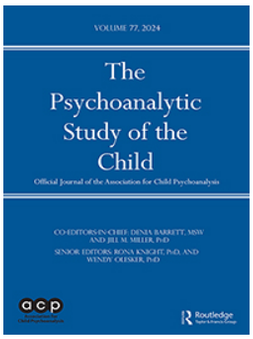

The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child

ISSN: 0079-7308 (Print) 2474-3356 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/upsc20

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To cite this article: Christine Bauriedl-Schmidt (2024) Best Source of Hope: Care, Solidarity, Disobedience Reflected by the Climate Catastrophe, The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 77:1, 415-430, DOI: 10.1080/00797308.2023.2287385

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00797308.2023.2287385

Published online: 23 Jan 2024.

THE PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY OF THE CHILD
2024, VOL. 77, NO. 1, 415–430
https://doi.org/10.1080/00797308.2023.2287385

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Best Source of Hope: Care, Solidarity, Disobedience Reflected by the Climate Catastrophe

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ABSTRACT

The climate catastrophe is a humanitarian catastrophe and can be considered one of the most urgent challenges facing the continued survival of the human species. Starting with a psychodynamic concept of generativity (I) and the experience of guilt and shame associated with it, I then turn to socio-critical discussions of climate and generational justice as an expression of violence and a pathology of the social. These considerations culminate in a call for a form of solidarity based on reciprocity that can be expanded to the issue of solidarity with non-human nature (II). For humanity, the climate crisis presents the challenge of what, in climate jargon, are called social tipping points. In the interaction between the individual and society, disobedience and hope can be grasped in terms of their transformative power. This is explored taking the examples of the figure of Abraham in the Old Testament and that of the Last Generation climate initiative (III).

KEYWORDS

Civil disobedience; climate catastrophe; generative care; radical hope; social pathology; social tipping points

> There are currently about 7.9 billion of us living on this beautiful blue planet, peacefully circling round its sun in our tiny little corner of the great cosmos. We are all connected. Just like all other living things and beings, we can trace our origins back through deep time to the sources of life, and therefore, no matter how far from nature we distance ourselves, we are inseparable from it.
>
> (Thunberg 2022b, German version, 42)

This is how Greta Thunberg (2022b), in the course of an intergenerational dialog with scientists, cast the inseparable bond between humans and non-human nature and put her finger on the historical dimension of human life, the future continuation of which was until very recently not really a matter of controversy. The development of civilization should be seen against the backdrop of the relatively stable climatic conditions of the geological epoch of the Holocene. At the beginning of the noughties, climate scientists coined the term Anthropocene in order to draw attention to the massive, in the broader sense industrial interventions in the planet's system (cf. Rockström et al. 2009). In this context, the economy, society, and civilization rest on two basic assumptions: First, that changes to the planet's system proceed linearly and are irreversible; and second that the biosphere is able to cushion the impacts of human influence, for example the unlimited production of waste and the extraction of resources (Rockström 2022). Approximately two centuries after the beginning of the Industrial Age, sudden surges as in exponential

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changes, the main driver of which is human action in a globalized world, demonstrate that these assumptions were erroneous. The resulting changes, for example as regards fuel emissions or acidification of the oceans, can be described as curves that are so steep that they resemble the shape of a hockey stick. These compare with equally accelerating socio-economic development trends, for example as regards the consumption of energy and water, transportation, and international tourism (see Rockström 2022). As a result of the accelerated development, we risk exceeding the planetary limits (e.g., biodiversity, oceans, the climate, see Rockström et al. 2009) that we need to adhere to as the "safe operating space for humanity" if humanity is to be able to survive on Planet Earth in the long term. These limits are interlinked in complex ways, mutually influence one another, and cannot be predicted; beyond these limits, irreversible biophysical tipping points may be reached and passed. To avoid this catastrophe happening, the international community and its various institutions must cooperate, with special reference paid to the regions and population groups that are hardest hit (see IPCC Report 2023; Dixson-Declève et al. 2022). Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon brings chance, risk, and responsibility to the point: "We are the first Generation that can end poverty, the last that can end climate change." (28 May 2015 in Leuven, Belgium, see: https://press.un.org/en/2015/sgsm16800.doc.html).

