

## PRENATAL PERIOD OF LIFE AS A MATRIX FOR OUR LIVES AND OUR SOCIETIES – A CULTURAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL SPECULATION

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### Abstract

The personal historical significance of the prenatal and perinatal period has been researched and described at the individual level by prenatal psychology in many ways. The collective psychological significance of the prenatal and perinatal period has also been repeatedly reflected upon by individual prenatal psychologists without these thoughts receiving wider notice. The following contribution is therefore to gather together again important aspects of this topic, whereby “physiological premature birth”, typical of humans, receives special attention.

**Key words:** prenatal psychology; psychohistory; history; culture

### INTRODUCTION

In psychoanalysis and prenatal psychology conjectures are frequently made about how our perinatal and perinatal experiences influence our later life. Today a lot of information is available from self-awareness groups in which it is possible to make early pre-verbal experiences accessible again by using certain techniques (Ridgeway and House 2006). Furthermore there is practical knowledge from the treatment of patients who had to bear particular stresses in the period before or during birth. These observations gave the impression that the prenatal and perinatal experiences can accompany our lives and experiences like a background film and can co-determine our actual experiences and behaviour. An example would be a fear of destruction resulting from experiencing a deadly threat in the prenatal period or fear of change resulting from a traumatic birth. Such experiences have a formative influence and can subtly affect actual experience and behaviour. This of course applies in the same way

*“This biological moment (the reduction of the intrauterine existence) poses the first danger situation and creates the need to be loved that will never leave humans.”*

Sigmund Freud

[“Dies biologische Moment (der Verkürzung der Intrauterinexistenz) stellt also die erste Gefahrensituation her und schafft das Bedürfnis, geliebt zu werden, das den Menschen nicht mehr verlassen wird”] (Freud 1926, p. 168).

to positive experiences which in contrast to negative experiences, however, cannot be so easily identified in later experiences and behaviour, as is the case in negative experiences. Nevertheless, they are also of equal, if not greater, significance.

There have always been considerations in psychoanalysis and prenatal psychology about how these influences work at the collective level. Here I would like to give some names, the list of which is not exhaustive: Freud, Jung, Rank, Graber, Mott, Lake, DeMause, Fedor-Freybergh, Dowling, Crisan, Blazy, Wasdell, Fabricius, Sloterdijk, Evertz



and many more. However these observations and considerations have hardly received attention in wider circles. This is associated with the particular difficulty of internally comprehending pre-verbal experiences because we are centred in our experience of our verbal ego and this limits our perception. Whereas memory research was based earlier on the assumption that only verbal memory existed, nowadays it is generally accepted that pre-verbal and non-verbal recollection of perceptions, feelings and pictures is of similar significance (Shachter 1994). However, our common sense is still totally centred on speech and its scope as Wittgenstein is supposed to have pragmatically formulated: "If you can't talk about it, you have to be silent." The apparent brilliance of this statement appears today from the point of view of prenatal psychology as a perception restricted by the prevailing era. In fact the pre-verbal and non-verbal world of experience has the same significance as the verbal world. Language has made increasingly larger areas of the external world as well as the internal world accessible in the course of historical development. We can encompass verbally more and more details of the external world. And this is also the case for the internal world of our feelings and perceptions. Poets have in the course of history verbally expressed more and more areas of our inner experiences. Especially in the modern era, when one thinks of Kafka or Beckett, increasingly refined means of expression for pre-verbal and non-verbal experiences were developed. This is the also case with modern painting which, whether abstract or surrealist, in its way tries to express not yet verbally formulated depths (Evertz and Janus 2001).

In this way the pre-verbal and non-verbal world gradually begins to impinge on our consciousness. However, because as already stated the prenatal and perinatal parts of our biographies are still little perceived by common sense, I want in the following contribution to reassemble some aspects which will make clear the significance of the prenatal and perinatal period for the collective experience without by discussing the existing literature in detail, as I have done elsewhere (Janus 2000). In doing so, the anthropological and psychological significance of the so-called "physiological premature birth" is a somewhat

neglected starting point, with which I will therefore begin.

