

## Book Review

***Mythology of the Prenatal Life***. Francis J. Mott, annotated by R. D. Laing, 1960/2013. London: Starwalker Press. ISBN: 978-0-9558231-8-3. and ***The Nature of the Self***. Francis J. Mott, 1959. London: Starwalker Press. ISBN: 978-0-9558231-6-9

Francis J. Mott's *Mythology of the Prenatal Life* is his sequel and companion volume to *The Nature of the Self*. Originally privately published as a monograph, this book was annotated by the influential psychiatrist, R. D. Laing, and is accompanied by his own thoughts in facsimile handwriting.

The two volumes are meant to be read in succession, with *The Nature of the Self* laying a foundation for the following book. However, one may read only *Mythology of the Prenatal Life* and have a basic sense of what was written previously.

Both volumes would be fascinating to anyone researching symbology and mythology as they relate to the pre- and perinatal periods. The content is full of little gems, for those willing to entertain Mott's excellent and unusual connections between the life of the pre-nate, discovered from the recounting of dreams and stories, and the struggles encountered by the everyday human being in the world.

For example, in *The Nature of the Self*, Mott describes how the development of the fetus leads to all primal feelings, which are found at the core of oneself, and felt through major sense organs, such as the skin. He writes, "...the fetus [is] an entity who in doing things via the umbilical cord to another entity, the placenta, ...at the same time is having things done to him," (p. 28). This early experience of the fetus, he continues, can lead to various psychological complexes, or confusions around eating, excreting, and death. Among many other pieces, Mott addresses the trans-generational transmission of information, including trauma, which can occur between parents and fetus, the idea of a universal design of creation, and stages of development through the body. These are all accompanied by interesting illustrations.

Mott makes amazing connections between the mythologies familiar to most, and the life of the pre-nate. His associations between the stories in the Bible and the struggle of the pre-nate with the placenta and umbilical cord are gripping. He addresses passages found within the stories of Adam and Eve, Moses, Samson and Delilah, and Noah's ark, all within the first 50 pages of the approximately 240-page volume. However, stories from Shakespeare's plays, Greek mythology, and ancient tribal stories of Africa are plentiful as well.

In *Mythology of the Prenatal Life*, Mott describes one example of the prenatal mythology found in a familiar Bible story. He states:

Certainly the fetus and the placenta may be said to 'eat together' in the sense that the fetus 'feeds' the placenta with blood, and the placenta in turn 'feeds' the fetus. This interpretation is in no sense a wishful use of symbolism, since precisely the same dynamic may be seen in the story of Adam and Eve, where the serpent (symbol of the umbilical arteries) causes the placental Eve to eat, whereafter she gives the same food to the fetal Adam. (p. 26)

As intriguing as these gems of symbolism were, this reviewer found much of the language used in both books to be somewhat laborious to navigate. It took several weeks for me to finish both volumes, even as a prolific reader. This may be because the writing was completed in 1959-1960, and was not necessarily intended for lay readers. It may also be that, as Mott states, in his "[uncovering of] a whole new realm of experience, ...there are no words for its simple and economic exposition." (*The Nature of the Self*, p. xiii).

Reviewed by  
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