

Birth of the Self: Out of Dissociation into Creation through Relation

Psychoanalysis and Creativity: How Art and Spirituality Catalyze Emotional Growth

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Anais Nin, on “Birth”:

“...for where the seed of man and woman mingle, within the drops of blood exchanged, the changes that take place are the same as those of great flowing rivers of inheritance, which carry traits of character from father to son to grandson, traits of character as well as physical traits. Memories of experience are transmitted by the same cells which repeated the design of a nose, a hand, the tone of a voice, the color of an eye. These great flowing rivers of inheritance transmitted traits and carried dreams from port to port until fulfillment, and gave birth to selves never born before...No man and woman know what will be born in the darkness of their intermingling; so much besides children, so many invisible births, exchanges of soul and character, blossoming of unknown selves, liberation of hidden treasures, buried fantasies...” (Nin, 1959, *Four Chambered Heart*).

Birth of the Self: Art and Spirit

“It is most important that you should be born; you ought to come into this world—otherwise you can not realize the self, and the purpose of this world has been missed. Then you must simply be thrown back into the melting pot and be born again.” (Jung, *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1932*, p. 28-29).

“Every act of birth requires the courage to let go of something...to let go eventually of all certainties, and to rely on one thing: one’s own power to be aware and respond; that is, one’s creativity. To be creative means to consider the whole process of life as a process of birth... Man's main task in life is to give birth to himself, to become what he potentially is. The most important product of his effort is his own personality. Most people die before they are fully born. Creativeness means to be born before one dies” (Fromm, 1955).

“No event of adult life is so calculated to arouse our awe of the beauty and our wonder at the intricate workings of what we call Nature...as the events of procreation. No flower or bird of gorgeous plumage imposes upon us the mystery of the aesthetic experience like the sight of a young mother with her baby and the breast. We enter such a nursery as we would a cathedral or the great forests of the Pacific coast, noiselessly, bareheaded” (Meltzer, 1988, 16).

The Self

- The self is by definition the totality of all psychic facts and contents...You see, it is as if the self were trying to manifest in space and time, but since it consists of so many elements that have neither space nor time qualities, it cannot bring them altogether into space and time...The self consists, then, of the most recent acquisitions of the ego consciousness, and on the other side, of the archaic material. The self is a fact of nature and always appears as such in immediate experiences, in dreams and visions, and so on; it is the spirit in the stone, the great secret which has to be worked out, to be extracted from nature, because it is buried in nature herself. It is also most dangerous, just as dangerous as an archetypal invasion because it contains all the archetypes: one could say an archetypal experience was the experience of the self. It is like a personification of nature and of anything that can be experienced in nature, including what we call God. (Nietzsche's Zarathustra: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1934-1939, Vol. 1 (11 November 1931, p. 445).
- "The self, in its efforts at self-realization, reaches out beyond the ego-personality on all sides; because of its all-encompassing nature it is brighter and darker than the ego, and accordingly confronts it with problems which it would like to avoid...the experience of the self is always a defeat for the ego." (Mysterium Coniunctionis, 1955-56, CW 14, 778).

The Self

- “Intellectually the self is no more than a psychological concept, a construct that serves to express an unknowable essence which we cannot grasp as such, since by definition it transcends our powers of comprehension. It might equally well be called the “God within us.” The beginnings of our whole psychic life seem to be inextricably rooted in this point, and all our highest and ultimate purposes seem to be striving towards it. This paradox is unavoidable, as always, when we try to define something that lies beyond the bourn of our understanding.” (Jung, *The Relation between the Ego and the Unconscious*, 1916/1928, CW 7, 399).

- “I am unable to envisage anything beyond the self, since it is—by definition—a borderline concept designating the unknown totality of man: there are no known limits to the unconscious. There is no reason whatsoever why you should or should not call the beyond-self Christ or Buddha or Purusha or Tao or Khidir or Tifereth. All these terms are recognizable formulations of what I call the “self.” (Jung, *Jung and Religious Belief*, 1958, CW 18, 1672).

- “The term self is often mixed up with the idea of God. I would not do that. I would say that the term self should be reserved for that sphere which is within the reach of human experience, and we should be very careful not to use the word God too often. As we use it, it borders on impertinence; it is unlawful to use such a concept too often. The experience of the self is so marvelous and so complete that one is of course tempted to use the conception of God to express it. I think it is better not to, because the self has the peculiar quality of being specific yet universal. It is a restricted universality or a universal restrictedness, a paradox; so it is a relatively universal being and therefore doesn't deserve to be called “God.” You could think of it as an intermediary, or a hierarchy of ever-widening figures of the self till one arrives at the conception of a deity. So we should reserve that term God for a remote deity that is supposed to be the absolute unity of all singularities. The self would be the preceding stage, a being that is more than man and that definitely manifests; that is the thinker of our thoughts, the doer of our deeds, the maker of our lives, yet it is still within the reach of human experience.” (Jung, Nietzsche's Zarathustra: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1934-1939, Vol. II, 3 June 1936, pp. 977-78.)

The Self

- "When it comes to a concept of the self, we have to look into how the self is structured. As with all realities, the self is inherently relational. It is always in relation to other selves in the human community. From birth, even from conception, this is so. If when the baby was born there was no tendency in it to find its way to the mother, to the breast, it would die. This relational nature permeates all the parts of the self in the way that gravity permeates all matter. We shall come to see, as we go on, that the core of narcissism is a hatred of the relational---a hatred of something that is inherent in our being...In its hatred of the relational, one of the ways that narcissism operates is to destroy separateness. In people dominated by narcissistic currents there is a failure of separateness between themselves and others, and they will assume that you think in the same way that they think" (Symington, 1993).

The Self

- “Self-experience originates in relatively unlinked self-states, each coherent in its own right, and that the experience of being a unitary self is an acquired, developmentally adaptive illusion. It is when this illusion of unity is traumatically threatened with unavoidable, precipitous disruption that it becomes in itself a liability, because it is in jeopardy of being overwhelmed by input it cannot process symbolically and deal with as a state of conflict. When the illusion of unity is too dangerous to be maintained there is then a return to the simplicity of dissociation as a proactive, defensive response to the potential repetition of trauma (Bromberg, 1996).
- It is only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self. Bound up with this is the fact that only in playing is communication possible” (Winnicott, 1971)

Out of Dissociation into Creation through Relation

Affect is primary in the psyche/unconscious

- **Affect:** Central organizing principle of psyche (Jung, CW 3)
 - “The essential basis of our personality is affectivity. Thought and action are, as it were, only symptoms of affectivity.” (Jung, CW 3, 78).
 - Affect lends an experience a particular feeling-tone and meaning that may *link or sever* discrepant pieces of the experience together (images, thoughts, memories, sensations).
 - “A content can only be integrated when its double aspect has become conscious and when it is grasped not merely intellectually but according to its feeling-value. Intellect and feeling are difficult to put into one harness—they conflict with one another by definition. Whoever identifies with an intellectual standpoint will occasionally find his feeling confronting him like an enemy... (Aion, 1951, CW 9ii, 58).