Irrespective of whether we want it or not, whether we are aware of it or not: The climate crisis kindles notions of the destruction of humankind and confronts us with human vulnerability. The German word for vulnerability is "Verletzbarkeit" which, while etymologically similar to vulnerability with its derivation from wounding/maiming (lat. vulnerare), has linguistic associations with letting go, bidding farewell, the last, death (ex: Grimms Wörterbuch, as per Heil 2016). "A latent, existential finality and ineluctability can be attributed to vulnerability (Heil 2016, 131–2), which recognizes the presence of death in life. However, this is an ideal demand, and Freud describes the reality of the human relationship to death as follows (1915):

> We have shown an unmistakable tendency to put death aside, to eliminate it from life. We attempted to hush it up, in fact, we have the proverb: to think of something as of death. Of course, we meant our own death. We cannot, indeed, imagine our own death; whenever we try to do so we find that we survive ourselves as spectators. The school of psychoanalysis could thus assert that at bottom no one believes in his own death, which amounts to saying: in the unconscious every one of us is convinced of his immortality. (German version, 324)

This quote from Freud provides the psychodynamic background for the difficulty of constructively addressing anthropogenic climate change: Humans dissociate the possibility of their own death. The specificity of the climate crisis makes it simple for people to retain an observing, ignoring position. The enormity of the threat triggers a strong defense (see Dohm and Schulze 2022; Hoggett 2013, 2019; Lertzman 2015; Orange 2017; Weintrobe 2021) that is directed against negative emotions becoming conscious and frequently results in the figure John Steiner describes as "turning a blind eye" (see Habibi-Kohlen 2023). Unlike acute threats, such as those resulting from a pandemic or war, people find it hard to grasp climate change cognitively, as it is not conveyed to us directly and immediately (Nikendei 2021). This leads to the significance of climate phenomena for the conditions of life on earth and for the social organization of our coexistence on earth not being

adequately considered. To turn away from a threat instead of turning to face it prevents what would be an appropriate search for effective solutions.

Humans are in secret and unconsciously convinced of their own immortality. Humans only recognize death as a conceivable reality to be taken seriously if their loved ones and the ambivalent bonds to them are affected and/or at risk, as we can read in Freud's (1915) essay on "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death." By means of, among other things, loving feelings for those closest to us, generative care and solidarity can be kindled. Vera King (2020, 2022) thus introduced the issue of generativity in the context of the climate crisis into the discourse in the German psychoanalytical community.

Oedipus, Laius, and the climate crisis

Freud's cultural theory uses the Oedipus myth as the heuristic basis for generative activity: The myth entails parricide, retrospective acknowledgment of the loving bond to the parents, the mourning resulting from the loss, and overcoming the feeling of guilt through the communal creation of a symbol. In the interpretation offered by Loewald (1980), the conflict that unfolds in the Oedipus complex focuses on children wresting authority from their parents and destroying the latter as libidinous objects. The associated feelings of guilt are subject in a favorable case to transformation and metamorphosis, with the accompanying symptoms of mourning and reconciliation, through to a mature superego and nonincestuous object relations. Young people are challenged by first having to persevere during a vacuum in recognition, i.e., initially forgoing recognition by those whom they have hitherto most relied on and needed (King 2020). The next generation requires the support of the adults for this often-frightening developmental task. Today, many young people are not only confronted with mastering their developmental conflicts, but are also struggling to combat the destruction of the conditions for human life on earth, among other things on behalf of the climate.

In present society, the image of childhood and adolescence has changed, from infants without voices, from irresponsible youth, to young people who want to assume and are assuming responsibility (Novick 2021), who are also taken seriously as partners in negotiation (Honneth [2015] 2020b, 234). Young people want to contribute to enhancing the resilience of their environment, be it by focusing on regional projects or on global ones, which is the goal of the Fridays for Future movement. This is impressively portrayed in the 2021 film "Dear Future Children" (directed by Franz Böhm), which movingly presents the active commitment of young people the world over campaigning for justice, democracy, the climate, and climate justice.

The image of the adult has likewise changed from authoritarian educator to a partner in cooperation who is open for a partnership in which objectives get corrected (a notion from attachment research). Against the backdrop of the climate crisis as vocalized by young people, the dark side of the modern adult becomes all the more apparent: a person driven by the eternal logic of intensification (Rosa 2019) who competes with young people as regards youthfulness, who finds it hard to accept finitude and mortality (King 2011). When the mirror of generativity and the adolescents is held up to them, adults are confronted by the fact that their social reality is cast into question and their cultural practices limited. Adults are usually not pleased by this. The recognition of finitude, the tolerance of ambivalence, and finally letting go are the factors that define the attachment to and the rupture with the prior generation (see King 2020). Generativity can fail if the ambivalence between the generations is

not maintained. This is the case in particular if parents do not accept finitude, do not want to relinquish their position in the sequence of generations, and feel threatened by the claims made by the next generation—as a result, generational differences get elided. In Greek mythology it is Oedipus' father Laius who constitutes the figure that marks the starting point for the narrative of threatened generativity (see Morbitzer 2020).

