

sand. In the kitchen I remember the warm bodyish smell of chopped liver, and the chicken's feet, the fiesselech, in the soup. I remember your Yiddish words when I was good or bad: 'Susele', 'bubele', or 'you shloch', 'you shlemiel'. A long long time ago I thought you were beautiful. Slowly I grew away, and when the break came I no longer knew I loved you.

Seeing you now, with your hands too big for your slack-skinned arms and your mouth lined where your false teeth don't fit, your brittle grey hair and a pinny over

your nice dress, you could be any old lady, no more than one of a generation. You have stopped looking like the picture of you that looks like me. Already I imagine how it will be when you are not there, the pain of losing you and the freedom from you. Long ago I hid from you behind a wall where I could grow into myself. I don't know if I can let the wall down and find again the person I once loved.

*This piece was written in March 1991. My mother died in August the same year.*

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## ***Foetal Drama and the Roots of Religion***

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**W**ar is the collusional enactment of perinatal psychodrama. Religion, on the other hand, is the collusional construct of the foetal unconscious. The common saga of pre and perinatal imprinting is handled in displacement by symbolism, myth and ritual. We have created the gods in our own image, but it is a part of that image which lies buried behind the defences of the trauma of birth. It is part of the image that is disowned, dissociated from its ground, projected to the edge of the cosmos, reified and reintegrated as

revelation from the beyond.

Three great levels of religion can be seen, nesting one within the other like a set of Russian matruska dolls. The outer layer, precipitated by perinatal trauma, is characterised by myths and symbols of the uterine ecology, bounded by the convulsive struggle of birth. It is impossible to see any earlier levels until the myths of this outer shell have been deconstructed and the precipitating traumata integrated. The second and more primitive level of religion is one associated with the trauma

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of implantation, and characterised by the symbols, myths and rituals of the detached pre-implanted blastosphere. The third discernible level lies even deeper in and is associated with the trauma of conception. Here the symbols, myths and rituals are those associated with gametal journey, approach and fusion against the background of pre-existence in parental somatic tissue, prior to their release and journey on a path of destiny.

The imprinting of the human organism as a learning system appears to be continuous and independent of neural development. Information as a continuous coding of relationship between inside and outside would appear to be stored in the complex intra-cellular structures of molecules, atoms, sub-atomic particles and quantum fields replicated and passed on through the developing organism until it eventually becomes more or less available to adult consciousness. It is here that we encounter the continuum across the boundary between psychology, biology, biochemistry, fundamental physics and cosmology. It is one of the corollaries of David Bohm's theory of the Implicate Order, that not only is information about the whole (the explicate) encoded at the point (implicate) but that the history of that point's transition through space-time is also encoded in the field structure of the implicate order.

### *Perinatal Experience and the Ground of Ambivalence*

From the foetal perspective the one and same ground of being is both giver and destroyer of life. The Great Mother in whose existentially unbounded womb the foetus has been nurtured, protected, re-

sourced, carried and cradled, becomes at full-term the constricting, polluted, poisonous and persecutory world in which the baby experiences the rising stress of hypoxia and malnutrition. The contrast in signals is profound, even before the neonate is propelled in rage and terror beyond the boundaries of tolerable pain through the crushing vortex and eviction of the birth canal itself. Here lies the origin of the knowledge of good and evil, experienced in relationship to the placental tree form, the archetypal tree of life, mediated through the snake, the umbilicus, signalling the sentence of expulsion from Eden. So in the construct of displacement, the Great Mother, be she Mut or Kali, is fraught with dread and worshipped both as life-giver and life-destroyer. If the ambivalence reaches a pitch at which the two polarities can no longer be sustained in identification with the same ground, then the godhead is split in two. So the forces of good are opposed to the forces of evil. The end of (uterine) time is consummated in the struggle between the two sides. In mythology, as in the experience of every live birth, good wins, albeit with great suffering, sacrifice and pain.