Out of Dissociation into Creation through Relation

Dissociability of Psyche:

- Foundational: Inherent: How psyche is structured
- On continuum: Normal to pathological

• “There is an age-old experience of mankind which is reflected in the universal supposition of a plurality of souls in one and the same individual. As the plurality of psychic components at primitive levels shows, the original state is one in which the psychic processes are very loosely knit and by no means form a self-contained unity...it often takes only a little to shatter the unity of consciousness so laboriously built up in the course of development...” (Jung, CW 8, 365)

• “Let us turn to the question of the psyche’s tendency to split. Although this peculiarity is most clearly observable in psychopathology, fundamentally it is a normal phenomenon. The tendency to split means that parts of the psyche detach themselves from consciousness to such an extent that they not only appear foreign but lead an autonomous life of their own” (Jung, CW 8, 253).

- Contrasts with model of psyche that emphasizes repression and conflict

Out of Dissociation into Creation through Relation

- “Dissociation... is a normal *process* that can become a mental *structure*.” (Bromberg, 2003)
- “Dissociation is primarily a means through which a human being maintains personal continuity, coherence, and integrity of the sense of self” (Bromberg, 1996).
- “[Dissociation’s] key quality is the ability to retain the adaptational protection afforded by the separateness of self-states, but only insofar as each plays a proactively assigned role. This preserves most socially developed areas of ego functioning, but renders them into relatively mechanical instrumentalities of survival—a cure that is often worse than the disease” (Bromberg, 2009).

Out of Dissociation into Creation through Relation

Dissociability of Psyche:

- Ontologically developmental: dynamic and emergent
 - Influenced by experience: interplay of archetypes and complexes
 - Self-regulating, adaptive function
 - Expression of the existence of the Creative Psyche
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- “The inherent tendency of the psyche to split means on the one hand dissociation into multiple structural units, but on the other hand the possibility of change and differentiation. It allows certain parts of the psychic structure to be singled out so that, by the concentration of the will, they can be trained and brought to their maximum development” (Jung, CW 8, 255).
 - “...the connecting link between the psychic processes themselves is a very conditional one. Not only are unconscious processes sometimes strangely independent of the experiences of the conscious mind, but the conscious processes, too, show a distinct loosening or discreteness” (Jung, CW 8, 365)

Out of Dissociation into Creation through Relation

- “The power of dissociation when used as a defense... is a defense unlike any other. In human beings, it bypasses cognitive modulation systems and...is clearly anchored in an evolutionary response that is equivalent in survival priority” (Bromberg, 2003).
- “If one believes, as do I, that mental functioning is an ongoing dialectic between dissociation and conflict, then I am willing to retain the term repression for convenience. I may eventually give up the concept of repression because I certainly don’t use it in any way similar to how Freudians, contemporary or otherwise, use it in ego psychology’s conflict theory” (Bromberg, 2009).
- “A patient’s shift from dissociation to conflict is a complex process in which realities that have been kept apart by discontinuous states of consciousness are gradually able to be held within a single transitional state of mind” (Bromberg, 2003).

Out of Dissociation into Creation through Relation

- Relationship that enters into the patient's psyche is required to heal dissociation.
- "...the analytical method is most unassailable just where the cathartic method is most shaky: that is, in the relationship between doctor and patient. It matters little that, even today, the view prevails in many quarters that analysis consists mainly in "digging up" the earliest childhood complex in order to pluck out the evil by the root. That is merely the aftermath of the old trauma theory."(Jung, CW 16, 276).

Out of Dissociation into Creation through Relation

- The transference is the way of entering into the therapeutic relationship.
- "...the therapeutic effect comes from the doctor's efforts to enter into the psyche of his patient, thus establishing a psychologically adapted relationship. For the patient is suffering precisely from the absence of such a relationship. Freud himself has long recognized that the transference is the alpha and omega of psychoanalysis. The transference is the patient's attempt to get into psychological rapport with the doctor. He needs this relationship if he is to overcome the dissociation" (Jung, CW 16, 276).
- "...the essential factor is the dissociation of the psyche and not the existence of a highly charged affect and, consequently, that the main therapeutic problem is not abreaction but how to integrate the dissociation" (Jung, CW 16, 266).

Out of Dissociation into Creation through Relation

Relationship that enters into the patient's psyche is required to heal dissociation.

- “But I rather question whether the thing is as simple as that, or whether there may not be other factors essential to the process. For it must be emphasized that mere rehearsal of the experience does not itself pose a curative effect: the experience must be rehearsed in the presence of the doctor....the intervention of the doctor is absolutely necessary. One can easily see what it means to the patient when he can confide his experience to an understanding and sympathetic doctor. His conscious mind finds in the doctor a moral support against the unmanageable affect of his traumatic complex. No longer does he stand alone in his battle with these elemental powers, but some one whom he trusts reaches out a hand, lending him moral strength to combat the tyranny of uncontrolled emotion (Jung, CW 16, 269-270).

Out of Dissociation into Creation through Relation

Relationship that enters into the patient's psyche is required to heal dissociation.

- “In this way the integrative powers of his conscious mind are reinforced until he is able once more to bring the rebellious affect under control. This influence on the part of the doctor, which is absolutely essential, may, if you like, be called suggestion. For myself, I would rather call it his human interest and personal devotion. These are the properties of no method, nor can they ever become one; they are moral qualities which are of the greatest importance in all methods of psychotherapy, and not in the case of the abreaction alone” (Jung, CW16, 270-271).

Art, Creativity and Emotional Growth

- “The creative process, so far as we are to follow it at all, consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image, and in elaborating and shaping this image into the finished work. By giving, it shape, the artist translates it into the language of the present, and so makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life. Therein lies the social significance of art: it is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking. The unsatisfied yearning of the artist reaches back to the primordial image in the unconscious which is best fitted to compensate the inadequacy and one-sidedness of the present. The artist seizes on this image, and in raising it from deepest unconsciousness he brings it into relation with conscious values, thereby transforming it until it can be accepted by the minds of his contemporaries according to their powers.” (Jung, On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry, 1922, CW15, 130).

Art, Creativity and Emotional Growth

- “The fight against the paralysing grip of the unconscious calls forth man’s creative powers. That is the source of all creativity, but it needs heroic courage to do battle with these forces and to wrest from the them the treasure hard to attain. Whoever succeeds in this has triumphed indeed.” (Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, 1912/1952, CW 5, 523).
- “We know that every good idea and all creative work are the offspring of the imagination, and have their source in what one is pleased to call infantile fantasy. Not the artist alone, but every creative individual whatsoever owes all that is greatest in his life to fantasy. The dynamic principle of fantasy is play, a characteristic also of the child, and as such it appears inconsistent with the principle of serious work. But without this playing with fantasy no creative work has ever yet come to birth. The debt we owe to the play of imagination is incalculable. It is therefore short-sighted to treat fantasy, on account of its risky or unacceptable nature, as a thing of little worth. It must not be forgotten that it is just in the imagination that a man’s highest value may lie. (Jung, *Psychological Types*, 1921, CW 6, 93).

