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## Rebirth - The Quintessential Creative Process

I'd like to offer some observations on the way the pattern of birth - from conception through to the initial establishment of a two-person relationship between mother and child - becomes the pattern for all creative process.

Dissatisfaction with its new identity leads a newborn child to search for meaning in its old identity: regress into birth and act out its pattern. The same pattern is then followed at later stages in life. The easier the birth, the better the basis for healthy creative process; pain and destruction, however, are almost inevitable elements in creativity.

The birth pattern is commonly relived by individuals at the threatening transitional stages of life, notably weaning, adolescence, menopause, death; also at times of crisis such as separation and bereavement.

It is repeated in sexual activity, where it may directly conflict with the orgasm pattern. (See David Boadella's article in this issue.)

The pattern is expressed constantly in art, mythology and religion. In literature it is embodied in content and/or in form and rhythm. The form of much music clearly repeats it. (A good example of an 'easy birth' is Chopin's Prelude Op. 28 No. 15: complete with pulse beat throughout the different stages, except where the cord is cut nine bars before the end; there then follows reunion of mother and child.)

The creative process in the arts and in therapy follows the same pattern within the individual's experience. Form, the therapist, the group, is the womb.

The pattern is acted out by groups: in particular by any minority group which perceives itself as needing to maintain, for survival, a different identity from the surrounding society - i.e. a new seed has been planted in the womb of the environment.

So it becomes the pattern of revolutions of all kinds, and the pattern of the historical development of whole civilisations in relation to their natural environment.

In the chart which follows I've mapped out some of what I've observed. I use the classifications made by Stanislav Grof in *Realms of the Human Unconscious* - Basic Perinatal Matrices I-IV. My ideas were much stimulated by the workshop he held in London last year, by conversations with Frank Lake, by studies of the creative process in literature, and experiences in my own therapy and work as a therapist. I hope the map will suggest to readers new ways of looking at individual and group experience with which they are familiar. The first section - 'Good' and 'Bad' Birth, is substantiated by research, as is that on the creative process in art. The rest is, of course, my own interpretation.

| GROF<br>BASIC<br>PERINATAL<br>MATRICES                     | BPM I   | BPM II<br>(‘First Stage’ of Labour)   |
|--|---|---|
| ‘Good’ Birth where process is accepted, assisted by mother | Union: bliss. Womb is warm, nourishing. Increasing growth causes discomfort but is accepted | No exit. Closed system. Womb contracting ‘against’ child. Feelings of unbearable oppression, threat to life etc. In a ‘good’ birth this is a shorter experience uncomplicated by pathological delays or mother’s resistance. It soon leads into . . . . . |
| ‘Bad’ Birth where process is resisted and/or abnormal      | Union. Growth feels threatening to mother. Womb unwelcoming, cold, hostile, poisonous etc.  | No exit. Womb tense, holding, resisting life process. Long delay, interminable hell and persecution experienced by child: hopelessly stuck in discomfort, victim to power of mother, suffocation.   |
| ‘Good’ Revolution  | American settlement (17 - (18 under benevolent British government.                          | British rule becomes oppressive, denies right to independence, tightens against settlers. . . but much acceptance in Britain also.  |
| ‘Bad’ Revolution   | Russia under Tsars  | Minor revolt met with intensified domination; increase of hardship, poverty. Intense holding for generations.   |
| Pathological Revolution                                    | Germany post World War 1. Europe the unwilling womb; poisonous, cold.                       | Economic restriction; stifling. Europe denies growth and existence to Germany, ignores its ‘kicking’, disowns life process, tightens automatically but flabbily. Nazis act out oppressor role and intense paranoia caused by poisonous, depriving mother. |
| Creative process in art literature etc.                    | Acceptance of given or traditional form: artist works within it.                            | Given form felt as restrictive. Struggle against form. Conformist society may pressurize artist economically.   |
| Growth Movement in wider society: poor model               | Movement starts up and is tolerated with 51% illwill.                                       | Movement experiences dislike, misunderstanding by wider community and traditional therapies. ‘Alternative’ = heterodox, liable to persecution. Economic pressures. Tense, holding society tightens.   |
| Good model   | Movement starts up and is tolerated with 51% goodwill.                                      | Movement feels itself acceptable and needed: tolerates society’s hostile contractions and economic pressures. ‘Alternative’ = ‘controlled experiment’. Society aware of need for change and growth.   |

| BPM III<br>(Second Stage')   | BPM IV<br>(Third Stage' and after)   |
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| Mother, child work together with awareness that there is a way out. Enormous pressure, tension, struggle, urge to violation, but also synergism: combined easy pleasurable rhythms as child is allowed to emerge.                            | Child's 'ego-death': total annihilation as identities separate, then mutual restoration of physical contact, comfort, new union, acceptance of new life.   |
| Intense conflict. Resistance and/or 'giving up' by mother. Enormous tension suffocation, struggle, violence, destructiveness as child fights to emerge. Mother now victim to child's aggression. No collaboration.                           | Child's 'ego-death' followed by unbearable isolation or rejection, leading to unresolved identity, unhealed pain and trauma, guilt, disbelief in relationship.   |
| Tension, conflict, war; but also negotiation, sense of purpose understanding.  | Declaration of Independence, mutual acceptance of different identities, new union of understanding between Old and New Worlds.   |
| Violent revolution: destruction of rulers and total overthrow of system and its values.  | Communist society cut off from affluent West, alienated from other cultures.   |
| Violent sadistic wars to gain independence and <i>lebensraum</i> . Omnipotence fantasies: persecution, destruction and 'rape' of Europe.   | Nazi child born a monster: mother castrates, 'kills' him.  |
| Destruction of old forms. Parody; 'outrageous' art etc. Defiance of norms, conventions, critics.   | 'Ego-death'; formlessness; identity-loss through society's rejection, non-recognition during artist's lifetime. And/or establishment of new forms, structures; recognition of genius, acceptance by critics and society.                             |
| Increasing defiance of society's norms, of structure and grounding. Anarchy, violation, flight into fantasy living, transcendence, emigration.   | Isolation from and ineffectiveness in wider community. Cord broken, energy flow cut off in either direction. No mutual acceptance.   |
| Movement asserts itself, pushing its discoveries out into society - education, social work, therapy, politics etc. Conflict is inevitable but can be borne with, if mutual trust is cultivated; though communication may often seem minimal. | Movement loses its identity and form temporarily. Real confrontation can lead to establishment of new identity, recognition and acknowledgment of parent sources. Building of mutual understanding and trust on basis of originally shared humanity. |