### *Placental Failure and the Roots of Paranoia*

Degrade in placental efficiency is one of the first signs that 'the end is at hand'. Body poisons produced by the full term foetus are returned in the umbilical blood stream, rather than being absorbed into the maternal system and discharged. Nutrient levels degrade. Oxygen transfer is lower, carbon dioxide discharge is inhibited. It is a condition which escalates towards the beginning of labour and

intensifies beyond all bearing during the process of parturition. Granted that the neonate fixates at the point of last tolerable stress, the boundary to the foetal unconscious is characterised by myths of a persecutory environment about to irrupt into total life-threatening attack. Here then lie the roots not only of ambivalence but also of paranoia, persecutory phantasies held at bay behind perinatal repression, but valently available for restimulation, displacement and projection onto any appropriate ground or symbol. The corporate foetal unconscious designates the environment as an irrationally unstable space, liable to unleash persecutory behaviours upon the unsuspecting contents at any moment. One of the central problems of the religious quest is how to propitiate this environment and to protect humanity from its capriciousness. Perinatal experience is that only through sacrifice, crushing and victimisation does the attack eventually yield and the world become resourceful once again. Alternatively, in regressive phantasy the attempt is to move back into a more stable and nurturant phase before the onset of full term placental failure, to reconnect to the Tree of Life in a timeless eternal dream-world.

This condition when applied to the world of resources lays the grounds of the paranoid competition of world capitalism. Whatever the level of resource actually provided, the fixated paranoid phantasies of resourcelessness are only temporarily sedated. The message is that enough is never enough, that the foetal unconscious core is always and eternally in want, craving more space, craving more food, more raw materials, needing to accrete in order

to continue to grow and survive, needing to hoard against the future experience of resource-failure, anticipated at any moment, needing at all costs to maintain an exponentially increasing flow of capital in order to ward off the terrors of fall and annihilation in the market place. Granted this dominant foetal paranoia as a ground of adult interaction, the struggle for resources bears no relevance to the adequacy of the resources to meet adult needs. External resources are required to repress an unending foetal greed. When every individual and every group is marked by these dynamics, the resource struggle is universal. Exponential wealth accumulation is the order of the day. No matter how much is already accumulated, getting more is required for survival, at whatever cost to the environment. Here lie the unconscious dynamics of the free market economy. In an unlimited environment such exponential drives can be tolerated. In a limited holding world, their effect is catastrophic. The rich and powerful survive at the expense of the poor and impotent. Exponential processes of the core drive the periphery into collision with the environmental ecosystem which is mined to destruction in order to satisfy the psychotic requirements of the proliferating parasite. The social, political and economic implications of this analysis are truly revolutionary.

### *Scapegoat, Sacrifice and the Projection of Primal Talion*

The only action which seems to satisfy the voracious demands of the cervical maw is the sacrifice of the foetal victim. Conversely, every live birth contains buried in

the foetal unconscious the imprint of its own traumatisation, victimisation in conditions of helplessness. Repressed and denied, the material is projected and acted out in psychodrama on other victims, carrying by displacement the talion rage, repressed and denied in the heart of the human condition.

Any disturbance of the boundary of the collusional foetal unconscious demands the offering of some victim at that boundary. Ritual enactment proliferates over time. In some cultures it requires the ritual designation of a scapegoat. The call for 'someone's head to roll' may be metaphorical in certain situations, though even here the person concerned may well find their career ended, their family life destroyed, and their very being cast out of society as some untouchable pariah. In other contexts the death of the victim is only too real, often in the most horrific of circumstances. The sacrificial victim is offered representatively, so ensuring that those who remain can stay in safety, securely enwombed within the divine protection. Human sacrifice is older than the known history of humanity. Commonly it is the first-born child who suffers the most intense impingement and it is the sacrifice of the first-born that dominates some religious systems. The saga of Exodus may itself be read as a primal psychodrama, presaged by waves of contraction, as the megahumanoid foetus reaches the point of birth through the persecutory cervix of Egyptian bondage. It is at that critical point where the exit is apparently finally blocked that the sacrifice of the first born is enacted across the land. Among Jewish ancestors, the sacrifice is displaced into the first born of

animals, in the saga of Abraham and Isaac, reinforced in the ritual of Passover. In far more primitive fertility cults the first born child may be sacrificed to Ba'al or Moloch, burned alive or ritually decapitated, buried in the ground as some kind of magical appeasement to the Earth Mother, in a magical attempt to guarantee the safety of the boundary of the village, tribe or settlement.