### **The anthropological and psychological significance of "physiological premature birth"**

The tangible and obvious biological distinction of humans in comparison with other primates is, along with bipedalism and brain size, the striking and long-lasting helplessness of human infants. The biological background is the so-called "physiological premature birth" (Portmann 1969, Gould 1992), the psychological consequences of which for the collective experience will be elaborated on here. Due to the extreme helplessness caused by this premature birth, the human infant lives in a dual world. It lives on the one hand in the shelter of primary parental care and relationship that replaces the womb: it is fed, warmed, carried around and cared for with the intimacy of bodily proximity and contact; on the other hand it lives in the external world and is exposed to its influences. Therefore the primary protection and total care of the parents who replace the security of the prenatal world is important for its survival. Because the human infant cannot cling to its mother as it is too weak and she possesses no fur, it has to achieve and secure its place through relationship and it does this with eye contact, mimic, gesture and vocal pleas (Morgan 1995). The fine co-ordination shows itself amongst others in the contented infant's movements to the rhythm of the mother's voice, which can be seen well when it is lying and the mother bends over and talks to it. This co-ordination in the movements also exists before birth and it has been called a "foetal dance". In this fine co-ordination of movements and feelings of attachment, which were only recognised to their full extent through films of mother-child interaction, a part of the primary entity before birth is restored after birth. The child is able in contact with the mother to reproduce emotionally something of the union of the primary situation. This happens, as I again emphasise, through the co-ordination in contact through the eyes, through mimic, gesture, movements and mutual empathy. By means of "attunement", that is, mutual fine co-ordination, something of the primary union is restored. The intensity of the relationship between mother and child



therefore compensates for the biological deficiency of premature birth.

This explains the existential intensity of human relationships. This isn't just a matter of security but always the preservation of integrity as well, the inner union that was lost too early. Its loss means at the same time an early achievement of integration, which means balancing the mother's complex world of experiences. Just as the child always has to balance itself with the mother's movements before birth, it always has to balance itself with the emotional fluctuations of the mother's experiences. The consequence of this is a kind of premature development of the ego, the ego being understood as a centrally regulating authority. This is true of the prenatal period and especially of the postnatal period. The ego of a primate baby, as far as it can be spoken of, is embedded in the adequate living situation with the mother. The ego of a human infant is challenged to always establish and maintain its security and its inner integrity by means of a subtle co-ordination with the mother and her psycho-cultural identity. A requirement for this is exactly this particular intensity of the mother-child relationship. Freud already discussed these interrelations presciently when he wrote: "The biological factor is the drawn out helplessness and dependences of the small human child. The intrauterine existence of humans appears in comparison to most animals relatively short; they are sent into this world less completed than these. In this way the influence of the real external world is strengthened, the differentiation of the ego is brought forward, and the dangers of the external world are heightened in their significance and the value of the object which alone can protect against these dangers and replace the lost intrauterine life is enormously increased. This biological moment poses the first danger situation and creates the need to be loved that will never leave humans" (Freud 1926, p. 168). Here the discovery of "physiological premature birth" has therefore been anticipated at the psychological level by over 40 years. When however a real relationship can be described in the same way at different methodological levels, here the psycho-biological by Freud and the evolutionary-biological by Portmann, then it speaks for its great significance and can be held to be proof.

In the co-ordination between mother and child, rhythmic movements, imitation of sounds, and emotional resonance play an important role. In rhythmic rocking, the prenatal rocking by the mother's movements is reproduced as is the connection with the prenatal acoustic world by the tones, speaking and singing of the mother. We can surmise that the roots of dancing, music and speech lie in this configuration. The music theorist Parncutt says succinctly: "Music is the prenatal mother" (Parncutt and Kessler 2007). Through dancing, music and speech lifelong echoes of the prenatal union are reproduced together with others. This all facilitates mutual emotional resonance as it existed in the prenatal situation.

