

A Novel Idea by Rich Norman

Why do we create? It seems inexplicable and mysterious, as if a sudden and unexpected force from above or below has seized us, and will not be denied. Jung descriptively named this quality the "autonomous complex," in reference to the compulsive quality of creative expression. An example will help us find the fact beneath the appearance.

I was feeling much better, and indeed, the entire of the day seemed to call me to release and happiness, so I started out early as the sun, hiking some 15 miles before lunch. After my meal, it was clear, the despondency which had gripped me for the last few months had been well and rightly understood, the host of memories once sealed out of sight were recovered, and my mind now reveled easily in the midst of many thoughts which were once too painful to articulate. How splendid is the day we have unfettered from guilt and ignorance of ourselves! Each splash of light was as an invitation to life, and I looked upon the room, just the same as before, but different, now glowing in every happy promise, and I wondered what had changed. The idea was utterly irresistible. I had to know! The room was the same, but not the same, and it seemed as if in a sudden moment of transformation, I understood it all: Experience gains its meaning, its quality, not as a function of our source impressions, but instead, as a function of how those impressions are affectively encoded and interpreted. Think of how one person may adore his pet mouse and another person might find it disgusting. The mouse is the same, a neutral objective perceptual stimulus, it is the affect and emotion assigned to it which give the mouse its value, its various quality to each person. No wonder all the world looked different today—*the affect with which it was endowed had been altered*, its quality redefined, and for the better! The implications were at once obvious—if all of our human pain and misery can be redefined, reassigned affect to alter its quality, to redistribute our prolific energies once bound into painful fixated ideations anew, then, we might ask the impossible and ultimately hopeful question: Who is lucky now? I had found it, an irresistible notion I needed and wanted to pursue, and indeed, I could imagine a situation where one might feel as I felt at that moment, and no matter what misfortune gripped one, it would not matter, in fact, one would be grateful for it, grateful for whatever Life might bestow... all is right, all is naught, all is perfect, but for this! Every pain in my life seemed to unfold and uncoil, to release its precious energies into the present, and I had found it, found the irresistible answer, the way to end human suffering, and wanted, needed and required, only one thing: To speak its name aloud! I had found—a novel idea. A bit of analysis will make clear exactly what that is. (Please go to: <http://blog.theultranet.com/2013/05/a-novel-idea-from-symptom-to-sublimation.html> for a more detailed examination of the psychology and neuroscience behind dreaming and the creative processes).

Freud noted that dreams are the prototype of psychopathological structures, which means that in dreams, just as in mental illness, we hallucinate and act in strange and bizarre ways, governed not by logical thought, but by association and the emotions. Freud also noted how these emotions and the ideas to which they are attached, are not held down in the unconscious as tightly at night, and as these repressed ideas are closer to consciousness in dreams, we can interpret a dream to find them, and, gain insight into

psychopathology as well, which is also formed as these same repressed ideas return to consciousness. Put succinctly: symptoms of mental illness and dreams are both formed as the repressed returns to consciousness. This is why a neurotic symptom can be analyzed exactly as a dream. I have also noted in my own work and studies that creative function is increased as we draw near to the repressed, and in fact, the creative drive itself is a function of the wish to be reunited with the repressed, reunited with the unconscious. So we can see, as creative function and neurosis are both powered by the return to consciousness of repressed emotions and ideas, that an artwork is but a substitute symptom! This is why an art work will not be denied, and has such compulsive force to its emergence, it too, just like a neurotic symptom gains its compulsive quality from the same mechanism: the return of the repressed. Neurosis and creativity are deeply akin, and there is no doubt why we see the artist and the neurotic bound together throughout history, from Dostoyevsky to Woody Allen. However, it need not be so, and an artwork can be constructed as a lucid dream, a substitute symptom which *heals* its creator.

Soon my novel idea held me fast in its grip as I gladly succumb to the tide, and it seemed to tumble out, perfect and complete from the very moment it was spilled onto the page, so long nurtured deep beneath the surface, and then, suddenly spat out into the light of day—my novel idea had become... *a novel*, my hope for humankind spelled out in song and story: *Enough: The Book of James*. Ah! My dream! Our hope! Both familiar and new, it has returned to me, an unknown as a lost brother, a friend, both new and aged.

From the pages of *Enough*:

"Long forgone are those dreams which know us best, and in tender rapture do bestow their kiss, to warm us from within. How blessed are those dreams which surrender the most precious treasure—How blessed are those dreams which bestow the fact—How blessed are those dreams which create, which dream... of us?"

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