

## The Expression of Pre- and Perinatal Experience in Cultural Phenomena

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**Abstract:** None available.

**Full Text:** Headnote ABSTRACT: Prenatal psychology is able to shed light on various experiences which appear to be creative mechanisms for coping with difficult situations of transition in life but which on closer inspection also seem to be re-enactments of pre-birth feelings and of birth itself. The symbolism of regression to the womb and of rebirth can be found in various cultural phenomena such as puberty rites, shamanism, the myths of great heroes, fairy tales, sacrificial rituals and initiation fights. However, the same basic pattern can also be seen to lie within the abstractions of philosophy and behind modern, technological enterprise. This basic, recurring pattern of symbolic regression and rebirth appears to be the fundamental way in which pre- and perinatal experience influences postnatal consciousness. The concept of narcissistic transformation is used to define such manifestations of early experience. The potential of this concept to elucidate cultural phenomena can only be hinted at here by exploring in a limited way its application to certain, central areas. INTRODUCTION There is much evidence to show that pre- and perinatal experience forms our first and deepest images of security and insecurity, of individuation (\*) and disintegration. However, it seems that these experiences are registered in a way other than through ego-consciousness. Nevertheless, traumatic experience in early life can have subsequent effects which are consciously experienced. It can appear in neuroses, psychosomatic complaints and other forms of distress. Modern psychotherapy was thus motivated to render early experience itself more accessible to consciousness so that subsequent integration could occur. Early memories seem to be stored as complete scenes or episodes in the lower structures of the brain. They are thus unlike later memories which are stored in the cerebrum and which can be retrieved with the use of language. Awareness of early memories is achieved through a repeated acting-out of their content. Throughout postnatal development, early experience is covered by later experience and is concealed within one's general attitude to life. However, events of an unusual nature, not only threatening but also pleasant ones, or great changes in life can serve to evoke early experience. The most typical example of this is puberty and, as a result, it is the focal point for the expression in culture of pre- and perinatal phenomena. It is hoped to demonstrate these hypotheses by examining not only the rites of puberty but also shamanism and fairy tales. Then, the fundamental themes found to occur so frequently there-namely, those of symbolic regression to the mother's womb and of rebirth-will be shown to manifest themselves in myth, in sacrifice and in initiation struggles and also to appear in more abstract form in philosophy and in a sinister form in the technological conquest of the environment. Of course, these are all matters of interpretation. Thus, it is important to state clearly at the beginning that I understand symbols to be expressing fundamental, real experiences, particularly pre- and perinatal ones, in another context of life. For me, all living symbolism is thus the recollection of real, significant events and the expression of them in symbolic form. RITES OF PUBERTY As already mentioned, the stage in life which typically involves great change is puberty. It can therefore evoke in us our very first experience of change, the experience of birth itself. The maturing adolescent loses his grip on the world of childhood. The only place he has experienced apart from the familiar world which he is falling away from is the prenatal one. By evoking his memories of life before birth, he finds the security to give up old ties with his identity as a child and, at the edge of the adult world, to plan his new self. Thus, the birth experience becomes a model for individuation, for renewal of identity. The process of inauguration into a new province of life is generally called initiation and the following pattern is common: loss of the familiar world, symbolic prenatal regression through the dissolution of old connections and the evocation of primal experience and then subsequent rebirth as a new person. This structure, which is typical of all rites of