### **The social processing of "physiological premature birth"**

This magical union with the mother is transferred successively to the family, the group and the world at large. In human relationships it is also always dealing with the invocation of the the primary union. The dual reference of the relationship world of the infant is therefore preserved. We live at the level of instincts and needs of our primate heritage and simultaneously at the level of retaining the connection with the greater whole, be it primarily the pre-birth mother, then the infant's mother, and later the family, the social grouping and the world as a whole. In the tension between these two levels lie the roots of the special developmental dynamism and creativity of humans. The matrix of prenatal and perinatal experiences is projected onto the world as a result of the "physiological premature birth" and by this the real world is interpreted as a state of "being at home" provided by a superior maternal being. Because the in reality still prenatal infant cannot bear the external world it accepts the after birth mother emotionally at the same time as the pre-birth mother. Thus an emotional horizon of senses is created which has to be continually reconnected with reality, an elementary challenge for the ego's integrative ability, for intelligence and creativity. One can even conjecture that the origins of the incredible growth of *Homo sapiens*' brain capacity lie in the need for this complex achievement of integration.



Premature birth and brain development run parallel in the evolution of mankind.

Human creativity is challenged to continually find new alignments between the primal experiences formed in the prenatal and perinatal periods and the later worldly experiential horizons in harmonious forms. Humans are in this sense condemned to creativity or, put another way, creativity is a primal root of human existence. In prenatal psychology these interrelations are discussed in different ways, see for example Rank (1924, 1932), Renggli (2001), Evertz and Janus (2002), Janus and Evertz (2008) and many others.

### **The processing of early experience in mythology**

A concrete example of mythological processing of early experience is said to be the tree: the tree is in many ways important for the primate being in us – we find shelter under it or in its branches, the leaves and fruit can also be nourishing and so on; the tree is over and above this important and “sacred” as the “perceived” return of the lost placenta or the umbilical cord for the being of premature birth in us, that is searching for its too early lost “being at home”. The projection of the prenatal experience of the placenta onto the tree or respectively the experiencing of it in the mirror of the prenatal experience turns the “sacred” tree into a symbol of union. A central image in different mythologies is that the world will exist as long as the tree of life, such as the Nordic World Tree Yggdrasil, lives. When the World Tree falls, the end of the world will start, just as the breaking down of the placenta at the end of pregnancy initiates the end of the prenatal world. In these connections lie important roots of symbol creation: the symbol of the snake has a root in the experience of amniotic fluid, etc, which is however another topic and will not be followed up here.

### **The relation of humans to the world as prematurely born primates**

The projective experience that results from this premature birth and the particularities of early communication (confirmation of union) has fundamental consequences for the relationship to the world. Humans perceive the environment not only as such but in the

mirror of prenatal primal experience also as a sort of “being at home” which has been prepared for them by a higher being. Curiosity about the external world is at the same time curiosity about the projected internal world. The external world appears as the external world and at the same time as a mysterious internal world in which everything is connected with everything else and with which one is in a mysterious way associated. Rilke was perhaps referring to this relation when he presciently spoke of the “world internal space” (*“Weltinnenraum”*). The prenatal microcosm is mirrored in the postnatal macrocosm and the postnatal mystical contact to the universe mirrors the mystical contact to the prenatal universe, as represented by the mother to the child. This is the atmosphere of the magical dreamtime culture as depicted by the Australian aborigines and many tribal cultures. The decisive point is that the horizons of interests and activities of humans in the world extend far further than the limits of a primate. When the whole world is experienced as the reflection of the maternal primal “being at home” then I also want to investigate it and get to know it just as the child is studied and gauged. This increases the room for basic consideration and reflexion about the narrow area of interest of normal primates. Through projection, world aspects, which are otherwise of no interest to primates, become of interest to humans. Because, for example, the tree as a sacred tree appears emotionally so significantly and mysteriously nourishing, it also becomes interesting in its reality. Its nature and its real potential are researched and so it is possible to develop it into a fruit-yielding tree. This is an approach towards explaining the interest of humans in nature studies, the extent of which separates us so very much from other primates. Man wants to become closer to “God” by recognising His laws without realising that “God” is a manifestation of the pre-birth mother. Sloterdijk (1999, p 549) speaks in this connection of the Uterodizee of the concept of God.

