

Psychodynamics of Projective Emotional Regulation

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Introduction

When conducting historical analyses, it is all too easy to start from today's mindset, which presupposes the ideal of a certain rationality and empathy toward others. This, in turn, is based on an internal emotional regulation, as it was initiated during the Enlightenment with Kant's "Determine yourself from within!" and then elaborated in the literature and philosophy of the 19th century, only to become accessible to every individual with the psychodynamic psychotherapies of the 20th century, it became accessible to every individual. Yet despite this capacity of the modern mindset for self-determination and self-realization, the social forces of traditional patriarchal structures remain socially potent within ideologies and religious communities, where the earlier projective emotional regulation still prevails. That is why a reflection on this type of relationship to the world is important.

An important step toward this in psychoanalysis was the discovery of the persistence of childhood feelings and conflicts in adults, through which these became reflectable and internally balanced. However, this initially applied only to the feelings and conflicts of the child who was already capable of language, while the pre-linguistic feelings and sensations preceding this - spanning the broad spectrum from joy to terror - were, within the framework of psychoanalysis, mythologized in a pseudo-scientific manner as drives, libido, masochism, sadism, death drive, etc. .

These pre-linguistic feelings were indeed experienced intensely, but they were not represented linguistically and, in this sense, had "never been conscious," as Otto Rank put it, or, more precisely, had not been conscious on the level of language. The exploration of this deep dimension of experience took place primarily in regression therapy settings, which focused entirely on sensation and feeling, thereby making the pre-linguistic experience internally accessible in its experiential specificity and thus also capable of linguistic reflection, as elaborated in the extensive literature of prenatal psychology (e.g., Janus 2000, 2004, 2013a, 2013b, 2024; Evertz, Janus, Linder 2014, 2021).

This pre-linguistic experience always takes place within an intimate relationship "with," whether it be the mother before, during, and after birth, or the twin, or even the broader family

environment including the father and siblings. At these developmental stages, emotional regulation thus takes place within the context of the respective relationship.

One could perhaps speak more abstractly of an externally oriented emotional regulation or of a fetal emotional regulation that remains dominant even during the “extrauterine first year” (Portmann 1969).

This is the distinctive feature of the human relationship to the world: that it is not like the animal, which is in the world at birth and is then guided by its instincts, but rather that, while it is in the real world at birth, it remains emotionally “due to physiological prematurity” still within a fetal horizon of experience, as expressed immediately prenatally in magical experience and postnatally in mythical experience. The immaturity of the hippocampus and prefrontal structures is evidenced by the extensive helplessness of the infant, which could also be described as a lack of adaptation caused by its prematurity, which must be compensated for precisely by the prosociality of the parents.

However, their ability to assume this complementary responsibility is limited in traditional cultures by the fact that their members themselves are still, in essential respects, shaped by a fetal-magical and mythical experience, for which I would like to use the term “projective emotion regulation.” Specifically, this means that no real distinction can be made between the inner and the outer, so that one’s own feelings, such as anger or fear, are experienced as coming from the outside and are therefore managed at this level through incantations, rituals, and sacrifices, or - in modern times - through insensitivity and irrational behavior. This is the background for the abysmal cruelties in the treatment of children throughout human history, as described for the first time by the American psychohistorian and psychoanalyst Lloyd deMause (1979). It was not until the beginning of the last century that the autonomy of the child’s emotional world was “discovered,” and not until the middle of the last century that the need for attachment in infants and toddlers was “discovered”. Only then was it possible to assume real responsibility for the child and to move beyond the previously taken-for-granted mistreatment and physical punishment of children, as it still defines the parent-child relationship in large parts of the world and, to some extent, even here (UNICEF 2014, Fuchs 2019), as exemplified by the genital mutilations still practiced in some societies. All of this shows how far we still are from true enlightenment and true responsibility for our relationships, for which internal emotional regulation and empathy are prerequisites.

At the same time, the picture is complicated by the fact that, alongside the insensitive and violent treatment of children, there has always also been an intuitive and empathetic approach to children, ultimately rooted in a positive primate heritage. One aspect of this was the abrupt

and disconnected coexistence of empathetic and violent behavior. A particularly striking example of this for me was a report about Carthage, where mothers allowed their children to be sacrificed to the deity while at the same time weeping and despairing. It was precisely this disconnect between empathetic personal behavior and unempathetic, externally driven violent behavior that has always been a fundamental strain in parent-child relationships.

