

The Origin of Anxiety

Franz Renggli, 2002¹

Summary

For thousands of years, in all developed societies throughout the world, mothers have been separated from their babies – as an emotional adaptation to a life of alienation in towns. The first advanced civilizations which can relate this to us are the Sumerians – and their successors the Babylonians: 5000 years ago they developed the cuneiform writing system and then recorded the oldest stories in the world. I understand their mythology as the ‘great dreams’ of these peoples.

In the stories which tell of the great goddess Inanna and her ‘baby’ Dumuzi, these early separation dramas are described with impressive imagery. At a deeper level, the heroic battles are interpreted as a symbolic representation of birth: at the end of a struggle beyond the limits of human imagination, the dragon or monster is beheaded: the umbilical cord is severed, the baby is born. But this enormous battle is only ever the end of a myth, so that all the tales of the gods actually tell of what a baby experiences in its mother’s womb. The Sumerians are the first culture to write of these dramatic events. Based on these wounds from pregnancy, birth and infancy, they invented more and more new pictures and stories, to make these early traumatic experiences understandable. As I believe, to calm the people of that time. These interpretations are the key to understanding the mythology of other cultures, but also to understanding the hidden pre- and peri-natal aspects of our own dreams.

Humanity’s earliest mythology reflected in pre- and peri-natal experience

In all traditional cultures, a baby is in constant physical contact with its mother or with another carer, during the day as well as at night, as with the apes. A baby in this situation feels at peace and safe, it does not cry, and if it does this is a signal to which its caring environment immediately responds. The situation is quite different in the ancient civilizations, where mother and child are separated after the birth. And there is a pattern: the higher the civilization, the earlier and more radical the separation. For thousands of years.

We know, from comparative behavioral studies, that a young animal’s first emotional experiences are the most important ones. They are irreversible – this phenomenon is known as imprinting. Depth psychology tries to define this with the term ‘sub-conscious’. From this follows: in the depths of the soul of each

¹ In: Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health, Vol. 17, 2002: 127-41

person from all civilizations there is the panic and anxiety of an abandoned baby. A hell of loneliness – to a greater or lesser degree. It is the emotional adaptation to the alienated life in a town. This anxiety is, at the same time, the driving force for all the higher achievements in the culture of mankind: for its technical curiosity and creative activity. The ability to form relationships and to love is also rooted in this early stage – but so too are all forms of violence, up to and including war (Renggli 1972).

In my book on the Plague – *Selbstzerstörung aus Verlassenheit* (Self-destruction due to abandonment), 1992 – I concentrated on the history of the changes in the mother-child relationship in our culture connected with the flourishing of towns in the High Middle Ages from 12th to 14th centuries. During this time a baby loses its last calming bodily contact with its mother: it is banished from her bed to the cradle. Just a small intervention? Yet it can be shown that Mary and her baby Jesus was the dominant subject in painting from the 13th to 16th centuries – for 400 years! The people in this period must have been obsessed with the subject of a mother and her infant child. These Madonna pictures are a key to understanding the anxieties and conflicts in our culture. If such a ‘small’ intervention as this nightly separation could have such a fundamental effect on the mentality of the period², how much more dramatic must have been the infant’s experience when it was separated from its mother, during the day, during conscious experience, for the first time? This is the subject of my new book – ‘archaeology of anxiety’. The first ancient civilization which can provide us with information on this subject are the Sumerians – and their successors the Babylonians – who invented cuneiform writing around 5,000 years ago. Sumer is the cradle of our civilization, embedded in the land between the Euphrates and the Tigris, in modern-day Iraq. They created their early prosperity on the basis of the newly developed method of irrigation of their desert-like landscape – the basis of their city culture. Their wealth is also the basis for trade – and war.

Where do we find the traces, the evidence of this early-childhood drama, the separation of a baby from its mother? Very simple: in what has been most abundantly produced – in their texts, in their myths. And myths we find in all cultures throughout the world, they are comparable with one another. I start here from the premise: myths are the great dreams of a people, just as a dream represents the “private myth” of a person (Jung/Campbell).