From universal sacrifice of the first born, ritual evolved to a representative or vicarious victim. The process of circumcision, practiced universally, may well also be a displacement in symbolic form from the cutting of the crown of the whole person, to the cutting of the crown of the part. The Little Man is sacrificed in place of the whole person. Death of the victim may be by intense cranial battering and damage, by strangulation, garroting and suffocation, by burning or by drowning. The remains may be abandoned, buried, committed to sink in the water of sacred pool or well. They may be burned as an offering to the gods or eaten, incorporated in cannibalistic ritual, binding the lives of the living in mystic union with the death of the victim.

Blood plays a vital part in the sacrificial rituals, whether of man or beast. Drained from the body it may be poured on the ground, offered on the altar, smeared on objects, houses and bodies, or drunk in the totemic meal of incorporation.

However sublimated, sanitised and displaced, it is these same fundamental rituals which lie at the heart of the Christian religion, not only in the symbolic sacrifice of the first born of God, but also in the rituals of the mass, eucharist or communion. Symbolically the victim is

murdered vicariously on the altar. His body and blood appropriated, distributed among the worshippers who incorporate the remains in unconscious repetition of a practice reaching back to the dawn of history, and yet meeting in every generation the unconscious need for primal talion in the collusional psychodrama of the foetal unconscious.

There is a close parallel between vicarious victim and the crowned ruler, be the crown of gold, laurel leaves or thorns. From the regressed foetally fixated position, the cervix encircles the head. For the megahumanoid foetus of the social system a representative victim is elevated head and shoulders above the rest and the head is physically crowned. While that head fills the symbolic cervix, the subjects are safe within the containing walls of the monarch's protection. And yet the head of state, the president of the corporation, the leader, hereditary or elected, is also and always the target of projection of negativity and potential reversal of idealisation from the benign monarch to the demonic tyrant. He is to be preserved and protected or assassinated and vilified. Immense primal anxiety floods the system when the head of state falls, dies, is overthrown, assassinated or otherwise removed. The cervical orifice yawns in terror until filled by the next in line.

### *Atonement, Appeasement and the Repression of Primal Guilt*

Two sources of guilt are closely interwoven in the perinatal saga. For no apparent reason the primal environment, this 'god in whom we live and move and have our being' for nine months of exis-

tential eternity, appears to undergo a reversal from love, care and protection to rejection, persecution and eviction. What brings about this sudden volte face? The only inference open to foetal awareness is that the foetus itself must have done something awful, hell-deserving, which would justify the expulsion from Eden. Over millennia the cultus purified the myths of fall and original sin, projected them backwards in time to the arche of humanity and outwards in metaphysic to a split among the gods, always and at all points in ultimate displacement from its grounding in the trauma of birth.

Another source of guilt can be seen in the coincidence of love and rage, as the idealised reactions towards the same holding environment. Attachment, dependence and survival outlaw the enactment of rage in retaliatory destruction. Life demands that this shall not be so. The unfolding perinatal impingement confirms that the violence of primitive rage experienced against the persecutory environment is indeed punished by the pains of hell, by banishment from the presence of God, by being cast out and cut off from the land of the living, whose foetal wombworld is bounded by birth.

Again because the emotions involved are fixated in a position of hyperstress and trauma and because they are in an idealised condition of absolute splitting between good and bad, love and hate, the guilt also is both fixated and absolute. It is universal and cannot be discharged. We have seen that the aggressive retaliatory drives may be externalised onto some victim. They may also be internalised onto the self. Always there is the ambivalent interplay between container and con-

tained. The guilt is internalised, carried forward in the foetal unconscious as a boundary condition experienced in adult life. In displacement it energises the behaviour which justifies the guilt, reinforcing the enactment of talion rage in ambivalence against objects of love, creating in adult psychodrama a justification for the primitive emotions held in repression. In this way perinatal impingement is indeed the original sin, all later transgression is a re-enactment. The fall is however, not simply an archaic event at the origin of the species but existentially a personal event at the event-horizon of post-natal consciousness.

