

Do Not Leave Me Alone

By [Myron Gananian](#) (May 2023)



The Spanish Family, Alice Neel, 1943

We are born with two fears. The innate fear of falling is demonstrated by a very simple maneuver called the Moro test, which can be done within an instant of birth. For this, the infant, held supine just a short distance above the table, is allowed to drop back unaided. Its response is deemed indicative of an intact neural capacity. The other fear is that of abandonment, as clearly evidenced by the cessation of crying when the justborn is swaddled, the tighter the better, and comforted by its mother's rocking and feeding, smell and voice. Neither fear is ever lost. Both are protective, the first from physical harm, the latter from psychological anguish. The fear of falling is universal in land mammals and absent in birds and is not significantly altered over a lifetime. The attraction toward the center of the earth is immutable, while the inborn sense of abandonment is diminished with the proper emotional environment and exacerbated by its absence. If not assuaged in the early formative years the consequences are not only severe but permanent. Abandonment means in its essence, not being wanted. When this emotional environment exists from birth onward the human psyche will do anything in its power to soften the pain caused by having been "Cast Out" of the lives of those most meaningful to it. In effect, whatever an "Outcast" needs to do to convince himself that indeed he belongs in society. Unfortunately, these efforts are almost universally self-destructive and maladaptive unless recognized and addressed. If possibly worse, these efforts are not able in the least to soften the results of the malady. The destructive psychological aftermath can occur later in life with no less severity as we shall see.

By delving into the psychological consequence of being not wanted in individual cases it may be possible to extrapolate its consequences to explain some of the emotional turmoil in which our society currently finds itself. The society, no less than the individual, can suffer psychological pain to such an extent that the function of the society suffers. These words aim to show that it is possible that there is currently an

analog, widespread in society, of the disorder which occurs in individuals who suffer the heavy burden of not being wanted. In other words, the pervasive sense that we have been cut loose from our moorings and have been cast adrift.

Let us use the clearest example of the abandonment syndrome for comparison, Borderline Personality Disorder. DSM-5 301.83 (F60.3) This condition exists in women more than men by a ratio of three to one, affects at least 2% of our population which translates to a large number, is not easily diagnosed and therefore underdiagnosed, is difficult to treat, and in addition to the profound distress it causes the patient, results in great volatility in relationships with those close to the afflicted person. It likely develops most frequently early in life when either by direct verbal messages or from unspoken attitudes the child is convinced that he is unwanted and in the way. For example, this often is a consequence of having alcoholic parents which is a clear circumstance for children being underfoot and either dispensable or disposable. The unequivocal effect of such an emotional environment early in life is to not only feel alone but to actually be physically isolated, pushed away from any emotional framework. Verbal, physical, and sexual abuse are also major factors adding to the feeling of being expendable. At this time the child does not possess the capacity to counter being alone, and lacks the ability to understand that the problem is not his but belongs to those responsible for his isolation. It is likely that when the conditions for this malady occur later in life that the precarious soul, unprepared for an existence without his accustomed security, will also end up with a similar disorder with similar ramifications.

Now to connect these thoughts with what is troubling our society. By near universal agreement we all feel bereft of an explanation for the following incomplete litany of our time of troubles: six-year-olds shooting their teacher, unknowns being pushed onto subway tracks, massive riots with extensive

property and life destroyed, increased domestic violence, infanticide, homicidal car-jackings, drug deaths, several venereal diseases increasing, suicide rate up 30% from 2000 to 2020, diminishing armed forces enlistments, folks avoiding employment, reduced or eliminated penalties for even major crimes, as well as international disarray from America's lack of clarity. What many have called "Cultural Rot." All eliciting the question "Why" and "What is going on?" –a query on all our tongues. It is not possible that all these have occurred together by chance. Far more likely that they have a common cause, a disease plaguing our society, alienation. That malicious condition involves a long list of consequences, best clarified by its dictionary definitions: isolation, detachment, estrangement, distancing, separation, severance, parting, cutting off. It is undeniable that all those words accurately describe the malaise that has overtaken our nation. Our society is acting out just as children do when they know no other way to express distress caused by the lack of attachment to a source of security. Insecurity is inarguably the present emotional undercurrent in our nation.