² In the Plague book I demonstrate how this mass epidemic is to be understood as the eruption of a crisis, as a mass psychosis. Due to this additional separation of mother and child, through the loss of the last remains of calming bodily contact during the night, people were fundamentally disturbed, their ability to form relationships undermined. Along with the crises which occurred at that time with the flourishing of our civilization and towns, the people of that period also lost their inner security and stability; their immune systems were weakened and then broke down completely. This is the real reason for the outbreak of the plague, not the rats or fleas as carriers or the plague bacteria as pathogen. However, when the talk is of a mass psychosis – the witch trials are a clear indicator for this – then there must be a split personality, product of the split attitude of parents to their very young offspring. And this one can clearly see in the Madonna and Child paintings: they are a picture book of the origin of our anxieties and conflicts.

But before I present the mythology of the Sumerians and Babylonians in more detail, one more remark on my methodological procedure. Of course, I did not wish to simply get to know the ancient civilizations in ancient Mesopotamia, but to compare their mythology with those of the Egyptians and Greeks, the Aztecs and Mayas, and Ancient India and China. And since I discovered that a baby's wailing is a topic in all ancient civilizations, I wanted to compare their mythology with those of the 3rd-world peoples living today: with the Indians of North and South America, with Africa and Asia. And my interest was finally hooked by the research team led by the Basel ethnologist Meinrad Schuster on the Sepik in New Guinea. All their creation myths revolve around the female sexual organ. Are these people as hyper-sexualized as we were in the middle Ages³? But I have discovered that it is not the female sex, but rather the birth canal, which exerts such a fascination over these traditional cultures. There where everything sprung from. With this knowledge I returned to the oldest mythology in the world, to Sumer and Babylon.

And very soon I was able to discover images of birth, the great "catastrophe", as repeatedly described in mythology. But birth is only one episode in these earliest tales of the gods. It is therefore obvious, that the myth as a whole represents the story of a pregnancy. And thus we come to the results of Francis Mott, who could show, already in 1960, that each deity in the whole world is, finally, an embryonic, or rather fetal creature. In the 50's and 60's Mott already sketched a psychology of self of the baby developing in its mother's womb and described the transformation of this self during and just after birth. But the work of Francis Mott has remained more or less unknown, up to the present day.

Against this background I wish to present the mythology of the Sumerians and Babylonians in more detail, as I have in my book: 'Der Ursprung der Angst' (The Origin of Anxiety), 2001. First to my original intention:

1. The separation of mother and baby

In the patriarchal pantheon of Sumer, Inanna is the most revered goddess, Queen of Heaven and Earth. The beautiful Inanna is the queen of love and sexuality, but also of violence and war. Her hunger for power is almost limitless. All the gods are scared of her – a dazzling, a contradictory personality.

Her lover is Dumuzi, a shepherd, or the guardian of her sheep and goats, a fairly passive personality who never performs any heroic feats. There are many very poetic and erotic *love-songs* dedicated to Inanna and Dumuzi. A very different picture is given in the equally extensive *Mourning literature* where the Great Goddess is inconsolable over the loss of her Dumuzi, stolen by the enemy.

³ On the subject of hyper-sexuality see Renggli 1992: 93-96.

Usually she hears his crying, looks for him without success, or finds him dead in the desert – murdered.

We find yet another picture in the, probably best-known, Sumerian myth: “Inanna’s Descent to the Netherworld”. Briefly the story: already ruler over heaven and earth Inanna would now like to extend her dominion to the underworld, where her elder sister Ereshkigal rules. Since this is a difficult and dangerous plan, Inanna gives her serving-girl Ninshubur exact instructions as to what she should do, should Inanna not return from there after 3 days.

