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THE BEGINNINGS OF PRENATAL PSYCHOLOGY IN POLAND

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the centuries, many cultures have expressed an intuitive awareness that the time the human being spends in the mother's womb is of critical importance, not only in terms of our physical development, but also in terms of the psycho-spiritual one. There exist various myths and stories of how the fetus is protected by a variety of angels and guardian spirits. Many cultures also developed specific practices that the future parents followed prior to conception, and then by the mother throughout her pregnancy, in order to provide the optimum conditions for a healthy development of the fetus. In the European culture it was Aristotle who stated that the child receives the mother's feelings like a plant receives the vital substances from the soil. In China and India, more than a thousand years ago, prenatal clinics were founded where mothers were taught how to make contact with their prenatal child. Talmud mentions the unborn child's consciousness. Similarly, the Gospel according to Matthew (Mt 1, 39-46), in the scene of the meeting of the two mothers, Mary and Elizabeth, makes it clear that they are aware not only that they were pregnant, but also that they carried children in their wombs. We can see their warm attitude towards their children: their bonds, attuned to reading the child's emotions, a belief in the possibility of a quick communication of the mother's emotions to her child, the child's participation in them and adequate reactions to them (the mother's joy provokes the child's joy). Similarly, Leonardo da Vinci expressed his belief that the mother's desires have an impact on the child, and that her fear or psychical pain are much more

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destructive for the child than for its mother, as the child might even lose its life because of them. The 20th century brought a rapid development of science concerning the prenatal period of life, also in Poland.

To present the development of prenatal psychology in Poland, it is necessary to include the context of the history of prenatal psychology in the world, especially in Western Europe and the USA, including the similarities and differences, to show what is specific to the emergence and popularity of this field of science. The history of the development of prenatal psychology in Poland is an illustration how behind a given new trend, approach or field of science there is often a single man, convinced that his or her beliefs are true, usually an enthusiastic and charismatic person, thanks to whom a given way of thinking becomes popular. It is also necessary that a scientific climate is favorable, that is, that there is a theoretical gap, a visible lack of knowledge, a demand for research and deeper reflection in the given area. Social approval is also necessary for the proposed ideas to be perceived positively. Such was in the situation of prenatal psychology in Poland.

1. THE TIME WHEN PSYCHOLOGY AS A SCIENCE BECAME INTERESTED IN THE PRENATAL PERIOD OF HUMAN LIFE

Prenatal psychology has an over 100-year old tradition in Western Europe and the USA, and already in the 1920s appeared a reflection on the trauma of giving birth and being born, as well as the first experimental studies on the behavior of the fetus, especially on the psycho-motoric development and the sense of hearing. In Poland, prenatal psychology appeared in the 1980s, a few decades later than in the West, and used the experience and the specialist literature already gathered in this field.

2. INSPIRATION – WHY INTEREST IN THE PRENATAL PERIOD OF HUMAN LIFE?

An especially significant contribution for prenatal psychology to develop as a field of science were the achievements of psychoanalysis, where at individual therapy patients were analyzing the first moments of psychic life and traumas in their earliest period of life. Already in 1924, Gustav Hans Graber (just as Otto Rank, 1924) pointed to the necessity of including the prenatal period of life as significant in the whole biography of an individual. Within the psychoanalytic

trend in psychology, studies were conducted based on the therapy of patients, an analysis of their creative works, and an analysis of individual biographies, as well as histories of whole nations. Hence, over a dozen authors created various approaches and concepts that were of key importance for prenatal psychology of the psychoanalytic trend. Among these authors were: Otto Rank, who became convinced of the importance of the birth trauma causing anxiety neuroses; Nandor Fodor, who in addition to the birth trauma emphasized the significance of the prenatal trauma; Donald Winnicott, who stressed the significance of a non-traumatic childhood; Frank Lake, Michael C. Irving, as well as R.D. Laing, Graham Farrant, and others, who brought attention to the relevance of very early gestation, and even the event of conception; Lloyd deMause, who developed the concept of psychohistory; Maarten Lietaert Peerbolte, who emphasized the transpersonal aspects of pre- and perinatal experience; Stanislav Grof, Frank Lake and Leonard Orr, who developed breathing techniques for researching the enduring effects of the pre- and perinatal experiences in adult life; many psychotherapy trainees, who recognized birth trauma as part of their training and work on “the suffering fetus” or “the toxic placenta”.

The appearance of life-span developmental psychology also motivated the interest in the earliest period of human development. The prophylactic approach, in turn, which promotes the improvement of the “quality of life”, supported the research on the prenatal factors that optimize or disturb this development. Moreover, thanks to the ultrasound technology, it was possible to see the intrauterine environment. The newly developing medical technologies allowed to examine the operations of the cardiovascular system, the neurological system, the hormonal system, the child’s metabolism, its movements, state of health, mood/well-being, and at the same time presented it as competent in relation to the requirements and possibilities of the environment of the womb. Thanks to using advanced technologies, the child itself was recognized as the subject of activity (reacting, orientation, expression) and learning, remembering and experiencing, already at birth equipped in skills that are far more sophisticated than a set of unconditional reflexes – which made it an interesting object of psychological research. Altogether, it may be said that the inspiration for the development of prenatal psychology in the West was the development of the sciences (e.g. embryology), medical technology, and searching for the most effective therapy methods.