And now, onto the "Why" of all this splintering, the sense that we are flying apart, and before we head in that direction we are at each other's throat. What heads the list has to be the altered, diminished role of father, mother, and family. Too many households without a father, and sometimes a mother as well, leading to multiple devastating consequences, financial and emotional. It is the rare single mother or grandmother who can care for children in a way that fully compensates for the absent father. The abandonment by the father stands alone, nothing, but nothing that the most capable mother can do or say, and all that money provides, can counter the absence of the father; he is absent, period. Try to convince the child that he is not. We would do well to respect feelings attributed to Tolstoy by Vladimir Nabokov that "two married people with children are tied together by divine law forever." Poverty caused by the absent father is

seen as the cause of another long list of impediments to success in every aspect of modern life. Children absolutely need the security of a predictable household that has the same name as they do. Pre-school, after school sports, and community centers will not suffice. The nuclear family entails discipline and responsibility, characteristics not acquired anywhere else, and indisputably currently in short supply. Why are so many Blacks killing so many Blacks in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Baltimore? The average illegitimacy rate in the US is 40%, among Blacks, 70%. For non-Hispanic whites, 22%. To contend that this is not a profound influence on the children in such households is beyond naïve, and at heart, racist. Worst of all it keeps Black families away from the only answer to their seemingly endless cycle. Reparations will not help to bring fathers back home.

While the deleterious effect of an electronic screen, regardless of what is displayed, is of concern, the depth and extent of its malignant influence is still not recognized. Any time spent in front of a screen, even for profitable or benevolent purposes, is time not spent in human contact. We are being starved of one of the most important elements that provides nourishment for our sense of being wanted and needed by others, very simply, contact with others, a very important appetite. If we want to feel needed we must be told, in no uncertain terms, that we are needed. We cannot conjure the sense of being significant to others. A piece of glass can never tell you that you mean something to another human. Face-Timing, Zooming, and ear buds are not working, and in fact, serve to increase our isolation. The need at birth for a parent's contact is never lost, it is transferred to as many others as possible who do not harm us, often cats and dogs. All this the correct and very effective antidote to avoid the torment of the quarantine of isolation. While the concern about pornography is correctly focused on the depravity and exploitation of women its effects in taking men to a fantasy world increases the distance with the real world, adding to

the space between the only two halves known as humans.

Then the diminished role of faith and religion, the historical bulwarks of social cohesiveness. There is no denying the central role of the press in contributing to this discord by failing to be the neutral arbiter of news. Distortion of news substantially contributes to the state of agitation in our society. Not knowing whom or what to believe can serve only to expand the sense of loss of the contact with certainty. This agitation is no different than what occurs to molecules; when heated; the distance

between them increases as they fly apart. AI will certainly exacerbate this inability to trust our reason and senses.

Is it possible, then, that having been cut loose from all the elements in our life that not only support and protect us but also contribute to defining us, that we are, helter-skelter, thrashing around, seeking identity in anything within our reach, anything that will serve as a source of meaning in our now meagre lives, a surrogate, which inevitably turns out to be a phantasm. The closest thing to ourselves is our own identity, now regarded as an impediment, so maybe casting it aside and becoming a new person, even a murderer, will become the substitute for the "Lost Soul". "I will change my essence, my gender. I will divest myself of my old, useless, meaningless aspects and try on some new clothes, become a Drag Queen, or better yet cut off my parts that were the cause of my loneliness." A colubrine shedding of the skin.

Then, although possibly the major contributor to such widespread mayhem, is public policy, which creates a feeling that protections we took for granted are no longer a certainty. Unable to call the police, the drawing down of our armaments for Ukraine, the number of our military enlistments not being sustained, both our borders no longer in existence, our economy and personal finances in shamble from profligate governmental spending, punitive taxation, the sense that