Management of guilt is also critical for the maintenance of perinatal repression and the preservation of defences against the psychotic anxieties involved. How to deal with this level of guilt then becomes an existential question to be handled always in displacement, always by projection, always in psychodrama, divorced from its ground and yet always and imperatively to be managed. If only the foetus could do something to appease the wrath of the environment, to propitiate the gods, then perhaps, just perhaps, it would not have to go through the pains of hell. Perhaps it would be allowed to remain within forever, connected to the Tree of Life in an eternity of timeless communion. From the other side of the perinatal split, the task is somehow to renegotiate the caesura of birth, so to satisfy the gods that they would allow re-entry to paradise before it is too late. So, over millenia, the myths and rituals of atonement, appeasement and propitiation are reified. The sacrificial victim carries not only the retaliatory rage but with it

the ultimate condemnation of the guilty party. If the evil can be projected into the other then sanctity may yet be regained by the self. Rituals of propitiation and atonement dominate the dynamics of world religions and in particular the world-wide trilogy of faiths emerging from the Eastern Mediterranean: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Not that the patterns are confined to religious behaviour, they are also fundamental to the elevation of absolutes in ethical constructs, the construction of codes of ethics and the enactment of penal systems and procedures of justice. Where any particular action or situation comes close to re-stimulating the perinatal levels of rage, terror, grief and guilt, the retribution matches most closely, albeit in displacement, the original impingement of parturition.

### *Regression, Salvation and the Search for the Good Womb*

With defences against perinatal trauma effectively in place, the foetal unconscious, fixated at the point of trauma, moves in reversed time, regressing to the last known place of safety, idealised in reaction to its antithesis. So the good enough womb is symbolised as heaven, dimly identified with the original home, elevated as the goal for ultimate salvation. Rituals of salvation have as their common purpose the regaining of a place of protection within the great womb of the goddess. 'Outside Mother Church there is no salvation'. Rituals of rebirth enact the perinatal trauma in reverse. The initiate is brought into the safety of the sanctuary. It is the one who has fallen from grace and been thrown out who requires through a proc-

ess of rebirth to regain the safety of paradise. The object is to ensure that the conscious world is no longer invaded by the terrors of birth, nor sullied by the guilt of talion rage. All evil is to be purged from the inner person and goodness reintroduced from the idealised environment. So the foetal unconscious, driving motivator of the religious life, lives in search for the good womb, to be once again restored, reconnected, in communion with the ground of being.

### *Rituals of Worship and the Maintenance of Defence*

The dynamics of religion encode the perinatal psychodrama at the boundary and preserve in myth, symbol and ritual, art and architecture, an eternally fixated pattern of uterine dependency. The task of the cyclically repeated process is to ensure that any residual irruptions of primal angst into adult consciousness are contained, propitiated and re-repressed. Preservation and reinforcement of the defences is the pre-requisite of successful religion. Away from the collusional imposition of the symbols, myths and rituals of the sanctuary, the effectiveness of perinatal defence may begin to erode. Worship is therefore entered through a process of regression, symbolising the split between inside and outside, and encoding the caesura of birth. Once inside, the process of idealisation is intensified, the absolute goodness of the godhead is celebrated, the experienced negativities of humanity confessed, projected onto the vicarious victim and dealt with in displacement. Goodness is then received by reintroduction from the idealised environment, often

in a foetal position. The corporate activity is moulded in every way to reinforce the paranoid schizoid processes of perinatal repression and uterine regression. The effect is a profound elision of disturbing material from adult consciousness at the cost of complete blocking of the possibility of integration, egression and the deconstruction of the psychotic position. The material is therefore preserved in the unconscious of the adult population and acted out in the societal dynamic. The religious process serves to maintain and reinforce patterns of social psychosis.