As she arrives at the 7 gates of the underworld Inanna must relinquish one piece of her clothing, symbols of her power, at each of them, before passing through. Finally she stands naked in front of her sister, Ereshkigal. And she looks at her with the “look of death” and then hangs the empty shell i.e. the corpse of Inanna on a hook.

After 3 days her servant Ninshubar is alarmed and finally seeks help from Enki, the god of cunning and wisdom. He creates 2 little creatures from the dirt under his fingernails that can creep unseen into the underworld. There they come upon Ereshkigal, who is in labor and tearing her hair. The two little creatures keep her company through her pain, which touches her so much that she grants them a wish. Of course, they ask for the corpse of Inanna and pour the ‘water of life’, which Enki had given them, over her. But anyone who leaves the underworld must offer a replacement in their stead. Thus Inanna is accompanied by demons on her return. However she refuses to sacrifice any of the people they meet on the way, for example her servant Ninshubur. Finally she is threatened by the demons, that she will have to return herself. In a panic she finally gives them her lover Dumuzi. The only reason he does not have to stay in the underworld for ever is because his sister Gestinanna takes pity on him: she is prepared to spend half of each year in the underworld in his place.

Who is this Dumuzi, Inanna’s lover? Literally translated his name means “the good child” or the “true son”. And this is why I mentioned the mourning literature in which Inanna mourns her “dead husband”, her “dead son”. But there are many other such mother goddesses – besides Inanna – in the ancient Near East, who seek their young gods and then mourn for them. And here lies too the cradle of our civilization: here, for the first time in history, babies are separated from their mothers. All the birth or mother goddesses, who seek their youthful “lover” and who subsequently mourn his death in diverse rituals, can be taken as a symbolic representation of the mothers who despair because they were separated from their infants after birth.

And Dumuzi spends *half* of each year in the underworld, the realm of the dead, in the myth of Inanna’s descent: an image of the *infant’s* misery and desperate loneliness. In the mourning literature on the one hand it is the young god’s weeping which is extolled, and on the other the mother’s fruitless search for him.

It is important to note in this context that it is never the mothers who have *willingly* relinquished their babies, but that they were *forced* into this behavior, this separation, by their culture. Thus the suffering of all these godly mother-figures.

Another aspect of the descent to the underworld myth should be mentioned here. Inanna herself is a typical representative of the period. Her conflicting nature has its origins in her own separation drama, in the abandonment by her own mother. Inanna's descent to her sister Ereshkigal in the dark underworld can be understood as her wish to get to know and integrate her own shadow, her depressive side. She wishes to become *whole*, but fails in the attempt. She dies. She only returns to life thanks to a trick, and in her stead sends her son Dumuzi to the underworld, to death i.e. into abandonment and loneliness. An excellent image of how the mother's depression is passed on to her son, her baby, how unresolved despair is passed on from one generation to the next.

2. Birth as a key experience in mythology

What images and symbols did the ancient cultures develop to portray the experiences and anxieties of a baby during birth? Primarily one has to mention the old heroic battles; the hero's fight with the unimaginably powerful forces of a dragon, his battle against and final conquest of an endlessly destructive monster. Frederik Leboyer, the French gynecologist, who revolutionized the childbirth process in the last century, once expressed it like this: every baby born into the world is a hero. These mythological fights and battles usually take place in the mountains and "Mother Earth" is the prime symbol of womanhood, who brings forth everything that exists. The mountains, or mountain ranges, can thus be understood as the pregnant belly of this mother.

As an introduction, I present an example from another cultural complex, the fight between the greatest Indian gods Indra against the monster Vritra. Indra is the king of the gods, a storm and weather god, armed with thunder and lightning – comparable with Zeus in Ancient Greece. And Indra was created, to fight against Vritra, enemy of the gods, who is depicted as an immeasurably large snake on a mountain which contains all the water there is. During their fight Indra rips Vritra apart, splits the mountain and releases the water held in it. At the same time Indra released the sun. In this myth it is clearly expressed that the baby shatters the 'mountain', the water pours forth and the sun, the baby, is born.

