

13 Principles

Anthropological Foundations of the Family

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Phylogenetic Aspect

1. In former times people differentiated between animals living isolatedly – comprising for example insects as animals without social behaviour – and creatures with social forms of living, including man only. But the social aspect in nature is not only limited to human beings or highly developed mammals. Portmann shows that there are different levels of differentiation within the organisation of the social life among all animals, including man. He proves that the social aspect is already a fundamental component inherent to the nature of simple species such as insects. It is expressed in the recognition of members of the same species, in a highly differentiated being together of the different sexes and in the distribution of available habitat among the rivalling males: these are all single characteristics that can be observed with higher animals as important constituencies of social life. All forms of behaviour towards each other and of working well together of individuals can be found as a natural tendency of the individual even among the simplest animals, and their experience of the world include a more or less strong and differentiated group life which makes more of them than mere isolated organisms. The individuals make their basic and life-saving experience in living together with members of the same species and their vital actions happen within mutual contact. This co-operation saving the species is fundamental even to simple animal life.

The higher we go in evolution the richer and more manifold become the forms of the “social aspect” we find in the animal kingdom, and among all higher creatures we find social forms of life – the higher the animals the more developed these forms are. These manifold phenotypes of the social aspect in the whole animal kingdom, the distinct social lifestyle of higher mammals and also the most highly developed social way of life of human beings are based on inherited foundations. Indeed its shape is very different

among single species. If Portmann talks about “inherited tendencies or foundations of a social way of life” he never means a driving force, an instinct or anything similar to an inner force, resembling a motor that drives one individual towards the other. He rather recognized that the complete structure of an organism, his post-birth development and his specific behaviour is designed from the very beginning towards a life in a group, towards meeting members of the same species, i.e. his nature is “social” as it shows social structures through and through.

Among apes the constant living together with members of the same species, i.e. the familiarity in a group, guarantees the upkeep and the highest possible development of the individuals. The emotional bond between mother and child is already developed to a high extent in order to introduce the growing individual into life. Confident affection and relation is not only a natural attitude among human beings which is necessary for the preservation of the group and of the individual. It is already inherent to the nature of all higher mammals, especially to that of the primates and of human beings. Confidence is thus a natural feature, an anthropological significance that belongs to the social way of life and to nature, not only of the human beings.

2. Structuring the kingdom of animals according to the development and refinement of the brain and rise from the “lower” animals to the “higher” animals one can observe a regular pattern between
 - a) comprehensiveness of the cerebrum (=complicated physique)
 - b) the kind of adolescent period
 - c) the way of hatching (which is the family among human beings)
3. The way of “hatching” human beings plays a *special role* among mammals

Reptiles:

animals who leave the nest early (early nest leavers – self-invented) The new-born is a small image of the grown-ups; no hatching because of small cerebrum; development = setting)

Birds:

1. Early Nest leavers: small cerebrum: no hatching as with reptiles
2. Nidiculus: highly developed cerebrum = complicated physique = longer adolescence, instead of longer breeding period in the egg we can find hatching here.

Mammals (opposite “solution” as with birds)

1. lower mammals = small cerebrum = nidiculus = hatching (almost as higher birds)
2. higher mammals = highly developed cerebrum = longer adolescence
Solution: no longer hatching but longer pregnancy. the longer embryonic time leads to a mixture of early nest leavers and nidiculi: the new-borns are smaller images of the adults, they are able to cope with life only a few hours after their birth but they need post-birth care and are dependent from mother’s milk.

Human beings:

more developed cerebrum = even longer period of adolescence

Solution: not a longer pregnancy, *but prolonged post-birth care, “social lap” = family.*

The ontogenetic aspect

4. The human *physique*, the *social way of life* of man and the *development* of the child in its first social surround, the family, form a *unity*. The strong *reduction of instincts* together with the *social learning ability* correspond with the long phase of childhood and adolescence. The development of the new-born into an independent human being takes place within an affectionate interrelation to the first social neighbourhood, i.e. mother and father. This family is the *natural given form of community*. The state is not natural to the same extent (if one will think about it at all).
5. The human child is born as a *person*. At birth it is highly immature. But it is born as an individual with open senses, an active pursuit of new movements, an open curiosity, with the ability to imitation and affectionate social contact (Adler: “creative force”, activity of the self) and it is equipped with a highly developed learning ability. Thus from its birth it takes part in the *creation* of the social intercourse with the family (Adler). The child is not determined by his natural tendencies. In “maturing learning and learning maturation” it develops the disposition and a *self-esteem* (decisive!). The basic law of human development is the following: The development of individuality and independence (Messner: full person) is the better the more the family (first social surrounding, group) is socially educated. It depends from the social education of the family (but also of all other human communities) how well the individuality and independence of any member of the social community is developed.