### *Eternity, Dream-Time and the Sacrament of Umbilical Attachment*

The quality of time experienced within sacred space is quite different from that in the 'real world' of post-natal consciousness. There is a sense of timelessness, stillness, 'eternity', which is not properly the object of theological speculation but of psychodynamic elucidation. The condition of fixation has that quality of the suspension of the passage of time, the present is a never-ending moment, a still point with the dimension of infinity. It is like a still picture, taken from the moving video of time. In this condition there is an experience of a somewhat trancelike state. Blink rates decay, brainwave patterns approximate to those of dreaming sleep. The symbolic and imaging capacity of the right brain becomes more dominant. The logical analytic capacity for rational assessment of the left brain is diminished.

In the experience of collusional foetal regression, the time-base is not even that of developmental uterine existence, mov-

ing inexorably forward from one stage of growth to the next. Here the experience is of a time capsule, frozen in foetal consciousness, regressed within an idealised environment and creating out of the foetal unconscious those myths, symbols, architecture, space, images, rituals, art form and music, which epitomise the dream-time condition of the idealised womb-world.

Here, typically, individual differences of awareness coalesce into a kind of corporate foetality, a communal activity which rises, sits, kneels, walks, moves and sings in concert. Direction of worship is vectored 180° away from the entrance. The head, the mouthpiece, the leader of the ritual, typically resides in the sanctuary. The other end is guarded by boundary managers, welcoming and directing members and ensuring that no disturbance from unwanted persons or behaviour is allowed into the sacred space. Processional activity moves up and down the umbilical arteries, carrying the ambivalent reactions of the populace into the sanctuary for processing, cleansing and returning to the body corporate.

Sacramental incorporation symbolises in displacement not only the eating of the sacrificial or totemic victim but also, and in the same image, the nurture of umbilical attachment. If the primitive sacramental meal was associated with the eating of the placenta, then it is not difficult to trace this same ritual through layers of sanitation and displacement, through the placenta cakes of ancient Jewish ritual, to the matzos of the last supper and into the bread and wafers, blood and wine of eucharistic imagery. It is the reception of this food which keeps the worshipper in eternal life, the sacrament of umbilical dependency.

## *Placental Symbols and the Processional Standard*

The only companionship known to the developing foetus is the blood vessel entwined rope of the umbilicus, connecting the naval to the spongy tree-formed multi-branching disc of the placenta — the Tree of Life. Here is the womb-twin, the soul brother, the helper, the guardian angel or the resourceful cornucopia of the dream time. Eventually its functions begin to fail and in later life there may be dreams of mushrooms with dying, crimpling edges, parachutes folding and failing, plunging the dependent into a death-dealing fall. Post-natal rituals associated with the afterbirth abound, both in the contemporary world and throughout history. The placenta may be burned, thrown away in revulsion as rubbish or preserved and nutrient extracted for skin-renewing cosmetics. It may be buried in a significant place, cooked and eaten in a symbolic meal, preserved and revered as having magical properties.

Some of the earliest records come from Ancient Egyptian texts indicating that the placenta and umbilicus of the child born to be pharaoh was preserved and carried on a pole in procession. It is possible to trace the evolution and displacement of this practice in a continual series spanning some 4,000 years. There was the ancient saying, 'There is healing in the sight of the pharaoh's placenta'. The image evolves and is sublimated into bird wings and eventually the eagle topping the standards of monarchs, caesar's legionnaires, presidents, czars and fuhrers down the ages. The religious, mystical healing element also persevered. With the Israelites afflicted in the wilderness, Moses



held up the 'serpent' on a stick or pole, with the parallel saying, 'There was healing in the sight of the serpent'. Umbilicus and snake intertwine in symbolic identity. The caduceus, symbolic rod of the Greek god of healing, carries the image into the contemporary culture of the medical profession. In phantasy, reconnection to the placenta facilitates regression to the nurturing womb, the place of wholeness before the onset of disease.