The oldest Sumerian hero is called Ninurta, who fights his monster, Asag in the mountains in a wrestling match of cosmological proportions. His weapons too are thunder and lightning, screaming winds which can build up into a storm in which heaven and earth collapse. Large quantities of water can then build up into a flood, so that whole towns in the mountains or the world as a whole can disappear beneath the water. And the flood is the symbol for the amniotic fluid,

which pours forth from the mother's body at birth. These masses of water alternate again and again with rains of fire, with fires of enormous dimensions – symbols of the burning sensation on the skin that a baby experiences during birth. And during this battle our hero Ninurta's head suffers terrible damage: many stones wish to crush or split his head. In the trial after he has victoriously conquered Asag, he condemns them all to destruction or to absolute insignificance. These stones are symbols for the hardness of the bones as the baby experiences them in its passage through the pelvis.

Ninurta fights against Asag, Baal against Mot, Gilgamesh against Chuwawa, Marduk against the primeval mother Tiamat – in Egypt it is Re against Apophis, later in Greece Zeus against Taifun and Apollo against Python. Or, in the *flood* mythology, it is the hero who battles alone against the masses of water. In these dramas it is described, over and over again, how people lose their orientation completely, even the gods are overcome by panic, complete darkness reigns – by contrast what is never missing is the image of the sun rising after victory has been won, after the baby has spied the light of the world. And people die like flies in the flood, in this 'war'. They are all, with only one exception, destroyed. This flood lasts for six days and seven nights 'like a woman's contractions'. And the goddess Ishtar (the Babylonian Inanna) screamed then like a woman giving birth and the earth split like an earthenware pot, an image of the amnion bursting. In the end the gods present the flood hero Atramchasis with eternal life – the symbol for a baby who has survived all the dangers of birth undamaged.

In Sumer we also find an extensive literature on the *destruction of towns*, which the people of that time, at the beginning of wars, must have experienced as a trauma, again and again. But beneath this historical reality lies hidden the much 'older' and deeper experience of birth of the people of that time. In this literature on the destruction of towns the "enormous anger" of the chief god, Enlil, is described. Enlil lives on the ziggurat 'dur-an-ki' which, literally translated, means 'the band between heaven and earth' – which is a symbol for the umbilical cord all over the world. Enlil, in his great fury, leads down enemies from the mountains. And, at the critical moment they succeed in breaching the town wall - these town walls too can be understood as the embryonic sac. Dead bodies pile up, hunger and thirst are rampant, and everything which falls into the enemies hands is destroyed. They roll over a town like a flood. These enemies do not even halt before the most holy place, symbol of the uterus, the inner sanctuary of a temple, where a god dwells, which the eyes of mankind may never perceive. Everything is destroyed and desecrated, reduced to soot and ashes and the remains carried away as war trophies. The population's wailing and crying do not cease, and of the king of such a city, it is said for example, that he will know no pity: no rule lasts for ever – thus Enlil, symbol of the umbilical cord, in his unbounded fury. And his will is law, there is no exception. The king is thus a symbol for the baby, which at the end of the pregnancy, must leave the mother's lap, the town. This fate is fixed and cannot be altered under any circumstances. Just as in the flood, the dying and downtrodden population is thus a symbol for

the pain and anxiety of death a baby experiences during birth. The being 'cut to pieces' is also mentioned in this context, a motive which can be found again and again, in the mythology of the entire world literature. This being chopped to pieces is also to be understood as part of the baby's physical experience during birth. On the other hand, all the countless pictures of the bulls in heroic fights, which lunge wildly with their horns, are to be understood as a symbol, of how the birth goddesses, the mothers of that time experienced the pain of childbirth.

The cosmic tree, or huge cedar, is almost always felled after the birth, as for example, in Gilgamesh's fight against Chuwawa. The cosmic tree, whose branches and foliage touch the sky and whose roots reach down into the underworld, is a worldwide symbol for the umbilical cord, which connects the baby and the placenta, a connection which has to be broken after the birth.

