

The Nature of Man – A Contribution to Psychological Anthropology

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Introduction

A century of research into the significance of prenatal, birth, and early postnatal experiences now allows us to understand human nature from a fundamentally new perspective. Whereas religious tradition had viewed humans as a creation of gods or, ultimately, as the creation of a single God, the Enlightenment and the emerging scientific view of reality brought about a shift toward to view humans, from an evolutionary biological perspective, as a distinct species of primates. This provided a very precise understanding of the physical aspect of humanity, enabling the development of all the possibilities of modern medicine, prevention, healthcare, and so on. At the same time, the Enlightenment and the associated “mutation of consciousness” (Obrist 1988, 2014) - with the ability to distinguish between inner and outer realms - a new dimension of introspection, as developed in the literature and philosophy of the 19th century and in the psychotherapies of the 20th . In a novel way, the significance of childhood and early childhood experiences for later development could be grasped and described; in prenatal psychology, this was also achieved for prenatal and birth experiences and their affective and emotional reflection (Rank 1924, Graber 1924, Janus 2024, Evertz 2025, Evertz, Janus, Linder 2021, 2026, et al.).

In recent years, the essential interrelationship between early childhood psychological development and brain maturation has also been understood. At birth, essentially only the brainstem is functional, enabling the control of basic vital functions; by the age of one and a half, the hippocampus matures, allowing for initial emotional and situational orientation; it is not until age five that the prefrontal cortex becomes functional, allowing for empathy with the perspective of others, the “theory of mind”. The unique position of Homo sapiens is largely determined by the developmental consequences of immaturity at birth (Janus 2025, Goetzmann, Janus 2026).

From an individual psychological perspective, this immaturity determines the brainstem-mediated magical experience during the first eighteen months of life, the midbrain-mediated mythical-emotional experience from the second to the fourth year of life - the fairy-tale-age and finally the initially rational experience that emerges with the maturation of the prefrontal cortex, along with “theory of mind” and the capacity for mutual empathy.

From a collective psychological perspective, the immaturity common to all humans at birth means that early human history, at the level of tribal cultures, is shaped - in addition to primate instincts - by a magical experience as a continuation of the prenatal experience of oneness. This magical experience opens up a broad horizon of desires and fears, from which the potentials of the prefrontal cortex are activated to allow the magical desires to become reality to some extent. This leads to the first Stone Age inventions:

- clothing, in which the desire for enveloping and protective security is fulfilled;
- the mastery of fire, which brings uterine warmth into the outside world;
- dwellings, which likewise fulfill the desire for enveloping and protective security, as do the sacred spaces of temples and churches later on;
- vessels, which allow food to be preserved and carried about, so that it is always available in a new way;
- ritual dances that restore a mystical unity or resonance with the rhythm of the mother’s heartbeat and the movement created by her walking;
- musical instruments, which, with their rhythm and melody, reenact the acoustic, pre-birth world (music, as a “virtual person,” represents the fetal mother) (Parncutt, Kessler 2007, Oberhoff 2008).

All these human inventions and creations always involve two things: on the one hand, the fulfillment in the real world of desires arising from magical experience, and thereby simultaneously an expansion of the realm of perception and action beyond the limits dictated by primate instincts. The findings of neuroscience now allow us to view such psychosocial changes in interaction with changes in the coordination of different brain regions —such as the cooperation between the right and left hemispheres (Jaynes 1993, Gilchrist 2017) and the cooperation between the brainstem, midbrain, and cerebrum (MacLean 1963). Human history

is thus not merely a cultural history, but always also a cerebral reorganization or rebalancing of the functionalities of the various brain regions, while the physical basis has remained constant since the time of Cro-Magnon man. This has several fundamental consequences, which will be described and explained in the following sections.