From the maturity now possible in terms of internal emotional regulation and empathy for another's distinct emotional world - as Otto Rank first described in a differentiated manner in his American lectures as the "Psychology of Difference" (Kramer 1986) - emotional regulation in traditional societies appears precisely as "projective emotional regulation." Experience in these societies was defined by a fetal sense of oneness or an interwoven connection with the world, as expressed in the concept of the "Dreamtime" of the Australian Aborigines or, of course, in ancient polytheism or in the all-encompassing will of God in the Christian faith. In the continuation of this fetal, perinatal, and postnatal pre-linguistic experience - which encompasses the entire world - naturally also reflects the existential maturational deficits of Homo sapiens through the "physiological prematurity," the only fragmentary responsibility of parents, and the traumatic burdens caused by their projection of feelings onto their children, through which the children became "poison containers" (deMause) for their negative feelings and scapegoats for their own inability. Therefore, the history of childhood was a "nightmare" from which we are only just awakening, as Lloyd deMause put it, and that is why the reenactments of this nightmare in the societal horror of endless wars and persecutions in the name of projected destructive parental images were the realities of our history. Nietzsche had already asked himself how humanity could survive at all in the face of the horrors and devastation in history. He saw this as rooted in an indestructible instinctive will to survive.

That is certainly correct and can perhaps be further differentiated today. Here, only individual aspects can be mentioned: "projective emotion regulation," with its distortions regarding reality and its irrational desires, compelled—to a certain extent out of the will to survive—the ever-renewed mobilization and further development of the abilities to recognize facts and act accordingly, and not, as in animals, only at the final stage of instinct-guided action (Tinbergen 1966), but also in earlier stages of action and, finally, with the increasing dominance of rationality in the mindset already in the planning of actions. This applies in relation to the external world, but also in relation to regulation in social relationships and in parent-child relationships, which since the Enlightenment have been increasingly shaped by empathy and reason (Shorter 1986). Added to this is the fundamental desire of parents that their children's lives will one day be better than their own have been.

In the following, the various aspects and manifestations of “projective emotion regulation” in social life and in the historical process will be examined in separate sections. In this context, the interaction between technical and social inventions and the development of “projective emotion regulation” is of particular significance and will therefore be addressed at the outset.

The Interaction Between Projective Emotional Regulation and Technical Inventions

For millennia, technical innovations unfolded so slowly that the life in small groups -predetermined by our primate heritage - could remain the dominant social formation. Yet social life was increasingly shaped by magical experience, as all events unfolded within a fetal experiential horizon of universal connectedness, into which even the slowly emerging technical inventions were integrated. As Nietzsche (1878, p. 524ff.) vividly described: in tribal cultures, it was not the individual who steered the course, but everything took place through the operation of the all-unifying magical power, which ethnology later termed “mana.”

One consequence of this magical experience was that all members of a tribal group were under the spell of a totem or divine being that was ultimately primordial and motherly. This extended the incest taboo - which in a primate group naturally regulates individual behavior - to the entire tribe, because all were magically connected to the “one” mother. This led to the complex marriage regulations between groups, as described in detail by the ethnologist Lévi-Strauss (1981) described at length.

The slow increase in technical inventions, which encompassed the entire infrastructure of daily life - such as the use of fire, the invention of clothing, houses, food preparation, the refinement of hunting methods, the facilitation of gathering through baskets, facilitating storage through vessels, refining food preparation through vessels, etc. - interacted with an increase in the instinct-independent range of action of an ego, or rather, a strengthening of the ego. This gradually enabled an even greater increase in the observation of nature, which ultimately led, via the invention of plant cultivation, to the invention of agriculture and the domestication of certain animal species.

All of this together led to a population increase and shattered the basic formation of the tribal group, which until then, through its instinctive roots in the primate group, had signified a sense of social security and enabled social regulation within the framework of personal acquaintance, which was likewise based on the instinctive guidelines of the primate heritage. This disruption of the social foundation of the tribal group within the context of the “Neolithic Revolution” created entirely new conditions that could only be met through the invention of novel constructs for social cohesion. During the period of the so-called matrifocal cultures from 11,000 to 3,500 BCE, these were the trance-like feelings and sensations related to the mother (Meier-Seethaler

1983, 1993, Göttner-Abendroth 2019). Yet it was no longer merely, as in tribal cultures, the fetal feelings directed toward the placenta-symbolic totem, which through mana provided the soul's sustenance and nourishment, but it was also the experience of the mother's "extrauterine first year" depicted in mythical forms," which, precisely because of the immaturity of the hippocampus and prefrontal brain structures, was experienced only in this manner as a dreamlike mythical figure. But this very primal experience of a shared reference to the postnatal mother offered the still relatively small groups - reaching from a few hundred to a few thousand members - a sufficient emotional cohesion against the backdrop of a still magical-sacred life of unity. All events on Earth were conditioned by the "Great Mother," who was also vividly present in heaven and on Earth and whose active forces were perceptible in the nourishing, in which the reality of life and experience during the first year of life was reflected.

