

The Sunrise As The Birth Of A Baby: The Prenatal Key to Egyptian Mythology

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In Deference to the Dutch Historian of Religion, Bruno Hugo Stricker

Keywords: Egyptian mythology; Francis Mott; Prenatal Dreams: The theology of the Sun; Embryology; Cosmology; The Sun God Ra; Isis and Osiris; Horus, their son; Experiences of a baby in his/her mother's womb.

ABSTRACT: The Dutch historian of religion, Bruno Hugo Stricker, has been studying Egyptian mythology since 1940 and can show that this ancient culture tries to understand the development of a baby in the womb of its mother as a basis to comprehend the origin of the world. In the center of the Egyptian mythology is the Sun God Ra who is swallowed every evening by the sky goddess Nut and in the morning is reborn through her vulva. The books of the netherworld describe the adventures and dangers he lives through in the body of this goddess. Every morning Ra has to attack the biggest of his enemies, the serpent Apophis, whom he defeats by cutting off his head—the naval cord is severed. Microcosm: the baby is born; macrocosm: the sun rises blood-red above the horizon.

INTRODUCTION

For over 10 years I have been working on Sumerian and Babylonian mythology in order to trace its prenatal and perinatal roots. By chance, in a footnote, I came upon the name Stricker. I discovered that since 1940, this Dutch Historian of Religion has been exploring the mythology of the Egyptians from the same point of view.

In the course of my research, I had concentrated on reading the mythology of all very advanced civilizations from ancient China to Aztec. More recently, I had been focused on the stories of the gods of still-living cultures. Truthfully, I had always kept a respectful distance from the Egyptian's mythology because they have so many stories about all their godly figures--and there are a staggering variety of these figures. However, important indications, intimations and implications can be found in their books about the netherworld and from all the inscriptions on all of the temples. In the course of time, out of those thousands of fragments, figures must have spontaneously crystallized in our minds. There are many contradictions about these myths. Actually, the *Osiris* myth does not have an Egyptian origin; this version was passed down from

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Plutarch. I confess I did not really understand Egyptian mythology. It remained strange to me. Yet, it is exactly about this mythic clutter that Stricker has written *De Geboorte van Horus (The Birth of Horus)* in five volumes comprising 770 pages. There were 8,500 footnotes in his Dutch language which I could not understand at all.

For a long time, I have been absorbed in the writings of the English psychoanalyst Francis Mott, who interpreted his patient's dreams through the background of their pre- and perinatal experiences. Prebirth is the decisive period of human existence which pervades and colors the rest of life. But, if those experiences during pregnancy are of such fundamental importance, how does a grown-up dream of being a baby in the womb? This is one of the central questions in Francis Mott's work. His answer was quite simple. In our dreams, the embryonic or fetal self occurs as light, fire or brightness. This reflects fetal sensation during gestation and the nucleus of a subsequent self. As early as the 1950s and 1960s, Francis Mott demonstrated that all the old god-figures were in some way related to light. Either their head or body was surrounded by a shining brightness, a halo, or there was an indication of fire in their names. Thus, for Mott, all the old god-figures are symbolic representations of what a baby experiences prenatally wrapped within the mother's womb.

EGYPTIAN MYTHOLOGY

In Egyptian mythology, the *Sun God Ra* stands at the center. There are many volumes written about the netherworld, the *Amduat*, such as *The Book of the Gate of Heaven*, *The Book of the Cave*, or *The Book of the Earth*, just to mention the most important ones. In these books of the netherworld, you can read what the dead king, the Pharaoh, can expect to encounter in that world. The Pharaoh himself desires to become the dead *Osiris* so that he can daily traverse across heaven in the bark (boat) of the sun in the company of *Ra*, the Supreme God. There are extant mysterious drawings and related texts which provide guidance for the Pharaoh in the netherworld and how he can rise from death to eternal life. These texts describing the netherworld, relate how every evening the *Sun God Ra* is swallowed by *Nut*, the Goddess of Heaven. The necrology delineates the dangers and adventures experienced by the Sun God Ra passing through the goddess's body during his night voyage. Shortly before dawn, he must pass the greatest danger of all. This is the struggle for survival with his archrival, the snake *Apophis*, whom he in the end beheads in order to be reborn through the vulva of *Nut*. Of course, *Apophis* is a symbolic representation of the umbilical cord which must be severed. The sun rises blood-red at the horizon; thus the sunrise is understood to represent the birth of the baby.