In Poland, however, the inspirations for the interest in the psychological aspects of the prenatal period of life were not as much a response to the demands of science, but more to a social demand. Since the mid- 1960s, birth classes were

led, inspired by prof. W. Fijałkowski, a gynecologist and obstetrician, according to his so-called “Polish model of birth classes”. The program entailed e.g. developing emotional bonds with the child and establishing mutual contact in the form of dialogue. For this to be possible, the child has to be seen as a subject (a child, not a fetus) with social competences (the need of contact with its parents, an opportunity for such contact), and the parents need to be convinced about the significance of dialogue with the child for its development. The achievements of prenatal psychology were thus a crucial motor for the birth classes curriculum content to be expanded.

Another reason for the growing demand for acquiring knowledge about the prenatal period of life was the fact of legalizing abortion at the woman’s demand until the end of the 3rd month of gestation, as the newly gained knowledge from research on the early prenatal development inspired a question: what or who is actually aborted at this surgery? The first publications in this field (by Fijałkowski and later Kornas-Biela) were sought, copied and even rewritten by hand. Women sought answers to the questions on the status of the prenatal child: is it a shapeless jelly, or rather a developing organism of a child; how well-formed is it, what are the symptoms of its human development (e.g. spontaneous movements since the 6th week after conception, sensitivity to touch since the 7th week, taste by the end of the 3rd month, etc.). The pro-life movement, developing as a social response to the frequent abortions, as well as women themselves who faced a “choice”, were seeking information on the achievements of prenatal psychology. A significant contribution to the development of prenatal psychology and a change in the social attitudes towards appreciating the significance of the prenatal period of life was the publication of a few books translated into Polish from English and German, as well as albums illustrating the psychophysical development of the child and its activity, e.g. movements, suckling, gestures, mimics, also in response to stimuli.

3. THE “FOUNDING FATHERS” OF PRENATAL PSYCHOLOGY

The “Father” of prenatal psychology in the West is considered Hans Gustav Graber, the first head of the first organization dealing with prenatal psychology, the *Studiengemeinschaft für Pränatale Psychologie*, established in 1971. His long years of solitary efforts in this field since the 1920s and his contribution to the development of this area of knowledge were recognized this way.

The unquestionable father of prenatal psychology in Poland is prof. Włodzisław Fijałkowski (1917-2003), a famous medical professor (Kornas-Biela, 2013). He is recognized as the pioneer of prenatal psychology in the country because he was the first one to write about the child's development before birth, the psychological aspects of pregnancy, birth and postpartum. He gained his knowledge participating at cyclic symposia organized by the International Society for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Medicine (ISPPPM). In the years 1974-1986 he even had the prestigious position of a board member in this international organization.

Fijałkowski had access to specialist literature, mainly German-speaking, through contact with other specialists from Europe. The foreign language skills acquired during the Nazi occupation were now used to gain knowledge about the prenatal period of human life. He wrote not only scientific articles, but primarily popularized the knowledge on prenatal psychology in various journals and papers, especially those addressed to women; for example, for many years he was an editor of a large section in the most popular magazine about children, entitled "Twoje Dziecko" ("Your Child"), thanks to which thousands of women could learn about the advances in prenatal psychology. Also, his books contributed much to the greater social awareness about the earliest development of the youngest child in the family: *Poród naturalny po przygotowaniu w szkole rodzenia* [Natural delivery after birth classes], 1981, 1986; *Rodzi się człowiek* [A human is born], 1973, 4th ed. 2006; *Dar rodzenia* [The gift of birth], 1983, 4th edition modified 1998.

What inspired the development of prenatal psychology in Poland were the personal experiences of prof. W. Fijałkowski. As a prisoner of the concentration camp in Oświęcim-Brzezinka (Auschwitz-Birkenau), and then the camp in Dautmergen (Württemberg) during the Second World War, he promised himself: *If I survive, I will fight for life – life is beautiful and it may not be played with*. Undoubtedly, his dramatic war experiences were the fundament of his heroism in struggling for the respect for human life already from conception, and treating the defense of human life as his life vocation. When the Polish parliament – then communist – introduced the *Act on the acceptance of aborting a pregnancy* in 1956 (allowing an abortion at the woman's demand until the end of the 12th week of pregnancy), the attitude of the professor was clearly defending human life. In the medical document of the first woman who demanded a referral for an abortion surgery, he wrote: *as a human – I refuse*. For this firm attitude, he was dismissed from work at the outpatient clinic and persecuted by the totalitarian authorities. He organized the first course of birth care and non-pharmacological

