

The whole process is no more dramatically evident than when couples are going through a separation or divorce. People's deepest fears and rage are unleashed in a vortex of paranoia, defiance, and self-doubt.

So many of our beliefs are not logical reality-based facts but rather an emotional disposition to life. And many of our behaviours are not logical responses to social stimuli but soothing rituals developed as a response to the mortal uncertainty of life and relationship.

Hidden from the world your secret inner life and its associated collection of idiosyncratic convictions and dispositions are like rituals, prayers, spells, magic omens, and affirmations that seek to protect you, make you feel safe, and reassure you of your worthiness.

Equally your overt everyday behaviour serves the function of ancient rituals, routines, and practices as you seek to achieve the predictability, safety, status and worthiness you long for on the pilgrimage of life.

Relationships:

The killer is that because the little things you believe and want are actually so vital to you that you co-opt your partner into this process where his/her behaviour become a symbol, a sign, and an image of your victory or salvation. He or she proves and validates you.

You can see in all of this that what is at issue and at stake for couples when they are embroiled in marital conflict or divorce is not just right and wrong as assessed by psychological standards, but one's existence – one's redemption, one's sense of justification.

Most societies create rituals for dealing with enemies who threaten their beliefs, status, or security. Each person in relationships does the same thing - we sacrifice, reject, attack, ignore, or banish the enemy that is our partner. Our beliefs and behaviour serve the purpose of securing our private redemption, salvation, victory, forgiveness, blessing, or atonement.

I cannot emphasise enough that our very personality style develops as a consequence of primitive religious impulses and concerns and remain so throughout life. We all outwardly justify our mild idiosyncratic needs as reasonable while inwardly we are haunted by how these idiosyncrasies reveal our hidden anxiety, if not terror, in a life we struggle to come to terms with.

Relationships are the unique container within which these religious and redemptive issues are played out.

The behaviour of couples in emotionally committed relationships is irrational when viewed through the lens of logic and psychology but it is consistent and meaningful

when viewed through the lens of anthropology and theology. When we are seen in our abject nakedness, facing into the storms of life, uncertain of where we came from and of our destiny we know only one thing – we are doomed to die. We inhabit a body that seems to betray us. We have a destiny that micks us yet we live in a world that is miraculous in its beauty.