With the further expansion of agriculture and, in particular, livestock farming, the population grew to such an extent that subgroups began to form, which fought one another, as dictated by the primate legacy to mercilessly combat the foreign group. As a result, warriors took on central importance for the survival of the group. This led to a cultural shift from an orientation toward the "Great Mother" to an orientation toward the "Great Father," as it subsequently took shape in monotheistic religions, shaping their cultures. Due to the paradigmatic differences between matrifocal and patriarchal cultures and the corresponding emotional regulation and regulation of social cohesion, these connections will be addressed in separate sections.

Projective Emotional Regulation within the Context of Matrifocal Cultures

The early pre-linguistic mother embodies, on the one hand, the dimension of the prenatal environment with its integration into the maternal organism, which has the nourishing, sustaining, and all-encompassing preserving function that later manifests in relation to the external world as individual functions of food intake, digestion, breathing, excretion, thermoregulation, etc., and self-preservation as a whole; and on the other hand, the relationship with the mother encompasses the dimension of the extrauterine environment in the first year of life, serving to compensate for the incompleteness of development, immaturity, and the resulting helplessness and dependence through the social womb of the parents and the family. Human infants have therefore also been referred to as "carry-children" to characterize this special situation. The parents are thus not real persons, as they increasingly become in the course of the second year of life and childhood, but are experienced like the figures in myths: the parents are, in a sense, divine figures who determine all events. However, due to the lack of maturity, the parents' behavior cannot be understood in a real sense, but only its impact can be

experienced, just as people in antiquity felt the power of the gods directly in their everyday lives.

The devout resignation and the “trust in God” that enable the infant to live in his situation - or, from the adult’s perspective, to endure his situation - are the same devout resignation and the same trust in God that enabled the members of ancient societies to live in a world full of real and social uncertainties, or, from today’s perspective, to endure them. The real ignorance regarding vast realms of reality and the associated economic and social catastrophes made the world so uncertain that this was only bearable in the trance of infantile feelings. One might suppose that if people had been able to grasp their situation, they would have died of fear.

The nature of this emotional regulation thus corresponds to the externally guided emotional regulation of the first year of life, where, due to elementary immaturity and helplessness, everything depended on the compensatory power of parents experienced in a divine-mythical way.

The distinctive feature of magical-mythical experience lies in the fact that inner states of mind can be directly reflected in the perception of mythical figures - that is, negative feelings in threatening deities or demons, or positive feelings in benevolent deities and angelic figures. This is the constellation of the “archaic consciousness” described by the Jungian Psychoanalyst Willy, 2014 (1988, 2013) with its minimal distinction between inner and outer. Behavior that is rational in our sense is possible only within the framework of the emotional parameters arising from the mythical vision, as is classically depicted in the Iliad. The motives of the gods cannot be recognized as reflections of one’s own motives and therefore cannot be reflected upon. For this reason, the term “projective emotional regulation” is more appropriate here than at the level of magical experience, where external and internal reality still largely coincide. In the ancient worlds, on the other hand, there exists in the cities a self-contained, human-created living space, even if social life as a whole is still determined by the emotions and states of mind projected onto the gods.

In Neolithic matrifocal cultures, it is the feelings of the pre-linguistic mother toward the child in the first year of life and their projection onto the entire lifeworld that dominantly and directly determine cultural life in its cult of the “Great Mother.” Just as the infant is now emotionally and interwoven with his mother in all aspects of life, so is the member of matrifocal society with his entire environment. The consequence of this is that real changes, such as the seasons, are directly experienced as changes in all social relationships and must therefore be reenacted in rituals to maintain resonance with the changing mythical mother. These rituals are not yet symbolic but consist quite concretely in performances of the dying of Son-Beloved of the Great

Mother or the vegetation gods. The logic of these rituals, whose concreteness is scarcely comprehensible to us today, results directly from the earliest maternal experience with the dramatic transition from the womb world to the infant world.