Implied is also that after a birth is finished, heroes and gods often recreate the world, thus, for example Ninurta, or Marduk in the Babylonian creation myth after he has conquered the primal mother Tiamat and split her into two pieces. With one part he creates heaven, with the other earth. Her eyes become the sources of the two great rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris. And Marduk recreates everything, the sun and the moon, day and night, the month and year. All these are, I find, images of how a baby experiences the world as something completely new, after it is born.

All these heroic fights are again and again, new facets which illuminate the various aspects of the experience of birth. Symbols were created by the peoples of that time to portray the anxieties and panic reactions during birth and the happiness and relief after it.

3. The conflict between mother and child during the pregnancy

However, birth is only one part of the stories of the deities, albeit one of central importance. The myth as a whole is thus a story about a baby's experiences during the pregnancy. The Dutch historian of religion, Bruno Hugo Stricker, already discovered that that Egyptian mythology can be interpreted as prenatal. In Egypt, the chief god, the sun god Re, is swallowed every evening by the sky goddess Nut. In the books of the underworld, his adventures during the nightly journey through her stomach are described. And in the morning of each new day, Re leaves her body through her vulva – after he has conquered and beheaded his greatest enemy, the snake Apophis: thus is the umbilical cord cut. And the sun rises, blood-red, on the horizon – symbol for the newly-born baby. And Stricker also demonstrated how the Ancient Egyptians, in their creation myths, repeatedly compared the creation of the world with that of a baby: they complemented their knowledge of the macrocosm with experiences from the

microcosm, and vice versa. Stricker was a pioneer in the prenatal interpretation of mythology, but his work is still largely unknown (see Renggli 2000).

In the Baal cycle, from the Mediterranean trading station Ugarit, the battle with Mot, death, at the end of the myth, is immediately recognizable as a portrayal of a birth. But this struggle with Mot is preceded by the fight with Yamm, the sea. The story in brief: Baal is promised a palace by the father of the gods, El, who however soon drops his protégé and promises the palace to his son, the sea-god Yamm. And he is thus encouraged to steal the rule from his rival Baal. In the fight which ensues between them Baal is finally defeated and can only beat his enemy using two magical weapons. Later, when the palace is being built, Baal insists that no window should be built. Only when he descends to earth and conquers 90 towns – 9 in mythology is always a number for the months of pregnancy – does he return, victorious, to his palace and now he wants a window to be built. At the same time he sends a message to Mot that he is prepared to fight him – the baby is ready for birth.

The fight with the sea-god Yamm, the ‘primal waters’ is thus to be understood as the prenatal experience of a baby with its amniotic fluid, the waters. And the building of a palace or temple in mythology is often a representation of how a baby itself constructs ‘it’s building’, the mother’s womb, during a pregnancy. The window which may not be built under any circumstances thus symbolizes the baby’s fear of a premature birth. Only when the 90 towns have been conquered, only when the period of the 9 months of pregnancy have been completed, is Baal prepared to descend into the chasm of the god of death, Mot: the birth can begin.

The question in this war of Baal against Yamm is obviously: for whom is this palace - the pregnant belly - being built, for the amniotic fluid or for the baby? Baal is portrayed as a prisoner of the amniotic fluid which he, as a hero, can only overcome thanks to 2 magical weapons. This battle for life and death, this battle for survival, is the beginning of a pregnancy in the myth. Images, which I believe, illustrate the conflicting attitude of expectant mothers to their children.