Art, Creativity and Emotional Growth

- “Besides the obvious personal sources, creative fantasy also draws upon the forgotten and long buried primitive mind with its host of images, which are to be found in the mythologies of all ages and all peoples. The sum of these images constitutes the collective unconscious, a heritage which is potentially present in every individual. It is the psychic correlate of the differentiation of the human brain. This is the reason why mythological images are able to rise spontaneously over and over again, and to agree with one another not only in all the corners of the wide earth, but at all times. As they are present always and everywhere, it is an entirely natural proceeding to relate mythologems, which may be very far apart both temporally and ethnically, to an individual fantasy system. The creative substratum is everywhere this same human psyche and this same human brain, which, with relatively minor variations, functions everywhere in the same way.” (Jung, Symbols of Transformation, 1912/1952, CW 5, p. xxix).

Art, Creativity and Emotional Growth

- “...to build a house where an old house stands, you must first destroy the old house. We must go a bit deeper and realize that with the instinct of creation is always connected a destructive something; the creation in its own essence is also destructive. You see that quite clearly in the moment when you check the creative impulse: nothing is more poisonous to the nervous system than a disregarded or checked creative impulse. It even destroys people’s organic health. It is dangerous because there is that extraordinary destructive quality in the creative thing. Just because it is the deepest instinct, the deeper power in man, a power which is beyond conscious control, and because it is on the other side the function which creates the greatest value, it is most dangerous to interfere with it.” Jung, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1934-1939, Vol. 1, 30, October, 1935, p. 654).

Art, Creativity and Emotional Growth

- “You choose a dream, or some other fantasy-image, and concentrate on it by simply catching hold of it and looking at it. You can also use a bad mood as a starting point, and then try to find out what sort of fantasy-image it will produce, or what image expresses this mood. You then fix this image in the mind by concentrating your attention. Usually it will alter as the mere fact of contemplating it animates it. The alterations must be carefully noted down all the time, for they reflect the psychic processes in the unconscious background, which appear in the form of images consisting of conscious memory material. In this way, conscious and unconscious are united, just as a waterfall connects above and below.” (Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, (1955/1956, CW 14, 706).

Art, Creativity and Emotional Growth

- “There is always more than we can ever possibly digest. But we try to break off, bite off some bit of trauma glob or chunk and chew on it, turn it this way and that, dream it, rework it, develop expressive symbols and gestures. In some form or other, through dance, music, painting, poetry, hopefully psychotherapy, we slowly develop, over thousands of years, an emotional language, a digestive language.” - Michael Eigen (Monti, 2006).
- “Whether visual or dramatic, the artistic metaphor suggests that ‘function,’ the actualization of the shared creative effort, is paramount, whereas specific, concrete elements of frame or set are secondary, playing a supportive role to the unique therapeutic vision created by the therapeutic dyad” (Bass, 2007).

Art, Creativity and Emotional Growth

- “The creative process is, according to Freud, an alternative to neurosis, that is a defense mechanism protecting against neurosis, leading thus to the production of a socially acceptable source of entertainment and pleasure for the public. For the artist has the ability of turning his fantasies into artistic creations instead of into symptoms. The unconscious plays a major role in the act of creation. That is, the act of creation is made possible by the libido, the energy of the id, and by a defense mechanism considered to be the most beneficial- sublimation. By turning the sexual desire into a cultural manifestation with the help of the ego, sublimation makes the thoughts of the unconscious more acceptable to the conscious and it also allows for something of production and pleasant, for the others as well,” (Drobot, 2014).
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Art, Creativity and Emotional Growth

- “There is a direct development from transitional phenomena to playing, and from playing to shared playing, and from this to cultural experiences.... It is in this area, where fantasy and reality overlap, that creativity, including the basis for adult cultural life, and play originate.” (Winnicott, 1971)
- “The spontaneous gesture comes from the true self, and the individual who is able to be spontaneous is, therefore, living creatively.” (Winnicott, 1971)
- “...playing and cultural experience are things that we do value in a special way; these link the past, the present and the future; they take up time and space. They demand and get our concentrated deliberate attention, deliberate but without too much of the deliberateness of trying.” (Winnicott, 1971)
- “Allow for that which cannot be digested, assimilated or easily interpreted. There will always be something in each of us (as in art) that remains alien, unknown, mysterious and untranslatable.” (Spelman & Thomson-Salo, 2014)

Art, Creativity and Emotional Growth

- “Loewald, in elaborating his view of psychoanalysis as an art, and the fantasy character of the psychoanalytic situation, compared psychoanalysis to a dramatic art, in which the analyst and patient conspire in the creation of an illusion, a play” (Bass, 2007)
- There is a “creative principle at the center of the personality whose substance is generosity, gratitude or forgiveness” (Symington, 2008).
- “So this *formative power* born out of generosity of spirit is capable of transforming a frustrating element into a catalyst for new discovery and surprising avenues of possibility opening out before us” (Symington, 2008).
- “The art of being an analyst require attention to the intuitive, poetic, symbolic narrative that emerges in an analytic session.” (Knox, 2003)

Art, Creativity and Emotional Growth

- “Art itself can be regarded as a defense mechanism. The artistic creation may be, for the artist, wish fulfillment or fantasy gratification of desires denied by the reality principle or prohibited by moral codes. Art is thus a means of giving expression to, and dealing with, various psychic pressures. The artist can work his fantasy- a substitute for satisfaction- by means of sublimation, into a socially acceptable form, art, that the others can enjoy. He works out the personal in his daydreams, fantasies into something he can share with the public,” (Drobot, 2014).
- “[Jung] extends creative functioning by further dividing artistic creativity into two categories, psychological art, and visionary art. It is psychological art which appears to be generated by primary processes. Thus, psychoanalytic theory seems best able to explain psychological art and creative acts where the incentive is not the act itself, but rather relief from pain, anxiety, or sexual tension. Explaining creativity solely as sublimated sexual energy, and libidinal curiosity is...reductionist and cannot interpret all of its dimension,” (Jung, 1953, cited by Bergquist, 2011).

Spirituality and Emotional Growth

- “I want to make clear that by the term “religion” I do not mean a creed. It is, however, true that every creed is originally based, on the hand, upon the experience of the numinosum and, on the other hand, upon pistis, that is to say trust or loyalty, faith and confidence in a certain experience of a numinous nature and in the change of consciousness that ensues. The conversion of Paul is a striking example of this. We might say, then, that the term religion designates the attitude peculiar to a consciousness which has been changed by experience of the numinosum.” (Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, 1938/1940, CW 11, 9)
- This spirit is an autonomous psychic happening, a hush that follows the storm, a reconciling light in the darkness of man’s mind, secretly bringing order into the chaos of his soul. [“A Psychological Approach to the Trinity,” CW 11, par. 260.]

Spirituality and Emotional Growth

- “The unconscious is the only available source of religious experience. This is certainly not to say that what we call the unconscious is identical with God or is set up in his place. It is simply the medium from which religious experience seems to flow. As to what the further cause of such experience might be, the answer to this lies beyond the range of human knowledge. Knowledge of God is a transcendental problem.” (Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, 1957, CW 10, 565).
- “Religion means dependence on and submission to the irrational facts of experience.” (Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, 1957, CW 10, 505).