One world comes to an end or must come to an end so that another world can emerge. Or to put it another way, one world must die so that another can be born.

This is the distinctive feature of human birth: that we are born “unfinished” (Janus 2025a, 2025b), meaning that we are still, mentally and physically, within a fetal experiential horizon, whereas other “nest-leavers” find themselves in a real world, in which they can also orient themselves, move, and behave. Human infants live as “secondary altricials” in an intermediate world, whose magical-mythical character we, so to speak, carry over into our further development and relate to the world accordingly, on the magical level precisely in tribal cultures, on the mother-related level in matrifocal cultures.

The consequence of this was that the contradictory worldviews of the mythical vision and the realistic orientation repeatedly and continuously collided abruptly, failed to recognize one another, and led to painful ruptures. This leads to the necessity of sacrificial rituals in everyday life and within the broader contexts of seasonal changes. Only through these constant rituals can the inherently bizarre contradiction of the various worldviews be managed, so to speak, in social action.

In “The Golden Bough” (1928), Frazer describes the accounts of colonial explorers regarding cultures that were still archaic and, in some cases, still matrifocal in orientation, with their brutal rites and sacrifices. In an essay, I have described these connections in detail (Janus 2018a).

Projective emotion regulation in patriarchal cultures

In connection with growing expertise and technical developments in agriculture and livestock farming, there is a further increase in population, whose cohesion can no longer be ensured by the aforementioned rituals. Subgroups form, who perceive one another as hostile and fight each other with destructive intensity. As a result, men gain dominant importance as warriors for the group’s survival. It is no longer the mother and the cult of the “Great Mother” that sustain and save lives, but rather the “Great Father” or “paternal protection (Vaterschutz)” (Freud) that sustain life or protect against death and ruin.

This dramatic cultural shift is historically traceable (Lerner 1985) and so comprehensive that we, who are still under the spell of these patriarchal structures, have difficulty truly perceiving the era of the entirely different mental and social structures of matrifocal cultures, as would be possible today through the reception of the results of relevant research (Göttner-Abendroth

2019, Gimbutas 1996, Meier-Seethaler 1983, et al.). The fact that this reception is so incomplete and fragmented stems from the aforementioned spell, which prevents an inner perception of the aforementioned connections. The psychological dynamics of the developing warrior cultures, as depicted in the Iliad, distorts the entire relationship between the sexes: boys are raised one-sidedly to focus on their abilities as warriors, while the social significance of women is limited to the ability to bear children and to care for them. These changes, however, still take place entirely within the framework of a mythical worldview, in which one's own feelings and sensibilities are reflected in the mirror of the divine figures and their relational dynamics, except that now the new social realities of male dominance and a devaluation of the significance of women and mothers are reflected within this framework.

Psychologically, one could speak of father-oriented infant and toddler feelings. Although the father is now at the center, but in a sense adorned with the trappings of the maternal connection - a mythical omnipotence over life and death. Just as everything once depended on maternal omnipotence, so now it depends on paternal omnipotence, which has, in a sense, copied the maternal qualities of nourishment and life-sustaining care, as can be demonstrated and traced today in detail through the transformation of cultural symbols (Meier-Seethaler 1993).

That is why even today prayers are directed to the father, asking him to give "our daily bread." The entire responsibility lies with him, as the child experiences from the very beginning in a patriarchally organized culture, whereas in a matrifocal culture the entire responsibility is clearly experienced as lying with the mother.

The existential rupture in the human condition caused by "physiological prematurity" and the resulting reference to an imaginary magical-mythical world and simultaneously a real reality, which, in its contradictory nature, was managed at the level of matrifocal cultures through magical rituals and constant sacrifices, is now managed in a new form through the ultimately sacral wars and the associated sacrifices (deMause 2005, Koenigswald 1989). Since the early god-kings, as successors to the prenatal omnipotence of the "Great Mother," allowed their own group to experience itself, in a uterine sense, as naturally all-encompassing - as was still entirely natural among the Egyptian pharaohs - there were, when the Assyrians emerged as a historical power, no established protocols for dealing with this. These first had to be developed in the form of peace negotiations and treaties. On a smaller scale, this problem recurred when, during the Thirty Years' War, the claims to omnipotence of the Catholic Church, which ultimately drew their power from the prenatal maternal experience perceived as omnipotent, clashed with the Protestants' claims to omnipotence, which were founded in a similar manner. The emotionally-driven solution seemed to lie only in mutual annihilation. The concept of

“tolerance,” the idea of mutual recognition and of treaties, had to be developed only in the face of the futility of this “solution” by annihilation within the framework of the negotiations of the Peace of Westphalia.