A particularly striking example of this is the human interest in the processes in the heavens which mirror the “uterus heaven” (Grössing 1994). The canopy of the heavens is emotionally a return to the canopy of the uterus, which forms the amnion. Because the



processes in the canopy of the uterus and the forces at work behind them are so mysterious and meaningful, the heavens and “the forces at work behind them” are of such interest. This is why the movements of the stars appear so fascinating and challenging to inquisitiveness and real observation and learning begin and is continued over the generations. This also receives a very practical meaning for spatial orientation and for recording time. These practical results in their turn further retroactively the interest in observing the stars and researching their movements, so that finally the interest in researching nature and technology detached itself from its mystic background which is, however, still noticeable in the sense of elation and unity that accompanies the research and discovery of the laws of the heavens. The fascination of the heavens is not only the starting point for researching nature but also for psychology. The heavens become a field of projection for personal emotionality. Mankind discovers itself as it were in the mirror of its projections. Astrology thus becomes the first psychology, which we can also reflect today in all its splendours. Nowadays, this view of astrology could be described as follows: it is not the stars that determine our fate, but the feelings of our inner world that are projected onto the constellations. The constellations themselves are already projections of inner archetypal images which have their roots in the prenatal primal experience.

Similar deductions can also be made for other fields of human interest, such as, following a suggestion from Ranks, fire: one aspect is fire’s warmth which in an adverse and cold world could be an emotional return to the prenatal warmth of the mother that keeps the child warm before birth. So seen, fire can become a sacred fire that is worshipped and whose presence ensures the relationship to the primary union with the prenatal warmth and for this reason it becomes interesting and humans occupy themselves with it and learn to use it. In the process the practical significance becomes more important and the mystical significance recedes, even though in some advanced civilisations, such as that of Rome the sacred fire in the Vestal temple was a central retainer of the state, ensured the relation to the primary unity.

Another example for the further processing of a projection of the uterine experience is the enclosure of a settlement. To begin with, drawing a circle round a certain area sufficed to give it magical properties. The circle turned this area into a “cosmos”, as the Aborigines said. This gave it a feeling of being home. The circle had created a relationship to the origins. This was its primary function. It was not until after this that it became clear that it might be sensible to make this originally magical protection concrete by erecting a real wall or fence.

Humans became willers and doers through their technical capabilities. This is the start of ego formation. This is mirrored in the self description of the early pharaoh Unas: “... Unas, the steer of the heavens, impatience in his heart which lives from the essence of all the gods, ... because Unas is the great power, the most almighty ... the life time of Unas is all time, ... if he wants, he will do, if he does not want, he will not do” (quoted from Clarus, 1980, p. 32). This led over generations to the development of ego capabilities and corresponding social structures and reinforcement of the ego. But this ego was not able to experience itself as such. Finally the strength from the origins was what enabled it to act. This is why it ascribed these capabilities to higher powers or divine beings. Corresponding to the personal ego differentiation the otherworldly powers acquired differentiation and personal features. The mirroring in the otherworldly figures in return strengthened the personal ego. Humans found and invented themselves in the projection onto the otherworldly figures. This is the transition from the magical world of the tribal cultures with its extremely impersonal and nature-bound demons to the mythical world of the early city cultures and civilisations which the psychologist Wundt also described as the “age of heroes”. And they really were heroic deeds that the peoples of the era accomplished with the invention of agriculture and livestock holding, the building of cities and the invention of writing. The related grandiose strengthening of the ego awareness was mirrored in the hero ego, the prenatal origins of which will be dealt with in the following passage.