Reflection of the Mythical Worldview

Looking back today, we can understand the mythical worldview as an emotional and pictorial grasp and shaping of the world - made possible by cultural and civilizational development - that resonates with prenatal world experience. The functionality of the prefrontal cortex is still limited to shaping this emotional re-enactment of prenatal primal experience into mythical images and narratives. Just as before birth and in the first year of life, the mother, father, and other caregivers are experienced as divine beings, on whom one is completely dependent and by whom one is entirely determined, so too is the real world experienced and shaped as an event governed by higher beings. The staging of religious content in processions and performances makes the inner experience become real and appear real, thereby conveying a sense of unity between the prenatal and postnatal worlds and thus a feeling of elemental security. While Egyptian and Indian myths primarily brought to mind and made tangible the great unity of this world and the other, Greek myths also express the great tension inherent in the reconnection to the prenatal primordial world and the seed of a developing autonomy and a human inner world, paradigmatically in the myth of Prometheus and his theft of fire from the world of the gods. The autonomy developed through the realization of prenatal qualities in the external world is simultaneously a kind of overwhelming burden due to the new responsibilities it entails, but also due to the loss of prenatal unity, which is experienced as a sacrilege or a guilt, which is then symbolized by the incredible torment of being chained to the rock and the eagle's bloody tearing of the liver. Thus, a tormenting aspect of human individuation or psychobiological transformation is captured precisely in the mythical image and narrative, which today can be perceived and reflected upon as a sense of guilt and fear of individuation. Ultimately, this concerns the compensation for the consequences of an evolutionarily deficiency - a birth in a state of neurological immaturity - through a transformation of the relationship to oneself and one's environment.

In Christian mythology, the Promethean theme corresponds to the Fall, with the expulsion from the oneness of Paradise due to the budding of self-will or the budding of autonomy.

Ultimately, all human experience, action, and understanding revolves around striking a balance between the prenatal world of unity and the postnatal world of partiality - initially through the means of the magical experience of unity, subsequently through the means of the intimate connection between the hereafter and the here-and-now mediated by the gods, and in modernity through the belief in world domination achieved through technical and scientific perfection.

The unleashing of the reflective possibilities of the Enlightenment made it possible, within the realm of poetry, to reflect on the content captured in myth on an emotional level at the level of one's own experience, as in Goethe's poem "Prometheus," which deals with rebellion, self-discovery, and self-assertion - a development from dependence to independence and autonomy - and specifically from a newly gained inner strength as self-development and self-creation, which shapes the spirit of the modern age. Conversely, this in turn makes it possible to use the emotional knowledge of myth for a reflective understanding of oneself, as Freud did with the myths of Oedipus and Narcissus, in order to grasp and reflect on psychological connections which were already captured on an emotional level in the myth. Due to the one-sided rationality immediately following the Enlightenment, this recourse to the knowledge of myth was not yet sufficiently possible. Freud's use of the knowledge contained in myth was an important first step overcoming the limitations of perception imposed by one-sided rationality. Now, over 100 years later, as early pre-linguistic development has become accessible to perception and reflection through infant research and prenatal psychology, we can retrospectively reflect on the collective psychological developmental knowledge contained in myth, as has been done above. The Fall of Man or the Torment of Prometheus capture, in a pictorial narrative, the drama of a loss of unity in the originary event of a birth into immaturity, as this repeats and manifests itself in later stages of life. What was previously reenacted concretely in sacrifices within the one-dimensionality of magical experience (2024, p. 181ff.) is now captured in myth as a dramatic event involving mythical figures in a new way, which in turn can be reflected upon retrospectively today on the new level of expanded perception.

In this way, the development of mentality or the evolution of consciousness can be grasped directly today, as exemplified by Erich Neumann in "The Origin of Consciousness" (1949) and Willy Obrist in "Mutation of Consciousness" (1988). This is further deepened and explained by prenatal psychology, which stems from Rank's psychoanalysis, particularly through a deeper understanding of the human primal potential for creativity in artistic

creation, as Rank explored in detail in his book “Art and the Artist” (1932, see also Janus 2014). These remarks on the reflexive understanding of myth, as it is possible today, are supplemented by a deep understanding of the instinctual patterns derived from our primate heritage, as elucidated by modern ethology in the mid-20th century by Nikolaas Tinbergen (1966) and Konrad Lorenz (1943).