methods of fighting labour pain already in 1957, based on which for 5 years he was developing a model of birth preparation classes as a form of prenatal education and perinatal psychoprophylaxis. He also lead yearly courses in this field for doctors, therapists and psychologists working in the gynecological-obstetrical branch throughout Poland. He pointed to the interdisciplinary humanistic character of gynecology and obstetrics, and always stressed the psychological aspects of the reproductive processes and the psychological situation of the unborn child, its parents and other individuals in its environment. He was the creator of an original Polish model of birth preparation classes (literally, “birth school”), where the psychological aspects were treated as crucial, including birth psychoprophylaxis, and the main advocate of natural birth, “family birth”, and the presence of the child’s father at birth. Since 1983, he included the father in the birth classes and in the course of the delivery. He was a promoter not only of natural birth, but also of breastfeeding and natural family planning, as manifestations of an ecological attitude. He considered an ecological renewal of procreation to be “a must of our time”, and thus created a 12-point *Integrated Program of Ecological Procreation*.

4. PUBLICATIONS THAT WERE SIGNIFICANT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRENATAL PSYCHOLOGY

In the West, prenatal psychology appeared as a result of a few decades of research on the earliest period of human life, conducted by a relatively large group of scientists. They published in their own languages, and there was not a single breakthrough position in prenatal psychology. However, a publication that significantly changed the thinking about the prenatal child and the child being born was a book by a French obstetrician, Dr. Frederick Leboyer, *Birth Without Violence* (1975). It stressed the importance of a trauma-free birth and was addressed to the wider public, popularizing the practice of placing newly-born infants in a tub of warm water – which became known as a “Leboyer bath” – intended to imitate the familiar sensation of the warm amniotic fluids in the prenatal environment. Then, another French obstetrician, Michel Odent, in the low-intervention labor which he advocated, went even further and used warm-water pools for the laboring woman, for a “water birth”.

In the USA, major publications that pointed to the significance of prenatal experiences were e.g. books by Janov (1970, 1983) and then *The Secret Life of the*

Unborn Child by Thomas R. Verny (1981). Next, a popular book by David Barnes Chamberlain – *Babies Remember Birth* (1988) – appeared, presenting experimental research results that indicated that prenatal memories do exist. This view was supported by Gustav Hans Graber (1974) and Ludwig Janus in *The Enduring Effects of Prenatal Experience* (1997), who presented further evidence of prenatal memories.

In Poland, a book that brought public interest to the earliest period of human life was *Dar rodzenia* [*The gift of birth*] by Fijałkowski (first published in 1983, in 100,000 copies, then in a few more editions and translated into Ukrainian and Lithuanian). The next position in this field was an article by D. Chamberlain (1986) and my article on the psychophysical development of the child before birth (*Rozwój dziecka nienarodzonego* – 1984, *Rozwój psychofizyczny dziecka przed urodzeniem* – 1987), published in extended versions in various journals and magazines, as well as in the form of a booklet, in the years 1984-1990. Another position, still on sale, although it was written almost 20 years ago (1993, new edition 2002, 2004), is my book *Wokół początków życia ludzkiego* [*About the beginnings of human life*]. A next publication, whose all subsequently re-published copies have been sold, is my 500-page book *Pedagogika prenatalna. Nowy obszar nauk o wychowaniu* [*Prenatal pedagogy. A new area in the educational sciences*] (2009).

To sum up, it may be said that in Europe prenatal psychology was developed by a large group of people, while in Poland (due to various circumstances, including the political situation, as these issues were unwelcome by the communist government) it was initially only Fijałkowski and me. In the following years, the psychological aspects of procreation were also dealt with by other people, such as Eleonora Bielawska-Batorowicz from Łódź, Mariola Bidzan from Gdańsk, and Emilia Lichtenberg-Kokoszka from Opole.

5. PRENATAL PSYCHOLOGY WAS NOT INSPIRED BY PSYCHOLOGISTS

The motivation of the interest in the psychological aspects of pregnancy, birth and the child's prenatal development was, nevertheless, different in the West of Europe than in Poland. In Western Europe, the precursors of prenatal psychology were mainly psychiatrists of the psychoanalytical trend, who in their therapy observed a prenatal and perinatal source of psychic disorders or problems in their patients' functioning (e.g. sexual disorders, psychopathic behaviors, suicidal

attempts). In Poland it was a medical doctor, an obstetrician, Włodzimierz Fijałkowski, while a psychologist (me) continued his work. Moreover, the motivations, as mentioned above, were mainly personal and related to defending human life.

Many obstetricians in Poland are still interested in the psychological aspects of pregnancy, birth and postpartum and are in favor of presenting these issues at medical conferences. Among such doctors are: Bogdan Chazan, Marian Gabryś, Jan Oleszczuk, Ryszard Poręba, Jacek Rudnicki, Joanna Szymkiewicz-Dangel, Ewa Ślizień-Kuczapska. It may seem surprising why a scientific and practical involvement of a doctor inspires psychology to develop. However, this shows how we owe the emergence of prenatal psychology as a separate field not to psychologists, but to medical doctors, who in their work noticed a real need of creating such discipline within psychology.