### **Digression on the hero ego**

Human history is the history of increasingly complex structures in the technical mastery of the environment and the forming of society. This corresponds to the complicated structure of our relationships, our inner world, our emotionality and particularly internal control and self recognition. This can be combined in the concept of the ego as the centre of an experiencing, controlling, willing and acting instance. The individual formation of the ego is itself rooted in the distinctive features of the early interaction with the mother. The mother not only restores the primary union with her relationship but also the “foetal omnipotence” of the prenatal period, in which every desire is instantly gratified, with her admiration of the child. Something of this is still noticeable in Unas’ words. The infant’s weakness and helplessness is compensated for by the mother’s affirmation and admiration so that it doesn’t notice its real impotence. This strengthening of the ego is later mirrored projectively in the heroes of stories and myths. This is really no personal strength, but strength borrowed from the relationship to the mother. The mythical show is an action level of self-realisation. It is fed by the presence of the prenatal and postnatal blended world of the first year of life where the child is already in the world and simultaneously still in an imaginary womb world due to the mother’s assistance. This blended world was staged in cultic celebrations and also in initiation ceremonies as ritual spectacles and this led to the awareness that it was also possible to speak of it in mythical tales, as the Russian researcher of fables, Propp (1968) has illustrated: the substance of the initiation ceremonies provided the material for later fables. These stories in turn make it possible to recognise, or at least to surmise, that these myth-like happenings are a reflection of my own experiences, or I can discover myself in the mirroring of the projection itself as we can now understand fables psychologically. The projected feelings are found to be one’s own feelings and conflicts. This development of ritual through myth and narration to psychological understanding is a process of learning and emotional creation of self that has run through many, many generations, each generation adding a new dimension. The changes and developments in the cultural

external world are entwined with the changes and developments in the internal world of the ego. Just as we have created our cultural world in the course of time, so have we developed our modern ego with its capability of complex control.

The changes in the forming of the external world, relative to the prevailing times, are extensively connected with our elementary real needs and at the same time with our prenatally determined wishes union. This corresponds with, as previously said, an increase in the complexity and competence of the ego so that today we can feel ourselves to be the directors of our own self-responsible lives. The mother imparts from the beginning the cultural patterns that define her within her life. This is why the early formation of the ego is always also defined and formed through the cultural affiliation and identity of the mother. The child therefore learns from the outset the cultural conditions of its time and possibly is able for this reason to grasp its cultural singularities in the learning process so quickly and comprehensively in its youthful development as to enable it to create its own new concepts in adulthood. Individual and collective developments therefore act together upon the formation of the ego.

The following passage outlines the drama of the psycho-historical development of the ego in order to emphasise the significance of these connections.

### **The psychohistory of the ego’s development**

This process of the ego’s development took place historically as an intergenerational learning process covering many generations. As I find it so important to regard the historical processes basically as a process of development of the ego and not only as a history of the doings of political rulers or social changes, I would like to very sketchily describe at least some stages of the historical development of the ego. The cultural historian Jean Gebser (1949) described in his work “Ursprung und Gegenwart” (“*Origin and Now*”) basic forms of development of the ego and their corresponding *weltanschauung*. He differentiates between a magical, a mystical, a rational and an integral structure of awareness or ego, whereby he uses integral to try to describe our present day ability



to reflect psychologically and integrate the earlier structures that still exist within us.

In favourable circumstances such a collective development of the ego can take place in a few generations, just as Greek drama developed over a short time in history from its origins in ritual satyr dances through the still myth-telling Aeschylus to the already psychologically reflexive Euripides. A preliminary stage of this developmental process had already taken place in the transition from the Iliad to the Odyssey: while the heroes of the Iliad are still fixed wholly in a mythical horizon, Odysseus is a comparatively consciously acting and feeling person. With Greek philosophy for the first time in history it was possible to construct a rational ego.