initiation, led van Gennep (1909) to refer to them as "rites of passage." He saw initiation as consisting of three steps-separation, an intermediate state and then reconnection. What van Gennep termed the "intermediate state" follows the pattern of symbolic prenatal regression. Turner (1969, 1974, 1979), an American cultural anthropologist and follower of van Gennep, almost makes this relationship explicit by linking the intermediate state with the images of dying, of pregnancy and of birth. The theme of regression to the womb and rebirth is often so realistically portrayed in initiation rites that the neophyte is born through a birth tunnel between two legs and, like the newly born, cannot walk or speak and must first of all be fed. Eliade provides extensive evidence of this in his book "The Mystery of Rebirth" (1961), the title of which reflects the central motif of initiation. Silberer (1915) was probably the first psychoanalyst to categorize initiation rites under the concept of rebirth. More recently, Bettelheim addressed the subject of initiation and stated, "The fact that initiation is a symbolic rebirth ... is widely recognized today" (Bettelheim, 1975, p. 152). The pattern is so fundamental that it can easily be found in the imaginative creations of today's adolescents. For instance, adolescents tend to form subcultural groups characterized by prenatal symbols. They retreat to places which are separate in real or symbolic terms and there, in regressive experiences which bind them together, find strength for emergence into the world of adulthood. Rock concerts, for example, can be a communal experience of this kind: the rhythm of the music simulates the prenatal memory of the mother's heartbeat. The womb symbolism which is so characteristic of regressive experience is also especially apparent in therapy with young people (Scheffer, 1990). The treatment room becomes the uterus, the place in which the therapeutic rebirth completes the individual's own birth and, as Rank expressed it, overcomes the birth trauma. The real events of pregnancy and birth can manifest themselves in symbolic play and lead to subsequent integration. The pattern of pubertal initiation can also be found in novels for young people (Roebing, 1990). The best-known example is Robinson Crusoe's transposition to a secluded island, symbolic of regression to the womb. In this place, the hero is transformed into the new cultural ideal, an individual who achieves autonomy through his own dexterity and skill. This process is triggered by separation from his parents' house and the aim is reconnection with the adult world. In the course of the transformation, the new cultural ideal of the autonomous individual surmounts the old ideal of integration into hierarchical structures. Puberty is such a significant period with regard to cultural history because, in the adolescent's depth regression, there is the possibility to re-examine in a creative way the cultural and personal ideals which were accepted from the parents in childhood and then to try to formulate new ones. Adolescence is thus a driving force of cultural development, traditional values always coming under question and being transformed.

THE JOURNEY OF THE SHAMANS A second, fundamental way in which Man has coped with change and crisis is through shamanistic regression or the journey of the shamans. This process is essentially introversion, an imaginative depth regression. The basic pattern is transposition to another world, a journey to Heaven and Hell, to the primal foundations of one's being. In this place, a lost inner unity is regained through a process of dying and coming into being. This can be seen as a case of regression to the womb whereby a connection is re-established between the prenatal psychic state and life after birth, between the prenatal self and the postnatal ego. The symbolism of regression to the womb is quite apparent in the reports of shamanistic experience given by Harner (1982), as the following example of a shaman's journey illustrates: "I moved forward into a dark, narrow place and found . . . an entirely new cave. Concentric circles of light and darkness opened around me and seemed to bear me along. I didn't actually feel as if I were moving through the tunnel but as if it were moving next to me. At first, the rings were round like circles but they changed their shape . . . and gave a glimpse of a grey and dimly lit landscape-a lake, over which I slid for a long time, observing exactly how the waves rose and rippled and moved beneath me. The tunnel that brought me to this place sloped slightly downward" (Harner, 1982, p. 61). In my opinion, the various elements of the shaman's journey are imaginative reconstructions and symbolizations of pre- and perinatal experiences. When this relationship is accepted, the drum and rattle are understood to induce the regressive trance which initiates the journey. The shamans' drum-beating symbolizes the beating of the mother's heart, while the rattling represents intestinal and arterial noises.