Spirituality and Emotional Growth

- “The teaching of the past, for example, of St. Paul or Jesus, can be edifying, but in itself does nothing. Paul himself had a sudden revelation. Unless there is a personal religious experience—realizing from the inside what it means—nothing happens. Such an experience can take many forms, for instance falling in love; anything which is really lived.” (Conversation with E.A. Bennet, 7 July, 1959, *Meetings with Jung*, pp. 92-93.)
- Religious observances, i.e. the retelling and ritual repetition of the mythical event, consequently serve the purpose of bringing the image of childhood, and everything connected with it, again and again before the eyes of conscious mind so that the link with the original condition may not be broken.” (Jung, *The Psychology of the Child Archetype*, 1940, CW 9i, 275).
- “The soul possesses by nature a religious function.” (Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, CW 12, 14).

Spirituality and Emotional Growth

- “A lot of therapy is about the slow recovery of faith, at least more of it, a more informed faith, wiser, fuller, ready for anything.” (Eigen, 2007a)
- “An overlap between spirituality and psychoanalysis involves vision of destructiveness. There are moments one sees how bad one is, the injury one inflicts, endless depths of destructiveness.” (Eigen, 2001b)
- “Psychoanalysts and prophets have faith in new beginnings.” (Eigen, 2001b).
- “The source of sanity lies in generosity of heart, when generosity is absent we are left with madness” (Symington, 2008).

Birth and Rebirth in Analysis

- Birth and rebirth manifest in analysis in three general ways: “primary”; “secondary”; “tertiary.”
- **Theme of birth and rebirth:** Analysis that engages with birth material connects with the “birth story,” providing the possibility for the emergence of a “transformed birth story.”
- **Birth and Rebirth--range of meanings:** archetypal and developmental; concrete and symbolic; fantasy and reality; intrapsychic and interpersonal.
 - “...this is an area of human experience about which vague, oversimplistic generalisations tend to be presented as precise facts. This is to be regretted for these are states which need particularly cautious analysis and statement, plus an aptitude for evocative and apt description. Such workers often seem to be concretising as bodily events, elementary psychological events...” (Tustin, 1981).

- “...the swelling belly tends to galvanize both the expectant mother and others. In many places the pregnant mother is deemed numinous—in a liminal state, perspicaciously aware of the unseen, quintessentially feminine; in touch with the unconscious, with ancestors or with the supernatural. She may be variously treated as vulnerable, susceptible, and in need of care, or as powerful and potentially dangerous. If linked with omniscient “Mother” Nature, she is ascribed creative powers and may be attributed special qualities of unconscious divination, intuition, or sorcery: in highly intellectualized societies she is often patronizingly regarded as dippy, scatty, irrational, or overemotional.” (Rafael-Leff, 2004, p. 320).

- “...the laden womb is a salient reminder of one’s own origins in the pungent amniotic sea within a female container, the powerful, archaic, life-bearing, death-dealing mother of gestation. Furthermore, pregnancy breaks all axiomatic rules: not one, but two persons occupy one body. Tethered together in constant symbiosis, possibly of different sexes, they reside in a state of union: one inside the other, while yet inexorably moving toward separation, when a new one will emerge out of the living flesh of the (m)other” (Rafael-Leff, 2004, p. 320).
- **Birth constellates anxieties and complexes around:**
 - **Formation**—normality, creativity, destructiveness
 - **Containment**—being held, occupied and known within (possession, exposure, contamination)
 - **Preservation**—being sustained, protected, nourished
 - **Transformation**—“Seed” into baby, fluids into milk, fantasy into reality.
 - **Separation**—from womb; risk of miscarriage, loss, internal depletion
(Rafael-Leff, 2004, pp. 320-321)

- Primary, necessary, regressive, developmental process
 - Arising from a “mismanaged psychological birth” (Tustin, 1981).
 - Regressive mental states characterized by a pull to “return” to the womb or early infancy, and recapture or experience, for the first time, a missed or disturbed birth, infancy or childhood.
 - “There are plenty of people who are not yet born. They all seem to be here, they walk about—but as a matter of fact, they are not yet born, because they are behind a glass wall, they are in the womb. They are in the world only on parole and are soon to be returned to the pleroma [fullness] where they started originally. They have not formed a connection with this world; they are suspended in the air; they are neurotic, living the provisional life.” (Jung, *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1932*, p. 28).

- “The neurosis is as a rule a pathological, one-sided development of the personality, the imperceptible beginnings of which can be traced back almost indefinitely into the earliest years of childhood. Only a very arbitrary judgment can say where the neurosis actually begins. If we were to relegate the determining cause as far back as the patient’s prenatal life, thus involving the physical and psychic disposition of the parents at the time of conception and pregnancy—a view that seems not at all improbable in certain cases—such an attitude would be more justifiable than the arbitrary selection of a definite point of neurotic origin in the individual life of the patient” (Jung, CW 16, 257-258).

- Maieutic transference/countertransference

- “In the maieutic process, the central exchanges within the analytic relationship are seen as revolving around creativity and the revelation of the self not mastery (power) or healing (shamanism) but birthing is the root metaphor for what is taking place...During times of struggle in this birth-giving, the analyst may want to attend to ego anxieties but the basic commitment remains to a creative process that is appearing out of the invisible recesses of the unconscious.” (Stein, 2015).

- Infused with unprocessed experiences in body, implicit, or nondeclarative memory comprised of perceptual, behavioral, emotional, and somatosensory experience.

- Particularly significant with relational neglect and trauma.

Birth and Rebirth in Analysis

– “Second birth” or “rebirth” work (“Secondary”)

- Birth, emergence, and development of one’s authentic self.
- Five forms of rebirth: *metempsychosis* (transmigration of souls), *reincarnation* (in a human body), *resurrection*, *psychological rebirth* (individuation) and indirect change from *participation in the process of transformation*.
 - Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again[b] he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You[d] must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:3-8)
- Birth experienced as a symbol, metaphor, or signifier for the partially known which captures the unborn, unsymbolized, unexperienced, and unimagined in the self.
 - “Personality is a seed that can only develop by slow stages throughout life. There is no personality without definiteness, wholeness and ripeness. These three qualities cannot and should not be expected of the child, as they would rob it of childhood. It would be nothing but an abortion, a premature pseudo-adult...” (Jung, 1954).

Birth and Rebirth in Analysis

- Emergence of more whole self-development (“Tertiary”)
 - Precursor to more complete psychological, affective, relational, moral, and spiritual development.
 - “But how can I attain the knowledge of the heart? You can attain this knowledge only by living your life to the full. You live your life fully if you also live what you have never yet lived, but have left for others to live or to think” (Jung, 2009, p. 233).
 - Signifier of the unknown, portending the mysterious, creative, ineffable, unimagined, and unborn.
 - “Just where we don’t expect life, there it will be, because the life that we know is almost exhausted. The new life always comes from an unexpected corner (Jung Visions: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1930-1934, Vol. I, 27 May, 1931, p. 377).
 - “So long as he knows that he is the carrier of life and that it is therefore important for him to live, then the mystery of his soul lives also—no matter whether he is conscious of it or not. But if he no longer sees the meaning of his life in its fulfillment, and not longer believes in man’s eternal right to this fulfillment, then he has betrayed and lost his soul, substituting for it a madness which leads to destruction, as our time demonstrates all too clearly (Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, 1955-1956, CW 14, 201).