It is precisely this theme of ambivalence which we also find as the central motif in the flood story. I have already presented the flood as an image of birth – but now the preamble. At the beginning of time the gods had to perform hard labor to earn their living. A rebellion against the chief god Enlil fomented. And the solution to the conflict: humans are formed by the god of wisdom, Enki, so that they can take over the gods’ work in the future. But in the end the earth is populated by many people – and in ancient civilizations newborn babies have to cry a lot. The chief god Enlil can no longer sleep at night and therefore decides to destroy all the people again; first with an illness, an epidemic, and then with an ever-increasing famine. The god Enki, on the other hand, always gives one man, Atramchasis, exact instructions as to what he should do, so that he can avoid the destruction of the chief god. I have already mentioned that Enlil is a symbol for the umbilical cord. Enki, on the other hand lives in the ‘apzu’, in the freshwater ocean below

the earth which according to the belief in Ancient Mesopotamia, feeds all springs and rivers. The earth is a symbol of motherhood in mythology throughout the world. The freshwater ocean is thus an image for the amniotic fluid, for the potential fecundity of the mother's lap. Enki is the god of irrigation and god of the amniotic fluid.

In the flood myth the pregnancy is portrayed as the great battle between the chief god Enlil and Enki, the umbilical cord which wishes to destroy everything against the protective aspect of the amniotic fluid, the mother's lap. Francis Mott already described how the baby experiences all the aggressive feelings of rejection from its mother as the blood flooding in through the umbilical cord, by which it is 'destroyed'. A child, according to the beliefs of the Sumerians and Babylonians, is thus, from its very beginning, from conception, torn between the loving, protective aspect of its mother, represented in images of the amniotic fluid, or its mother's womb, the god Enki and the impulses of the umbilical cord, which wishes to destroy it under any circumstances, the god Enlil. An excellent image of the ambivalence of the mother of that time, her conflict during the whole pregnancy. And of course it has to be said, these were not 'wicked' mothers. Their ambivalence is 'born' of their own primal wound: when they were separated from their mothers at birth, forced by their culture and society. Then we must not forget: no mother relinquishes her child willingly. When the mothers of that period became pregnant, I surmise, that their old, own trauma of separation, their trauma of abandonment resurfaced strongly. As a result they could not, even during pregnancy, properly engage emotionally with their developing children, they are disturbed in their ability to bond emotionally, or even reject their babies.

It should also be mentioned it is in this trauma that the cause for the unending conflicts within the goddess Inanna lies, who finally in her despair, sacrifices her own lover, her baby Dumuzi and exiles him to the hell of loneliness, to the underworld.

And the end of the flood story? After the flood which rages like a war, after the birth, the baby receives the gift of eternal life from Enlil – an image of the enormous happiness and the life energy of a baby after it has finally survived all the heroic battles of pregnancy and birth unharmed.

The product of this conflicting attitude of the mothers of that time is a divided personality, represented in the indestructible 'friendship' between Gilgamesh and Enkidu, probably the oldest and most world-renowned heroic epic. Therein develops the split between the struggle for power, the obsession with it, represented in the figure of Gilgamesh and the primeval power and enormous energy, in the liveliness of a person, symbolized by Enkidu. No sooner are they together, the Gilgamesh-Enkidu baby is born: the monster Chuwawa is conquered and the great cedar in the cedar forest is felled – the umbilical cord is severed – then Inanna notices the beauty of the hero Gilgamesh and proposes marriage to him – a 'falling in love' that any mother experiences after the birth of

her baby. But Gilgamesh simply rejects her with insults, by listing all the lovers who have been abandoned by her – just as all babies are abandoned by their mothers in Ancient Mesopotamia. Ishtar subsequently demands the bull of heaven from the sky god to take her revenge on the pair, to destroy them. Her love may not be rejected. But the bull is beaten by Gilgamesh and Enkidu insults her by throwing its leg in her face.