It is hard to empathize with the figure of Laius, let alone identify with him, a person of whom Modernity has had little or nothing good to say, and who first receives any contours or responsibility through the subsequent narrative. In the version attributed to Aeschylus (which preceded the better-known version by Sophocles) we learn that Laius, in a moment of drunkenness, acts irresponsibly and impregnates his wife Jocasta contrary to the oracle's prediction. This moment of regression is fateful for him, as he loses his son, his fatherhood, his life, and his city (Weineck 2010). Perhaps we can identify with this regressive/enjoyment-seeking side of Laius who, consisting of an amalgam of guilt, remorse, and omnipotence, retroactively and by (ostensibly) extinguishing his son's life, tries to reverse his error—as if his son were some meaningless waste product. I am forever shocked when the disposal of (toxic) waste under the ground or under the sea seems to be considered a rational way of contributing to climate neutrality—as if the byproduct of our seemingly unlimited enjoyment-bringing consumer behavior would thus be nullified, if "only" to maintain our standard of living and our place in the social order. It is as if we were disposing reality along with the waste, without wasting a thought on the generation that follows on from us.

Generativity can also become the scene of failure when it comes to parentification. Then the admonishing voice of young people can be personified, can become the symbol of heroic people who occupy the place of the authoritarian family head and thus trigger the defense idealization vs. invalidation (King 2020). Both the Laius Complex (Morbitzer 2020) and parentification have been diagnosed within generative interaction in Modernity when the logic of enhancement and upholding the illusion of "eternal youth" leave no space to recognize that young people's aggression also contains a love of the old (see King 2011, 2020). In the context of the climate movement, another aspect can become problematic. Some children and young people state that they do not want to have children. Older people among us will no doubt remember that this was also to be heard about 40 or 50 years ago in the face of the threat of eco-catastrophes. The dystopias of that time were frequently read as an expression of externalized destructivity that seemed to hit back in the notion of eco-catastrophes or radical social movements, and thereupon called for specific restrictions, in the process eliminating awareness of the fact that these were projections. However, what if it is not just inner fears but real occurrences that trigger this statement, which is so skeptical of generativity? Some adults play down the arguments and activities of the young people committed to combatting climate change by pointing out that this is a youth rebellion such as has arisen at many times in the past and is part and parcel of being a young person. The young people's warning can then be misunderstood as simply neurotic anxiety or slanderously discredited, whereby the signal impact of real anxiety gets brushed under the carpet and disregarded. The study compiled by Caroline Hickman et al. (2021) shows in especially impressive form how very young people feel stressed by the climate crisis and just how strongly they feel adults, politicians, and those in positions of power have ignored what they have to say (see the essay by Kathrin Hörter in the present volume).

Successful generativity is, anthropologically speaking, the response by adults to the psychological, social, and practical dependence of young people. In the best case, the

subsequent generation is capable of prompting generative care on the part of the adults (King 2020). Today we can say that generativity goes beyond mere reproduction and needs to be expanded to include (a) concern and care for one's own descendants, and (b) in an extended socio-cultural sense, the creation and maintaining of "enabling conditions for the descendants to grow up" (King 2020, 14). With a view to the climate catastrophe that is already taking firm shape, we can say that in the best case the young generation will be in a position to activate in adults an openness to perceiving anxiety, and this can then engender an insight into the need to act. In 2019, adult organizations emerged to support the Fridays for Future movement, such as All for Future, Together for Future, Parents for Future, Psychologists for Future, Scientists for Future, and many more besides. Here, the various adult generations have felt addressed by what the young people have said and are evidently signaling that they are willing to provide an answer and work together with the younger generation to bring about social tipping points (Otto and Herrmann 2021).

A psychoanalytical-socio-psychological view of the climate crisis

I shall now present three psychoanalytical approaches that share a basis in a socio-psychological approach that implicitly (Orange) or explicitly (Weintrobe, Butler) relies on the social critique innate in the theories of the Frankfurt School. In keeping with the latter's dialectical approach, with its affinity to psychoanalysis, society in general is realized in the individualized society through the interaction of individuals. At the same time, society very strongly constitutes the substance of individuality. We now see individuals shaped by consumer and production relations and whose individual existence is defined down to its most secretive inner life by these objective forces (see Adorno [1951] 2020). The climate crisis can be read in this light as a humanitarian emergency and a pathology of the social (Honneth 2009)—a diagnosis that calls for solidarity with the Other, with the generative Other (King 2022), and with the non-human environment (Butler 2020).

The role of shame and guilt

In view of the damage that is already being wreaked by the climate crisis and which verges on assuming an even greater scale, negative emotions such as horror, guilt, and shame may be kindled in the adult generation. Psychodynamically speaking, in terms of the classical perspective, here superego functions take priority, and, from the intersubjective perspective, affect regulation takes the front seat. Allowing and upholding difficult sensations and emotions is known to offer a basis for reflected, meaningful acts. Given the urgency of the climate catastrophe, however, an irritating apathy strikes the eye (see above). We shall now address the background to this phenomenon in an effort to better understand it.