The psychodynamics of the wars rest on a peculiar fusion of the impulse, derived from the primate heritage, to combat the group perceived as foreign and threateningly invasive, with the impulse, arising from the existential rupture of “physiological prematurity,” to stage and shape threats as a struggle for survival in order to stay alive or, in a sense, to come to life. This aspect of the birth experience as an existential struggle for survival was described by deMause as a “fetal drama,” insofar as he viewed the onset of birth as conditioned by the failure of fetal living conditions, particularly through the failure of an adequate oxygen supply and also through a threatening confinement. Hence the fantasies of poisoning and entanglement accompanying the outbreak of war (deMause 2005, p. 53).

Historically, this stems from the fact that the traumatic aspects of birth manifest more acutely in later life and were therefore first described by Otto Rank in “The Trauma of Birth” (1924). Only a more comprehensive understanding of the psychodynamics of birth, as it occurred in the course of the history of research in prenatal psychology, broadened the perspective to recognize that birth could also be experienced as an adventure and a demonstration of a primal heroic force, with the realization that this is the very core of the birth experience. The child brings itself into the world through this force, with the mother’s support.

One could also put it this way: from the male experience, birth has the aspect of a struggle, and from the female experience, more the aspect of a sacrifice. In matrifocal cultures, therefore, changes would be experienced according to this aspect of the primal experience of birth as a sacrifice and ritually enacted, in order to process the primal force of change emotionally. In patriarchal cultures, changes would accordingly be staged according to the model of the struggle aspects of birth as a struggle for survival in war (Wasdell 1993), and the changes - which ultimately always imply a questioning of fetal unity and primary vitality - to be psychologically coped with. Ultimately, it is a matter of managing or coping with the consequences of the existential contradictions of a magically-mythical worldview and a realistic worldview.

In the previous examination of the problematic aspects of previous cultural formations, with a focus on conflict resolution through sacrifice or through wars, the constructive aspect of cultural development was neglected, which will be explained in the following section.

The creative aspects of cultural development

In light of the endless suffering in the cultural and civilizational history of humanity, with its ceaseless sacrifices, persecutions, wars, and the associated humanitarian catastrophes, it is natural that failure, deficiency, inability, and malice tend to take center stage in our consideration. This applies accordingly to the justifications or explanations of world events at the level of mythical narratives and images. Here, the history of the gods and humans appears more as a history of crime, as is paradigmatically illustrated in the depiction of the various generations of gods in Greek mythology, beginning with an absolutely violent and bestial primordial event in which the father Uranus devours his children, followed by the castration of Cronus by his son, all the way to the more personal and familial pantheon of the later Greeks, which is, however, still defined by criminal acts such as murder, theft, lies, infidelity, vengefulness, and other criminal behaviors, which can indeed be understood as a reflection of the real social conditions in the Greek urban societies of violence and slavery.

Yet there is also a certain civilizational and cultural development from Uranus to Zeus, just as in the Jewish religion there is a transition from the cruel god of storms and war in the historical beginnings to the - admittedly still violent and vengeful - god of law in later times (Miles 1986), which likely also took place in interaction with the surrounding advanced civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

However skeptical one may be regarding cultural “higher development,” there is nevertheless undoubtedly an increase in complexity within social structures and an astonishing inventive creativity aimed at achieving ever-new balances in social configurations within the relationship between goddesses, gods, and humans. The forces at work here will be explored in the following.

In doing so, I will again start from the “incompleteness” at birth, but this time from the opportunity inherent in this situation. The existential helplessness and dependence are, in a sense, compensated for by the inner connection to the fetal vitality and functionality in the primary prenatal life situation, which can meet all demands and challenges and overcome them. This feeling of strength and vitality is, after birth, the source of the infant’s development of its own abilities. That is why even increases in abilities that are actually related to maturation - such as being able to roll over on one’s own, to grasp purposefully, to orient oneself increasingly and later to crawl, and even later to walk, are experienced as an echo and confirmation of the feeling of elemental strength and vitality originating from the fetal period. Psychobiologically, this leads to the evolutionary biological formation of a sense of self or a sense of one’s own self, initially entirely at the bodily level, the self as a bodily self, and then increasingly also in interaction with parents and significant others as a social self. In doing so, parents enable me,

by addressing me as a person, to experience myself as a self. In the early period of magical-mythical experience, this still has the character of mythical grandeur, as reflected in the countless heroic myths, to which mothers may also have contributed. For instance, the mother of Alexander the Great is said to have told her son that he was actually the son of Zeus.