From instinctive space through magical space and mythical space to the cognitive space of perception and action

While Freud had spoken of his theory of drives as a mythology, it was not until the middle of the last century that biological behavioral research truly grasped the functioning of instinctive processes. This is characterized by the fact that a drive tension, such as hunger, sets in motion an appetitive behavior controlled by genetic coordination, which then triggers the instinctive final action of eating via an innate trigger. Only in the final phase of appetitive behavior can orientation reactions occur that are associated with a state of alertness which, according to a hypothesis by Lorenz (1973; see also Solms 2021), comes close to or is a precursor of what we later refer to as consciousness. If one follows the observations regarding the magical experiences of the Eskimos (Rasmussen 1921–1925), they live in a world threatened by eerie spirits due to the fundamental uncertainty of their environment. Therefore, one can surmise that they live in a state of constant tension between the necessity of orientation and a corresponding consciousness-like alertness. Furthermore, one can assume that this situation mobilizes cognitive potentials to constantly improve hunting tools, hunting behavior, and the necessities of survival in this extreme Arctic environment. This means that increasingly broader segments of behavior must be internally represented in order to enable the complex, self-directed control of behavior.

Similar processes can be assumed in the manufacture of hand axes, which requires sustained attention over many hours - a capacity other primates do not possess (Stout, Kreisheh 2015). The impulse to manufacture hand axes in the first place, in turn, stems from magical desires for power, such as those arising from the transition from the prenatal state of omnipotence to the postnatal state of powerlessness experienced by the child in the early stages of life. The impulse and also the ability to use tools already exist in primates and are reinforced in humans by the intensity of the magical experience, making possible the hours of effort required to produce a hand axe. This, in turn, increases the selective pressure regarding the ability for

goal-directed behavior, which again corresponds to the ability to internally represent longer sequences of actions.

The cultural historian Yuval Harari (2013) has suggested that linguistic expressive abilities, which initially developed only in terms of vocalizations related to desires for social responses - such as “go away,” “come here” - evolved around 40,000 years ago to convey inner states of mind, as expressed in Stone Age drawings and engravings and, as one might suppose, also in emotional mythological narratives or accounts of inner and indeed pre-linguistic events. These would then be accounts of paradisiacal prenatal states of mind or hellish prenatal states of mind, as well as accounts of archaic struggles with overwhelming forces from the birth experience. However, from our present-day perspective, this occurs projectively, without a reflexive reference to one’s own experiences - that is, pre-personally - as is characteristic of mythical events (Janus 2026). Only today, since the development of reflexive consciousness, can we, in relation to inner experience within the framework of psychoanalysis and psychodynamic psychotherapy expanded to include the perception of the prenatal dimension, retrospectively reflect on and classify the mythical accounts as accounts of real prenatal and postnatal events (Janus 2024, p. 159ff.).

To understand these connections, the findings of fairy tale research, particularly those of Vladimir Propp (1987), can be helpful: he was able to show that the inner developmental events of the puberty process were initially staged very concretely in initiation rites and then, as part of a further step in the evolution of consciousness, became the content of narratives. And it was only in the last century that fairy tales could be reflected upon as accounts of the transformative process of adolescence (Scherf 1972, Janus 2024, p. 146ff.), and so far only within a small circle of experts.

With these remarks, the path announced in the title of this section—“From the instinctive, through the magical and the mythical, to the cognitive realm of perception and action”—has been traversed and can therefore be internally represented as a psychological developmental path of the adolescent process; in principle, it can also be conveyed to educators with explanatory notes to aid in understanding their students. Of course, it can also be used for the inner grasping of one’s own developmental path. This always presupposes an openness to the fact that prenatal, natal, and early postnatal experiences and conditions are part of one’s own life story and initially manifest themselves in scenic concrete repetitions of actions or bodily sensations, which can then manifest in dreamlike sequences of events; however, at today’s

level of consciousness, these also enable a reflection on one's own development. Furthermore, events still depicted entirely within an artistic-projective space—such as in **The Magic Flute**—can then be understood and interpreted as psychological developmental processes (Remmler 1985). The dramatically heightened ability to perceive inner states of mind and reflect on them - expressed in **The Magic Flute** and in the literature, philosophy, and art of the 19th and 20th centuries (Evertz, Janus 2003, Janus, Evertz 2008) reflects a dramatically increased capacity for perceiving inner states and reflecting upon them - a capacity that can be understood as a strengthening of the ego function - has a long history, which I would like to outline and explain in the following section.