The tree symbolism which is so central to shamanistic ritual seems to reflect in quite remarkable detail the fetus' experience of its placenta (Dowling, 1988). In a similar way, the drum itself can also be seen to symbolize the placenta and the drumsticks, the umbilical cord (Dowling, personal communication). Symbols of the placenta and umbilical cord have been discussed in detail by Mott (1964), Rausch (1987), DeMause (1982) and others. As a modern counterpart to the description of the journey of the shamans, I would like to quote Jung's report of his own depth regression, his "Sea journey at night" (Nachtmeerfahrt): "It seemed to me as if the earth were literally giving way beneath me and as if I were rushing into a deep, dark place. I couldn't get rid of a feeling of panic. But suddenly and not so far down after all I landed-to my great relief-on my feet in a soft, sticky mass. However, I was in almost complete darkness . . . The entrance to a cave lay before me ... I waded through knee-deep, ice-cold water to the other end of the cave . . . In order to cope with the fantasy, I often imagined a descent. Once it even took several trials to reach the depth. The first time I reached, so to speak, a depth of three hundred meters, the next time it was already a cosmic depth. It was like a journey to the moon or like a descent into emptiness. At first, the image of a crater came and I felt as if I were in the land of the dead" (Jung, 1971, p. 182ff). Such "sea journeys at night" are the basic element of the journeys of many heroes from Gilgamesh and Osiris to Dante and Faust. The cave and its entrance can be taken to symbolize the female genitals. An inner connection between the individual initiation of the shamans and the group initiation of the rites of puberty can be imagined as follows. It is probable that the initiation of the shamans goes back to the experience of adolescence. The young shaman is typically initiated into his calling during adolescence (Findeisen and Gehrts, 1983). His adolescent crisis is creatively used and developed so that in later crisis situations he can employ the dynamics of the depth regressive experience in a therapeutic manner. He becomes able to find a new beginning and attain an expansion of this consciousness through symbolic regression to the womb and the process of rebirth. It is also likely that the inner shamanistic experience of those individuals particularly inclined to depth regression contributed to the shaping of initiation rites. By the same token, the rites of puberty could then provide confirmation of the possibilities and transformative potential of depth regression for the shamans. It seems to me that in later historical epochs the experience of shamanistic regression can be discerned in other processes of creativity. The artistically talented person can react to a social crisis by a creative regression; this was in fact the function of the shaman in tribal cultures. Elements of symbolic regression to the womb are ubiquitous in artistic creations and in reports about the creative process. This is impressively illustrated in the works of Poe, for example, who in particular dramatized the depth repressive horror and despair of the transition involved in the acquiring of an American identity. Poe's stories portray, with frightful images of perinatal regressive experience, the reverse side of the immigrants' hope for paradise on earth in America (Janus, 1989, p. 283 ff.). FAIRY TALES Fairy tales are one form in which the content of the rites of puberty and of shamanistic initiation continued to exist in later cultures. One can speak of them as guided shamanistic journeys or as rites of puberty elevated to the level of fantasy. They deal primarily with the conflict of separation from the parental home and do so through a story of transposition to another world-often clearly symbolic of the womb, a reconnection to one's origins and the acquisition of an adult, male or female identity. In numerous fairy tales, a connection is explicitly drawn between the birth experience and the course of puberty. In Sleeping Beauty, for example, the evil mother symbolized by the wicked fairy, harbours death wishes during the birth of the child. The symbolic enactment of these wishes during puberty leads to a psychic, death-like prenatal regression symbolized in the state of sleep. The heroine's own longing for love arises from this regression and is symbolized by the prince's gaining entry. The intensity of the longing overcomes the obstacle posed by the thorn bushes which can be taken here to symbolize not only the vagina but also the perinatal death wishes. In Snow White, it is the latent death wishes of the mother during the pregnancy and then her death during the birth which traumatically fixate Snow White's development and fatally threaten her entry into life as an adult woman. The mother's desire for a child as white as snow, as red as blood, as black as ebony, can be viewed, in the words of Odermatt, as anticipations of the ". . . attempts on the