In recent decades and throughout the last century, significant progress has been made in the humanization or personalization of parent-child relationships. At the beginning of the 20th century, the child was “discovered” as a person, in the mid-20th century the infant, and in recent decades also the unborn child as an independent being, “The Fetus as Personality” (Liley 1972) in the field of neonatal medicine and as the “The Secret Life of the Unborn” (Verny 1982) and in the “Encounter with the Unborn” (Fedor-Freybergh 1987, 1989) within the framework of prenatal psychology.

This development reflects a progress in empathy and thus responsibility in parent-child relationships of fundamental and possibly even epoch-making significance, insofar as this parental empathy enables the child to feel itself already as an infant and thus also to develop the capacity for self-directed emotional regulation.

The latest development in this field is the so-called “Bonding Analysis” (Hidas, Raffai 2005, Blazy 2015) or “promotion of the prenatal mother-child relationship,” which, however, presupposes an inner perception of this dimension of human relational capacity, as discovered by the psychoanalysts Rank, Graber, Fodor, Peerbolte, and others. Hidas and Raffai, however, deserve credit for having explored and captured the reality of the prenatal relationship in the analytical situation so concretely that it became possible to take the constructive step of an exploration at the level of the relationship between the expectant mother and her developing child, as it was then methodologically developed and made applicable in “Bonding Analysis” (www.bindungsanalyse.de, www.bindungsanalyse.at). This practicality has been repeatedly demonstrated and substantiated in the conferences on Bonding Analysis organized by Helga Blazy (2009, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2025).

The remarkable autonomy and capacity for relationship that children possess following a successful “Bonding Analysis”, is linked to the fact that, based on the experience of an empathetic relationship before birth, they are able to regulate their primary prenatal feelings in the relationship in a self-determined manner.

These latest developments in the exploration of prenatal relatedness also make it possible to grasp and describe the social enactments of prenatal and natal feelings and relatedness that were once taken for granted in traditional cultures. While social life in a primate group is determined by instincts, life at the level of tribal groups is always paradigmatically shaped by magical

rituals centered on the totem through enactments of prenatal relatedness (Dowling, Leineweber 2001, Janus 2013b). Everyday life and everyday reality run parallel to this imaginary level of social life, as illustrated by the Australian Aborigines' expression "Dreamtime." These enactments, typical of Homo sapiens, which make inner states and experiences "real" in the shaping of social life, are, however, the core and origin of creativity at the level of tribal cultures - precisely in a very direct and action-oriented manner. Just as the placenta is vital for the child's survival before birth, so is the totem for the spiritual survival of the group. An example of this is an account of the fate of a group of Australian Aranda: to make a new area habitable, it first had to be "cosmized." When this staff once broke due to a mishap, the members of the group are said to have died of fright. So fundamental was the reality and necessity of the totem's survival as a magical presence of the placental experience. In a comparable sense, the felling of the Donar Oak by Boniface signified the end of the Germanic tribal religion.

At the level of the cult of the "Great Mother," the magical presence of the prenatal mother encompasses all aspects of life. Therefore, all life processes are inseparably connected to her, and therefore all changes indirectly and quite realistically activate the drama of the birth experience, whose repetitions in the continuous sacrificial rites which scenically reenact the catastrophic aspects of the birth experience (Janus 2000, p. 270ff.), the creative and ego-preserving scenic mastery of the elemental and overwhelming aspects of the birth experience. The shaping in the scenic reenactment is a genuinely creative process and, as it were, the birth of a magical self within the context of the sacred group, in which the human as a creature develops, in a primal way, into the creator of itself.

At the level of ancient patriarchal cultures, with their more developed urban life and more advanced agriculture and livestock farming, everyday reality and imaginary staging diverge more clearly. As Obrist put it, in these cultures "heaven is pushed upward," creating space for a broad reality of life shaped by human beings themselves, in which the growing autonomy of the self and the capacity for self-determined action find expression. But ultimately all earthly events are ultimately determined by the gods on Olympus, in which the fundamental dependence of social life on a staging of pre-birth primal experience is established as the backdrop, where everything depends on a higher being and its impulses and drives.