Evolution of an Ego Function

The expansion of the inner and outer spheres of action and perception in the course of human development, as described in the preceding section, interacts with the formation of the ego function, which is new in evolutionary biological terms. Since the behavior of mammals and other primates is largely instinct-driven, there is no need for separate control of perception and behavior, as is required by the immaturity at birth typical of *Homo sapiens* and the immaturity of the genetic coordination of instincts. The developing ego function takes over the missing instinctual control in order to bring about the necessary adaptations after birth. A decisive stimulus for recognizing the significance of this function and its emergence is Freud's remark about "premature ego development" (Freud 1926, p. 186) as a consequence of immaturity at birth. He had recognized and articulated these connections in his debate with Otto Rank regarding the significance of the birth experience, though further discussion was precluded by their subsequent estrangement. In the subsequent history of psychoanalysis, the topic also faded into the background amid Rank's dissidence.

The development of prenatal psychology enabled a new approach that can draw on recent research in evolutionary biology and cultural psychology. The essential point here is the evolutionary biological confirmation of Freud's insight into the significance of immaturity at birth in the concept of "physiological prematurity" (Portmann 1969, Gould 1992, Haeusler et al. 2021). Added to this is the finding from neuroscience that the infant's brain volume at birth is only 25% of its later volume, meaning that a large part of brain growth occurs postnatally under conditions of environmental adaptation and its formative effects. This situation is the reason not only for what Freud termed "premature" ego development, but for

the evolutionary biological development of the ego function itself, which is so crucial for Homo sapiens. One could even say that this function is of central importance for understanding Homo sapiens, characterizes him in a fundamental way, and distinguishes him from other primates in this regard. The evolution of the ego enables, in a fundamental way, the compensation for existential unpreparedness for the external world by making it possible, in ever-new ways, to constructively attune oneself to one's attachment figure in order to reestablish an inner relationship and unifying connectedness, as existed before birth. Freud had remarked on this: "The psychic mother object replaces the fetal situation for the child" (Freud 1926, p. 169).

One element in this coordination between mother and child after birth, on a biological level, could be the "Kindchenschema (baby shema)" described by Konrad Lorenz (1943), as well as the unifying significance of eye contact and physical touch. This balance is also effective in relation to the environment through the ego function, externally manifested in the child's ever-changing search for parental protection, whether by seeking to be picked up or physically shielded.

In collective psychological development, these connections regarding the early mother-child relationship also influence the relationship with the outside world, in that the Stone Age inventions of clothing and dwellings create a maternally sheltering protective zone that makes it possible to use the environment - despite its inhospitability - as a substitute home for the womb world lost too soon. The primary inventions of the Stone Age still took place within the framework of tribal cultures, which replaced the primate groups that were still held together by instinctively determined regulation of emotions and affect and provided security. Through Stone Age inventions, a new kind of security was created in reality by fulfilling desires stemming from prenatal experience. In this sense, the Stone Age can be understood as a training ground for environmental adaptation and self-development, which made it possible to cope with the fundamental changes in life within large groups, as they developed through the inventions of plant breeding and later agriculture. Within the framework of matriarchal cultures from 12,500 to 3,500 BCE, and their relatively small size, emotional cohesion was made possible through ritual celebrations centered on the elementary pre-personal feelings derived from early experiences with the mother (Gimbutas 1996, Göttner-Abendroth 2019, Meier-Seethaler 1983, 1993). People still lived in the immediate aftermath of the pre-birth relationship with the mother. Based on this experience, sacred weddings to promote plant growth immediately made emotional and affective sense. This "Great Mother" was already a

symbolic further development of the magical All-Mother in the form of a dissociated world of good and evil spirits in animistic cultures, as still shaped the experience of the Eskimos (Rasmussen 1921–1925).

