

# The Prenatal Self Becoming Conscious Baptism of Christ, Lotus-Vision of Buddha

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**Abstract:** Graber wrote that Jesus Christ and Gautama Buddha integrated the prenatal self. A comparison of the texts shows that this self is a structure with several layers: The good womb of the middle of gestation; the primal self of the end of the embryonal period; implantation; DNS replication of the female germcell which is the first act of creation. The two men created a lost object of love: Christ his father whom he did not know, Buddha his mother who died after her child's birth.

**Zusammenfassung:** *Die Bewußtwerdung des vorgeburtlichen Selbst. Die Taufe von Christus, die Lotosvision von Buddha.* Graber schrieb, daß Jesus Christus und Gautama Buddha das vorgeburtliche Selbst integrierten. Ein Vergleich der Texte zeigt, daß dieses Selbst eine Struktur mit mehreren Schichten ist: Der gute Schoß aus der Mitte der Schwangerschaft; das Urselft vom Ende der embryonalen Periode; die Einnistung; die DNS-Verdopplung (Keimzellenreifung) der weiblichen Keimzelle, dem ersten Schöpfungsakt. Die beiden Männer erschufen ein verlorenes Liebesobjekt: Christus seinen Vater, den er nicht kannte; Buddha seine Mutter, die nach der Geburt ihres Kindes gestorben war.

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## **Graber and the Prenatal Self**

A special kind of conscious birth, the rebirth experience, is found in most religions. In a mystical state the adult feels reborn, or born again. Often he speaks of his new birth or his second birth. He seems to have reexperienced or repeated his birth, this time in a conscious way. His new identity usually is a feeling of being

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connected with a cosmic energy or a divine being, or being filled, animated by it. (Cf. Mircea Eliade (1958) *Naissances mystiques*)

Gustav Hans Graber, one of the founders of prenatal psychology, defines the self as prenatal. He described this prenatal self as “a love relationship of a dual union of mother and child”; at birth the self is lost, replaced by the ego.

In this perspective it is the self which is born, born again, in the rebirth experience: It rises from the unconscious into consciousness. One can also say that the original birth is undone: Consciousness has gone back into the prenatal realm – but it is the adult who has the experience, and he is able to live and to function in the postnatal realm though usually in a very special way. This is the case with the mystic; I think his ego boundaries are strong enough to encompass and contain the energies of the prenatal dimension. If these boundaries are not strong enough they will break and the result is a psychotic.

Graber illustrated his idea of the prenatal self with the examples of Jesus Christ and Gautama Buddha. He wrote that both had integrated the prenatal self; Buddha by returning into the mother’s womb when he reached nirvana, Christ by identifying with the father.

Graber’s short essays on Christ and on Buddha are quite speculative and abstract. I want to look at the texts describing the decisive experiences which made them founders of new religions: The baptism of Christ and the lotus-vision of Buddha. I think we can find the physical, physiological, biological basis of their rebirth experience. It has two steps. At first the prenatal breath is perceived as a divine spirit coming down on them: It is mother’s breath animating and energizing the fetus. Then they feel compassion, love: They experience the prenatal heartbeat which is animated by mother’s heartbeat felt as a rhythmic flow of love, in the phase of the good womb which begins in the third month of gestation. At this time human consciousness begins to awaken, growing out of the prehuman mammalian brain. It is a first perception of being, of self; it is a first birth, a birth without the trauma of birth, the birth of a being which feels timeless, eternal, deathless, immortal, infinite, divine. Graber gave these qualities to the prenatal self; in 1930 Freud had written in a similar way about primary narcissism. With the knowledge accumulated in the meantime we can enter into the complexities of this experience.

### **Baptism and Lotus-Vision. Prenatal Breath and Heartbeat**

I quote from the gospel of Mark which is considered the oldest of the four gospels. “Jesus was baptized by John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (1, 8–11)

I try to perceive a real, a concrete process in this text. I mention that in the Greek text Spirit is *pneuma*, the basic meaning of which is air and also breath. Before the Spirit came Jesus was under water where he could not breathe. When he came out of the water he started to breathe again, but in a new way: Spirit, or *pneuma* is a special kind of breath, a divine breath. Then the voice from heaven says that Jesus is loved. He feels love. I think he has a new feeling; his heart feels

an emotion which – as I suppose – it did not feel before (at least not since he was twelve): A love from heaven, a divine love. So there is a new breath and a new feeling in the heart, both non ordinary, non natural.

The baptism of Jesus is described in the gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke. In the gospel of John Jesus comes to John the Baptist but is not baptized; John says about Jesus: “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.” In Chapter 3 Jesus talks to Nicodemus: “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto 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: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (3, 3–5) I think Jesus here speaks of his baptism (described in the other gospels) and so I think when coming out of the water he reexperienced his birth, but going backwards through it, into the prenatal realm.