For intersubjectivity theorist Donna Orange, the experience of shame and guilt as well as the radical recognition of climate injustice are what stimulate meaningful action. At the heart of Orange's (2017) deliberations on the climate crisis is the socio-psychological/socio-critical idea that people in the rich industrialized Global North are not sufficiently prepared to assume responsibility for people from poorer regions. She introduces the concept of the historical unconscious to get a theoretical handle on the collective occurrence, whereby people in the rich industrial nations elide the awareness of the social injustice innate to the climate crisis and thus make it tolerable. She contends that it is key to use the climate crisis

to also create an awareness of the underlying historically specifiable social injustice. Given this climate injustice, psychoanalysis is challenged to undergo a radical ethical turn. Orange relies here on the thought of French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas and his concept of face-to-face with the Other that takes "positive control" (Lévinas, in Herrmann 2010) of the individual and radically calls for the subject to become the guardian of the Other. People from the Global North must become conscious of the feelings of shame and guilt in order to be able to transform their hitherto irresponsible life practices in the first place. It is imperative for this process of awareness that the privileged people from the industrialized nations detect the shame for others' crimes in the eyes of the victims, i.e. in the face of those who most suffer from the consequences of the climate crisis (Primo-Levi 1988 in: Orange 2017, 127). Orange's approach of focusing on those in the Global South who are suffering from the impacts of climate change can be expanded to the need to protect the generative Other—King (2022) has elaborated on this aspect.

Orange's (2017) socio-critical call for a radical ethical turn, with its justifications in social philosophy, can be read as a call to each and every one of us to contribute to climate justice and the protection of the Other. These demands can also be understood in a broader political sense if we construe climate justice not just as a moral imperative, but as a necessity for life (cf. Neubauer and Ulrich 2021, 144). The political dimensions of generative care and solidarity are also to be discerned in two further psychoanalytical approaches.

Political dimensions of generative care

Psychoanalyst Sally Weintrobe (2013, 2021), who takes an angle based on object relations theory, has for many years now been contributing decisively to the psychoanalytical discourse on climate change (cf. Bayer and Gaines 2011). She places care and carelessness at the center of a critical analysis of capitalism, Neoliberalism, and their self-destructive concept of growth and/or progress. She describes the self as torn back and forth in a conflict of ambivalence between carelessness (egocentrism) and caring. Both sides of the conflict are real and need to be recognized and tolerated by the individual. Weintrobe speaks of a "culture of uncare" that is characterized by an exclusive focus on the short-term, by instrumental reason, and by a dedication to the omnipotent triumph of narcissistic grandiose fantasies over reality. In this context, she outlines the traces created by the permanent fundamental struggle between caring and emotionless imagination in politics, culture, and individual. Weintrobe (2021) takes as the basis for change her demand that rich people socialized in the West assume responsibility, i.e., renounce their narcissistic denial that culminates destructively in idealization and fantasies of omnipotence whenever reality constrains the felt claims to a standard of living.

Judith Butler (2020) takes the ignorance vis-à-vis the suffering of the Others as occasion to make a radical plea for nonviolence. For her, there is an imperative for nonviolence that takes a stand against all destruction of attachments and ties. Violence must not invariably be actively structured, but is also to be encountered in the form of passively allowing injustice to happen (with Foucault's words: live and let die, cf. Butler 2020), for example when people from the Global North look on inactively as people in the Global South suffer the consequences of the North's negligent and wasteful lifestyle—and potentially die as a result (Butler 2020). Butler's core idea is that nonviolence becomes crucial precisely when violence might be justified, e.g., when it is a matter of so-called "self-defense" or the defense of the

group to which one belongs. For Butler, nonviolence is meaningless if it does not go hand in hand with a commitment to equality, for after all, the inequality of some lives, e.g., the lives of people in the rich industrialized nations, is strongly championed in the name of self-protection. She considers aggression to be an element of social bonds that rest on reciprocal interdependence. Aggression in the sense of nonviolence parries violence and opens up "the horizon of a new social equality (. . .)" (Butler 2020, 44). Resorting to Freud's deliberations on the archaic destructive potential of the superego, Butler describes mania as the antagonist of this inner superego tyrant, which she accords the function of solutions orientation and assigns the power to liberate itself from destructive relations through disidentification. In the face of the climate crisis and climate injustice, we could therefore say that the individual's ego must be sufficiently reflective to oppose this inner tyrant or to turn to its milder versions, for example in order to forgo things or to search for allies, instead of passively wallowing in guilt, shame, accusations, and "more of the same."

It swiftly emerges in alliances based on solidarity that nonviolence, resistance, and refusal must not be confused with apathy, passivity, doing nothing. For Butler, a society is per se obliged to maintain its attachment to all other individuals at all costs. This means enduring the burden of the ambivalence of love and hate and being aware of this obligation. For Butler, the principle of equality is the lever for successful ethics. Action geared to the principle of equality is nonpaternalizing action that identifies and protects especially endangered groups. Action that takes its cue from the principle of equality concedes that we are all vulnerable, endangered, i.e., dependent. So what exactly does Butler mean with the principle of equality? For her, people should not be considered grievable only once they have died. To her mind, every life must be equally grievable, i.e., of value, independent of demographic variables (such as gender, age, ethnicity). The call for the radically equal grievability of life is an ethical call for generative care and solidarity in an (inter)culturally expanded sense.