The dynamic further development consisted in the transition from plant cultivation to agriculture and livestock farming, causing the population to grow to some 10,000, who no longer knew one another and formed subgroups that then, in a primate-like manner, threatened and fought one another, as subsequently occurred in Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium. This development is already historically documented (Lerner 1995, among others). The “Great Goddess” Ianna in Babylon was sought out in heaven by the city god Marduk and dismembered. This reflects the dramatic shift in mentality from an orientation toward the “Great Mother” to an orientation toward the “Great Father” and the development of a warrior culture, as described in detail in the Iliad. This process was accompanied by a devaluation of women, who, in order to survive, had to join and submit to the stronger warrior. In the wake of this cultural transformation, the monotheistic religions - from Zoroaster to Jehovah and Allah - which made the claim to power of male violence the standard for mental and cultural structures, as realized in the hierarchical structuring of societies, and increasingly through written, codified regulations. This structuring follows the instinctive patterns of rivalry among male primates, thereby gaining its evidentiary basis.

What is important in this shift in mentality is that the male usurpers took the place of the “Great Mother” and drew part of their power from her magical power, as matriarchy researcher Carola Meier-Seethaler (1993) has detailed and explained. The complexity of patriarchal structures and their potency stem from the fact that, as mentioned, part of these structures originates from the male primate heritage, and part from the archaic experience of the mother as a higher being before and after birth. Only by taking these different levels of instinct and their developmental-psychological implications into account can a more complete understanding be achieved (Janus 2018). There is also another aspect: The power of the “Great Mother” derives from the principles of mother-related instinct regulation (Thanner 1997), while the power of the “Great Father” from male instinctual patterns. This lends the respective social structures their inner coherence and stability, which they could not possess as purely cultural inventions.

With regard to the ego function, these connections imply that the ego function in matriarchal cultures was indeed shaped by feminine-maternal traits. As Rank (1929, p. 5) had already

formulated, the ego is the successor to the prenatal self, which, due to immaturity at birth, develops into the functionalities of a self as a holistic function and an ego as a representation of an adaptive function. This feminine-maternal ego of matriarchal cultures determines their social structure and makes the mother the central power center of the group, which is held together by bonds of kinship. The restructuring into a patriarchal structure now places the “Great Father” in the place of the “Great Mother,” although the reference to her is preserved in the tonsure as a symbol of castration, the female garment, and celibacy. The earthly representative is the respective ruler, who represents the primary unity between the afterlife and this world in a new way.

In this form, the ego function first appears as the ruler’s self-determination, as in the case of the Egyptian pharaoh Unas, who is said to have declared, “if he wills, then he does” (Clarus 1980, p. 32; see also Janus 2000, pp. 312ff.). The pharaoh is the house in which all Egyptians have a place. Here, too, the matriarchal background is recognizable. In later times, he ruled over the vast granaries that ensured sustenance, just as we still pray today to the hidden maternal aspect of God to give us our daily bread.

The pharaonic office of the “Old Kingdom,” initially endowed with comprehensive cosmic-prenatal power in a wholly magical sense, subsequently lost its evident authority, because its magical omnipotence was challenged by the emergence of local provincial princes. The “Middle Kingdom” stabilized its claim to power through more concrete administrative structures that gave earthly form to the pharaohs’ former magical omnipotence. But even this claim to omnipotence was challenged by the emergence of the militarily formidable power of the Hyksos. This led to a further organizational concretization and personalization of the ego function, from the already personally recognizable personality of the pharaoh to the entirely personal claim to power of Akhenaten.