- Transformations in being, marked by more complete embodiment, transcendence with connection, and the maturation of complex human qualities: compassion, grace, wholeness, reverence, wonder, and creativity.
- Expression of the archetype of transformation (Campbell, 1969); the archetype of the self.
 - “Individuation appears on the one hand, as the synthesis of a new unity which previously consisted of scattered particles, and on the other hand, as the revelation of something which existed before the ego and is in fact its father or creator and also its totality.” (Jung, Transformation Symbolism in the Mass, 1942/1954, CW 11, 400).
 - “In the last analysis every life is the realization of the whole, that is, of a self, for which reason this realization can also be called “individuation.” (Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, 1944, CW 12, 330)
 - “The instinct of individuation is found everywhere in life, for there is no life on earth that is not individual. Each form of life is manifested in a differentiated being naturally, otherwise life could not exist. An innate urge of life is to produce an individual as complete as possible.” (Jung, The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1932, p. 4.)

Theoretical Viewpoints: Historical Overview

Sigmund Freud

“The process of birth is the first situation of danger, and the economic upheaval which it produces becomes the prototype of the reaction of anxiety” (Freud, 1926, p. 83).

“The first experience of anxiety...is birth, and, objectively speaking birth is separation from the mother...it would be very satisfactory if anxiety, as a symbol of separation, were... repeated on every...occasion...a separation took place...we are prevented from making use of this..by the fact that birth is not experienced subjectively as a separation from the mother...the fetus, being a completely narcissistic creature, is totally unaware of her existence” (Freud, 1926, p. 59).

“There is much more continuity between intra-uterine life and the earliest infancy than the impressive caesura of the act of birth would have us believe. What happens is that the child’s biological situation as a foetus is replaced for it by a psychical object-relation to its mother. But we must not forget that during its intra-uterine life the mother was not an object for the fetus... at that time there were no objects...It is obvious...there is no place for the abreaction of the birth-trauma” (Freud, 1926, p. 68).

“The essential thing about birth...is that it calls up ...a state of highly tense excitation...Let us call a state of this kind, before which the efforts of the pleasure principle break down, a ‘traumatic’ moment” (Freud, 1932, 782).

Otto Rank

“If one ventures to accept literally and seriously the origin of the anxiety-affect which Freud recognized as arising in the process of birth—and one is forced to do so by a number of experiences—then it is easy to realize how every infantile utterance of anxiety or fear is really a partial disposal of the birth anxiety...just as the anxiety of birth forms the basis of every anxiety or fear, so every pleasure has as its final aim the re-establishment of the intrauterine primal pleasure” (Rank, 1924, p. 17).

“It is proved, then, without doubt that the essential part of the work of analysis, the solving and freeing of the libido “neurotically” fixed on the analyst, is really neither more nor less than allowing the patient to repeat with better success in the analysis the separation from the mother. But this is by no means to be taken metaphorically in any way—not even in the psychological sense. For in the analytic situation the patient repeats, biologically, as it were, the period of pregnancy, and at the conclusion of the analysis—i.e. the re-separation from the substitute object—he repeats his own birth for the most part quite faithfully in all its details. The analysis finally turns out to be a belated accomplishment of the incompleted mastery of the birth trauma” (Rank, 1924, p. 5).

Carl Jung

“...mother, who was our first object, with whom we were truly and wholly one. She was our first experience of an outside and...an inside: from that interior world there emerged an image...a reflection of the external mother-image...” (Jung, 1956, CW 5, 500).

“The phenomenology of the ‘child’ s’ birth always points back to an original psychological state of non-recognition, i.e. of darkness or twilight, of non-differentiation between subject and object, of unconscious identity of man and the universe. This phase of non-differentiation...is both man and universe and yet neither, but an irrational third” (Jung, 1950, CW 9, 290).

“The road of regression leads back to childhood and into... the mother’s body...moral condemnation seizes upon the regressive tendency and tries by every trick of devaluation to prevent this sacrilegious return to the mother...therapy must support the regression, and continue to do so until the “prenatal” stage is reached....Hence, the regression leads back only apparently to the mother, in reality she is the gateway into the unconscious, into the “realm of the mothers.”...For regression, if left undisturbed, does not stop short at the “mother” but goes beyond her to the prenatal realm of the “Eternal Feminine,” to the immemorial world of archetypal possibilities where...“slumbers the divine child,” patiently awaiting his conscious realization” (Jung, 1956, CW 5, para 506-508).

“The real point is that the regression goes back to the deeper layer of the nutritive function, which is anterior to sexuality, and there clothes itself in the experiences of infancy...the sexual language of regression changes on retreating still further back, into metaphors derived from the nutritive and digestive functions...The so-called Oedipus complex with its famous incest tendency changes at this level into a “Jonah-and-the-Whale” complex, which has a number of variants, for instance the witch who eats children, the wolf, the ogre, the dragon, and so on. Fear of incest turns into fear of being devoured by the mother. The regressing libido apparently desexualizes itself by retreating back step by step to the presexual stage of earliest infancy. Even there it does not make a halt but... continues right back to the intra-uterine, prenatal condition and, leaving the sphere of personal psychology altogether, irrupts into the collective psyche where Jonah saw the “mysteries”...in the whale’s belly” (Jung, 1956, CW 5, para 654).

“...regression to the mother is bound to revive the memory of...the mother as the nourishing source. Incest is not the only aspect...hunger...drives the child to its mother. Whoever...regresses into the...mother's bosom, expects not only to be warmed and loved, but to be fed...it aims-without admitting it—at incest and nourishment” (Jung, 1956, CW 5, 519).

“Freud's incest theory describes certain fantasies ...The... sexual theory is...discomfited by the fact that the last act of the drama consists in a return to the mother's body...giving rise to an even more infantile theory....elaborated by Otto Rank...the regression goes back to the deeper layer of the nutritive function...anterior to sexuality...the sexual language of regression changes on retreating still further back, into metaphors derived from the nutritive and digestive functions of life” (Jung, 1956, CW 5, para 506-508).

“A person sinks into his childhood memories and vanishes from the existing world. He finds himself apparently in deepest darkness, but then has unexpected visions of a world beyond... If this layer is activated by the regressive libido, there is a possibility of life being renewed, and also of it being destroyed. Regression carried to its logical conclusion means a linking back with the world of natural instincts which... if...can be assimilated by the conscious mind it will bring about a reactivation and reorganization of its contents” (Jung, 1956, CW 5, para 631).

“The moment of a rise in consciousness, of the separation of subject and object, is indeed a birth...The blessed state of sleep before birth...is...rather like an old shadowy memory of that unsuspecting state of early childhood, when there is as yet no opposition to disturb the peaceful flow of slumbering life” (Jung, 1956, CW 5, 501).

“...the symbol of psychic pregnancy...goes back to the primordial image....The child that is to be born signifies the individuality, which...present, is not yet conscious” (Jung, 1971, CW6, 806).

Additional Jungian Contributions

Michael Fordham

“... the primary or original self of the infant is radically disrupted by birth in which the psyche-soma is flooded by stimuli which give rise to prototypic anxiety. Following this, a steady state re-establishes itself and the first clear sequence of disturbance followed by resting or steady states has been completed. The sequence repeats again and again during maturation and the motive forces behind them are called deintegrative and integrative. At first, the sequences are rapid, but as psychic organisation proceeds, they become spread over longer periods till relative stability is attained for most of the time” (Fordham, 1944, *Children as Individuals*, p. 103).