The climate crisis draws our attention to the reciprocal dependency of human and non-human systems on our planet (cf. Rockström et al. 2009). This brings the non-human environment into play and we can thus enquire as to its significance for human beings. Can we assume, against the backdrop of the critical socio-psychological/intersubjective criterion of equal grievability, or even allow an interpretation that the human subject should interact with a non-human subject (the Other) in terms of the claim to unconditional recognition of their reciprocity and solidarity (Orange 2017; Rosa 2019)?

Relationship of solidarity with the non-human environment

With a view to the global threat of the climate crisis, the challenge is not only to consider the suffering of the group to which one belongs but also to take all human beings into consideration equally, and possibly also specifically those who belong to the Others. Defining something as "non-identitary" has the disadvantage that it may then be treated badly as "something foreign." The result is that environmental destruction as the (pending) threat to the basis of our lives cannot be grieved to the same extent as the destruction of humans, in particular humans of the same cultural group (see above). With the radical-ethical claim to be the guardians of the Others, we can be touched by the claims of the Others without taking possession of or incorporating them, let alone rendering them identical to ourselves.

We can derive from this that solidarity can only be shown toward the Other who is experienced as being unequal. From the psychoanalytical viewpoint, solidarity is

a regulative idea that stems from the ability first to empathize with the foreignness, and not rest at that but recognize the difference of the Other, and second to be able to project libidinously onto that Other despite the difference (Küchenhoff 2001). Butler (2020, 2021) explores the issue of whether the concept of solidarity can also be applied to non-human nature. She investigates the significance of ecology in Marx's "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts": Humans and animals evolve from organic nature, which they then need in order to survive. It is this constant process (Marx's term) of preparing and ingesting external nature qua the necessary process of utilization that separates organic from inorganic nature: The process of interchange with nature is the precondition for human life in a double sense, i.e., it covers a) the unity of the human body and the body of nature, and b) the necessary dependency on being able to use/work the body of nature for inputs in order for the human body to survive:

> No human body can live without the body of nature; it is and is not its own body, and its very survival depends upon this doubling. This interchange involves dependency, interchange (not exchange), and animation; it establishes the body of nature as essential to the body of man. (Butler 2021, 13)

Here, the individual faces the task of maintaining a dialectical relationship to his/her own body, i.e., being able to view his/her own body from two vantage points: (a) as an animated body that belongs to him/her, and (b) as a body of nature on which s/he depends. In this persistent process of interchange with the objective of survival (as a species), we can clearly see the desire to overcome alterity, i.e., the line dividing inside and outside—by labor forms of control and also through caring, nurturing forms of labor (cf. von Redecker 2020, see below). For Butler, the latter representation legitimates thinking about a relationship of solidarity based on reciprocity between human and non-human nature such as can be derived from Marx's early writings. In this way, she unfolds an omnipotent idealization of autonomy that at the same time entails a denial of dependency, e.g., on the existence of basic underlying physical conditions. Elsewhere (Butler 2020) she presents the explicit notion that non-human nature should be accorded a status of its own over and above its instrumental significance as the human habitat, since the loss of the latter can also be grieved (Butler 2020, 100). Butler resorts here to Freud's concept of the death instinct and postulates a solidarity with the alien that must also entail a disidentification of one's own ideal as fostered by the superego is directed against life. Disidentification can be grasped as transgression and as regression and thus as the necessary precondition for new solutions that recognize reality.

The climate crisis as social pathology

The works of Orange, Weintrobe, and Butler make it clear that the climate crisis constitutes a pathology of the social in the meaning the term has in Axel Honneth's critical social psychology (2009). A pathology of the social prevents a society from extensively using its critical, rational potential, whereby this should not be confused with instrumental reason. Symptoms such as inequality, injustice, and unfreedom affect different groups of individuals differently in a systematic way. The pathologies of the social systematically constrain the potential for critical reflection, leading to things being rendered unconscious and topics no longer being highlighted. From the perspective of social pathology, there is emphasis of the economic-political bases of the climate crisis that are reflected in the way in which we realize

life and society. The socio-critical perspective as well as the related process of rendering things conscious is necessary for the individual to recognize the systemic compulsions and free her/himself from their clutches. What is involved is a cognitive and emancipatory process for all human beings, not just those people who are oppressed but also those who close their eyes to the suffering that their cynical lifestyle causes others (cf. Richter 2020).

