

THE WOUND OF “ABANDONMENT”

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The wound of “abandonment”

Express your Emotions to Heal

Guide santé

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PREAMBLE

Why should one be interested on the subject of “abandonment” when so many others could and would rather discuss of Man, of his sufferings, but also of his inner-beauty and capability to love? Simply because, during my twenty years of private practice in Medicine, “abandonment” appeared to me as being one of the most common cause in my clients’ physical discomfort, and low-quality of life (in both men and women alike).

Before being involved in my private practice, my activities in the different organizations I worked in, first as a war-surgeon and then as a doctor, confronted me to the ravages of war and of intolerance. Indeed, I have seen people lose their parents and their children, people who have been relocated by force, others who have been imprisoned for political reasons, victims of leprosy being likewise excluded from their family circles, and religious and ethnic minorities being rejected and persecuted by parties in power. Notwithstanding, it took me a great deal of time to finally understand certain behaviors from the greatest part of these people, behaviors which sometimes appeared to me at the same time odd, and yet ever so human; It took me indeed a great deal of time to understand that these people had been victims of utter “abandonment”, and that it was because of this specific reason that they continued to suffer in their daily lives. Of course, it is evident that the suffering of others forces oneself to wonder as to the causes thereto, and it was thus that I realized that I, myself, suffered of “abandonment”, despite of the fact that nothing in my life, until then, led me to ever reach such a conclusion, probably because

I was simply satisfied observing the circumstances and events taking place outside my inner-being.

The simple observation of another person's attitudes, behaviors and reactions often suffices to convince the observer that the subject being observed suffers of having been abandoned. This said, I am surprised to detect such frequent "pathology"; I am likewise, surprised to see the numerous origins thereof, and to notice that, usually, the people who suffer, in such cases, are utterly unaware of their state. In terms of my private practice, I seldom speak of "abandonment", and name such a matter ever so rarely; indeed, words, themselves, are not what is important. In my eyes, the process of listening, of heartily understanding, of having the necessary empathy, the opening of the mind and the absence of criticism are infinitely more important than mere words in regards to a patient's suffering. Hence, for the past twenty years, I have seen many patients, men and women alike, managing to heal themselves from the feeling of "abandonment" without even realizing that they were suffering from such pathology. They just simply realized that they were not loved as they would have liked to be in their lives, and yet if they ever managed to heal themselves, it was due merely to the fact that they had adopted a certain method of being and of living, and that particular method is to be the subject-matter of this book. This method of being is the essential reason which made me want to write and to speak about this subject, but not to make "sick" those people who do not realize that they are suffering from having been one day abandoned (in any case, these people will not read this book!), but rather to help and assist those who realize that something is not quite right in their personal or social lives. The objective of this book is indeed to help and accompany those men and women who face themselves confronted, in a repetitive manner, to the same fears and inner and exterior reactions, in both their private and professional lives. That is the task to which I wish to involve you,

the readers, by inviting you to keep in mind that only a suffering person is able to achieve that which is necessary to heal himself/herself, and that the means which are at his/her disposal, and the finality of his/her journey are but the same for any other human being: Love.

Chapter 1

THE ORIGINS OF “ABANDONMENT”

“ABANDONMENT”, NEUROSIS OF “ABANDONMENT”, REJECTION:
A FEW POINTS OF REFERENCE:



Words are never innocent, and, in spite of how much one is careful to choose them, one realizes that they carry a great significance in the manner they define people and, all in all, things. The word “*abandonment*” itself has a Germanic origin which signifies “... *to the power of...*”; on the other hand, the verb which derives from it, “*to abandon*”, comes from an old French expression: “*laisser à bandon*” which means leaving something, or someone, to an external power (that of someone’s, or simply to no one else’s). Indeed, the notion of “leaving something under the power of someone else’s” resides in the heart of the idea of “abandonment”, and illustrates what the peasant in the Middle-ages were forced to do when they had to deliver their harvests to their powerful lord whose lands they worked. The verb “*to abandon*” means as well to leave, to cease caring for, to reject, to exclude, to push away, to eject... The definition of the word “*abandonment*” given by the French dictionary *Le Petit Larousse Illustré* is: “Being left aside, being neglected¹”.

To abandon signifies to leave something without care, in utter disorder or without protection. An example would be “abandoned lands”: lands that are left without care or left to themselves... This state of carelessness can be compared to the state of complete “abandonment” in which a human being can find himself as well: left without any care and neglected because of people’s lack of interest... Etymologically speaking, the word “*abandonment*” takes as a suffix the word “*ban*” which, in the Middle-ages, designated a territory subject to a lord’s jurisdiction. This term is still today used in France, more particularly in eastern France, in the region of Alsace, to describe lands that are located on the territory of a commune. A person who, in effect, is “*abandoned*” is a person who has been placed outside the commune, and thus who does not belong in the community or, rather, who is not recognized as being a member thereof; in other words, this person would be considered “*banned*” which is to say declared as being unworthy by society and, therefore, forbidden to reside amongst his/her peers. That is what an abandoned child feels...: it feels an exclusion from the family circle and, thus, feels “*banned*” by society.