The adoption of these patriarchal structures by the Jewish tribe led, within the framework of this more manageable society, to a remarkable internal differentiation, in which Jehovah evolved from a violent weather god into the later moral God of the Ten Commandments and Job, as the religious scholar Miles (1998) so vividly described in his “Biography of God.” In the figure of Jesus, the suffering human being himself then came to the center of perception, as Miles (2004) was able to illustrate under the theme of the “disarming of God.” Prenatal psychology can open up an even deeper dimension here, namely that the godlike magic of Jesus is connected to the fact that, on a deeper level, he represents the suffering fetus before

birth in an archaic perception, as first captured and described by the American psychohistorian Lloyd deMause (1996, see also deMause 2005, p. 47ff.) and also by the English prenatal psychologist David Wasdell (1993), who conceived the associated individual story as a construct (oral communication):

The prenatal child Jesus was conceived out of wedlock by a high priest, a fact that was denied by the claim that he was a child of God - a notion that was not perceived as fantastical at the time as it would be today. Similarly, Alexander the Great is said to have been told by his mother that his actual father was Zeus. The aim, therefore, was to gain Joseph's consent as the social father in order to protect Mary from certain stoning as punishment for an illegitimate pregnancy. Mythologically and also psychohistorically, it can be deduced that the cross is an abstraction of the Tree of Life, which in all mythologies symbolizes the primal experience of the placenta (Dowling, Leineweber 2001, Frenken 2016), through which the mother is originally experienced. The crucifixion thus repeats the prenatal experience of suffering of a deprived, devalued, and raped woman, which resonated with the collective conditions of women at that time.

In the wake of more than a thousand years of patriarchal rule, these connections are quite naturally perceived as completely foreign and are pushed aside through denial and trivialization. But today they can be grasped and described in smaller groups with personal connections and responsibilities, as has occurred in societies for prenatal psychology (www.isppm.de, www.birthpsychology.com, among others) and Psychohistory (www.psychohistorie.de, www.psychohistory.com, among others). However, the suppression of these connections has the consequence that social events are, to a considerable extent, influenced in unrecognized ways by traumatic content originating from the early, pre-linguistic period (deMause 2005, p. 47ff., Levend, Janus 2011, a.o.). The crucial starting point for a turn for the better lies in a fundamental improvement of primary socialization conditions and the promotion of corresponding parental competence (Grille 2005, Axness 2012, Janus 2010, Volz-Boers 2026, among others). Reflection is also so important because, since the Enlightenment and its orientation - so constructive in many areas of life - toward the rationally comprehensible aspects of reality in science and technology, the underlying influence of archaic prenatal, natal, and postnatal motivations has gone unrecognized. This will be outlined in a concluding section.

The archaic dimension of science, technology, and the monetary system

If we can understand today's Stone Age inventions - such as clothing, shelter, and the use of fire - as the fulfillment of descendants' prenatal needs, thereby compensating for the evolutionary biological deficit of being born in a state of immaturity, then this naturally applies as well to the inventions of modernity in the form of science, technology, and the monetary system, which transform the real world into a lifeworld intended to compensate for the hiatus of maladjustment to the real world by creating a world of comprehensive security and need satisfaction that fulfills the corresponding persistent fetal needs. I have laid out the foundations for such a reflection in three books, whose titles express the respective fundamental ideas: "Homo foetalis et sapiens. The Interplay of Prenatal Experience with Primate Instincts and the Mind as the Core of Human Nature" (2018), "Mundus foetalis. The Prenatal Dimension in History and Social Consciousness" (2021), and "Unfinished – Becoming – Creative. Fundamental Structures of Human Existence. Psychological Additions to Ontology and Epistemology and to the Philosophy of Parmenides" (2020). The aim, therefore, is to recognize the fundamental characteristics of Homo sapiens as an "ever-unfinished, ever-becoming, and ever-creative" natural being and to proceed from this understanding in relation to oneself and the world. The danger for Homo sapiens lies in attributing the divine prenatal experience of omnipotence - the experience of becoming oneself - to the creative achievement made possible precisely by that experience, thereby falling under the spell of self-overestimation. In this sense, it is important to recognize that neither science nor technology can fulfill all desires but can certainly contribute to helping us find a better or even more creative sense of belonging in the world and within ourselves. And the sociologist Georg Simmel was right to describe money as the "god of our time." A text of mine reflects on the prenatal background and could help us step out of this prenatally conditioned exaltation and avoid falling under its spell (Janus 2023b). In this sense, we must take Rank's insight to heart that all earthly experience and action is only "partial," that is, incomplete and possible only for a limited time. The danger of human action and perception lies in a "totalization" oriented toward prenatal experience. Rank made this distinction in Volume III of his "Technique of Psychoanalysis," and I wish to quote him at length here due to its fundamental significance for the collective psychological level as well, specifically as a central aspect of Rank's perspective in the differentiation between the Total-Ego and the Partial-Ego. He sees the neurotic as still attached to the wholeness of the prenatal level: "If there is a symbol for the state of wholeness, for totality, it is undoubtedly the embryonic state, in which the individual not only forms an indivisible whole in itself, but also appears