part of the stepmother to kill Snow White; the overall intention that she should be white, i.e., dead" (Odermatt, 1987, p. 30). The mother's ambivalent wish for a child adversely affected the fetal existence and continued after the birth in the negativity symbolized by the stepmother. Here again it is the beginning of puberty, the blossoming of the young woman, which evokes the traumatizations of the early stages of life and initiates the regression to the various places in the story which symbolize existence in the womb—the forest, the dwarves' cottage and the glass coffin. Once more, it is sexual driving forces, symbolized in the love of the prince, which ultimately provide the energy for further development. An example of a fairy tale in which a male hero suffers prenatal injury is Hans mein Igel (Hans My Hedgehog). In accordance with a curse spoken by his father, the hero is born with a hedgehog skin which symbolizes his rejection. Here again, separation from the parental home during puberty leads to a reenactment of the earlier situation of rejection and to a regression to the life of the forest, symbolic of life in the womb. Hans undergoes such a transformation in the forest that he becomes able to fulfill all the expectations of a male hero and eventually attains his bride. Rapunzel is also a story of negative prenatal experience. The mother is the victim of her own destructive maternal introjections. Prior to Rapunzel's birth, she is consumed by her passion for a particular plant which nearly kills her. Thus, Rapunzel falls under the spell of an evil maternal imago even before her birth and it then dominates the rest of her life. The mother's hostility towards the birth of her daughter is underlined by the fact that Rapunzel is locked away in a tower, another representation of deep uterine regression. Good maternal elements are symbolized in the window and good intrauterine elements in the golden hair. Rapunzel's love of the prince represents the power of sexuality and eros to overcome the birth trauma. The negative fixation of the birth trauma is further expressed in the retreat to the desert and the forest. However, this is also overcome because Rapunzel herself has twins, a boy and a girl, who together symbolize unity. The fairy tale about the devil with the three golden hairs shows how good birth conditions, symbolized by birth in the amnion, commonly believed to be a sign of good luck, can be the foundation of a capacity for purposeful transformation; the hero is able to cope with all the snares set for him by his father.

**Fairy Tales and Shamanism** The fairy tale can be traced back both to the shamanistic experience (Luthi, 1960, Eliade, 1975, Gehrts, 1986) and to the rites of puberty (Propp 1946). Recently the individual shamanistic elements of the fairy tale were summarized by Gehrts. It is clear that they contain features of regression to the womb and birth symbolism similar to those found in shamanism. The under- or upper-world in fairy tales can generally be understood as a symbolisation of the prenatal world. As with the shamans, a hole in the earth leads directly into this world. A good example is in the fairy tale *Das Erdmannchen* (The Sprite). With their departure from the real world and their journeys to the beyond, fairy tales mirror the experience of the shamans and suggest that personality integration can only take place through an integration of the prenatal with the postnatal stages of life. The aim of the hero's journey in fairy tales is often to obtain a special treasure, such as the water of life or the tree of life, both of which can be seen as symbols of good prenatal experience. The water of life can be interpreted as the amniotic fluid. As a matter of fact, we know that the fetus continually drinks this fluid and in so doing regulates its milieu. The other treasure mentioned above, can be interpreted, like the shaman's tree, as a symbol of the placenta (Dowling, 1988). The fairy tale hero, like the shaman, regularly relies upon the help of an animal. The dolphin is an example of the symbolisation of the good, supporting uterus. The winged horse has a similar function; it repeats the rocking experienced by the fetus towards the end of the pregnancy and also actualizes the state of suspension. However, the helpful animal can also symbolize the good placenta which accompanies the fetus through the dangers of prenatal life. Just as in reality, where the placenta must be given up at birth, in fairy tales the companion animal often dies or has to be sacrificed before the end. An example is the fox in *Der Goldene Vogel* (The Golden Bird).

**Fairy Tales and Rites of Puberty** It was Propp, the brilliant Russian researcher of fairy tales, who derived the "Historic Roots of the Fairy Tale" from the rites of puberty: "If one imagines everything that happened to the initiate and relates it in sequence, one arrives at the composition upon which the fairy tale is based . . . That which is now told was once acted out and presented" (Propp, 1946, p. 452). With the regressive fantasy of a return to the womb,

