

The New Year Infant as Child Archetype & The Positive Value of Regression

The archetypal psychologist, Dr. James Hillman, discussing the healing of the psyche through rebirth (and its paradoxical implications), makes a case for the positive value of *regression* as a psychological concept:

“But looking backward makes it possible to move forward, for looking backward revives the fantasy of the child archetype, *fons et origo*. . . . Renaissance (re-birth) would be a senseless word without the implied dissolution, the very death out of which rebirth comes.” (*Re-Visioning Psychology*)

If Hillman is correct here, then a good case could also be made that the infant traditionally pictured on our New Year’s banners is actually one of the manifestations of the *child archetype*, and is thus symbolic of the historical *regression* that enables, as Hillman, asserts, a move forward to a new beginning—a rebirth. (And this looking backward to move forward also means that the god of “regression” is none other than the two-faced Roman god Janus, from whom we get the name of the month of January. Janus, with one face looking backward and one looking forward, is the “God of Beginnings.” See next section.)

The Gypsy Scholar has pointed out (in the context of what Prof. Mircea Eliade tells us about the archaic New Year myths and rituals) that his “return to origins” through *regression* is comparable to the ritual method of archaic peoples, who pattern their lives on archetypal models that

are designed to take man back to the “time of the beginning” in order to experience rebirth. This rebirth, then, evokes the child archetype and, like the infant symbolizing the New Year, it stands for rebirth and a new beginning.

(It is worthy of note here that Eliade, in his explication of archaic lunar mythology, agrees with Hillman on the positive value of *regression*. He identifies the notion of “regression” with the *regressus ad uterum*, or return to the womb, which means that the archaic initiate is born into a new mode of being. This is, of course, symbolic, because according to Eliade, in the final analysis, the womb to which one is returned is that of the Earth Mother. “From the structural point of view,” writes, Eliade, the return to the womb corresponds to the reversion of the Universe to the ‘chaotic’ or embryonic state. The prenatal darkness corresponds to the Night before Creation and to the darkness of the initiation hut... But the basic idea is that of healing by a new birth—and, as we have seen, in most of their beliefs, agricultural people make a very close connection between this new birth and the contact with the Earth-Mother.”)