criminals have more protection than do their victims, and more. It is undeniable that we feel alienated from our government. Nothing clearer than the feeling that our government is not listening to us and has forgotten us, in effect abandoning us to our own devices. Thus, the final line of succor, instead of taking the place of the now absent family, church, and school, too, has left us adrift, forcing our citizens into a constant state of defensiveness, a fortress mentality, one of being responsible for our own safety and survival, a condition in which we found ourselves many, many years ago, when the government was not our first or second call for help. In actuality a far more certain, secure existence than the one in which we now live. If one is self-sufficient, as we used to be, there is no need to look to others for validation or protection. But now, with profound changes in society and our way of life, when the protection by forces outside of ourselves is taken away we cannot but feel abandoned. We are now paying the price for having so long sought our security in the hands of others, especially the government. What may be the most insidious mood in the US is the feeling that those who have been cast adrift into isolation are themselves responsible for the consequences visited on their heads. Not unlike telling the child that his neglect is due to his ugliness or misbehavior.

The future of our governmental apparatus does not appear hopeful. Rather it is more likely that we will experience a continuation of the present downward spiral. It will become worse before it gets worse. Our governmental leaders at all levels, just as our doctors, lawyers, teachers, priests, and policemen, come from the greater pool of our entire population. If the pool is contaminated by the conditions described herein, the loosening or disappearance of interpersonal attachment, then we cannot extract from it anything better than what it contains. Our lack of leadership and all that it should entail, inspiration, optimism, courage, trust, and so much more, is sorely lacking. Who is the leader

that commands universal respect? A couple of profound observations touching on this from long ago may describe the current scene in our nation. First from Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, "Without respect, it seems, we have nothing." And from the wise, ribald mouth of the Wife from Bath, in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, referring to the consequence of having less than admirable leaders, "How can a shittin shepherd have clean sheep?" Is it we who have failed in choosing our leaders or are our leaders failing us regardless of whom we choose? Whatever the case the national mood is that we have been cast adrift, and that we are unmoored from our accustomed safeguards.

The pool can be cleaned only by developing in our populace the former self-reliance of our agrarian way of life. This does not require living the agrarian life. Self-reliant people are not likely to feel that they have been "Hung out to dry" when support mechanisms are taken away. If it is agreed that we have become alienated then the only solution is to declare independence from those elements and people who diminish the dominance of the individual. Individuality is the bulwark against external threats, especially in the form of totalitarianism. It does not bode well for a society when the individual becomes anonymous.

There is a perfect example of the loss of identity and the degradation produced when the members of a society become so dependent that individuality totally disappears, the former Soviet Union. The urge for survival there led to conniving, stealing, cheating, and any other technique their imagination could contrive to counter the abandonment and resulting anonymity inherent in totalitarianism. All this chicanery visited on each other, including family, and not against the government, which remained their surrogate parent until the end. Recall that the efforts to counteract the torment of Borderline Personality Disorder are also maladaptive. To disregard that and the history of the Soviet Union is to face

a bleak future. If there is any doubt about the trajectory of our nation, look again to the Soviet Union for a likely outcome. Nowhere in world's history have the consequences of equity been so clearly expressed as it was in communism there. Equity is the solace and refuge of the dispossessed and forgotten, the alienated, but as well the attraction which led them into bondage and slavery. This last sentence explains the Russian Revolution as well as the genesis of Communism.

The path, then, beginning with abandonment, leads to any method for self-validation, then to increasing isolation from others caused by the shunting of emotional energy in the attempt to diminish the agony of being solitary, now causing more isolation due to the avoidance of human contact, and finally resulting in hatred toward any who would attempt to come close enough emotionally or even physically to contest or expose their vulnerability. We need to ask, is the hatred we currently feel toward each other as well as toward our institutions the inevitable end result of having been cut loose from all the sources of security, especially the security that comes from within ourselves?

Finally, just as the soil on which we are born determines our lives, so too does the Social Geography of our existence play an equally critical role in who we turn out to be. We are nothing without a defining social environment. There is no social environment without the constant, predictable, and intimate association with our fellow mankind. Absent that, we revert to no other comparable form of life on earth. We do not become animals, a favorite tag when describing humans lacking humanity. Lions, elephants, horses and all of them survive by maintaining as much of the herd as possible. The greater the threat the greater the resort to the security found in the herding instinct. We cannot perpetuate our kind without honoring the same source of security, we cannot divest the need for the same solace. We cannot survive unless we obey our need for close human contact; without It we become prey for

the wolves.

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