crossing the threshold of birth is a central motif which is often expressed in the image of being devoured. In fairy tales, this corresponds to the motif of being consumed by the dragon which, according to Propp, only later developed into a fight with the dragon. In the rites of puberty, the initiation house often represents a monster which devours the initiate (Propp, 1946, p. 84). In fairy tales, "The hero is devoured and then carried to another land in the stomach of the devourer, where he is spat out or cuts his way out . . . By crawling through the body of the dragon, he crawls into another land. Here the dragon's throat is a prerequisite for reaching the other world" (Propp, 1946, p. 292). This quotation illustrates that the dragon can be an archaic motif for the primal uterine situation and the birth experience. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the dragon often guards the threshold into the beyond and typically appears as a water creature. The identity of the fairy tale hero is confirmed precisely through his returning to face the dangers and forces of the beginning of life symbolized by the dragon, the water of life and the tree of life. It is this which makes an integration of primal experience and a new beginning possible. MYTHS The motif of the dragon also establishes a connection between initiation, fairy tales and myths. The hero in myths also returns to his origins in order to be renewed, often by way of a journey which contains the familiar images of regression to the womb and rebirth, often a sea journey at night. At the beginning of the journey, the hero must cross back over the birth threshold. Campbell discussed this point in his well-known summary of hero myths: "The notion that crossing the magic threshold leads into a sphere of rebirth is represented throughout the world in the image of the stomach of the whale which is indeed a symbol of the mother's womb . . . This motif bears witness to the precept that crossing the threshold is equivalent to self-destruction . . . The disappearance of the hero corresponds to the disappearance of the devout in the temple . . . the interior of the temple, the stomach of the whale and the heavenly kingdom beyond, above and below the boundaries of the world are one and the same. That is why the gateways and entrances to the temples are flanked by colossal monsters: dragons, lions . . ." (Campbell, 1978, p. 92f). The fish and the dragon-like sea monster again represent the maternal aspects of the sea. As C.G. Jung writes: "Water is essentially feminine . . . and mother. Life-giving, it renews the life of all that exists . . . the water of chaos from which the world arose and the water which surrounds the embryo in the womb run exactly parallel" (Jung, as cited by Steffen, 1963, p. 54). As psychoanalysts understand them, myths are collective dreams which essentially reflect cultural conflicts. Greek mythology, for example, reflects the transition from a matriarchal to a patriarchal way of life and is characterized by fight against the monster-dragon or, as it can be understood, by heroic liberation from dependence upon the mother. Neumann (1956, p. 89) spoke of a "dragon-fight mythology" in this regard. The ancient Oriental myths of Tammuz and Attis are still characteristically matriarchal and like the Egyptian myth of Osiris have as their main motif the ritualistic sacrifice and dismemberment of the hero. As in the other ancient Oriental vegetation cults, the sacrifice is intended to renew Nature (Eliade, 1986). They reflect an entirely different cultural ideal from the Greek myths, namely, the ideal of the return to the origin and the renunciation of individuation. Thus, it can be seen that the use of motifs symbolizing birth is influenced by the conflict and inner tendencies of the culture from which they stem. In mythology, the conditions surrounding the heroes' birth often symbolically anticipate, to a certain extent, the conflicts they must face later in life. This fact may reflect a piece of ancient wisdom (Janus, 1988). The story of Oedipus is a very well-known example of how a fate can be determined by pre- and perinatal traumatization. The traumatic prenatal situation arose from the deep conflict between his parents and his father's attitude of mistrust. The oracle can be understood as a reflection of Laius' fundamental anxiety. "He cast out Iocaste there without telling her the reason for his decision. This angered her so that she made him drunk and, as soon as night had fallen, lured him into her arms. When she had delivered a son nine months later, Laius kidnapped him from the arms of his nurse, drove a nail through his feet and bound them together. Then he abandoned him on the Mountain of Kithairon" (Ranke-Graves, 1985, p. 337). The context of the preand perinatal trauma is clear and it determines the course of the whole story, its violence and Oedipus' own tendency to regress to the womb. A complete analysis would have to pursue the interplay between prenatal and postnatal traumas.