6. THE SUBJECT OF PRENATAL PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS INTERDISCIPLINARY CHARACTER

In the West, prenatal psychology has grown into a multidisciplinary field and is dedicated to exploring the psychological dimension of human reproduction and pregnancy, as well as the mental and emotional development of the prenatal and newborn child (in the perinatal period). As a broad field, it has developed a variety of curative and preventive interventions when the child is still in the womb, at birth, when it is a newborn, as well as for infants and adults who are adversely affected by early prenatal and perinatal dysfunctions or trauma. As an interdisciplinary field, it combines various approaches and methodologies, various theoretical and applicative aims, combining fundamental research with clinical experiments, in a holistic approach to the prenatal period of human development, pregnancy and birth, integrating the achievements of various subdisciplines of biology, medicine, psychology, anthropology, etology, art and other fields.

In Poland, prenatal psychology does not receive so much recognition in the interest of other sciences besides psychology. Psychological aspects of the prenatal period of life are mainly the subject of interest to psychologists and family studies specialists. Within psychology itself, there are two parallel ways of understanding the object and character of prenatal psychology: prof. E. Bielawska-Batorowicz, from Łódź, is of the opinion that it should be strictly dis-

tinguished from the psychology of procreation (prenatal psychology and reproductive psychology as two separate fields within psychology), and prenatal psychology itself should belong to developmental psychology, i.e. become a part of developmental psychology that concerns the development of the child in the period before and around birth (Bielawska-Batorowicz, 1999). The alternative understanding of prenatal psychology, represented by me, opts for a broader way of approaching its object (similarly as it is in the West), recognizing its interdisciplinary character.

In the latter approach, the interest of prenatal psychology primarily entails issues related to the anatomic-functional development of the particular structures of the organism (e.g. the senses, the nervous system, the muscles, the neuro-hormonal system) perceived as the basis for the gradually emerging symptoms of the psyche and the development of the psychomotorics, competences of all the senses, the ability to remember and learn, awareness, emotions, communicating. Prenatal psychology also deals with investigating how the conditions (determinants, modifiers and stimulators) support or hinder the child's development, the fate of the pregnancy, birth, the child's adaptation after birth and contacts between the parents and the child, including breastfeeding. Because the child is strictly connected to the mother in its prenatal life, and through the mother with her physical and personal environment, prenatal psychology is also interested in the psychosocial aspects of the course of the pregnancy (e.g. experiences and behaviors of parents and the so-called significant persons, such as siblings or grandparents, attitudes of other persons to them and the conceived child). The subject of interest also includes factors that may influence the parents' experiences, and indirectly the child, such as preparing for parenthood, attitudes towards fertility, the legal situation of the conceived child, the cultural context related to pregnancy and birth (e.g. customs, rituals, superstitions concerning pregnancy), the mother's health situation (e.g. related to environmental pollution), material situation, family situation. Prenatal psychology deals with the prenatal child holistically, including its relations with the physical and personal world.

As the main focus of this field when it emerged within psychology was the exploration of human prenatal life, birth, bonding and early infancy from the baby's point of view, prenatal psychology does not limit its interest to the life before birth, but also holistically deals with the psychological aspects of being born, birth, and the first days after birth, since these facts are by nature processes, and not static, disconnected events, clearly separable from each other. Thus, the

issues of interest in the psychology of the pre- and perinatal period (around birth) are treated jointly and called by one name – prenatal psychology.

7. INSPIRATION FOR THE ORGANIZATIONAL STATUS OF PRENATAL PSYCHOLOGY

One of the symptoms of the development of science and an external criterion confirming its scientific status is when a group of scientists engage in research in the given field and various science-creating structures appear, such as scientific-academic centers, scientific associations, organizations, and visible effects in the form of conferences, symposia, thematic sessions, specialist journals and other publications, including the given science in the structures and curricula of universities as a separate subject. The need for prenatal psychology as a scientific discipline is visible in the above activities of academic centers and societies in this field.

The first organization created to bring together specialists dealing with prenatal psychology was *Studiengemeinschaft für Pränatale Psychologie*, later restructured into *The International Study Group for Prenatal Psychology* (ISPP – 1971), and in 1986 into the *International Society for Pre- and Perinatal Psychology and Medicine*. The psychoanalysts gathered at the World Congress of Psychoanalysis in Vienna (26.07.1971) contacted H.G. Graber after his interesting publication, and their meeting was an inspiration for creating this first organization to gather German-speaking specialists dealing with issues of prenatal psychology in their medical-therapeutic practice. Among organizations of a global scale we should mention one working mainly in North America – *The Association for Pre- and Perinatal Psychology and Health* (APPPAH). It was founded in 1983 by a psychiatrist from Toronto, dr Thomas R. Verny, who closely cooperated with a psychologist, D. Chamberlain. Also, the *Organisation Mondiale des Associations pour l'Éducation Prénatale* (OMAEP), founded in France, has been operating since 1982.