One fundamental reason for the blockage of further development in the classical Greek and Roman societies appears to be the social structure of a society based on slavery which limited real individualisation, as was later possible in Western Europe.

Because the ego's possibilities in antiquity were further nurtured by the history of the Germanic characterised successor states of the Roman Empire, it was possible here for the ego's evolution to occur faster in the late Middle Ages than in Antiquity. The Nibelunglied already showed evolution in that it describes the characters with their conflicts in a lengthy story line, in contrast to the mythical Norse sagas which tell of supernatural adventures of divine characters in which the ego remains at a projective level. In the late Middle Ages a sense of ego developed slowly as described by van Dülmen (2001) The drama of this development can be seen in the fact that in Renaissance portrait painting depictions of God were superseded by the portraits of real people. In Dürer's self-portrait the portrait of the son of God shimmers through.

A further large step on the way to a more complex structure of the ego is represented by the dramas of Shakespeare. Whereas the actions of divine characters were shown episodically in mediaeval mystery plays without development of feelings, Shakespeare is concerned with the feelings and conflicts of real people, admittedly of royal or aristocratic blood.

This is also partly true of German Classicism. It was only in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century that

Naturalism and Realism dealt concretely with people's feelings and conflicts in their real life surroundings with which everyone could immediately identify. This is the expression of a further growth of the ego. The Enlightenment let everybody think for themselves. This made itself physically felt in the masses of inventions that were made by individuals who would never have dared to do it under the horizon of religious dependency. Here I only want to mention the invention of Braille writing for the blind by Louis Braille. Blind people had always lived in exclusion from the culture of literature. This had always been accepted as fate and appeared to be willed by God. New was the fact that an individual was moved by their affliction to develop a form of writing for the blind.

The progenitors of this development were the inventors of the Renaissance, such as Leonardo da Vinci, for whom the invention of technical gadgets and understanding actual processes, such as bodily functions, was a real desire which would have been unimaginable to the weaker ego of mediaeval humans.

This new development had begun with the enjoyment of personal feelings as expressed by minne song. It was not uniform and started in different fields. In the field of religion the Reformation was just such a stimulus of the personal development of the ego consciousness and the withdrawal of projections. This development was perfected only with the Enlightenment in that the Godhead was assimilated by one's own will, as Schiller put it. Then a rapid development in the expansion of personal feelings began which in the 19th century above all applied to the erotic feelings between man and woman. The emancipation of women, which was initiated in the Enlightenment, led to men being confronted with their fears as embodied by the femme fatale. Realism and Naturalism traced the afflictions of people that resulted from their social background.

The collapse of the bourgeois family lifestyle of the 19th century rendered the roots of familial life and experience in the prenatal period accessible. These had been previously been masked by the idealisation of the family. Kafka in particular formulated pre-verbal feelings paradigmatically.

In this way the depth stratum of the self experience became accessible which had up



to then been projected in the experience of the earthly valley of misery. What Kafka only indirectly formulated in the medium of the relationship with the father was expressed by the next generation of writers of modernity, such as Beckett, directly as the childish misery of the missed mother.

The history of the ego's growth can be followed directly in authors: Thomas Mann describes directly the decline of idealisation, Franz Kafka records the consequences for the inner feelings, and Samuel Beckett clarifies the connection with the missed relationship to the mother after birth (Janus 2001, p. 216).

The decline of the idealisation of the old style of family life corresponds to the decline of the idealisation of the monarchy, insofar as the family of the king or emperor was so to say the heavenly guarantor of the bourgeois family.