Another example is the story of Heracles. The myths about him reflect the fact that a patriarchal attitude had prevailed. The matriarchal system in which each king was retained for only one year, at the end of which he was ritually sacrificed and a new one enthroned, had been superseded (Frazer, 1977, Ranke-Graves, 1985). Heracles' life, with its exaggerated masculinity, begins with the fateful animosity of his goddess-mother, Hera, towards his birth: "Then she hastened to Thebes and squatted with the legs crossed before Alcmene's door. Her clothes were bound in knots and her fingers clenched together so that the birth of Heracles was delayed ..." (Ranke-Graves, 1985, p. 411). This birth trauma is further intensified by an abandonment trauma following the birth and then by a nursing trauma: "... Hera lifted him (Heracles) and uncovered her breast, at which Heracles began to suck with such force that she cast him from her in pain ..." (Ranke-Graves, 1985, p. 415). Hera is said to have flung little Heracles forcefully to the ground. This maternal aggression recurs at the end of Heracles' first year of life when Hera sends three snakes. Heracles strangles them thus overcoming the negative maternal power. The excessive masculinity which Heracles subsequently portrays as well as his bodyorientated, fighter mentality can be understood in the light of these events. The lion's skin which was Heracles' sign of power can even be understood as a symbol of the protective uterine covering and of good prenatal experience. In discussing this motif and its connection with the theme of invulnerability, Otto Rank even spoke of a "permanent uterus" (Rank, 1924, p. 103). The birth of some of the Greek gods also entails very specific conditions. Apollo, who was born after seven months, embodies a contradictory combination of tenderness and violence. Hephaistos, who was crippled because of the rage of his father and by being rejected by his mother, attempted to heal his early trauma through the perfection of his works of art. In the prenatal state, Athena was the victim of the aggressive rape and the subsequent devouring of her mother, Metis, by her father, Zeus. After this prenatal experience of aggression, she comes into the world with a loud scream fully armed (Janus, 1989, p. 313).

SACRIFICE I would like to call the process which brings about a change of identity through symbolic regression to the womb and rebirth "narcissistic transformation." The journey of the shamans and the rites of puberty were archaic manifestations of this process. In cultural history, narcissistic transformation has assumed two basic forms: initiation through sacrifice in cultures where the maternal influence was more dominant and initiation through struggle in cultures where the patriarchal influence was stronger. Both kinds of narcissistic transformation reflect elements of perinatal dynamics-birth as sacrifice and birth as struggle. Hubert and Maus (1968) demonstrated that the sacrificial process implies prenatal regression: "Following a cleansing bath, the one making a sacrifice is given new clothes which indicates that a new form of existence has begun for him. After various embrocations, he is dressed in the skin of a black antelope. That is the holy moment in which a new being arises in him. He has become a fetus" (Hubert and Maus, 1968, p. 20). As a fetus, he separates himself from the totemic sacrificial animal, which in concurrence with deMause (1982, p. 270), we can view as a symbol of the placenta. The sacrifice of the animal thus repeats the cutting of the umbilical cord as an essential element of birth, an initial sacrifice enabling the individual to enter the world. This sacrifice is at the same time self-sacrifice for it is a surrender of the prenatal form of existence. The aim of the sacrifice is therefore renewal through a referral back to the origin and a new beginning. Eliade expressed this as follows: "We must be content with having determined that the Brahman repeats the cosmogonic act (\*) with every sacrifice and that this coincidence of the 'mythical moment' with the 'present moment' signifies both the destruction of profane time as well as the continuous renewal of the world" (Eliade, 1986, p. 91). The concrete way in which fundamental aspects of perinatal experience are reflected in sacrificial rituals is in my opinion an expression of early man's insecurity and vulnerability to ignorance and fear. In psychohistorical terms, it is significant that in India yoga techniques replaced sacrifice in its ritualistic manifestations. These techniques entail the internalization of the ritual. The asceticism of the yogi is "a sacrifice", according to Eliade, who adds: "We prefer to call this form of sacrifice "internalization of the rite" for it includes, in addition to inner prayer, a deep assimilation of physiological functions to cosmic life. This homologation of physiological organs and functions with cosmic regions and rhythms is a pan-Indian phenomenon" (Eliade, 1985, p. 121). This homologisation

symbolizes the prenatal stage of life, the homology of the fetus and the mother, however, no longer expressed in an external sacrificial act but as an inner experience. With regard to psychohistorical development in the Western world, the sacrificial rites of the earlier cultures can be viewed as having been superseded by the self-sacrifice of the Christian life of suffering and Christian moral conduct. Even in this context, the internalized sacrifice establishes a connection with the world beyond. In my view, the transition from sacrificial rituals to the inner practices of the yogi and to the self-discipline of the Christian way of life are steps which represent the expansion of consciousness and more complete self-realization. Early experience, which in former times was projected into myths, rites and fairy tales, has been increasingly rediscovered as the story of one's own desires and life. In German-speaking countries, such a change was articulated in the early theories of Freud and his followers. The Oedipus myth was referred to as the Oedipus conflict and understood in psychological terms as a stage in the individual's life history. Jung, Rank, Graber, and Fodor were the first to recognize the beginning of the Oedipus myth-the hero's negative prenatal experience caused by his parents' conflict over the conception and then his perinatal abandonment-as a reflection of the perils which can be faced at the beginning of life.