In Poland, the development of prenatal psychology is strictly connected with the activity of the Section of Prenatal Psychology, founded in 1984 within the Polish Psychological Association (PTP). This section was created upon my initiative, as a result of a meeting concerning abortion, which took place at the Congress of the Association in Cracow earlier that year (9.10.1984). The Congress guests, prof. W. Fijałkowski and the pedagogue Jan Neugabauer, presented

a film on what abortion actually is. The film was perceived by all participants as dramatic. After the screening, I approached them and said that “something must be done”, as we already know too much about the prenatal development of the child to treat the fetus as a “shapeless mass of cells”, and to treat pregnancy only as an altered different physical state of the woman. As psychologists, we cannot keep silent and ignore the psychic suffering of women related to abortion. Several psychologists joined the initiative, and still during the Congress we filed an official application to the PTP board with a proposal of a Prenatal Psychology Section. A month later, at the first board meeting of the PTP, the Section was officially registered and started its activity. The first board of the section was an interdisciplinary team of specialists and included: D. Kornas-Biela (me) – a psychologist, Jan Neugebauer – a pedagogue, Antoni Szymański – a sociologist and a politician. The honorary head of the Section was prof. W. Fijałkowski.

This organization has played a great role in the prenatal education of professionals, and generally the society. When created, it was the first section in the world operating within a professional association of psychologists to deal with psychological aspects of human prenatal development and human procreation, including the educational issues. The aims of the Prenatal Psychology Section entailed research-academic activity and educational-popularizing activity concerning broadly understood prenatal and perinatal psychology, for example through organizing scientific sessions. The issues discussed there included various groups of topics, such as:

- general problems – e.g. current issues in prenatal psychology, a discussion of research in this field, family and prenatal psychology, the significance of the child for its parents;
- the child’s development – e.g. psychic birth, the child’s competences in the prenatal period of life, forms of pre-birth stimulation and its significance for the child and the parents, the role of the father in the child’s prenatal development, factors that support and hinder the child’s earliest development;
- ecological aspects of procreation – e.g. threats to the ecology of the family, ecology of pregnancy, birth and postpartum (e.g. the diet of women awaiting the birth of their child and nursing);
- psychoprophylaxis of birth – birth classes;
- psychological and social aspects of family planning – e.g. social attitudes to methods of fertility regulation, motivations for selecting the given method, reasons for accepting or rejecting natural family planning, consequences of this lifestyle for the personal development of the couple, for their personal lives, for

their (marital) bonds, for the family life, including the children raised in this family;

- psychological aspects of natural birth – e.g. home birth, family birth, water birth, including the WHO recommendations and benefits for the parents and the child of the “rooming in” system (mother staying with the child), stressing its value;
- psychosocial aspects of breastfeeding – e.g. social aspects of breastfeeding, such as attitudes to breastfeeding, factors that determine successful breastfeeding, motivations for breastfeeding, its benefits for the child and the parents;
- psychosocial aspects of prenatal diagnostics – e.g. the attitudes of various social groups (students, parents, medical staff) to the methods of assessing the child’s health before birth, experiences of parents related to prenatal diagnostics, psychological consequences of the development of prenatal services (benefits and threats of such examinations);
- problems of the so-called crisis pregnancy – e.g. psychological aspects of adaptation to the situation of conceiving a child, pre-abortion counseling and the role of the psychologist, psychosocial problems of the so-called alternative solutions;
- psychosocial problems of abortion – e.g. motivations and factors determining a decision about abortion, the experience of abortion, personal and social consequences, therapy of psychic disorders after abortion (post-abortion syndrome, etc.);
- psychosocial aspects of procreation failures – e.g. psychosocial problems related to infertility, artificial insemination, adoption due to infertility, complicated pregnancy and birth, bearing a child who is ill or with a defect;
- psychological aspects of the legal protection of the prenatal child, maternity and paternity;
- psychosocial issues related to pornography – e.g. psychosocial consequences of pornography (also for the marriage and family life), social activities against the dissemination of pornography.

The scientific sessions organized by the Prenatal Psychology Section were very popular, and were attended not only by psychologists and medical professionals, but also by educationists, pedagogues and family counselors. These meetings were a forum that gathered persons who were interested in life before birth and wanted to apply the knowledge to redirect the system of care from focusing on “the pregnant woman” to care oriented at the whole family, changing the social attitudes to maternity and paternity and make changes in the health care centers, especially at obstetric wards, so that the situation of pregnancy and birth may be experienced with a sense of security, dignity, respect and joy, and the child

as a human being would be treated in a dignified way. Only until 1990 the Prenatal Psychology Section organized 30 scientific sessions, a few conferences, and three symposia at the Congress of PTP. Besides lectures and discussions, popularizing activities were also carried out, such as film screenings, book sales, etc.

Until the early 1990s, the scientific sessions organized by this Section were the only meetings of professionals from various disciplines where prenatal and perinatal issues were discussed and recommendations were formulated, e.g. aimed at de-medicalizing the time of pregnancy and promoting natural breastfeeding. The activity of the Section was meant to shape the public opinion by popularizing the achievements of prenatal psychology, as well as to cooperate with the authorities to change the practices and policy to support the family in the period of pregnancy, birth and postpartum. Materials from these sessions and symposia were published as articles in various journals and in three book editions (Kornas-Biela, 1992; Bielawska-Batorowicz, Kornas-Biela, 1992).