In the Christian religion the symbol also perseveres, with direct connection between the pharaoh's placenta in Egypt, the Mosaic serpent in the wilderness and the Christ, the placental body and blood of the foetal victim elevated on the cross as a sign of healing for the nations. In the images of war the placenta is carried aloft as the rallying point or standard with bird image or flag unfurled. In religion the placental image is paraded at the front of the procession of dignitaries entering the sanctuary. The processional cross, the flags of war, emblems of national identity signifying allegiance and unity within the totemic clan, the football club or religious order — the placental symbols are always and in all places essential companions in a society whose unconscious is dominated by the ecology of foetal regression.

### *Uterine Ecology and the Symbols of Sacred Space and Place*

Moving on from the activity and rituals of worship, it is now possible to examine the symbols of the sanctuary. Here the ecology of uterine existence is reified and projected into the art and architecture of sacred space. There is the issue of scale.

The size, height and grandeur of the sanctuary in comparison to the scale of everyday living creates the instant impression of smallness, or regression for the worshipper. The more profound and significant the centre of dependency, the more intense the regression and the larger and more cavernous is the internal space. Tree-form placental symbols proliferate in columns, arches, roof vaulting, art, windows, mandala floor mosaics, and carved wood. The sanctuary itself is frequently modeled on the form of the human body. The architectural form tends to be female. The inside of the cavernous womb is entered through a smaller tunnel-like doorway. The outside may be dominated by the distended belly of a pregnant woman, or the twin domes of the breast forms. Imagery and symbolism is fractal in design, with crosses, squares and circles replicated inside one another in vertical and horizontal, floor, wall and ceiling, from total architecture to tiny jewel. At whatever scale you examine the artefact, a congruence of symbolism can be observed.

Tombs abound, for in the mythical world of the uterine unconscious, death is a return to the womb, awaiting the rebirth of resurrection, so in mythology the corpses are bodies in waiting, unripened follicles biding their time until the end of time, which is already present in the presence of eternity.

The sacred pool or well, ritualised and sublimated to baptismal font, symbolises the place of reimmersion, drowning, re-entry via the vagina to the amnion and yet also the point of sacrifice to the goddess of the deep. Here another form of displacement victim-ritual is preserved within the complex syncretism of the re-

ligious construct. At the other end of the sanctuary stands the altar of sacrifice, the place of violent death, carrying within the Christian tradition the images of Roman execution, themselves displacement on a temporary basis of the ancient cultic practice of stoning. So by one means and another the sacred space is exorcised of evil material, the gods propitiated, the boundaries preserved and humanity held forever in unconscious bondage, forever unborn, hiding in heaven from the pain of parturition and the realities of the world beyond.

A similar analysis could be made of the traditions of each religious construct. The symbolic topology differs; its underlying ground is universal. The uterine ecology of the foetal unconscious provides the key to the understanding of sacred symbols.

Not that the sense of the holy is limited to the interior space of sanctuaries. Certain physical locations provide by their very geography and topology a restimulation of the idealised state of uterine regression. The wooded knoll surrounded by an amphitheatre of hills, with the twin valleys of fallopian entrance bearing streams at one end, while the far end opens out to a plain, lake or sea. Such a knoll may be the place of animistic awareness, the point at which the adult reconnects with the foetal unconscious and feels at home. Such a place may well then evolve as a sanctuary, a place of holiness, the location for a site of worship to the great goddess or some other deity of the local pantheon. Later evolutionary waves of the religious construct overlay the site with layer after layer of accreted symbolism. Stone age sanctuary becomes druid grove, only in turn to be Christianised, reformed, and elevated as the site of a cathedral, monas-

tery or shrine. Places gain power as centres of pilgrimage in so far as their geographical symbolism, and topological moulding, resonate most perfectly with the requirements of the uterine ecology. Here voices may be heard, visions seen and strange mystical experiences undergone. Here over millenia humanity constructs the site of the holy, displaced from its ground in the common foetal unconscious, projected, reified, ontologised, constituting in process a common psychosis.