But this insult goes too far. Enkidu, the primeval power of a human, is condemned to death by the council of the gods. Gilgamesh is aghast in his despair; his fear of his own possible death in the future becomes the driving force in his search for immortality. In the course of this search he forgets his friends and the point of his own life. Can this dichotomy and the dynamic behind it be better described than how the Sumerians and Babylonians tried to capture it in pictures 3000 to 4000 years ago? A dynamic and tragedy that has remained topical up to this very day, especially for the men in our patriarchal society. The result of this 'war' between a mother and her baby during pregnancy and childbirth as a result of the attitude of rejection on the part of the mother and the lack of trust which leads a person to lose his liveliness and to search for immortality his whole life long. Born out of a fear of dying, or rather out of an inability to live. Is it surprising that this epic still exerts such a fascination up to the present time? And at the end of the story Gilgamesh does not achieve immortality, but he does receive an herb to restore youth – but this is stolen from him by the snake, which henceforth sheds its skin and therefore appears not to age. At the end of the saga Gilgamesh is empty-handed; all that is left to him is the fame of having built the town wall of his city Uruk. Symbol of his armor.

As a side-note, it should also be mentioned that the town-destruction literature can also be understood against this background. The unending bloodbath, described down to the smallest detail, the total despair of the population and finally the complete destruction by the enemy can be understood as a fetal despair and depression, as the complete panic of a baby during the pregnancy when abandoned by its mother: a mother who has abandoned her own 'body' due to her own separation trauma. King Naram-Sin, in the Curse on Akad, is described as falling into a 7-year long depression after this maternal abandonment, and then kindly requests the rebuilding and repairing of his sanctuary. He begs for the 'return of his mother'. This is refused him twice, so in a blind rage he destroys this sanctuary with all his troops. An image of fetal fury, an uncontrolled destruction as a reaction to early childhood depression. And the result is that Naram-Sin's town is turned over to total destruction by the gods, in order to calm the fury of the chief god, Enlil. Without any kind of hope. We imagine the life of a baby, Naram-Sin, who survives birth by chance but his whole life long experiences himself as dead, as completely destroyed⁴.

⁴ See ch. 7 in my book, especially pp. 150-157.

4. Outlook

The mythology of the Sumerians and Babylonians are a key to understanding the pre- and peri-natal dimension, the beginning of the life of the soul. As the first ancient civilization they developed images and symbols, invented or told stories to portray the early dynamics and drama between a mother and her baby. The Sumerians were the first civilization to separate mother and baby- with all the consequences for both. Already during pregnancy the mother's own trauma of abandonment resurfaces. The baby experiences this immediately and feels alone and abandoned by his mother, rejected by his parents.

And because these archaic experiences are so powerful, the corresponding feelings and images from adult life, from the adult world are used to express the baby's first experiences of life, his experience during pregnancy, the birth and the time just afterwards. There are images, of extreme tenderness, of love and sexuality on the one hand, of violence, murder and war on the other. It is mainly a dangerous mixture of love and hate, of idealization and disappointment, and what results: depression, which means total despair and loneliness or a murderous fury and an absolute tendency to destruction and lying waste.

The Sumerians and Babylonians are the first ancient civilization, who gives witness in their myths to the beginning of our ability to form bonds, to the origin of all tenderness and love; but also of the source of wounding and traumatization, to the origin of our anxieties and panics, the source of all destructiveness and war. Here lie too the roots of all our addictive behavior. And the people in ancient Mesopotamia described this fetal fate and the period of early infancy with an openness and directness free of the mechanisms of suppression of later cultures. This also explains the fascination of these early tales of the gods. At the same time they are a key to understanding the mythology of the whole world in a new light. Because it is not 'images people are born with', Jung called them archetypes, but actually the same shared experiences, which connect people all over the world: in pregnancy, during birth and during the first period after birth. These experiences are represented in myths in archaic pictures with the same or similar symbols.

And finally these myths are also a key to understanding the prenatal dimensions of our own dreams. If we delve deep into these stories, and allow the archaic within them to take its effect on us, then we come to discover the prenatal dimensions of our own dreams; recorded by the Sumerians and Babylonians thousands of years ago.

