

Beyond the beginnings of time, this is the rhythm we will always seek, will always be comforted by, and will even escape to if we feel stressed, rolling back to our very beginning and the wonderment present we all know by heart.

For a time now, we have become aware of changes. In our eternal darkness, a new spirit moves over the waters. Suddenly there are great movements, voices become clearer. The creator is about to start up the world for us and the powerful contractions begin. The obstetrician said "Turn up the light," and there was light, and she saw that you were good. It didn't take seven days either, but it is a pretty chaotic experience so it could have easily seemed that way as we tried to make some sense of it. And what a demotion! We had been the entire universe, the be-all, he-all, she-all, and end-all. Now we were just as helpless as a newborn.

They turned on the lights, the crowd cheered, and it was a whole new ball game. We called foul. We cried. We yelled. We were really put out; figuratively, metaphysically, and literally. Our mind wasn't started at birth, but we must have been startled. Drugged with natural endorphins, we were shoved down that dark tunnel into the blinding light. It had been forever in stage one, and then we were gasping and blinking and kicking our way into this new stage, and suddenly we were center stage. All newborns must dream a lot about the old days, wondering about it all. They spend nearly half their time in REM sleep, the dream state, even with their eyes open. They just can't believe it. Forever and ever - and now this utter confusion? What happened?

We keep waking to a new reality, and we cry a lot about it. You can't remember; no one can. We talked in baby talk, and we thought in baby thought; we can't recall anything very specifically because our baby brain was still so non-specific. Creatures that operate entirely on instinct, practically up to the reptiles, do arrive ready-made. Just hatch them, and they're up and running. Aside from their size, they are fully wise and capable, as wise as they are capable of being, from their first days on earth. Here they come, and off they go.

More complex creatures take more time to mature, and we mature gradually as our parts mature. We come onto this earth both unfinished and unorganized; we can't even eat solid food for many months. There was no part of us that was, at birth, fully detailed or final. Every part was infantile; baby toes, baby nose, baby fingers, and baby brain. Everything was already working, or we could not

have been born alive, but there's a long time between appearance and maturity. Every part of us had years to go. Our brain was far from being organized and structured as it is now: articulate, differentiated and working with years of experiential memory. It was baby's brain, and it was about as capable of reflective thought as baby legs are for running. It still had to develop further, and all the time it was perceiving and understanding the best it could with what little it had. Given our baby legs, we would stumble and fall; we were not ready for gravity then. With our baby brain, our consciousness was equally incapable of the sure and distinctive method of thought which characterizes the adult mind. We were much closer to forever than than we are now.

There are several interesting aspects to the stages in which the brain matures. We are born with nearly all our neurons, and these cells rarely reproduce. For reasons which will become clear, it would be impractical to deal with the constant appearance of too many blank, immature, or disconnected cells in the midst of things. Instead there is enormous redundancy. Even after a stroke, there are often enough spare neurons around to eventually re-connect and re-learn. With billions of cells, we can afford to lose a couple of thousand a day all our lives, which we do, and yet not run out during our life. Between birth and the age of about two-and-a-half, each of us a little differently, we are navigating with a consciousness that is constantly on the run as our brain hooks itself up and prunes itself down to the right size for a lifetime career in data processing.

We know that each neuron communicates with countless others, sending electrical pulses down an axon nerve fiber, the axon. The axon in turn splits off into numerous hair-like dendrites, tiny sub-fibers. An axon which has grown all its dendrites is said to be fully "arborated," from arbor, the Latin word for tree. It looks exactly like a tree without leaves, dividing and subdividing from major branches to the finest of twigs. In this way, a single nerve cell in the brain may be in contact with up to as many as 10,000 others. With nearly all these cells in place at birth, much of the next three years is spent in the gradual arborization of the axons and dendrites. Our chips were in place, but they weren't wired up. We have to make our connections before we can make our communications.

By the time we are one year old, consciousness is undergoing a very significant change. At first, it took lot of energy to push in-

our ears and voices. Bears and monkeys become dogs and sheep tracks as we graduate from the collective unconscious into the present space through a glass of fabric and mythology given to us with our baby food. Over those years of worldly time we are weaned from the world of our senses and awareness into the collective fabric of our own family and culture.

With the arrival of physical mental maturity, we finally come into this world. The tree of our knowledge is finally becoming fully arborated, and the mind is ripe. Cognitive processing warms up. We begin to notice the many differences between here and there; the differences between me, and him, and her; the subtly differing worlds of early playmates. As we bloom into conscious comparative thought, we are separated from eternity for the rest of our life. We are no longer all and forever; we are fast becoming one more curious soul in the here and now.

Still, even as we all come to grips with the grip of time, there is not one of us that does not distantly remember in some general and diffused manner those days when the gods spoke. We remember the love they gave us, the love that we carry at the very base of our knowledge of this world. It was the earliest language we knew, the source code of our sensibilities. Our very earliest memories start with our parents and their natural love. Babies are treasured universally; there is no culture in the world that condones cruelty to infants. If there is one thing we discover in this awful world that almost makes the loss of eternity bearable, it is the love we found here. It is the only ration that we can take with us when we leave the garden because it is so simple, and it becomes the one compass we always use to find our way back again. We know we must find our way back there some day, back to our old eternal home. We can't forget it just because we are discovering mortality. But we do. We all forget our first eternity. We nearly forget the love as well. But somehow we believe that it will all come back some time.

Back when days were months and months were years, we have the answers to why both Jewish patriarchs and Buddhist devas, those re-born in the blessed realm, had such extraordinary life spans. When we were very small, naturally, "there were giants in those days..." as Bible stories and other creation tales tell us. The years before conscious understanding are so different because we experience them so differently. Nearly all mythologies start with a golden age or at least a time when the gods were making sure everything was working right. It is to this earthly plane that we



descend, simply by growing up. The nearly forgotten endlessness of it all that we carry with us is the echo of a much earlier life, and we were there.

When we try to think back to those ancient memories, we can almost scent the breeze of timelessness that beckons over that dark threshold. This is the true time warp, the undertow of trying to remember thoughts from another time, other lives so deep and vaguely comprehended, fossils of the past trapped in the very strata of our mind. We can hardly remember how long it was from age three back to age two. From two back to one is much longer as we move into our collective and universal world time. There is more time on the other side of birth than we can ever remember. There is no time so endless - or so deep.

The haunting memories of those earlier times are still there, scattered and generalized through our waking perceptions, still alive in our dreams and our nightmares. This is the personal and universal mind that is ours alone, and depending on how far back we go, shared with all others on this planet. The further we regress, the more general our entire consciousness becomes, the more time slurs, the more oneness there is in all things. The further we come forward, the greater the differentiation into all the specifics of our self in our space.

Only if the mind itself simplifies can we ever re-experience that other universe that has always been there within us. If the final maturation of our human brain forces us to forget that timeless place in order to deal with this time and space, it doesn't matter. We will rediscover it again at the right time, whenever something makes our mind simple again. It happens every time we let go our nets of perception and find our centers, at moments when time stands still. In terror and in ecstasy the overburdened brain slips time for the moment. Then we can know things that we cannot express or even think about.

It happens every time we undergo an experience so powerful that it blankets our waking consciousness, forcing us into momentary timelessness. It can happen temporarily, but only momentarily, and it keeps us aware that there is some place beyond time. It happens with eternal finality at death, the one and only experience that can actually loose us from the grip of time, and make us timeless before we die.