**STRUGGLE** Initiation as a struggle is very familiar to us from fighting competitions, the battles of the knights and the like. Heracles is an archaic examples of initiation through struggle; victory over the maternal dragon of birth is his prototype. Initiation as a struggle emphasizes the masculine orientation of a culture. Just as the aim of initiation, namely individuation or narcissistic transformation, can degenerate into bloody sacrificial rituals, so the initiatory struggle can also degenerate into destructive killing. An individual's fear of change, as something which might entail the death of his previous identity, is concretely acted out when he kills another person (Janus, 1989, p. 396 ff). In this context, wars can be seen as the initiation of large groups which have got out of control. War ensues when an external change or burden requires a large group to develop a new identity and the group, for whatever reason, is unable to do so. Instead it acts out its fear of change upon an enemy.

**PHILOSOPHY** A move away from cultural forms characterized by myth and ritual towards ones with a more rational and empirical orientation took place in the first millennium B.C., in conjunction with the development of writing. As Rank (1924, p. 160) was the first to point out, pre- and perinatal experience was no longer only approached in terms of myth and ritually repeated but was intellectually grasped and transformed into systems of philosophical thought. For example, when Thales proposed that the origin and womb of all things was water, the primal experience of the amniotic fluid was expressed as an abstract idea. Until that time, it had only been projected into tales of heavenly oceans or seas in the underworld. Heraclitus deals with the process of birth itself in his teaching about eternally coming into being. This prepared the way for the step which Socrates articulated in his doctrine "I know that I know nothing." This one sentence signifies the radical abandonment of the projection of prenatal security into myths of a divine heaven. It expresses the knowledge of one's own ignorance and ultimate powerlessness before the fact of one's own birth and mortality. This admission of ignorance was a prerequisite for a move beyond the limitations of instinctive evidence and towards the development of an empirical, rational view of the world. Compared to this step, the Middle Ages can be seen as a reversion to projection of fetal experience and to direct recourse to the heaven of prenatal security and a hell of prenatal catastrophe. Descartes' intellectual efforts, in which he drew a distinction between a maternal "res extensa" and a masculine, ego-like "cogito ergo sum", reflect the loss of his own mother at the age of one year and then the rebellion of the precocious child whose access to life was thought. At the same time, this reference to the world as the mother, the dead "res extensa"-which is marked by grief, hate and alienation-cleared the way for the cold, rational attitude of modern, technological society. Another approach to the maternal theme is to be found in the philosophy of Nietzsche. He expressed the perinatal threat to ego-continuity in the figure of Dionysus who went through repeated cycles of death and rebirth. Dionysus had a negative prenatal experience because of the death of his mother, Semele, and could only be carried to term in the thigh of his father, Zeus. As an individual born twice, he became for Nietzsche (1871) a symbol of the interplay between one's consciousness as an individual, the dissolution of the ego and the creative remaking of one's identity. With