6. The development of the human being to a full person happens within the family and by the family. Thus the common good of human communities is determined: the free development of the human being to a full person in and by the community.
7. The importance of the first year:
 - *Erect movement*: inherent ability for pacing, standing upright is learned by imitation
 - *Language*: deep larynx + speech centre + imitation, curiosity, social determination + family (social surrounding)
 - *Thinking*: all brain cells existing, synapses developed after birth, brain as an organ responsible for social life, still in progress – under social conditions!, thus extremely plasticable (?) (→ responsibility, family)
 - *Unity of development*: imitation, erect movement, language and reasonable action are social phenomena from the very beginning, and are developed under social conditions (“social uterus” = family)).
8. The “developed form” (Messner: full person) of the human being – if the above mentioned works well – is capable of *reasonable action* which is an essential aspect of his nature. He is not bound to his immediate subjective perspective but can act in an *objective manner* and take a superior point of view. He can *put himself into* strange worlds, thoughts, cultures and into the tiniest and largest dimensions of nature. “Sensitivity” is the central notion of Portmann: the mature person develops an inner stage, where simple actions can be accomplished without endangering life. This is true for the outer world, but its importance cannot be underestimated for peaceful interpersonal actions. Man can reason about himself (picture of oneself, self-esteem), he can think about other people’s opinions about him, can have a spiritual relationship to them and thus *plan* and *reason about* social intercourses. Thus he is not exposed to immediate emotion. (Adler introduces the sense of community here, → Goleman: social intelligence). Thus everything in human nature is inherent what natural law and social teaching describe as: justice (golden rule), a notion of the law, human rights, peaceful solution of conflicts, bonum commune, virtues, legal equality, dignity.

It is laid down in the nature of man what has been formulated in natural law: this is what distinguishes man from animals, his natural form of life which is living under the rule of law.

This is essential for our subject because it can only develop in a sound way within the family which is the first affectionate social contact of man.

9. Ethical aspect: The family as a form of community is basically natural: It is the foundation of all social structures. *How* man forms it is part of the general *cultural activity* of man. He always *has to* search for a solution. Prime mover for that are social tendencies deeply embodied in man. The better man understands these tendencies of the family (Messner: natural purposes), the better he can form family life accordingly. Family is thus an “open tendency” whose realisation depends from human creativity.
10. Family is a part of human beings as a cultural personality. He own no automatism, drives or instincts which *determine* his behaviour. He is free to from his social life. Through living together with others man creates his “second nature”, the culture.
11. Three-generations-model: The *extended old-age phase* is as important as the extended childhood and adolescence. It is characterised by a *further individualisation* by the ageing process, which at best is a benefit for all descendants and for the whole society. (Physical health is mainly dependent from social contacts. There is a 50% lower mortality rate among sociable “elderly”. Mutual help strengthens the spiritual *and* physical health.) This is the case for those “elderly” that not regarded as merely disintegrating machines as Marxism does. While the parent generation is in full responsibility of working life the grandparents can be a living example of wisdom, tranquillity, survey of life and thus extended equanimity and much more, which parents do not have as much at their disposal.

This all depends from man’s ability to recognise and realise sensible connections (Messner: existential purposes).

This overlapping of at least three generations (if it works well there might even be more) makes an *increased mutual help*, a relief of the strain, an extended treasure of experience and tradition and thus a better *protection of life* possible. Not only the parents but the grandparents, too, (or even the great-grandparents) are engaged in the upbringing of the child which enforces and ensures the passing on of cultural achievements in the family. More experience gather: the child witnesses more than 100 years of living history in the family (Take the following example: my father was born in 1915, my grandfather in 1883. My grandfather knew from immediate experience the life of his parents, my great-grandparents. Thus I – who was born in 1951 – had someone who could pass on to me life experience from

the middle of the last century. So the last German empire, the First world War and the Weimar Republic were present in our living-room.)

The extended family is natural (because of optimum safeguarding of life).

12. The passing on of *culture* through *tradition* takes place within the family. Portmann talks about "social inheritance". Human communities consist of families. The safeguarding of life through the (extended) family is thus a contribution to the safeguarding of the community's life. The democratic state as a means of the community to safeguard the life of all must therefore – *above all* – safeguard the family. (proven by evidence)
13. The composition of culture, the living together is a permanent task for man which requires from him to take over responsibility. The family is a place where he can learn it. There is no natural contradiction between the individual and the community, and no natural "conflict of generations". It is the most affectionate embodiment in the family which is the natural requirement for the individual to exhaust the abundance of possibilities of his nature and bring them to full blossom (Liberty is directly combined with absence of violence). Hatred, fight and war are the consequences of failed attempts for solution. There is no such thing as an *endogenous aggression*. There is no need for a "culture of quarrel" in the sense of the "fight being the father of all matters" (Joseph Fischer, German Foreign Minister).

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