### *Religious Leadership and the Management of Dependency*

The holy person, minister, priest, rabbi or imam, is habitually resident in holy space. A leader of the regressive group phantasy he is unquestioningly caught up in the collusional construct of the foetal psychodrama. The person whose inner psychodynamics generate the most intense patterns of dependency becomes the recipient of dependency projection within the group phantasies of society. Characteristics may be discerned at a very early age. Fascinatingly the ancient wise men of northern India could read the signs and marks on the newborn babe and foretell its destiny as an enlightened one or Buddha. It is perhaps equally fascinating to note that the birth of Buddha took place in a tented structure out in a park on the night of the full moon in the month of May, only to experience the devastation of abandonment as his mother died within a week. His first experience of enlightenment as a child came in a tent in a park where he was abandoned by his nurses only to be found curled up in a foetal position and in a trance-state. So the psycho-

drama of abandonment and the search for serenity in a world of suffering leads on to the acting out of the abandonment of his own wife and child and growing awareness of the contrast between the idealised regressive containment of palatial life and the suffering, bereavement, abandonment and death beyond its boundaries. So on the anniversary of the symbolic birthday, the night of the full moon in the month of May, after an immense battle with the forces of evil, Buddha achieved ultimate enlightenment in foetal trance at the foot of the bo-tree, reconnected to the placenta, shielded forever in schizoid detachment, achieving serenity in flight from the realities of birth and death.

In the absence of a professional religious leader most groups in conditions of crisis will elevate one of their members who most closely matches the behavioural pattern to the performance of the priestly function. The psycho-class selection and the elevation of leadership requires the person concerned to have intense imprinting and collusional resonance with the central norms of the common foetal unconscious. The religious leader in turn seduces and is seduced by the transference and counter-transference of the common collusional unconscious.

At another level those who emerge as the leaders of the religious, have the more complex task, or meta-task, of leading the regressive phantasies of the regressed even deeper. The same processes of psycho-class selection and elevation dominate the dynamics. The most intensely revered religious leaders are therefore some of the most intensely damaged and most primitively imprinted members of society. Just as in parallel the supreme commanders of

the military establishment demonstrate the most profound levels of personal armouring and anxiety-defence.

The mystic seers, visionaries, prophets and founders of religious orders, and indeed the great originating religious leaders of civilisation appear to resonate with the very deepest levels of regression of all. Their personal vectoring is profoundly in reverse from the post-natal space. The objectives, goals, values, of the pilgrimage of spiritual life lie symbolically in the omega point of the inner sanctuary. Here we see not simply regression to a sustained fixated uterine ecology but a movement into ever deeper and more primitive levels of foetal, embryonic, blastocystic, conceptive and gammetal patterns of imprinting, the understanding of which requires familiarity with human development from the periods of the early first trimester and beyond.

### *Shamanism, Animism and First Trimester Trauma*

It is no coincidence that religions whose symbolism is associated with perinatal defences and established uterine ecology have emerged in cultures with comparatively high levels of nutrition. Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Fertile Crescent and the Eastern Mediterranean basin provide sufficient food to ensure that pregnancy itself is not a threat to the life of the mother. The first normal trauma encountered after successful implantation is the near death experience of parturition.

Other cultures may have a harder time of it. Inhabitants of the marginal lands, the icy tundra of Northern Canada and Lapland, the desert fringes of Africa and

the Australian bush, in common with certain areas of chronic starvation caused by overpopulation, receive a common but much more primitive imprinting.

Life-threatening trauma can of course affect the human organism at any point in its development, with accompanying patterns of fixation, regression, splitting, subsequent repression, denial, projection and symbolic reification. If famine conditions are prevalent then pregnancy can place a life-threatening stress upon the already marginalised existence of the mother-to-be. The effects are felt as soon as the developing foetus begins to take a significant amount of nutrient from its environment. In these conditions there is a common foetal experience of acute resourcelessness early in the pregnancy, well within the first trimester. Conditions are slightly similar to that of later placental failure but at a much more primitive stage of development. There is the added complication that not only are maternal resources inadequate for the developing foetus, but in an irony of reversed dependency, the mother's body may actually extract resources from the developing foetus and use it as a food store to enable the survival of her own life in a period of famine. The womb-world thus reverses from a supportive and nurturing environment, through resourcelessness to a persecutory and draining sink. With reversed role the primitive foetus takes over the nurturing of its environment.