Butler's (2021) assertion of reciprocal relations between humans and non-human nature based on solidarity emphasizes that a pathology of reason (Axel Honneth 2009) is involved if the inconsiderate lifestyle of a very few privileged persons leads to the signs of an uncaring relationship not based on solidarity (and instead, for example, on disrespect, exploitation, unjust distribution) being trivialized and tolerated. The intersubjective notion of a relationship in solidarity (toward persons of other cultures and qua anticipation toward subsequent generations and toward non-human nature) underscores an attachment that calls for responsibility to be assumed and offers wealth for it (through the additional vitalization of interaction opportunities for identity formation) through the normative shift away from ego control in the direction of communicative fluidity (Honneth 2000) and the recognition of finitude (Freud).

The Club of Rome—a thinktank founded in 1968 that champions a globally sustainable future—calls in its last report (Dixson-Declève et al. 2022) for a fundamental volte face in favor of an Earth for all, with the elimination of poverty and flagrant injustice, and the transition to clean energy, to a system of food that is healthy for both humans and ecosystems. To this end, major systemic changes in all societies will be necessary within a single generation and possibly within a single decade (p. 41). This calls above all for political decisions in the direction of greater distributive justice (p. 221). The findings of the market research study commissioned by the Earth4All initiative and involving 20,000 persons living in the G20 countries show that the majority of the persons polled expressed concern about the current state of the planet and its future (>58%); were aware of the human responsibility for these dangerous tipping points being reached (73%); definitely want the planet to be better stewarded and protected (83%); and stated the opinion that the economic priorities of their country should focus on human wellbeing and environmental protection rather than profit and increasing wealth (74%). Despite the nascent positive and caring global mind-set we can discern here, the findings should not be misunderstood as signaling a willingness to bear the costs for the change that is necessary (cf. Dixson-Declève et al. 2022, 220–1).

So how can fundamental about-turns come about? Following the discussion of psychodynamic concepts, to understand how individuals and society approach the climate crisis I would like to apply such concepts to one example from history and one from the current climate protest movement (which can be programmatically considered nonviolent) in order to shine a light on the struggle relating to tipping points.

Social tipping points

At the personal level, people may have the feeling that their own pro-environmental and climate-friendly actions are to no effect. Using the paradigm of social tipping points, climate experts and political scientists have defined comparatively small but very impactful interventions that can be assumed to have great leverage for the changes that are necessary (Otto

and Herrmann 2021)—i.e., we can expect to see a cumulation of positive effects. These include climate communication and the use of the (creative) means of civil disobedience. The formula behind this, inspired by mass psychology: The committed action of a small fraction of a population can suffice to achieve the changes necessary and gain the backing of the majority of people for them (Erika Chenoweth in Herrmann 2021; cf. Thunberg 2022a). This offers hope for a future that can succeed.

Beyond power: Abraham's about-turn

Alongside the Oedipus-Laius myth, the Old Testament narrative of Abraham and his binding of Isaac is another influential story that takes as its subject matter the attempted killing of a child as a symbol for the prefigured failure of generativity. Both narratives have already been linked to each other from a psychoanalytical perspective elsewhere (e.g., Weineck 2010), although here I shall not consider the comparison drawn there.

We accompany Abraham, whom part of humanity considers to be the so-called Ur-father, on the path to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22), and the biblical story outlines that this does not happen out of malevolence or egotism, but out of obedience to God. The narrative is full of tension right through to the gesture of filicide—and it goes no further than a gesture: As Isaac lies tied to the sacrificial altar, Abraham has already raised his arm with the knife and is about to kill him when the voice of the messenger sent by God releases him from the duty of killing his son, and Isaac's life is spared (Weineck 2010). Relying on biblical and literary studies, Israeli-German philosopher Omri Boehm (2022), who teaches in the United States, establishes that the messenger's voice was probably added to the text later. He deduces from this that in the original version of the story, Abraham's decision led to him finding a solution to keep his son alive. In Boehm's interpretation (Boehm 2022), Abraham refuses to obey God as a supra-ordinated authority and in this way at that moment creates the binding moral idea of justice, thus delivering on what Kant associated with the courage and duty to think for oneself—contrary to Kant's own accusation that Abraham only acted out of blind obedience. The call for justice is indivisible; in other words, it has universal validity—across identities and identity groups (Boehm 2022).