JoAnn Culbert-Koehn

“I do not think that anyone’s personality is so uncomplicated that any one trauma or memory explains everything. What I have observed is that the events around one’s birth, or the days immediately following birth, leave a profound imprint and...re-experienced at... separation and transition...These earliest memories often have both physical and psychological correlates and frequently carry a kind of life-and-death urgency....” (Culbert-Koehn, 1997, p. 76).

“In writing about mismanaged birth and psychological catastrophe, I often use the phrase “physical or psychological birth” to encompass both the complex possibilities inherent in birth. The physical process of birth affects the psychological birth process, and the psychological process of either mother, father, or fetus may affect the physical birth. I wonder if the term “birth complex” (Sullivan, 1996) might be helpful in capturing this tangle of variables that surrounds this area of psyche common to us all, at the same time “archetypal” yet deeply personal and individual....In the case of the “birth complex” the common emotional tone is...often one of catastrophic anxiety... The catastrophic anxiety, embedded in the birth complex, may be somatocized and communicated to the analyst via projective identification....It is my experience that this complex is imprinted in the psyche and deeply affects us at times of life transitions” (Culbert-Koehn, *Analysis of Hard and Soft: Tustin’s Contribution to a Jungian Study of Opposites*, 1997, p.122).

D.W. Winnicott

“I am not claiming that treatments can be done on birth material alone. The analyst must be prepared to expect whatever type of material turns up, including birth material. The analyst must indeed expect environmental factors of all kinds:....the type of environment that belongs to the intra-uterine experience...the type of environment that belongs to the birth experience; ...the mother’s capacity for devotion...the capacity of the parental team for taking joint responsibility ...the capacity of the social setting for allowing maternal devotion and parental cooperation; and for continuing these functions... no consideration of the birth trauma can have value unless a sense of proportion can be maintained...the personal birth experience is significant, and is held as memory material...in psychotic states those very things are remembered that are unavailable...in more normal states. You will notice...I have used the word ‘birth experience’ instead of ‘birth trauma...’ (Winnicott, 1949, p. 177).

“Birth memories appeared with fantastic embellishments...from all stages of development...the effect seemed...real in its terrific intensitydisbelieving the details described as memories I found myself prepared to believe in the accompanying affect” (Winnicott, 1949, p. 179).

“Possibly birth experience can be so smooth as to have relatively little significance...Contrariwise, birth experience...that is abnormal...above a certain limit becomes birth trauma, and is then immensely significant....interpretation in terms of birth trauma will not...produce...permanent relief ...since the birth trauma is real it is a pity to be blind to it...” (Winnicott, 1949, p. 180).

“When birth trauma is significant every detail of impingement and reaction is...etched on the patient’s memory” (Winnicott, 1949, p. 183).

“It would be useful to give three categories of birth experience. The first is a normal...healthy, birth experience which is a valuable positive experience of limited significance; it provides a pattern of a natural way of life. This sense of a way of life can be strengthened by...subsequent normal experiences...the birth experience becomes one of a series of factors favorable to the development of confidence...In the second category comes the common rather traumatic birth experience which get mixed in with various traumatic environmental factors...I refer...to the extreme of traumatic birth experience, which provides a third category” (Winnicott, 1949, p 180-181).

“There is a very clear relation here between what the baby experiences and what the mother experiences...There comes a state in the labor in which, in health, a mother has to be able to resign herself to a process almost exactly comparable to the infant’s experience at the same time” (Winnicott, 1949, p.184).

“This relationship between the mother and the infant starts before the infant is born and is continued in some cases through the birth process and after. As I see it, the trauma of birth is the break in the continuity of the infant’s going on being, and when this break is significant the details of the way in which the impingements are sensed, and also of the infant’s reaction to them, become in turn significant factors adverse to ego development. In some cases, this adverse factor is so great that the individual has no chance (apart from rebirth in the course of analysis) of making a natural progress in emotional development, even if subsequent external factors are extremely good” (Winnicott, 1949, pp.188-189).

“Since anxiety is a universal phenomenon it cannot be directly correlated with...birth, namely a traumatic birth...birth trauma determines the pattern of subsequent persecutions; in this way birth trauma determines by indirect method the way in which anxiety manifests itself in certain cases” (Winnicott, 1949, p. 190).

“...in a percentage of paranoid cases there is this additional fact that birth was traumatic, and placed a pattern on the infant of expected interference with basic ‘being.’ ...I find a link between birth trauma and the psychosomatic disorders...” (Winnicott, 1949, pp. 190-191).

“...the to and fro from extra-uterine to intra-uterine existence and back involves experiences that belong to that individual’s birth... distinguished from the usually more important and more common movement in fantasy in and out of the mother’s body and in and out of the patient’s inner world” (Winnicott, 1949, p. 191).

“One of the difficulties of our psycho-analytic technique is to know...how old a patient is...In some...the patient is...his own age, and one can reach all that one needs of the childhood states by...memories and fantasies expressed in an adult way...I think there will be no useful interpretation of birth trauma; or birth material will appear in dreams, which can be interpreted at all levels. An analysis...may...go deeper if necessary, and the patient does not have to be very ill to be...an infant during an analytic session....there is a great deal...to understand without asking for an immediate description of what is happening in words. I am referring to something which is more infantile than...a child playing with toys. According to the...analyst and...diagnosis of the patient there will be variations in the wisdom or unwisdom of working...on these terms. If birth experiences are coming into the analytic situation there will certainly be a great deal of other evidence that the patient is in an extremely infantile state” (Winnicott, 1949, p. 182).

Phyllis Greenacre

“It is striking how little attention has been paid to the effect of this process [birth] on the development of the organism itself.....Perhaps birth is inevitably too close to death in our feelings; perhaps the struggle of birth is at once too terrifying and too inspiring for us to regard it readily with scientific dispassion. Perhaps men have too much exclusion anxiety and women too much direct anxiety” (Greenacre, 1952, pp. 14-15).

“The question then arises whether ordinary uncomplicated birth, even with its considerable degree of trauma to the infant, is not of some advantage, whether in some way this particular workout, rough as it is, serves as a good introduction to life, a bridge between the greater protected dependence of intrauterine life and the incipient increasing extramural dependence” (Greenacre, 1952, p. 6).

“I conceive of a situation in which the antenatal, natal and neonatal experiences have very slight or no true (differentiated) psychological content at the time of their occurrence, but do nonetheless leave some individual and unique memory traces which amalgamate with later experiences and may thereby increase later psychological pressures” (Greenacre, 1952, p. 8).

“In my experience the type of head sensation may often be correlated quite definitely with the form of birth experience of the individual and appears under any conditions of very severe anxiety, but especially in later life situations in which the subject of birth is being stirred in the unconscious of the patient” (Greenacre, 1952, p. 24).

“in a relatively good pregnancy the fetus appears to live a life of comparative ease, relaxation, and passivity” (Greenacre, p.9).