psychoanalysis, in Freud's initial formulations and then in the explicit statements of Jung (1912), Ferenczi (1913, 1924), Rank (1924), Graber (1924), Fodor (1949) and Rascovsky (1978), the various ways in which pre- and perinatal experiences can manifest themselves were clearly recognized. Essential impulses towards prenatal psychology developed out of their work. TECHNOLOGY Perhaps prenatal psychology can help us to use technology in a way which is more respectful of nature by enabling us to recognize, within our technological conquest of the world, hidden fantasies which have their root in the early stages of our existence. The search for the water and tree of life which was still an entirely inner experience in the journey of the shamans and in fairy tales was manifest in quasirealistic experiments in alchemy. The strong yearning for primordial bliss, coupled with the rational observations and control of experiments in the natural sciences, made the initial steps towards an earthly Utopia possible. Justus Liebig, the one who brought about the downfall of alchemy, was at the same time the inventor of meat extract and artificial fertilizer (Rank, 1924, p. 152). The hope of being able to create an earthly paradise through a new technological invention can release primal forces but it can also lead to dependence upon abstract goals. The invention of arable farming was to reproduce a Garden of Eden on earth, to reproduce the good prenatal beginning in a natural world eternally bestowing its gifts upon us. The suspicion that there exists another land full of unlimited possibilities can be the motivating force beyond world discovery and world conquest. For example, concerning the motives behind the immigration to America, Niederland writes: "From the beginning, America was settled by Europeans inspired by the Utopian image of an enormous island of happiness the unconscious components of which consisted in the notion of being able to participate in the fullness and magical powers of the mother" (Niederland, 1986, p. 187). A report from the man after whom America was named, Amerigo Vespucci, is in complete agreement with this: "If there is a paradise on earth in this world, it cannot be far from these lands" (cited in Niederland, 1986, p. 191). The apparently magical potential of a technical invention can combine with the magical dimensions of regressive expectations if it is not continuously referred back by one's own conscious effort to the whole context. Like the foundering fairy-tale hero, technical man is in danger of searching for inner integration through external means. The old shamanistic motif of flying, reimmersion into the prenatal state of suspension, certainly motivated technical development in aviation. But perhaps the realization of this dream also serves to open up once more a glimpse into the imaginative depth dynamics of human experience. CONCLUSION Any investigation of the cultural processing of pre- and perinatal experience is limited by the experience of the individual investigator. The success of his endeavor is highly dependent upon inner confrontation with the limits of his own perception, i.e., upon the work of expanding his own consciousness. The breadth and depth of his observation is largely determined by the degree of integration he has achieved of his own early experience. For this reason, I have simply set forth my observations and ideas as they emerged from my own experience. I have declined to offer any systematic consideration of Lloyd DeMause's brilliant work, "The Fetal Origins of History" (1982), the subject of which overlaps with mine. In principle, however, I can only agree with his basic statements, even though I am of the opinion that he does not sufficiently work out the constructive elements within depth-regressive processes (Janus, 1989, p. 406). Nevertheless, DeMause's work and my own formulations do illustrate that the understanding of historical and cultural processes can be greatly deepened by a knowledge of the patterns of pre- and perinatal experience. I myself would like to go further than this and point out that there is much evidence to suggest that Man has overcome the fear of his own mortality which resulted from the development and increase of his consciousness and that he has done so-and indeed can continue to do so-through cultural creations which refer back to the apparent timelessness of prenatal life and to birth as an experience of renewal. Reference to the prenatal horizon generates new possibilities for the attainment of creative constructive independence from the predetermined patterns of the instincts, from their demand for stereotypical satisfaction. Totemism, mythical divine worlds, religion, philosophy and the scientific and technical development of the world can all of them be seen as various realizations of primal, prenatal desires and as stages in the constructive liberation of the world from instinct, that is, as stages in the psychohistorical process



of consciousness expansion. I could only cite a few examples in my attempt here to elucidate this view of history and culture. The realms of religion, art and sport, for instance, have been completely left out. However, the actualization of depth-regressive experiences particularly in sport seems to have opened up new provinces of narcissistic restitution in the last hundred years. Whatever primary, physical experience is involved-flying, underwater swimming, diving or whatever-an essential element appears to be restitution through reconnection with primal, prenatal lust. DeMause (1982) and Grof (1983) have both shown the dangerous manifestations of the traumatic elements in primal experience, their blind transformation into wars and structures of totalitarian domination. Insight into this relationship may well prevent us from unconsciously acting out pre- and perinatal experience. It may then also enable us to use the constructive and transformative potential of primal experience for "building the house of a better humanity".

Footnote (\*) Translator's note: Individuation is the term introduced by Jung to denote the process or series of transitions that normally leads a human being to the unification of his personality. (\*) Translator's note: the series of events which brought the cosmos into being in the beginning.

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