Moreover, in order to shape the public opinion and make a change in terms of the often medicalized procedures related to procreation, a few so-called positions of the Section were published and sent to the according authorities, such as ministries, the parliament, local offices and various journals and magazines, e.g. for women on the following issues: securing the bonding between the mother and the child (1986; see Neugebauer, 1989), breastfeeding (1988), abortion (1989; see Kornas-Biela, 1990), on the occasion of presenting the Polish Senate the proposed bill on the legal protection of maternity and the conceived child (1990), the role of the psychologist in the care over the child before birth and the pregnant mother (1990) and pornography (and the destructive effect of addiction to pornography on the family and procreation, 1992). Moreover, the Section members have been active in various training and educational activities for different social groups: especially young people, participants of birth classes and family counselors. Prenatal Psychology Section PTP stopped its activity after 2004, as its leaders became involved in various related initiatives.

8. CHARACTER OF RESEARCH, DOMINATING PARADIGM

The technical possibilities of conducting empirical research on the prenatal period of human life in countries like the USA, Germany, France, Italy, Japan and Australia enable gathering knowledge on the earliest stages of human life. Hundreds of studies are being carried out on the child's psychomotor and sensual

development, learning, symptoms of emotions and prenatal memory. Besides the behavioral paradigm present in the experimental studies, where the psychologist is a member of an interdisciplinary team or only makes use of the results of other specialists (e.g. acousticians), also the reflections on the experiences from psychoanalytic therapy are being broadly developed (Janus, 1993).

In the last years more and more is published based on the holistic paradigm, as well as the ecological, narrative (idiographic) and transpersonal ones. At many conferences various views are presented labelled as *prenatal psychology*; they are often an accidental and eclectic mixture of knowledge or para-knowledge of medicine, psychobiology, cultural anthropology, psychoanalysis, philosophies of the East (especially Buddhism), blended with the authors' personal experiences, which makes this young field of science vulnerable and possibly rejected by those who deal with psychology in a professional or scientific way (especially within the paradigm of "hard science"). The term *prenatal psychology* is also used at various therapeutic practices or theories on the prenatal period of life by representatives of various philosophical-religious orientations (e.g. in Buddhism, Gsell et al, 1999), beliefs (e.g. in reincarnation) and magic (by relating to the beliefs of Native Americans, Aborigines and indigenous nations in various parts of the world), which is often not a contribution to the scientific character of prenatal psychology.

In Poland, due to the lack of e.g. specialist equipment and appropriate funding, extensive research on the child's prenatal development is not conducted. However, prenatal psychology is developing thanks to:

- reprints and translations of world literature;
- comprehensive comparative publications that critically discuss the research results from other countries concerning a given issue within prenatal psychology (e.g. my reviews on the psychoanalytical and behavioral paradigm in prenatal psychology);
- own research, not as much on the child's behavior, but rather on the psychological aspects of pregnancy, birth and first contact with the child – e.g. studies on bonding between parents and the child, the significance of prenatal communication, psychological aspects of preparing for birth, family birth (the father at birth), broad-scope research on parents with a genetic risk (5-year project within a government program), psychological aspects of prenatal diagnostics, especially decision making in the situation of an unfavorable prenatal

diagnosis, bearing a child with a genetic defect, preparing the siblings for the birth of a next child;

- developing our own concept of the ecology of procreation, initiated by Fijałkowski, continued by me, which is understood as supporting the development of the prenatal child treated as the ecology of the habitat, i.e. the first environment of human life, where the human being is an inhabitant of this ecological niche;
- in terms of the methodology – as opposed to the studies in the West using specialist technology or analyzing the patients' experiences shared at therapy, in Poland the methods used in research are interview, survey, own questionnaire, and the study results are analyzed statistically or using the quality analysis and narration analysis methods.

9. ADDRESSEES OF PUBLICATIONS IN PRENATAL PSYCHOLOGY

In the world, prenatal psychology developed as a science through publications of scientific books written for professionals, that is, those who know the terminology of psychoanalysis and have orientation in this field. In Poland, however, since its very beginnings, prenatal psychology was meant to become popularized. It was initially aiming not as much to develop as a science, but to deliver knowledge to the average leader, to change the attitudes of people for a better protection of human life, and for a more personalistic approach to the pregnant woman, treating pregnancy and birth as an important period of family life, appreciating the significance of the child's father's experiences and his support. Prenatal psychology drew more attention to the psychological aspects of pregnancy and birth – the parents' experiences concerning them – and thus served to make a change in the practice of gynecological-obstetric hospitals, so that they become more child-friendly, woman-friendly and family-friendly.