Erich Fromm

“But man’s birth ontogenetically and phylogenetically is essentially a negative act...he is the most helpless of all animals...being thrown out of the original oneness with nature, that we cannot return to where we came from, implies that the process of birth is by no means an easy one” (Fromm, 1955, p. 24, 27).

“...at any new stage of birth, we are afraid again. We are never free from two conflicting tendencies: one to emerge from the womb, from the animal form of existence into a more human existence, from bondage to freedom; another to return to the womb to nature, to certainty and security” (Fromm, 1955, p. 26).

“The whole life of the individual is nothing but the process of giving birth to himself, indeed, we should be fully born when we die—although it is the tragic fate of most individuals to die before they are born” (Fromm, 1955, p. 25).

Wilfred Bion

“The fact that there is no demonstrable communication between mother and fetus as clear as that between mother and baby is not an adequate reason for asserting that there isn’t one (Bion, 1979, p. 137).”

“It occurred to me that the fetus might hear noises, see sight, smell odors in a watery fluid such as the amniotic fluid and meconium. The significance of this did not become apparent at once, but I felt that past experiences with patients would have been less obscure if I had dared to imagine that the emotions displayed might be pre-natal. They were often expressed in a manner that differed from commonly accepted modes of expression” (Bion, 1979, p. 125).

“But the personality does not seem to develop as it would if it were a piece of elastic being stretched out. It is as if it were something which developed many different skins as an onion does. This point adds importance to the factor of the caesura, the need to penetrate what is recognized as a dramatic event like birth, or a possibility of success, or a breakdown. The patient has a breakup or breakdown, rather than a ‘breakthrough.’ (Bion, 1977, p. 47).

“The ability of the analysand to take advantage of the possibility of success which has opened out is a symptom of the penetration from the situation which Freud describes as intra-uterine, to the situation which is conscious and post-caesural. I do not suggest that the event is related to the dramatic episode of birth itself, but rather that that dramatic situation, if borne in mind, is easier to use as a model to understand far less dramatic occasions which occur over and over again when the patient is challenged to move from one state of mind to another....Since we can do nothing about the dramatic or obvious external event, it provides an interpretation, later to become a free association, for the not-at-all-obvious event.” (Bion, 1977, p. 47-48).

Frances Tustin

“Individuals whose early infantile elements were normal were relatively unconscious of them at the time they occurred and seem unlikely to have conscious memories of them later. A traumatic psychological birth is also covered over, and the individual only becomes affected...if it disturbs his behavior...to seek psychiatric help. Other individuals with special talents may work over their psychological birth, whether traumatic or otherwise, through...art, literature, music, or religious rituals” (Tustin, 1981, *“Do I Dare Disturb the Universe: A Memorial to Wilfred R. Bion,”* p. 183).

“Psychological study of such states is difficult, for they were pre-verbal and pre-conceptual. Communication has to be by...metaphor and analogy...” “Psychological Catastrophe” and “Psychological Birth” have seemed...to be apt metaphors...and “premature and mismanaged psychological birth” have seemed to me to be others” (Tustin, 1981).

“If the physical birth has been a difficult one, then the psychological birth may be difficult, but this is not inevitable. It will depend on the constitutional endowment of the infant, the events of early infancy and the quality of maternal sheltering...traversing the birth canal is not only a preparation for life itself, but is also a rehearsal for the “valley of the shadow of death.” The prenatal attitudes during birth, the sort of sheltering he receives or, as the result of constitutional factors, he is able to use, will affect whether he will...develop basic trust” (Tustin, 1981, *“Do I Dare Disturb the Universe: A Memorial to Wilfred R. Bion,”* p. 185).

“Within the sane and healthy sheltering, but not entangling, of the post-natal womb, psychological integrations take place, just as bodily integrations took place with the physical womb of the mother’s body” (Tustin, 1981, in *“Do I Dare Disturb the Universe: A Memorial to Wilfred R. Bion,”* p. 185).

James Grotstein

Three central propositions of the “castaway-cursed-unborn-infant:”

Proposition 1: ‘I wish I had never been born!’ (‘and I pretend that I haven’t been!’)

Proposition 2: ‘I want to have a chance to relive what I missed when I was little.’

Proposition 3: An obsession to ‘return to infancy’ or even ‘the womb’ (Grotstein, 2010).

Related Contemporary Research

The “thalamo-amygdal circuits may be the structural container for registering and storing memory traces, in infancy and in utero, prior to the development of cognition” (LeDoux, 1989).

The brain’s growth spurt spans from the last trimester of pregnancy to the second year. Early psychological, relational trauma, including prenatal and perinatal complications, is related to altered brain development (Schore, 2003).

Psychosocial, including prenatal factors, impact epigenetics—gene expression--and hypothalamic-pituitary-axis (HPA) reactivity as observed in infants (Oberlander, et. al., 2008).

Increased pregnancy fears and anxiety, not general stress, was related to pre-term births possibly mediated by elevated levels of corticotropin-releasing hormone that affects labor (Dunkel-Schetter & Mancuso, 2010).

Children whose mothers were self-reflective about their early histories when three months pregnant demonstrated secure attachment at eighteen months. (Fonagy, et. al, 1993).

Mothers with significant adversity and deprivation—yet who showed high reflectiveness ratings, regarding their histories, during pregnancy, had secure children, while only 1 out of 17 deprived mothers, with low reflectiveness ratings, had secure children (Fonagy, et. al, 1991a).

Longitudinal studies of children from unwanted pregnancies consistently find negative effects (David, Dytrych, & Matejcek, 2003).

Mythological Contributions

“The first indelible imprints are those of the moment of birth itself. The congestion of blood and sense of suffocation experienced by the infant before its lungs commence to operate give rise to a brief seizure of terror, the physical effects of which (caught breath, circulatory congestion, dizziness, or even blackout) tend to recur, more or less strongly, whenever there is an abrupt moment of fright. So that the birth trauma, as an archetype of transformation, floods with considerable emotional effect the brief moment of loss of security and threat of death that accompanies any crisis of radical change. In the imagery of mythology and religion this birth (or more often rebirth) theme is extremely prominent; in fact, every threshold passage - not only this from the darkness of the womb to the light of the sun, but also those from childhood to adult life and from the light of the world to whatever mystery of darkness may lie beyond the portal of death - is comparable to a birth and has been ritually

represented ... through an imagery of re-entry into the womb” (Campbell, 1969, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, pp. 61-62).

“The state of the child in the womb is one of bliss, actionless bliss, and this state may be compared to the beatitude visualized for paradise. In the womb, the child is unaware of the alternation of night and day, or of any of the images of temporality. It should not be surprising, therefore, if the metaphors used to represent eternity suggest, to those trained in the symbolism of the infantile unconscious, retreat to the womb” (Campbell, J., 1969, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, p. 65).

“Birth-giving was the only true mark of divinity in primitive belief so the first Gods of any supremacy had to claim also the ability to give birth. Lacking vaginas, many gods gave birth through their mouths (i.e., Satapatha Brahmana said that the God Projapati learned to give birth to creatures from his mouth). Hellenic Greeks pretended their new Father (Zeus) gave birth to the older Goddess Athena from his head but before he could do so, he had to swallow her real mother, Metis (Wisdom) who was pregnant with her at the time” (Walker, B., 1996, p. 106).