The French word “*banlieu*” (which means: suburbs) shows the prefix “*ban...*”, which enables us to understand what the inhabitants of French suburbs may feel like: a sentiment of having been placed or assigned upon a certain distance from the center of the city, you could say even of having been banished in a sort of way by the upper part of society which lives in the center of the city. In many cases, many are those who do not hesitate to speak of the “*state of ‘abandonment’*” in which some suburbs find themselves, and many suburbanians feel victimized of a collective “abandonment” organized by that “well-to-do” section of society that resides in a milieu of power and financial means. In fact, that which takes place in certain suburban areas in France that are very much neglected by public authorities corresponds perfectly to the example taking place on the collective level and on the individual level as we shall describe.

The feeling of “abandonment”

To feel abandoned by one’s husband, wife, child, mother, father, community or friends signifies that one feels isolated, left to oneself. Hence, it is important to underline that such a feeling is not an emotion, and that it can be rather well withstood or handled, depending on the person; however, when such a feeling is not well handled, the feeling of “abandonment” can be expressed by a series of physical and psychological manifestations covering from sadness to anxiety, depression and even aggression; but above all, it is self renouncement and self-withdrawal which take over... From that moment on, the person feeling “*abandonment*” will feel “*banned*”, which is to say unworthy... The words “*for ban*” or “*bandit*” which have in common the prefix “*ban*”, are expressions of what the “*abandoned*” subject often feels: guilt and the feeling of self-devaluation or low-esteem. From this “*self-devaluation*”, deeply imbedded in the person’s inner-mental being, the subject then begins to feel unworthy to be loved. I shall indicate here that, when I mention “*the person’s inner-mental being*”, I wish to refer to all the obstacles that we, as human beings, erect to protect ourselves from that suffering which is inflicted upon us by the outside world, including that of utter “abandonment”. I shall come back to that point at a later stage².

Neurosis of desertion

In Psychiatry, Neurosis of “abandonment” designate the troubled effects which are generated by an “*abandonite*”. Jean Laplanche et J-B. Pontalis, both psychoanalysts, wrote the book: “**Term introduced by Swiss psychoanalysts**” (Charles Oier, Germaine Guex) to designate a clinical state where the anguish of being abandoned predominates the need of safety or security.

In other terms, it is a neurosis whose etiology would be somewhat oedipal. It would not necessarily correspond to an “abandonment” suffered during childhood. The subjects who display this type of neurosis are called “*abandonite*”³. This entity is defined as well in the following manner: “Feeling and being in a Psycho-affective state of permanent insecurity tied to the irrational fear to be abandoned by one’s parents, or family members in the absence of a real situation of “abandonment”⁴.” In such cases, it would appear that there might be in the “*abandonite*” a depth of affective and insatiable avidity which would be written within his genetic code, and thus which would be a natural trait of sorts. This affective avidity would produce a mixture of anguish, reactionary aggression (traits put to the test to insure one’s interest and which would depict sadomasochist attitudes) and self-devaluation which would induce the subject to think: “I am not loved because I am not loveable”, a thinking pattern that would be called a “catastrophe mentality”. I am using purposely the conditional tense as the opinion of authors often differ, to the point that carefully chosen definitions occasionally contradict one another...

Since too often, scientific definitions are ambiguous, let us try to understand in a clearer manner the subject discussed by having recourse to simpler terms. Fundamentally, the definition of “*abandonite*” underlines a person who, by his inner-nature, is subject to an *insatiable affective need*. It likewise underlines the fact that the impossibility to satisfy such a need would cause in the subject different sorts of problems, such as anguish, aggressive reactions leading ultimately to low self-esteem and thus to the “catastrophe mentality”. This latter notion designates the overall troubles said to be “abnormal” and “pessimistic” suffered by the “*abandonite*” and which can be described as tendencies to look upon life in a negative and dark frame of mind, a good example of which being not believing in the beauty of things or of people... This definition, as described hereinabove, supports

the basic ideology of psychiatry: the man who suffers is abnormal, and because he is “*outside of the norm*”, he develops a series of symptoms called a syndrome, proof of the subject’s abnormality; hence, it becomes imperative to concentrate on these symptoms in order to have the suffering subject return to his normal cast, which is to say within universally accepted norms... Suffering is in this fashion perceived as a sign indicating that we are outside the norm as defined by “Society” and by “Science”, rather than as a sign that our body causes to attract our attention upon something that we attempt to subjugate. On the other hand, suffering is no longer suffering as we understand it: it becomes the pathological attitude of an individual who presents personality problems. That is how a suffering being can be seen being treated as an abnormal person, which only confirms, within his own mind, the mediocre opinion he already formed of himself! Another such definition illustrates perfectly what we discussed: “the syndrome of abandonism is essentially the consequence of an utter lack of maternal care, displayed by either mistreatments or just indifference. Two traits that are as pathogenically alike as the other⁵, write Serge Revel and Chantal Lacomme. They add that abandonism can lead to a severe depression. This said, as I do not wish to share in such an idea of the human being, I shall try to approach the question of suffering in a different manner, first by submitting the idea that all forms of suffering is unique for each individual, and that he or she who suffers is not automatically “abnormal”.