inseparably connected to a greater whole. At birth, not only is this bond with the mother forcibly severed, but the child also experiences a second trauma that is equally severe but has a much more lasting effect: this is the partialization to which it is forced through adaptation to the external world” (Rank 1931, p. 54).

Postnatal life is possible only “partially.” In this lies at the same time, the turning toward other human beings; the relational dimension is thus anthropologically inherent (Egloff 2026). According to Rank, in our sense of self we regain “something akin to the original totality”:

“The gradual development of one’s own wholeness in the sense of self is an individual substitute for the lost totality and protects the child from primal fear, although once self-unity is achieved, this is replaced by the fear of its possible loss. (...) Life demands constant partialization, and the well-adjusted person must be able to live through constant partial investment without wanting to preserve or having to expend their entire ego undividedly in every experience” (Rank 1931, p. 54). The neurotic person fails at this task: “Either they throw their entire ego into every experience, no matter how insignificant, out of fear of otherwise losing it partially (fear of life); or they keep their entire ego away from life altogether (fear of death), since neither partialization nor totalization is possible” (Rank 1931, p. 55). The therapeutic solution to this part-whole problem is achieved by the patient receiving a kind of wholeness in the analytical situation as a play space, which has a relieving and anxiety-reducing effect, thereby allowing volitional tendencies and feelings to gain a space for unfolding. Rank further explains the prenatal fixation of the neurotic patient in the following manner: “The so-called normal person can compensate for the lost prenatal wholeness by integrating into a larger whole such as the family, the professional group, or the nation. The neurotic type, conversely, makes the reality surrounding him a part of his ego, which explains his painful relationship to it. For all external events, however insignificant they may be in themselves, ultimately concern him personally; they are changes in himself that he experiences as painful. (...) He is never able to feel himself as a whole and thus perceives not only the gulf between himself and the world as unbridgeable, but also the split within himself as a constant obstacle to integrating himself into the world as an entity. However, neither is the inner division the cause of his alienation from the world, nor is his detachment from reality the cause of the inner division; rather, both are consequences of his attempt to resolve the problem of individuation, which he can only accept in the total form dictated by anxiety. The neurotic’s separation from reality is thus only apparent; rather, he is, in a kind of magical unity, more closely connected to the wholeness of life around him than

the reality-adapted type, who can be content with the role of a part within the whole” (Rank 1931, p. 67).

These distinctions can be directly applied to the dynamics of larger groups, thereby opening up a new and expanded understanding. Just as personal development can be burdened by trauma, which can then limit later maturity, the same applies to the individuation potential of members of a society, which can be massively restricted precisely by a historical burden of violence. Put simply, societies can be far “sicker” than we have previously perceived. There has always been and continues to be a danger of totalization in order to create a fictitious sense of security, whether through religious or ideological systems or claims to political power. What is new in our time is that we can reflect on these connections from a psychohistorical perspective, to which this article is intended to contribute. A crucial aspect here is the realization that we, as human beings, are genuinely relational beings and that this relationship begins before birth (Levend, Janus 2011) and that it is actually a social responsibility to support the development of such relatedness by assisting mothers and parents in their relationship with their unborn child, as is done in “Bonding Analysis,” a method for fostering the prenatal mother-child relationship (Hidas, Raffai 2006, Blazy 2015, Volz-Boers 2026, et al.), see also www.bindungsanalyse.de, www.bindungsanalyse.at). Then, in life as well, what is modernly termed “resonance” (Bauer 2022) or “synchronicity” (Strüber, Pölchau 2026) - that is, a living connection - can also be achieved.

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