Those who survive carry within them the fixated imprint of the transition from adequate provision to foetal malnutrition, from environmental resource to draining environmental persecution. The idealisation process is absolute, the environment

becomes a living hell. The fixation point encodes the attenuation of life to the last bearable moment. Regression is to an idealised supportive womb at an earlier period of development.

This condition appears to be the ground of shamanic ritual and religious process, the artforms of which typically show emaciated bodies with large heads, sometimes drawn as stick figures. The shamanic environment is animated and populated with persecutory demonic forces, threatening to attack the life of the adult whether in individual, family, group, or tribe. Here the paranoid phantasies are not associated with the titanic struggle of birth, but with the irrational reversal between good and evil in environmental relations themselves. Over time, religious rituals accrete, providing adult symbolisation of the common regressed primitive foetal unconscious. Sacrificial rituals have to do with foetal remains and entrails, the attempt to propitiate the evil spirits present in the trees, the rocks, the ground, the sky, the sea, the pool, the river — the environment is seen through the terrified eyes of an adult whose unconsciousness is dominated by a first trimester foetal being, fighting for its life.

Here too the shamanic leader may be designated from birth with that intuitive attunement to the underlying imprint. The shaman, seer, healer, or holy person lives in a profound state of identification with the animated environment, in constant touch with the spirit world of the ancestors and of the totemic animals and objects which become the symbol carriers of primitive projection.

First trimester trauma can of course occur in any culture. There may be life-

threatening illness affecting the mother, the death of a father or older sibling, or some physical catastrophe. Near abortions and miscarriages can have the same kind of imprinting on the survivors. Such events lead to deviant behaviour in normally resourceful cultures, but may lead the persons concerned into a shaman-like role within their society. Typically reversed dependency very early in the pregnancy generates a character imprint in which the person concerned sees themselves as having the responsibility for saving the life of the environment, a messianic complex with a helper mentality compulsively seeing in the other an image of the denied inner needy self.

### *Environmental Relations and the Animation of the Cosmos*

If the world of children and adults is dominated by personal relationships and that of the immediate post-natal nursing infant by object and part-object relationships, then the world of the prenatal ecology is dominated by environmental relationships. Here lie the grounds of assumptions which dictate the dynamics of ecology. The earlier the point of fixation, or the more primitive the stage of regression, the more profoundly cosmic is the animation of the environment. From the existential perspective of the embryo the womb-world is a vast unbounded living environment, basically benign but carrying all kinds of persecutory possibilities, bearing across its membranes the signals and hormonal footprints of the total emotional world of the mother. There is no outside

edge to this environment, it is infinite. Here is the ground of the god in whom we live and move and have our being. The fixated foetal unconscious, present in the adult, perceives the adult environment as a continuum of the primitive womb world, idealised, reified, projected to the outer-most reaches of the cosmos and deified. Out of these reaches of the unconscious the gods are formed.

In later life the levels of consciousness equivalent to the earliest points of regression provide the most overarching and cosmic constructs of spirituality. The other, the one, the all, the ground of being, the great spirit of the universe, the goddess, the living, vibrating world of cosmic consciousness, held up as goal in so much New Age spirituality, reflect as in a mirror the imprinting from the most primitive stages of life. As with later imprints the reified structures are dissociated from their biogenetic grounding. Symbols, images, myths and rituals accrete and the whole structure is validated with an ontology of its own and becomes, in essence, psychotic. Adherence with unquestioning and unquestionable loyalty to such a field, fraught with boundaries of taboo, effectively blocks any possibility of recovery of its primitive grounding or of the integration of the imprinting whose defences it encodes. The inversion in definition between health and psychosis current in these mystic levels of humanistic psychology and world religion represents a serious malfunction of the human psyche and a serious threat to the future well-being and the reality-relatedness of the species.