In the course of the advancing patriarchalization of social life, as expressed in Roman culture, this higher being is conceived in Judeo-Christian and later Islamic monotheism increasingly systematically in the image of the all-dominating and almighty Father. However, to the extent that - through the learning processes and social progress in human relationships occurring between generations, as deMause (2000) has described in detail, and the advances in technology

and social organization that run parallel to this development, the members of these societies take on, from generation to generation, more functions of coping with everyday life that were previously managed through imaginary enactments of prenatal security. This process reflects an increasing strength of the self, which then leads to the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The increasing assumption by people themselves of the shaping of practical and social life increasingly relativizes the significance of the staging of pre-natal security in religious and ecclesiastical rituals.

One can also describe this process as a process of internalization: the medieval staging of pre-birth reality in the social sphere is replaced by a more inner or even private visualization in personal life within the Protestant and Reformation movements. The improvement of living conditions through technical and economic progress in the wake of the Renaissance also makes living conditions safer. All of these are expressions of a creative transformation of mentality in interaction with the transformation of lived reality, which ultimately led to the shift from an orientation toward God or a destiny ordained by God to the ideal of “self-determination” and the ideal of a self-determined life within the framework of the Enlightenment (Janus 2015a, 2015b). It is no longer the will of God and His power to determine events that are decisive, but rather humanity discovered these previously projected potentials of itself and ultimately of its prenatal self now within itself.

To the extent that humans had, so to speak, fulfilled all prenatal desires for nourishment, security, warmth, being carried, a sense of belonging, etc., in the reality of modern societies, they were able to truly discover this potential within themselves as their own, and this is the prerequisite for assuming responsibility.

Just how nascent this entire development still is is evidenced by the economic and war-related catastrophes of the last 200 years. Nevertheless, the advances in social regulation through democratic rules and the economic and technological advances, which create regulation of basic human needs and thus security, were so significant that the complexity of social life and the opportunities for one’s own specific way of life have been able to continue developing. In recent years, the necessity of a supportive and guided development of the child during pregnancy and the first three years of life has also been recognized as a prerequisite for inner stability, which allows for a self-determined life within responsible relationships (Grille 2005, Janus 2010, Axness 2012).

Concluding Reflections

Because for us, responsibility for oneself and empathy in relationships are so self-evident today, it requires a distinct cognitive leap to also perceive the historical novelty of this mentality and to recognize it as the result of a long and highly complex historical process of changes in relation to the environment and to oneself (Janus 2008, 2013b, 2015a, 2015b, 2014a). In particular, it has only dawned on us in recent years to what extent prenatal and birth experiences shape our perception and behavior and our entire culture. The unique condition of “physiological prematurity” and the resulting persistence of fetal experience can now be recognized as a key factor in the distinctive status of *Homo sapiens*.

The fundamental urge to regain the security of the world lost too soon by reshaping the real and social world in a new way is a consequence of birth in a state of neurological immaturity. Over a long historical period, this elementary urge manifested itself primarily through magical incantations, magical rituals, and thus through projective emotional regulation, and was only very gradually replaced by the extensive fulfillment of all prenatal desires for comprehensive care in modern Western societies. This reduced the need to satisfy the persistent primal needs from the prenatal period imaginatively and projectively through religious rituals.

Recognizing the fact that traditional cultures were shaped by “projective emotional regulation” is a prerequisite for understanding the continuing influence of these structures of emotional regulation, in order to mitigate or even avoid their destructive effects. This is so significant because this type of emotional regulation means that, instead of personal responsibility, emotional impulsivity determines social events. The treatment of children in traditional cultures was correspondingly irresponsible and disconnected, so that they had no choice but to enact the misfortune they had suffered in their social behavior (deMause 2000, 2005, Fuchs 1919, *Jahrbücher für Psychohistorische Forschung*, www.mattes.de, www.psychohistorie.de). The consequence of these insights is that society prepares young adults for the responsibilities of parenthood in a completely different way and supports them in this, as is already the case in so-called “early interventions” programs and other initiatives, but currently only to a limited extent with regard to the prenatal period (Käppeli 2018). Only this can foster peace-building and conflict resolution skills based on emotional stability, empathy, and a strong sense of self.

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