10. PRENATAL PSYCHOLOGY AS AN ELEMENT OF ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE

The knowledge from the area of prenatal psychology has made its way to the canon of Polish textbooks and university lectures in human developmental psychology. The appearance of a separate chapter on the prenatal period of life in Polish textbooks on developmental psychology (Kornas-Biela, 2000, 2004, and

the new edition of 2011) and in textbooks on pedagogy and education (2010) improves the availability of this area of knowledge to psychologists and pedagogues and shapes their awareness of the human development in the perspective of the whole human life and the significance of its earliest stage. Moreover, papers in prenatal psychology are published in various journals, such as *Życie i Płodność* [Life and fertility], *Psychologia Rozwojowa* [Developmental Psychology], *Czasopismo Psychologiczne* [Psychological Journal], and since 2013, *Health Psychology Report*. The issues referring to prenatal psychology also appear in papers in the field of medicine, published in medical journals and by medical universities.

The contribution of Poland into the development of prenatal psychology as a science was that it elevated this new area of knowledge to be taught as a separate subject within university-level studies curriculum for the first time. Since 1990, at the Catholic University of Lublin, lectures have been given to the senior year students of psychology and pedagogy: “Prenatal psychology” (30 hours), “Psychology of procreation” (60 hours) and a seminar in this subject. It was also a compulsory full-course class for students of the Interfaculty Graduate Family Studies program at KUL: “Prenatal psychology”, “Psychology of procreation” and a seminar. Similarly, when another family studies program was opened at the Family Studies Institute, it included a course of lectures in prenatal psychology and psychology of procreation. Since 1997, prenatal psychology and psychology of procreation have also been part of the curriculum of master degree level studies program in obstetrics at the Medical Academy in Lublin (lectures, practical classes, seminar). Other universities and colleges also include topics in prenatal psychology, either as a separate class or as an element of developmental psychology. At KUL, a Ph.D. level seminar is running – it is possible to write a doctoral dissertation in prenatal psychology and prenatal education.

Prenatal psychology is also present outside the academia. After the political transformations that followed the “round table discussions” in 1989, several changes took place of the social life of Poland. It became possible to set up non-government organizations. Many participants of the meetings of the PTP Prenatal Psychology Section initiated new associations and movements, such as the Fundacja Rodzić po Ludzku [Childbirth with Dignity Foundation], Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Naturalnego Rodzenia i Karmienia [Association for Natural Birth and Breastfeeding], Human Life International-Europa, Polskie Stowarzyszenie obrońców Życia Człowieka [Polish Association of Defenders of Human Life], Polskie Stowarzyszenie Nauczycieli Naturalnego Planowania Rodziny [Polish

Association of Natural Family Planning Instructors], *Kobieta i Natura* [The Woman and the Nature], *Nośmy Dzieci* [Let's Carry Children]. For over 20 years, these and other non-government organizations have been disseminating knowledge on prenatal psychology in Poland. They publish information and papers on their websites, organize popular conferences, publish books, e.g. the SNRiK published the following conference proceedings: *Najlepszy start dla twojego dziecka* [The best start for your child] (1995), *Poród wydarzeniem rodzinnym* [Birth as a family event] (1995), *Rodzicielstwo bez porażek* [Parenthood without failures] (1998), the Fundacja Kobieta i Natura – books by Agrawaal, etc. These organizations invite famous specialists in prenatal psychology as conference speakers to Poland (although not all of them are psychologists), such as Thomas Verny, David Chamberlain, Peter Fedor-Freybergh, Michel Odent, Eva Gundberg, Ludwig Janus, Nils Bergman (Kangaroo Mother Care), Benig Mauger. Also in the local environments (e.g. medical, churches) various initiatives are undertaken under the umbrella name *prenatal psychology*, and articles touching on these issues are increasingly common in popular magazines (*Twoje Dziecko* [Your child], *Dziecko* [Child], *Mam dziecko* [I have a child], *Będziemy mieć Dziecko* [We will have a child], *Rodzice* [Parents], *Mama i ja* [Mom and me]).

Topics in prenatal psychology and prenatal education have made its way not only to the college level, but also to some extent to the high school level education. Issues such as the child's development before birth, psychological, health and hygienic aspects of pregnancy, birth and postpartum have been part of the school subject curriculum called "family education" for almost 20 years (e.g. Ostrowska, Ryś, 1999; Król, Maśnik, Węglarczyk, 1996; Król, Ryś, 2002). These issues were also present in special materials for teachers and students of elementary and secondary schools in the form of textbooks (e.g. Grabowscy, Niemyscy, Wołochowicz, 1993; Węglarczyk, 1996; Ryś, 1998; Kornas-Biela, 1999, 2002), scripts (e.g. Fornalik, 2001) or programs (e.g. Król, Maśnik, Węglarczyk 1996; Nowak, 2000; Ozimek, 2000; Muzioł, Sucharska, 2001; Zajdel, Siciński, 1999). The child's prenatal development and recommendations for a successful pregnancy are mentioned in textbooks in biology already in the 4th class of elementary school. A few educational films were produced in Poland about the prenatal development in hundreds of copies (e.g. "Człowiek od poczęcia" [Human being from conception]). A few thousand sets of plastic models presenting the child's prenatal development were distributed to schools, with my brochure on the child's psychic development. Basic information on the psychophysical development of the prenatal child should thus be available to secondary students.