During the birth process there can be a moment of suffocation, an experience of dying, the heart seems to stop. Then the head comes into the open, air gets into the lungs, they start to function and the heart feels liberated too. If the birth was very difficult a reanimation can be necessary. It seems that originally baptism aimed at provoking exactly this experience: A dying by suffocation – a near death experience –, followed by a reanimation. Did John the Baptist do this with Jesus?

In the description of Gautama Buddha’s Awakening or Enlightenment we find a scene parallel to the one just regarded: Buddha’s return from nirvana. (The oldest version is in the Middle Length Sayings, nr. 26. Translation of the Pali Text Society.) For six years Gautama had been searching redemption from suffering, from death, he wanted to find the deathless. Finally he found “the unborn”, “the undying”. Then he was wondering if he should teach his way – nobody would understand it. So he wanted to keep his knowledge for himself. Now the god Brahma Sahampati thought: “The world is destroyed if the Awakend One does not teach the dhamma (the doctrine).” The god came down from heaven and said to Buddha: ‘There are a few people who will understand, you can redeem them from suffering and death. You are the hero, the conqueror.’ Now Buddha felt compassion; he saw those seekers like lotusflowers which want to grow and to blossom, and he could help them. So he said: “Opened for those who hear are the doors of the Deathless.”

We can discover the same pattern as in the text about Jesus. Again at first a remark on language. Buddha was in nirvana. Literally it means no breath, or not breathing. Nir is a negative; vana is the same root as wind, meaning breath. But it means the postnatal breath. The state of not breathing is reached by a yoga method, a gradual reduction of breath to a virtual not breathing. Now the yogi has no more feelings: the end of suffering. It is an artificial apparent death (German: Scheintod); Eliade says catalepsy. Buddha reached this state by several meditations, or steps of meditation, in Pali: jhana. The German word for this is Versenkung, sinking down, which reminds us of the sinking under water at baptism. The yogi does it in a different way. Buddha wanted to stay there, in the not breathing state. Then the god comes – it is Buddha’s vision! Brahma is the symbol of cosmic energy, also called divine breath. The breath aspect is underlined by Brahma’s second name Sahampati, invented by Buddha. It means Lord of Breath.

Saham means I am; in this case it is the reversal of Hamsa, which signifies the song of the wild goose, symbol of Brahma.

So Buddha was in the not breathing state; then the divine breath came down on him, he was spoken to and then he felt compassion: His heart feels again, a new feeling, and so he decides to leave his solitude. It is the same pattern as with Jesus: Not breathing, heart empty or dead. Then new breath, heart full of love, compassion. I think Buddha also reexperienced his birth, going backwards into the prenatal realm just as Jesus did.

In Buddha's case there was a reanimation. In the text, of Saying nr. 26, there is no person corresponding to John the Baptist, but from other sources we know, that before Buddha had the Brahma vision, two men had met the meditating man, recognizing a saint; they had given him alms, porridge with honey, and had asked for a teaching. These two men, Tapussa and Bhallika, pulled him out of nirvana. In sacred Indian texts honey means a psychoactive drug (for example soma), in this case probably empathogenic, heart-opening, like MDMA or Ayahuasca.

In Hebrew there are several words for compassion. The most frequent one, the one Jesus probably used, is *rahamim*; it means uterin, womb-like, meaning a good womb. In John 1, 18 Jesus is in the "fathers bosom", says the King James Version. Luther wrote "in des Vaters Schoß" – in the father's womb. The Greek word is *kolpos*, known to physicians through *kolposkopie*, one can also say *vaginaskopie*. *Kolpos* means uterus. (*Kolpos* also in Luke 16, 22 "Abraham's bosom". Luther: "Abrahams Schoß".) – Buddha's word for compassion is *karuna*. *Kar* as in *karma*, action. *Karuna* is holy action – originally the creation of life – by the mother. – In German one of the words for compassion is *Barmherzigkeit*, from Latin *miser cordia* – a heart for the poor.

### **The Primal Self. End of Second Month**

The prenatal self rose into the consciousness of Christ and of Buddha. This experience is quite well known today, for example by the method of rebirthing developed by Leonard Orr, or by the use of psychoactive drugs, explored by Stanislav Grof and many others. It is an experience which lasts a short time. With Christ and Buddha it was different: They stayed in this non ordinary state of consciousness and of emotion. A transformation had happened. With Jesus from carpenter to prophet or to son of God. With Buddha from son and heir of a rich governor to an Awakened One, a religious beggar and tremendous preacher. A new person was born, a new identity, a new self rose from their unconscious. It must have been there already, as a stable structure, a kind of double (Otto Rank's term), that had grown there for a long time.