Birth and Rebirth

“The idea of a second birth is found at all times and in all places. In...medicine it was a magical means of healing; in many religions it is the central mystical experience; it is the key idea in medieval, occult philosophy, and, last but not least, it is an infantile fantasy occurring in numberless children, large and small, who believe that their parents are not their real parents but merely foster-parents to whom they were handed over” (Jung, 1959, CW 9, para 94).

“Rebirth is not a process that we can in any way observe...We have to do here with a purely psychic reality...Rebirth is an affirmation that must be counted among the primordial affirmations of mankind...a concurrence of affirmations concerning rebirth can be found among the most widely differing peoples” (Jung, 1959, CW9, 206-207).

“This word has a special flavour; its whole atmosphere suggests...renewal...by magical means. Rebirth may be a renewal without any change of being, inasmuch as the personality which is renewed is not changed in its essential nature, but only its functions, or parts of the personality, are subjected to healing, strengthening, or improvement... Another aspect...is essential transformation, ie., total rebirth of the individual...a change of his essential nature...a transmutation. As examples we may mention the transformation of....a corporeal into a spiritual being, and of a human into a divine being” (Jung, 1959, CW9, 203-204).

“...baptism represents a rebirth...Man is not merely born in the commonplace sense, but is born again in a mysterious manner, and so partakes of divinity. Anyone who is reborn... becomes a hero, a semi-divine being” (Jung, 1956, CW5, 494).

“...the basis of the “incestuous” desire is..the strange idea of becoming a child again, of returning to the parental shelter, and of entering into the mother in order to be reborn through her...It is not incestuous cohabitation that is desired, but rebirth. The effect of the incest-taboo and...canalization is to stimulate creative imagination which...opens up...self-realization of libido. In this way libido becomes imperceptibly spiritualized... thus creates spiritual life” (Jung, 1959, CW9, 332).

“All individuals are really trying to find a new birth...In the majority of cases the birth trauma is therefore mildly important and determines a great deal of the general urge towards rebirth. In some cases, this adverse factor is so great that the individual has no chance (apart from rebirth in the course of analysis) of making a natural progress in emotional development, even if subsequent external factors are extremely good” (Winnicott, p. 188-189).

“...the rebirth fantasy seems to be a universal fantasy in the human mind, connected with the experience of both destruction and creation. In the psychoanalytic process the rebirth fantasy is connected with initial hopes for a better life, but is also a vehicle for creating the analytic pair and for separating from the ‘totalitarian object’ (Sebek, 2002).

Birth of the Self: Out of Dissociation into Creation through Relation: Clinical Implications

“The mother-baby matrix is particularly significant for psychoanalysis; and I have argued that, on a theoretical level, the degree to which different psychoanalytic schools idealize the intrauterine experience determines not only their prescriptions for postnatal maternal devotion, but, by extrapolation, stipulations of optimal therapeutic treatment.” (Raphael-Leff, 2004, p. 320).

Birth of the Self: Out of Dissociation into Creation through Relation: Clinical Implications

Attending to “the birth story” through the analytic relationship, experience, and emerging narrative.

The “birth story:” limited narrative from un-gestated experience within the analytic encounter and analytic relationship.

The “transformed birth story:” cohesive narrative evolving from the gestated experience within the emergent analytic encounter and analytic relationship.

“In many cases in psychiatry the patient who comes to us has a story that is not told, in which as a rule no one knows of. To my mind, therapy only really begins after the investigation of that wholly personal story. It is the patient’s secret, the rock against which he is shattered.” (Jung, 1963: 117)

Birth of the Self: Out of Dissociation into Creation through Relation: Clinical Implications

“The birth story” is frequently dissociated, nonverbal and includes preconceptual material. Engagement with this material fosters the emergence of the birth story and includes:

Nonverbal; somatic/bodily; sensorimotor; imagistic; intuitive; behavioral; and affective modes of expression.

Sensory material: visual; auditory; olfactory; gustatory; kinesthetic.

Primacy of holding

Targeting dissociation: relational stance; analytic listening; tracking; linking; defense work; nonverbal methods; art

Artistic attitude and concrete use of art: Appreciation for the aesthetic in treatment. Concretely working with dreams, sandplay, movement, art, music, and other non-verbal forms of creative expression.

Birth of the Self: Out of Dissociation into Creation through Relation: Clinical Implications

Appreciation for creative psyche. Engagement with the creative psyche and the unborn.

Use of pregnancy and birth metaphors: conception; gestation; labor; delivery; etc. for accessing implicit and preverbal material, stimulating developmental and archetypal themes, and encouraging mentalization of the birth story.

Incorporating varied developmental and archetypal meanings of birth material into treatment.

Affect regulation work: affect activation, modulation, labeling, tolerance.

Facilitating, holding, relating to, and managing regression. Dangers of a “malignant regression.”

Birth of the Self: Out of Dissociation into Creation through Relation: Clinical Implications

Receptivity and engagement with multiple, shifting relational configurations and transference-countertransference patterns particularly the dissociated.

Significance of play in behavior and with words.

Attunement to complexes/archetypes; patterns; relational processes around birth including: formation, containment, preservation, transformation, and separation.

Attunement to emerging developmental needs. Dynamic process.

Consciousness and engagement with the irrational, numinous, and spiritual including its manifestation through psychic phenomena, the transpersonal, and synchronicities.

Embodiment of spiritual attitude and spiritual qualities in analytic relationship.

Account by psychoanalyst, Margaret Little, as analysand, of her analysis with Donald Winnicott

“I had been...taking up the smallest possible amount of space and being as unobtrusive as I could; hiding in the womb, but not safe even there...after this... I was seized with recurring spasms of terror. Again and again I felt a tension begin to build up in my whole body, reach a climax, and subside, only to come again a few seconds later. I grabbed his hands and clung tightly till the spasms passed. He said at the end that he thought I was reliving the experience of being born; he held my head for a few minutes, saying that immediately after birth an infant's head could ache and feel heavy for a time. All this seemed to fit, for it was birth into a relationship, via my spontaneous movement which was accepted by him. Those spasms never came again, and only rarely that degree of fear” (Little, 1985, 20).

Ann Ulanov:
Birth and rebirth: The effect of an analyst's
pregnancy on the transferences of three patients.

“Each woman had introjected a negative image of her mother and had identified with it. The central life relationship, therefore, was always with the mother...each woman found herself caught up in variations of behavior along a mother-daughter axis playing either a mother or a daughter role. None of them could see other people as they were in their own reality, but only as mother-substitutes or as daughter figures to be mothered, the roles being expressed in both positive and negative forms” (Ulanov, 1973, p. 150, in *Journal of Analytical Psychology*. 18(2): 146-164.).

“Confrontation with my pregnancy intensified this awareness [of the mother-daughter complex] to such a point that each woman seemed to undergo her own style of birth and rebirth. Central to this whole process of birth and rebirth was each woman’s transference to me. Through confrontation with my pregnancy – the beginnings of a real biological mother-child relationship – each woman saw how she had been attached to the fantasy mother she had projected onto me. Through acknowledging the beginnings of a real baby, each woman freed herself from the fantasy that she herself was somehow still a baby” (Ulanov, 1973, p. 153-154).