This also makes clear that we should not seek the origin of all our fears and hurts in our own parents. They, just like our grandparents and great-grandparents, are the 'victims' of collective, civilizing mechanisms, of a cultural 'higher development'. To put it personally: I can listen to a patient and believe in the truth of all he is telling me. Yes, I even assume that if he dug deeper into his soul he

would discover larger shadows or wounds than those with which he is already familiar, i.e. those he remembers. But the crux of the matter is: if I listened to the parents of this person, I could listen to them just as empathetically as to my patient. For they too were wounded and traumatized in their infancy, during their pregnancy and birth: a process which the Sumerians and Babylonians trace for us, a process that has rocked the foundations of our inner life for thousands of years. Here lies the real origin of all our anxieties, at the beginning of higher development, at the beginning of each civilization. Against this background my point of view in my practice is no longer so concentrated on pathology. I am much more interested in the resources within a family, in a person's life: what sources of energy, power and making sense of things are available. What sources of creativity can be mobilized in order to avoid the collective madness or to survive it. A world, such as ours today, which conducts 'war' against terrorism or narcotics, instead of asking, what are the reasons behind them? These being the injustice in the distribution of goods and foodstuffs in the world or, in our collective addictive habits. And in addition we search for all the warmth, closeness and protection which we were denied earlier. And because no kind of drug really delivers what it promises we have to constantly increase the dose. The origin of how we, at the moment, are destroying our world and ourselves.

With these new perspectives we are therefore no longer concentrating primarily on the misery in the world. We know that we can only be purified by crises. This is also true of the collective crisis which grips, harries our world at the moment. I wish humanity that in future it will concentrate its interest on the hopeful side of our existence. In the midst of this collective self-destruction, some mothers or parents have started, in the last few decades, to carry their babies around on their own bodies again. They understand an infants crying as a distress signal, to which they wish to react appropriately: a collective healing process of enormous importance. A process that is even beginning to affect birth practices in clinics, and our understanding of sickness and health.

In addition, our period of unemployment means that more and more unpaid work is being performed. We should not forget the enormous commitment and idealism of various groups of people, from the peace and ecological movements, freedom movements and help for the 3rd world through to women's emancipation. And finally the big religions are losing more and more of their importance and people are seeking out their own spiritual paths, their own inner godly core. If we keep all this in mind, then we are on the brink, today of a new, collective healing process. It is the start of a new humanity. A responsibility for everything on our planet. A Love of God.

Bibliography:

Renggli, Franz 1974: Angst und Geborgenheit. Soziokulturelle Folgen der Mutter-Kind Beziehung im ersten Lebensjahr. Ergebnisse aus Verhaltensforschung, Psychoanalyse und Ethnologie. Hamburg. (*Anxiety and Security. Socio-cultural consequences of the mother-child relationship in the first year. Findings from behavioral Research, Psychoanalysis and Ethnology.)

Renggli, Franz 1992: Selbstzerstörung aus Verlassenheit. Die Pest als Ausbruch einer Massenpsychose im Mittelalter. Zur Geschichte der frühen Mutter-Kind Beziehung. Hamburg. (*Self-destruction due to Abandonment. The Plague as an eruption of a mass psychosis in the Middle Ages. On the history of the early mother-child relationship).

Renggli, Franz 2000: Der Sonnenaufgang als Geburt eines Babys. Der pränatale Schlüssel zur ägyptischen Mythologie. Eine Hommage an den holländischen Religionshistoriker Bruno Hugo Stricker. (**The sunrise as the birth of a baby. The prenatal key to Egyptian mythology. Homage to the Dutch historian of religion Bruno Hugo Stricker.) In: The International Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Medicine, Band 12:365-82.

Renggli, Franz 2001: Der Ursprung der Angst, antike Mythen und das Trauma der Geburt. Düsseldorf. (*The origin of anxiety, ancient myths and the trauma of birth.)

Renggli, Franz 2002: Tracing the Roots of Panic to Prenatal Trauma. In Brooke Warner (Editor): Panic: Origins, Inside and Treatment. Berkeley, California, North Atlantic Books.

* Only available in German.

** This article has been translated into English and is published in: Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health, no. 3, vol. 16, 2002.