They live in the world of the prenatal self. When Jesus starts preaching he says: "Time is fulfilled." This means there is no more time, there is eternity. "The kingdom of God is at hand." This means, the kingdom of God is here. (Mark! Matthew is different.) Buddha will "turn the dhamma wheel", a new age has started, corresponding to the kingdom of God; Buddha will be "beating the drum of deathlessness".

This is not the prenatal phase in general but the phase of the good womb, about third to fifth month of pregnancy where limitless love is, or can be, experi-

enced, there are no ego boundaries yet. Here the fetus is the soul. Ludwig Janus mentions that the German word Seele is derived from See: It is the being living in the amniotic fluid. (In English soul and sea.) Janus says the soul is the fetal consciousness.

I think that the core of the two visionary experiences is the very origin of the fetal self which takes place at the beginning of the fetal period, or the end of the embryonal period, that is the end of the second month. It is a time of special growth. Johannes Fabricius in his book on Alchemy speaks of “the emergence of the fetal personality”, the “genesis of the primal self.” This can be reexperienced by the adult in mystical visions with “an impact of divine light.” “Psychologically, the ego’s experience of supernatural light signifies its awareness of areas of high-powered mental energies ordinarily unconscious”. It is “the presence of a mental nucleus governing the total personality at a deeply unconscious level”. Jung “discovered this nucleus of the unconscious and termed it ‘the self’.”

At this time the brain of the fetus grows with great intensity, stimulating the uterus in a pleasurable way and the uterus responds in giving back this feeling of joy: Mutual blessings, exchange of bliss, an endless love affair – in divine dimensions. The womb is activated, a kind of permanent hyperventilation sets in: Spirit comes down, love comes down.

This awakening of consciousness is the birth of consciousness: It is a first birth, the birth of the primal self. This is the meaning of Jesus saying that he was born again of water and of the Spirit. The same thing occurred with Buddha’s lotus-vision. His awakening had two steps, or was twofold: the first step was nirvana: He reached already “the unborn”, “the undying”, but it was an empty consciousness with no feelings. The second step of awakening is filled with feelings, with compassion.

### **Lotusflower, Mustard Seed. Implantation**

There are still deeper layers in the two visions. They are hinted at by Buddha’s lotus-symbol. He sees a process of growth, a movement. A plant is growing. This phenomenon is experienced at implantation. If one rediscovers this phase in trance one sees the blastocyst like a seed which sprouts, grows, develops seven segments, the uppermost is like a blossom opening its petals, stimulating the uterus, the endometrium: It responds by dropping a fluid, nourishment which is like nectar and ambrosia, the food of the gods, giving immortality. Ambrosia means not-death, in Sanskrit amrita, in Pali amatam . Before the not-death experience there was a death experience which is now overcome. Before implantation there is a crisis: For the immune system of the maternal organism the blastocyst is a foreign body, because of the sperm part in it. The blastocyst is rejected, nearly dies; it is the sperm part which dies, seems to die. Then the blastocyst is accepted: The womb is compassionate, has a heart for the poor being: Resurrection, immortality, eternal bliss.

The same process is implied in the parable of the mustard seed, symbol of the kingdom of God: “It is like a grain of mustard seed, which when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: But when it is sown, it groweth

up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.” (Mark 4, 31f.)

### **Virginal Conception. DNS Replication**

There is still a deeper, an earlier layer. I do not mean conception, fertilisation. This is also an experience of death and rebirth but it has a different content, it is violent, fiery, an explosion resulting from the fusion of the nuclei of ovum and sperm. Conception is not the beginning of life. Before conception there is already another process of growth within the germcells: A doubling of the chromosomes, a DNS replication, it is a self-multiplication, a self-fertilisation (*Keimzellenreifung* in German). It is the plant phase of evolution. Primitive plantcells live on light, they grow until they divide. In the female human germcell, the ovum, this process is experienced as the coming down of a winged being, it goes into a blossom and fertilises it. The dove, the wild goose. This is the spirit, the divine breath. Then a pulsation sets in, like a first heartbeat, love is felt, life begins.

In this process, the DNS replication, it is as if the parents of the mother make love again, the origin of the mother is repeated. The mother plays the part of her own mother, she makes love with her father: The sacred marriage of daughter and father is enacted, it is a part of Jung’s incest archetype. In many myths this marriage is called virginal conception, but it is a divine father fertilising the virgin. This virginal conception of Christ we find in the gospel of Luke. In Buddha’s case it was a white elephant from heaven who fertilised the womb of Maya, Buddha’s mother.