I find the story of Abraham fitting as regards the topic of climate and generational justice because in it we are taken straight to the tipping point and can experience how the tie to a destructive act is interrupted and the emerging abyss is overcome by the recognition of an alternative. We may feel reminded here of Bion's theory of thinking. From the Kleinian viewpoint of object relations, the protagonist gains the depressive position, is willing to anticipate the sorrow over the pending loss, to be conscious of the outrageously aggressive quality of his act, to raise his eyes and discern an alternative. The choice of the actual victim follows the generative-protective thought: The ram, not a lamb, falls victim to Abraham's gaze. We can only assume that this switch was initiated by something that arose from the intergenerational communication between Abraham and Isaac: Perhaps, looking into his son's eyes, Abraham was swayed to opt for positive power (see above Lévinas, quoted in Orange 2017) and to assume responsibility for the ethical-generative dilemma such that, through this linkage, a space between the two arose that provided support. Abraham recognizes the obligation to adopt a generational-protective and just stance, meaning that neither the yearnings of the father nor the narcissistic search for short-term happiness in the ocean of emotions (cf. Freud 1930) are allowed to outtrump the recognition of the child's

quite literal infantile dependence on help and its suffering. We can read Abraham's new insight (Boehm 2022), in keeping with Butler's thinking, as the necessary disobedience toward an archaic-tyrannical superego that serves violence and the subsequent enthronement of a more life-affirming version of the superego—a blueprint for subsequent generations. Here, the notion of justice (or, as Butler might put it, of equality) lays claim to universal validity if it is committed to life, i.e., to future generations over and above its own identity.

Freud extracts the basic figure of a vertical tie to parental law (cf. Freud 1930, 1933) from the original context of the family in order to use it more abstractly by granting it a greater force tying the individual to the family head and his rules—in the democracies of the Industrial Age, it is society and its institutions that take on said role. With reference to the climate crisis, we could imagine an appeal here to influential representatives of the three pillars of institutional power (politics, business, the media) as well as the owners of the greatest wealth, appealing to them to intensively contribute to achieving the necessary climate goals, to adhering to the "safe operating spaces for humanity" (see above), and to demystifying and invalidating ideologies that are damaging to the climate (cf. Mann 2021).

Freud (1930) cites another, albeit weaker force that can likewise be highly effective. It consists of the attachment forces that run horizontally, that apply between likeminded persons, if the peers join forces through identification. The climate protest movement juggles these two forces, as I shall try to show in the next section, taking the example of the Last Generation initiative whose struggle to gain the attention of politicians and the media is focused on achieving social turnaround points.

Civil disobedience by the Letzte Generation

In recent years, various different climate protest movements have taken shape worldwide that are committed to nonviolent protest in keeping with the paradigm of civil disobedience (cf. Braune 2017), among them Extinction Rebellion, Ende Gelände, and Letzte Generation. Civil disobedience has long since emerged in democracies as an effective means of negotiating interests, although the tool of disobedience still faces considerable criticism given that it walks a tightrope between legality and legitimacy (Braune 2017). Since early 2022, the Letzte Generation (Last Generation) movement, which takes its cue from democratic values (see: https://letztegeneration.de/en/mitmachen/werte-protestkonsens/), has grown and now attracts great attention in Germany, polarizing opinion to the point where some seek to treat it as a criminal organization. The activists' repertoire includes activities destined to disrupt, interrupt, or constrain the flow of everyday activities of many people that are climate-damaging and thus constitute climate and generational injustice (e.g., gluing themselves to autobahn surfaces during rush hour or during holiday traffic) or by attacking valuable cultural assets (e.g., monuments). After the initially more moderate acts (e.g., chaining themselves to gas pipelines) went comparatively unnoticed, the group's acts are now hitting the headlines in an attempt to set in motion changes in legislation that are necessary to overcome anthropogenic climate change and the power relations underpinning it. To this end, the activists, and they were initially mainly young people, are willing to run the risk of being disciplined by the forces of state, indeed potentially taken into custody. In the process, they do not remain anonymous but explicitly seek to reveal their own identities, i.e.,

they do not hide their faces or conceal their names but stand tall for their acts (https://letztegeneration.de/en/mitmachen/werte-protestkonsens/).

The Letzte Generation's disruptive acts are aimed at directly affecting humans' symbiotic-adhesive dependence on technology, as a result of which our dependence on nature (cf. Butler 2021) is rendered unperceived in favor of an ideal constituted by the independence of our industrialized world—something that can only be put in place and maintained by denial and at great intersubjective cost. The actions offer a view of the obstacles and hindrances we can expect to experience owing to dramatic climate events (e.g., flood disasters, heatwaves, drought, water scarcity) that can already be felt in many regions of the world—where they are also disruptive and, above all, increasingly unsettling in the dual sense of the term. For a comparatively short, albeit intense moment, the disruptive actions render tangible the helplessness that can presumably be expected down the road—should the climate and environmental damage assume irreversible proportions, as they constrain the automatic routine of everyday life and highlight the illusion of narcissistic fantasies of omnipotence. Moreover, they apply pressure at a specific point, namely the human desire for symbolic immortality (cf. Lifton 1979) when they attack a mode of symbolic survival, for example artworks, memorials with a great symbolic value. The very name of the initiative emphasizes humanity's precarious situation and can be associated with finitude and the end of the biological mode of symbolized immortality (Lifton 1979).