The democratising of Central Europe after the First World War and the associated challenge for self-responsibility furthered the coming to terms with the depths of one's own ego, which was formulated in psychoanalysis. The knowledge of psychoanalysis and the significance of the early parent-child relationship for the person's development entered literature and especially the new medium of the film. This was rather a topic of the western democracies than the Central European powers, which were still caught in a deficient father orientation. It was not until after the Second World War that this knowledge gained access to wider social strata in Central Europe as well. The prevailing personal ideal of the dominant male, as personified by the Kaiser and later by leaders at the ideal level, became obsolete through the demise of this type of personality on the defeat of Germany and Italy in the Second World War. Then the development of the ideal of the democratic and feeling man also took place in Central Europe with the help of the Allies.

In the above I wanted to describe in outline the individual steps of the ego's development also to illustrate that, despite this incredible increase in complexity and scope of the reflexive areas, externally as well as internally, of the modern ego the projective base frame that the world is some kind of home remains in the end. It is only within this base frame that development was possible. This will now be only briefly explained.

### **The world as an imaginary home**

From experience gathered from patients in psychotherapy we know that a differentiated personal development is only possible through the medium and the intimacy of a very personal relationship. We need the reflection in another person to find ourselves as subjects. An ego development is then possible in the mutual interaction of the relationship. It has already been mentioned above that one result of "physiological premature birth" is the great intensification of the mother-child relationship. Through the intensifying of the relationship the child anchors itself in the security provided by the affection of the mother. And as could be said in a rather old-fashioned way she replaces the love of the prenatal relationship that was lost too early, or restores the primal love at the postnatal level of life. This primal love is then transferred to the family, the social group, society and finally to the world itself. It can also be so expressed: we experience the world on two levels, the level of the primate *Homo sapiens*, and the level of a foetal child: the world is a very real one in which we live our primate lives and at the same time a prenatal imaginary home. And this is not just a condition at the magical or mythical stage but also applies in the same way in the present with the proviso that we are now in a position to penetrate the connections. Human culture has consisted from the beginning of balancing these two levels with each other. Here is the primal root of creativity that characterises *Homo sapiens* and makes him so unique. In the course of history we have so altered the world that it satisfies both in reality and symbolically our foetal needs by providing us in our societies with a relatively safe living space. Everybody works with unbelievable intensity at this task of reforming the real world into a primal home. The price for the creation of this imaginary world of security is the need for all to work for all. In earlier civilisations this work still had mainly imaginary features in that it served to make a heavenly life possible on earth for the god king, in which we could emotionally participate. So that one individual can experience himself as a will-possessing ego, all the others place themselves at his disposal like a good mother and are there permanently for him and all his needs. In this projective *mise-en-scène*, the project is developed of an



empowered ego on a further social level. The historical process fundamentally consists then of an internalisation of this situation, in that today everyone can be a willing ego and we all make this possible for each other through our work. The psychological background for this is that we experience the world emotionally as an imaginary home that is modelled on the prenatal home. And we are in the process of mutually fulfilling this dream because we need this for our emotional survival after the affliction caused by our too early birth.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

My thoughts on the anthropological and psychological meaning of the prenatal period of life and birth are basically intended to point out that prenatal psychology does not just have special significance in the sense that it is important to investigate the importance of prenatal and perinatal experiences for life history in order to make dealing responsibly with the earliest mother-child relationship possible, but also has a further fundamental collective-psychological

or culture-psychological meaning over and above this. Thus it could contribute to qualifying and bridging the present complete division between history and depth psychology by supplying the developmental psychological frame described above that could make some of the idiosyncrasies of *Homo sapiens* more understandable. This also has quite practicable features insofar as some irrational seeming behaviour becomes more understandable by reference to prenatal psychology at the collective level. We exploit the world in a rigorous and totalitarian manner as if it can go on endlessly providing for us, like a mother for her child before birth. At the postnatal level, however, we have to consider and take responsibility for the consequences of our behaviour. Due to its “physiological premature birth” *Homo sapiens* is, however, always in danger of acting and experiencing in some kind of prenatal trance and so putting itself into danger.

Because of the importance of the connections given, it is a task of the future to discuss these in a responsible manner and to work out ways of further communication.

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