The impact of prenatal psychology is also present in guidelines for birth class instructors, recommendations for pregnant women or parents preparing for childbirth. Moreover, the work of Fijałkowski is being continued, in that after his two books for children on the human prenatal development – *Oto jestem. Pamiętnik dziecka poczętego* [Here I am. The diary of an unborn child] (1998) and – *Jestem od poczęcia. Pamiętnik dziecka w pierwszej fazie życia* [I am since my conception. A diary of a child at the first stage of life] (2002), a few similar positions were published for children awaiting the birth of their siblings. An original element is the appearance of prayer books for parents awaiting the conception or birth of their child, where the knowledge of the prenatal period of human life and its significance for one's whole life is also present.

FINAL REFLECTION

Analyzing the literature on prenatal psychology in the West we may notice an inconsistency: the knowledge is often not referred to issues such as the humanness of the developing being, not to mention its right to live. Some authors vividly involve in describing the wonders of the “early prenatal human development”, stress the competences in terms of complicated movements, single senses, learning, use such terms as “human behaviors of the fetus”, and at the same time say that it is not possible for science to decide when a human life actually begins, and often politically correctly declare their acceptance for abortion, thus denying legal protection for the very being whose development and competences they popularize.

In Poland it was the knowledge in prenatal psychology that contributed to the change in the social mentality and introducing a partial legal protection for the conceived child in 1993 (abortion solely at the woman's demand is not available). It turns out that knowledge on the earliest period of human life may, but does not have to, shape the attitudes in favor of protecting life before birth. Obviously, it is also not the case that in Poland prenatal psychology is built upon the teaching of the Catholic Church on abortion – if anything, then the opposite order would be true. And from the beginning of prenatal psychology, it was not meant to be associated with these teachings, and the religious aspect was not accented, while the focus was rather on the ecological context of the care over the prenatal child and on the dignified conditions of childbirth. For over 20 years, Fijałkowski wrote on the ecology of life before birth and the

ecology of procreation. I have found this approach worth continuing. The same idea is also expressed in the leading slogan that the American Association for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health used in 1993 at their International Congress of "Womb Ecology ~ World Ecology".

Translated by: Aleksandra Biela-Wołośńciej

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POCZĄTKI PSYCHOLOGII PRENATALNEJ W POLSCE

Streszczenie

Zainteresowania prenatalnym okresem życia człowieka na terenie psychologii rozpoczęły się około sto lat temu, ale jako odrębny obszar wiedzy zwany psychologią prenatalną wyodrębniła się w latach siedemdziesiątych XX wieku. Rozwój psychologii prenatalnej inaczej przebiegał na zachodzie Europy niż w Polsce. W artykule zwrócono uwagę na te różnice w zakresie przyczyn oraz inspiracji wyłonienia się psychologii prenatalnej i jej rozwoju, „ojca” psychologii prenatalnej, a więc osoby, która wniosła wielki wkład w zainicjowanie zainteresowań prenatalnym rozwojem człowieka, a także dotyczących istotnych dla rozwoju psychologii prenatalnej publikacji, rozumienia psychologii prenatalnej jako psychologii rozwoju człowieka lub interdyscyplinarnej subdyscypliny psychologii, organizacyjnego statusu w psychologii prenatalnej, dominujących paradygmatów i charakteru podejmowanych problemów, adresatów publikacji z zakresu psychologii prenatalnej, psychologii prenatalnej jako przedmiotu badań i elementu dydaktyki na studiach, przydatności/zastosowania wiedzy z psychologii prenatalnej w argumentacji za obroną prawa do życia od poczęcia.

Słowa kluczowe: psychologia prenatalna; psychologia perinatalna; psychologii prokreacji; ekologia prokreacji; Włodzimierz Fijałkowski.

THE BEGINNINGS OF PRENATAL PSYCHOLOGY IN POLAND

Summary

Interest in the prenatal period of human life in psychology began about a hundred years ago, but as a separate area of knowledge called prenatal psychology it was isolated in the 1970s. The article points these differences in the following areas: the causes and the inspiration for the emergence and development of prenatal psychology; the “father” of prenatal psychology, who made a significant contribution to inspiring the interest in the human prenatal development; publications that were important for the development of prenatal psychology publications; understanding prenatal psychology as a psychology of human development or a separate interdisciplinary subfield of psychology; the organizational status of prenatal psychology; recipients of publications in the field of prenatal psychology; the dominant paradigms and issues in research; prenatal psychology as a field of study and an element of teaching at colleges and universities; application of knowledge in the field of prenatal psychology; application of knowledge in the field of prenatal psychology in arguments for defending the right to life from conception.

Key words: prenatal psychology; perinatal psychology; psychology of procreation; reproductive psychology; ecology of procreation; Włodzimierz Fijałkowski.