

## Lloyd deMause (1931 – 2020) – Obituary

Lloyd deMause liked to tell me about his childhood in Detroit, where he grew up as the son of a car designer. I conclude from our many conversations that cars had always played a certain role in his life.

During his psychology studies at the Columbia University in New York, he was particularly interested in psychoanalytic theories. This interest was not shared by his professors at the time. Nonetheless, he started to research the history of childhood.

His first major work, *The History of Childhood*, 1974, was published in 1977. With this, he created the basis for explaining the interactions between the parent-child relationship and collective developments. This work was an international sensation, was translated into many languages and became key for his further research, which was dedicated to the exploration of the causes for progress or, as he called it: the psychogenic evolution. Lloyd deMause is viewed to this day as *the* founder of psychohistory as a science. Numerous university institutes around the world gladly accepted his publications and included his discoveries and theory models in their curricula. Dominated by a psychological-natural scientific notion of science, it was not easy for psychohistory to be regarded as a discipline in the world of science, as it messed with other scientific disciplines such as history, anthropology or the economy-critical social psychology.

In the 1970s, Lloyd deMause founded the Institute of Psychohistory. A publishing house formed the Institute's economic basis. When I personally met him for the first time in 1985, we met in his office on Broadway, where about 30 employees worked on a weekly ads gazette for selling used cars. The proceeds of the publishing house were used for his research, the foundation of the International Psychohistory Association and the publication of the *Journal of Psychohistory*. After selling the publishing house in the late 1980s, he focused entirely on basic psychohistorical research, on his goal of establishing a scientific organisation, and on networking with colleagues around the world. Amongst many others, he was in contact with Alice Miller and Erich Fromm. He visited Germany regularly in those days, and the circle of his workshop participants resulted in the largest psychohistory association outside the USA to date.

His third major success (after *Foundations of Psychohistory*, 1982) was published in 1984: *Reagan's America*, translated into German by Klaus Theweleit. In this book, deMause attempted in a unique simultaneous-historical experiment to analyse and interpret the American president during his term of office. He applied his hypotheses to the political and social events at the time – in part with seemingly prophetic methods that foretold the events in the near future, such as the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan, which he foretold during a lecture by analysing collective fantasy images. He called this method he created "Fantasy Analysis": Political events could be foretold by means of media images (cartoons, front pages, films).

His important scientific achievements include the model of psychoclasses he created, which describes the progress of humanity in rhythmical sequences of the same. Its basis are the six-step modes of childrearing, where every mode results in a psychoclass – innovative or regressive.

Lloyd deMause's works had always been transdisciplinary; he connected historical, anthropological, psychoanalytical, politological and neuropsychological findings from prenatal research, made logical connections between religious, fantasised and pragmatic historic developments, described the disastrous consequences of violence against children as cause for armed conflicts – and he started projects that empirically supported his theory, such as the foundation of parenting schools in Boulder, Colorado, with long-term evaluation of the social and economic consequences.

With his penultimate major work – a summa – *The Emotional Life of Nations* – Lloyd submitted his life's work to the public in 2002. It is an opus of symphonic quality, a fluently readable explanation of human

development that virtually calls for a critical discussion. It was his last book. Alzheimer's disease prevented him from publishing *The Childhood Origins of War* in book form.

Lloyd deMause's works and publications made him an important personality in the scientific community and stirred some controversy. A central conflict was deMause's rigorous rejection of economic theories of capitalist exploitation as cause for violence. In his opinion, the economy was only ever as violent as its actors, while politics did not even act economically reasonable when it provoked wars that cost considerably more than they gained. Humiliation and revenge, induced in early childhood, present the problem of psychogenic evolution, according to deMause's findings from his studies.

The importance of Lloyd deMause's works and theory models will continue to affect future generations. His fundamental idea has been reflected both in legislation and the specific progress in many Western countries, e.g. as laws punishing violence against children. He liked to assess the psychogenic state of a collective by means of – where available – child abuse statistics. He often baffled me with harsh responses to my questions, such as whether it was reasonable to include Turkey in the EU. He said it was much too early, and at least another three generations were needed until this should even be considered.

After our encounters in the 1980s, we lost sight of each other, until Jerrold Atlas, a companion of deMause, whom I provided with a guest professorship at the University of Klagenfurt, approached me in 2003 and requested the publication of "The Emotional Life of Nations" in German. This resulted in translation work which I attached to the condition that Lloyd would come to the 2005 book presentation in Austria, which he did reluctantly, but which he ultimately very much enjoyed. We then met again in London in 2006. He had been invited to give a lecture at the Winnicott Clinic. His lecture became a scandal, because he claimed that Austria and Germany had surpassed countries such as the USA and Great Britain with regard to modern childrearing.

In his apartment in Manhattan, where I often spent the night, I got to know him and his family. He was a man full of sincere kindness and warmth – a rare breed. When we last saw each other in NYC in 2013, we hugged each other only to become strangers in the next moment. Due to his Alzheimer's disease, which started at that time, he no longer recognised me.

Christian Lackner, Klagenfurt, on 29 April 2020, on behalf of the Board of the Gesellschaft für Psychohistorie und Politische Psychologie, GPPP [German Society for Psychohistory and Political Psychology]

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