The activists' dilemma (*Activist's Dilemma*, Feinberg, Willer, and Kovacheff 2020) is clear: A protest is especially impactful if it attracts attention and thus boosts its prospects of influencing political decision-making. At the same time, the especially effective forms of protest alienate potential supporters, and identification among the general public falls. Climate activists thus find themselves in a recognition vacuum. They are derogatorily termed "climate stickers/Klimakleber," narratives are created in which they are compared with terrorist groupings ("climate terrorists") and some of them are subject of a raid (May 2023)—thus distracting attention from the actual source of the disquiet, namely the anthropogenic climate catastrophe. Why do such actions trigger so much aggression among individuals and society? The aggression involved here is that which is repressed, denied, and thus held in check by apathy and "business as usual" (cf. Orange 2017; Weintrobe 2013) and is now projected onto the protest scene and fought against—with the support of ideology and propaganda (Mann 2021). However, the degree of unpopularity does not tell us what political and social impact a protest form can have in the medium term. The Letzte Generation's actions are having an impact. If we ignore the tendentious media coverage in the gutter press for a moment, then the serious national media in Germany, while often being critical and condescending, nevertheless often publish differentiated coverage on the actions of Letzte Generation that underline possible starting points for the necessary transformations (e.g., transportation and energy transitions). This is concrete evidence that demonstrations can lead to social debate through discussion (cf. Horn and Mitscherlich 1982).

The individual is out of her/his depth at many levels when it comes to imagining the climate catastrophe and coping with the notion. For this reason, protecting the climate (and the same applies to protecting biodiversity, water, etc.) is a communal task. The invariable experience of climate feelings can only be endured, metabolized, and finally symbolized jointly, communally. Such feelings can range from: shame when becoming conscious of one's own negligent lifestyle; sorrow at the loss of the

familiar, perhaps one could even say sorrow at the loss of culture; uncertainty over whether one's own thoughts are not perhaps stuck in a cycle of enjoyment of the apocalypse; or uncertainty whether sympathy for the activities does not perhaps attest to a restricted container function. One starting point for personal change would be to develop an alternative ego ideal (cf. Lear 2008), something that, however, presumes that the future socio-political environment will exhibit the corresponding supportive features. Letzte Generation's value and consensus portfolio (like that of other climate protest initiatives) includes an insistence on nonviolence, respect, and recognition that apply equally and justly to both one's own person and to others, irrespective of whether the others belong to one's own in-group, to the (at times strident, vocal, and aggressive) critics of the protests, or to the system decision-makers. There is an explicit call here (pointing to an advanced development of the superego and ego structures) to recognize and consider one's own feelings and limits as well as those of the Others (cf. Mitscherlich 1970). We can therefore say that we can derive from the climate movement an understanding of power and cooperative freedom (Neubauer and Ulrich 2021) that is also to be found in psychoanalytical concepts (see above).

In her socio-critical/socio-philosophical treatise "Revolution für das Leben," Eva von Redecker (2020) elaborates alternatives to the destructive rage of capitalist societies. She conceives them as interstices in which the activities of regenerating, sharing, and nurturing can be developed on the back of the old until they can stand their ground as counter-projects to profit maximization and a fixation on and destruction of property. The "revolution for life" is not meant as a heroic act of sacrifice but is an everyday, regular exercise that can proceed under the premise of nonviolence in a spirit of shared, communal attachment—and this is what gives rise to the anxiety-reducing impact in the face of the threat of climate catastrophe (cf. von Redecker 2020). Here, structures of the I, the We, and "For us all" can be intensively and actively practiced.

The current crises and catastrophes confront us with the shattering of (world) orders (cf. Scholz 2023; Kaven 2020, in Habibi-Kohlen 2023), and we can imagine that our way of life on Earth is coming to an end. This is all happening without us already understanding everything and being uncertain about how the world will change, which spawns great ethical pressures (Lear 2008) that can be used to calibrate humans' so-called second nature in interaction with the structures of the respective culture and its surrounding reality. Philosopher and psychoanalyst Jonathan Lear (e.g., 2008) describes the successful process of a fundamental cultural transformation of an indigenous people that started with the traditional-ritualized interaction between representatives of the young and the older generations. In this context, Lear derives a notion of radical hope from Aristotle's concept of virtues and Kant's definition of the human condition. Faced by the shattering of cultural foundations, the radicalness of hope is based on commitment to the idea that something good will arise, even though the idea of a future at this moment in time surpasses our knowledge. The precondition for this is courage, to follow a "good" as our pathfinder that is as yet unknown. Hope can unleash its transformative power in the recognition of reality and sorrow as regards damage that has already happened. Let me close by quoting Sally Weintrobe (2021):

> Children are our best source of hope because we love them, and because they are more realistic than most of us are (. . .) They, who will have to live in a damaged world, need our support to stop further damage and make the world as livable as possible (298–9).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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