Rejection

Here is another word which is often used and even preferred by some people: REJECTION. For others, such a word is a synonym of “abandonment”. It does not reflect an emotion, but induces an entire series of feelings and sensations which are very similar to

those provoked by “abandonment” and which can be interchanged. However, for other authors, “rejection” would be harder to live than “abandonment” because it would consist of a more violent act. Indeed, he or she who would reject (someone) would have an active attitude which, on the other hand, would not be present in the act of “abandonment”. Therefore, “abandonment” would be more passive than “rejection”. This capital difference puts into evidence the fact that, in “abandonment” and in “rejection”, one finds two inseparable partners without which “abandonment” or “rejection” could never exist: the person who commits the act of abandoning or rejecting, and the victim who suffers such an act. Likewise, there can never be a victim without a victimizer. There is no victim who is abandoned or rejected without being someone who abandons or rejects him or her in the first place. Is a newly born child, who is immediately after its birth, placed by its mother in the care of Social Services, rejected or abandoned? In my eyes, it is irrelevant to categorize such an act as “abandonment” or “rejection” since the child will feel, regardless, a feeling of “abandonment”, and will feel consequently rejected, and will thus suffer... That is why, if the slight contextual difference underscored by some was worth being brought to light, it seems to me difficult to retain it as being essential when emphasizing to that which is being felt and to the consequences that result there from. In this book, I shall therefore use the word “*abandonment*” rather than “*rejection*”, but for the sake of mercy, I beg those who absolutely insist to the word “*rejection*” rather than “*abandonment*” not to feel themselves rejected!

We have earlier underlined that the feeling of “abandonment” or “rejection” is never an emotion. There are three great families of emotions: joy, sadness and anger. Fear and guilt are not emotions despite of the fact that they manifest themselves through important tensions which are physically palpable. However, they are creations of our inner mental being as we shall see later on. An emotion

is neither normal nor abnormal; it is neither good nor bad; it is simply illogical and escapes from all classification system. It does not produce suffering by itself; it must not be judged by anyone, not even by the person who feels it, let alone by an outsider. An emotion is natural. It simply IS. It is life itself. That which creates suffering is not emotion, but the forced blockage of emotion by one's inner mental; it is the blockage of the acknowledgement of emotion that creates suffering, or either the blockage of that which can *be felt* as either a product of emotion or the blockage of the *expression* of emotion. As a matter of fact, it is our inner mental being that is the responsible party of our precarious state, and not emotion itself, and our inner mental being, as we shall see, is the fruit of our upbringing. Its points of reference are what we perceive as being normal: normalcy, Society, in other words, other people... On the other hand, however, the points of reference of a person that actually ought to be considered are his or her deep inner nature as a human being, his/her life baggage, his/her inner depth which defines him/her as a person. A newly born baby has no point of reference other than those mentioned hereinabove. The baby feels and expresses naturally its emotions of joy by smiling or laughing, its sadness by crying heavily, and its anger by screaming while making tiny shaking fists. There is no violence in this child, and it is not violent towards others; at this stage the baby's inner mental being does not yet exist as it hasn't, as of yet, developed; hence, the child is not able to discern the difference between right and wrong. *It is merely content to exist* while being totally immersed in the present moment with all of its faculties of emotions. The child has indeed emotions which it experiences as naturally as possible without making any sort of judgment in regards to its self-esteem. Then, as the child grows, and receives a certain upbringing, its inner mental being begins to develop and grows in importance: the child learns to judge, to classify, to compare the reality that surrounds him to the existing norms he is acquainting himself

with. It is then, at that moment, that judgments of values begin to see the day, and that tensions start appearing: “what I feel or what the other feels is abnormal, wrong, illogical...” And yet, we know fully well that if emotions inhabit us, to think that they shouldn’t is certainly a noble thought, but change nothing to the fact that this emotion is there, alive! We may regret to feel it, but it does not make it disappear... We may dream of the day when we shall not again feel this kind of emotion, but we must realize that this day hasn’t yet come. We may as well tell ourselves that we shall register ourselves in seminars in order to only feel grand and noble things – yes! There are such seminars, and unscrupulous people capable of selling such illusions! In the meantime, we are here, now, facing our own “wrong emotions”.

Knowing that our emotions are natural, illogical, and that blocking them provoke tensions and suffering, why should we complicate our lives by resisting from letting ourselves go, and accept them by just letting them take over? What purpose does it serve to understand if it is to deny ourselves? When we authorize ourselves to live these emotions, our body gives us immediately a capital information: a very palpable physical relaxation invades us. This resistance is a sign that we are on our way to self-respect, and that our inner mental being has stopped interfering for a brief period of time. This clearly confirms the fact that “abandonment”, or “rejection”, is not an emotion since they manifest themselves through tensions and not through a body relaxation... An emotion that is lived is expressed through a physical relaxation.

From “abandonitis” to the original “abandonment”

There is somewhat of an ambiguity in the (medical) texts as we mentioned it before: definitions get often mixed-up with value-judgments in such a way that one may lose from sight the extend