The two sons reexperience their virginal conception, having taken the place of their mothers: They found their origin, the moment of creation. It is their very first birth, we might call it primal birth. This primal birth rises into their consciousness.

In their mothers this virginal conception took place when they were embryos in their own mothers, after the end of the second month, when the primal self was born. At the same time the next generation is coming into existence. The femal primal self is twofold, consists of a twofold creative act. Here is the origin of love, of love as creation – and what else is love? Here is the origin of God as love, of God as creator. Does this sound like poetry? It is poetry, of course, but it is also science, biology, and psychology too. So we can ask: Why did Christ and Buddha do this? Or perhaps we better say: Why did this happen in Christ and in Buddha? Why did the two young men repeat their virginal conception, and in this way their primal birth?

Who was born? Christ was born as a son with a loving father. Buddha was born as the jewel in the lotus. The lotus is a symbol of the lotus goddess, the virginal Great Mother of the old Indian religion; the Jewel in the Lotus is the son of the goddess, he is also her lover and he is her father too.

### **Primary Love, Primary Self**

Christ was an illegitimate child who did not know his father. Unmarried mothers had to be killed by stoning. (David Wasdell described Mary’s situation.) Buddha’s mother died a few days after his birth. Christ created a father for himself, Buddha

created a mother. Or we can say: Christ created a birth where he was welcomed by a father, Buddha created a birth where he was welcomed by a mother. So we can say both were reborn by giving birth. They had gone back to their origin, to their first experience of love, of creation. They went into this origin, into their mothers, they became their mothers, identified with them in order to create the lost object of love. They appropriated the creative power of their mothers, they became god, the creator.

The same process as phantasy, as unfulfilled wish, was described by Freud in his essays on Schreber (1911) and on the so-called Wolfsmann (1918), the two psychoanalytic models of psychosis and neuroses. Both men had gone back into their mothers in order to be fertilised again by their fathers. They remained in the passive position. In 1920 Freud introduced the death instinct which obeys the nirvana principle, he wrote. So here Buddha is implied. Freud did not see the second step of Buddha, the return from nirvana through compassion.

Christ and Buddha went into the active position, loving actively, creating their objects of love. Then, after their transformation, they communicated their experience, preaching compassion, founding a group. Neither Freud nor Graber mentioned this aspect of creative compassion; they stayed within the concept of narcissism, as egoistic self love.

Michael Balint wrote about the process of total regression to the point of a "primary love" from which a new beginning is possible. This pattern can be filled by methods of active imagination, by heart meditation, heart opening, in order to contact malignant inner objects, rejecting, or lost, hated or idealised, out of yearning for their love which they did not give. These inner images can be transformed or brought to life again, by the original love of the child, but now as the love of the adult, who resurrects the dead parent, re-creates his object of love. The roles of child and parent are reversed. Christ and Buddha were giants, were gods. The ordinary person can learn from them to find this active loving, in a conscious way, and with the help of a therapist, in transference.

### **Concluding Remarks. The Other Side of the Prenatal Self: Trauma of Birth, Trauma of Conception**

Christ and Buddha lived as the prenatal self, so sex was excluded. Buddha described precisely how he extinguished the sexual part in his body, the sperm part, in order to be able to enter his mother's organism which is in the root of the psyche. Christ went the opposite direction. At his second vision, transfiguration, he went from virginal conception to conception itself, meeting the sperm and then going with it back into the father, in the process of crucifixion. So in the end a sentence from the gospel of John had become a psychic reality: "I and my father are one." (10, 30)

Christ and Buddha overcame the trauma of conception which is implied in the vision of virginal conception. When Mary conceived Jesus, she broke the law of chastity; she must have been afraid of stoning. Maya had taken a vow of chastity, which she broke when she conceived Buddha. (I deal with these aspects in a book "Christ, Buddha – Tantra, Alchemy. Prenatal Psychology and History".)

I repeat the paradoxical aspects: Overcoming the trauma of birth by undoing birth, becoming unborn, as Buddha says. Overcoming the trauma of conception by undoing conception, returning into the father, into his creative power, the testicles (the father's bosom, or womb; Otto Rank says "Vaterleib", father's body) – seen from inside, in trance, there is a vulcano throwing sparks which fly like billions of angels in a dome of infinite size: Sperms that want to incarnate. Or returning into the mother, into her creative power, the ovary, which, experienced from inside, is a tree, the "ovarian tree" (Fabricius), the tree of life; it has cosmic dimensions. The two centers of creation have a mental representation in the pineal gland, also showing the Sun-God and the Moon-God.

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