In the eyes of Francis Mott, the *Sun God Ra* obviously is a representation *par excellence* of the baby in the womb of his mother. Having realized these connections, I knew for sure that I wanted to delve deeper into Egyptian mythology². Up to now, Stricker has remained largely unknown even among his colleagues. He has been completely overlooked by prenatal psychologists and psychotherapists.³ His Dutch language proved a decisive barrier preventing his work from being more widely studied. So, I began to learn Dutch in order to be able to read,

² This was made possible with the precious help of Eric Hornung's works.

³ Du Quesne was an exception; he organized a Congress in honor of Stricker's 85th Birthday, which he then documented and published as a volume of Congress Proceedings.

understand and translate Stricker's life work. In the following brief essay, my intention is to sum up his most important ideas in order to present them to a broader audience of colleagues in prenatal psychology.

ABOUT STRICKER AND HIS VIEWS

As Stricker stated in a letter, he does not understand anything about prenatal psychology. He is an historian of religion, well informed and actually brilliant in the philosophy and theology of the whole ancient world, and also the world of the Greeks and Romans, the Jews, Persians, and the Indians. Incessantly, he quotes geniuses of these cultures and compares them with the experiences of the ancient Egyptians realizing that their theology had a deep impact on the thinking of all later peoples. But there is another important dimension: Stricker compares these ancient quotations and writings with the images of the ancient world. Thus, his life work is a synthesis between word and image.

Stricker's main attention is focused on one of the books of the netherworld, *The Book of the Earth*, which he calls *The Embryologic Treatise*. His basic work *De Geboorte von Horus (The Birth of Horus)* published in five volumes is mainly an analysis and decoding of this book about the netherworld. The French scholar Piankoff who had originally edited the Egyptian text, understood it as an analogy to the *birth of the sun* (See Piankoff, Alexandre & N. Rambova, 1954, in English). In contrast, Stricker manages to prove that in *The Embryologic Treatise* found in the burial chamber of Ramses VI, with the help of its cosmological imagery about the creation of the world, the ancient Egyptians tried to comprehend the development and evolution of a human *baby* from the moment of procreation to birth.

For a better understanding of my essay about the god figures of ancient Egypt, here is a second preliminary note: Egyptian god-figures can, at will, blend, merge or morph into other forms. In the beginning this easily can irritate a reader. For instance, *Sun God Ra* is presented as a hawk. At the same time, the hawk is a symbol of *Horus*, the son of *Isis* and *Osiris*. Furthermore, the eyes of *Horus* symbolize the sun and the moon. The father, *Osiris*, is first of all a God of vegetation. Moreover, he is a judge in the netherworld. The King of the Egyptians, their Pharaoh, sees himself as *Horus*, the son of the *Sun God Ra*, who after his death wants to become *Osiris*. Thus, we can understand all these gods as the various aspects of a godly being or even of a man. Whereas *Osiris* is the dead father who stays in the netherworld forever, *Horus* is the aspect of the child, the child as the image of the father who has risen from the dead. Out of these two, the mystery of the identity between father and son evolves.

The *Sun God Ra*, being the highest god of creation, reflects the evolution of man:
In the morning he is the newly born child,
at noon he reaches the peak of his might and power
and in the evening he symbolizes old age, decline
and finally death before he is reborn the next morning as the symbol of rebirth.

All ancient peoples had a strong interest in the origin of the world: in cosmology on the one hand and in the baby (embryology) on the other. The basis for all original philosophy is in its

concept about the divine being. Every being is preceded by a process of becoming, a development. The embryonic genesis of a man in the fetus has been the model for each becoming. An abundance of facts and observations about both cosmology and embryology, were available to ancient peoples although many of these concepts seemed obscure, mysterious and inconceivable. And so, they transferred their knowledge from their cosmology to the genesis of man. And vice versa: what they knew about the development of a human being they projected back to the origin of the world: Cosmology and embryology, macrocosm and microcosm are compared at will. In other words, *individual ontogeny is a recapitulation of the creation of the world*.

The microcosm is like the macrocosm: events of world-wide importance are repeatedly related to and compared with human destiny. For example, heaven and earth are like man and woman. Because of the fertilizing rain, a child grows as a kind of vegetation, so a woman by her labor imitates the soil. An image taken from the animal kingdom in the way a bull mounts a cow has been compared with *Osiris* and *Isis*, and the river Nile seen as fertilizing sperm, yearly overflows its banks to fertilize the soil. Thus, all Egypt is compared with a uterus.

THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN'S VIEW OF LIFE

Before the discovery of the earth as a globe⁴, the ancient Egyptians had envisioned the world as a flat disk surrounded by an ocean as by a broad river⁵. Beyond this body of water a circle-shaped world mountain surrounds the whole world, the Egyptians called this *Achet*, ☉ the hieroglyph which literally means the horizon. The sky rests like a lid on this cosmic circle-shaped mountain *Achet*. There is nothing beyond but abyss and chaos. Thus, the whole world can be understood as a cave. (Fig. 1)

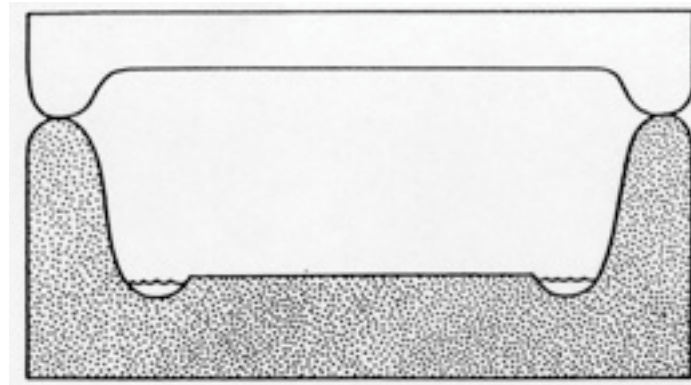


Figure 1. The World Cave as a Womb/Uterus⁶

⁴ See Sloterdijk 1998, *Sphären I (Spheres I)*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

⁵ Presented as a snake biting its tail: Uroboros, the sea snake, see Stricker, 1953.

⁶ Figure 42 in Stricker, *Geboorte IV*: 353. See the same concept of the world in Sumerians and Babylonians in Bottéro/Kramer, page 70.

Thus the world is like a macrocosmic womb. And this cosmic circle-shaped mountain, *Achet*, is symbolized or personified by the two Goddesses *Isis* and *Nephtys*⁷. *Horus*, the son of *Isis*, is the symbol for everything the earth produces and bears: the people, the animals and the vegetation. According to a later concept, the earth is imaged like a floating island in this world cave supported by an array of columns. (Fig. 2)

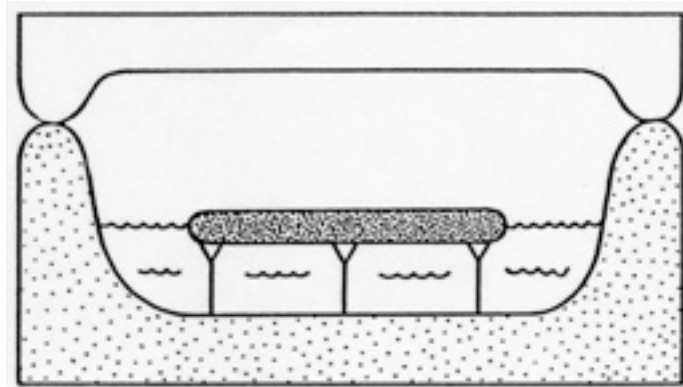



Figure 2. The World Cave As a Pregnant Womb⁸

And so, the earth is like a baby, like *Horus* in the womb of his mother, shown through the hieroglyph . Macrocosmically, it is the primal sea--the primeval waters which flow encircling the earth like a river, as the amniotic fluid in the microcosmos, the unborn in the mother's womb. As a baby looks for the first time on the light of this world (at birth), originally *Horus* created through *Isis* and *Osiris*, so every day the sun is born out of the vulva of *Nut*, the Goddess of Heaven. 'The sun climbs up from the horizon like a bird--*Horus* out of the uterus like a falcon.'

The symbol of this daily reincarnation is the lotus, a kind of sea rose, climbing upward from the depths of the primal sea, spreading over its surface to blossom. Its stem is, therefore, a symbol of the umbilical cord. In the beginning of all creation, the *Sun God Ra*, spontaneously came into being out of the primeval waters: Like a newborn baby, the Sun God is sitting on top of the primeval lotus.

The most important contribution of Stricker is the analysis of the Egyptian book of the netherworld, the *Book of the Earth* or *Book of Aker*, which is a part of the burial chamber of *Ramses VI*, 20th Dynasty in the 12th century before Christ. Stricker understands this *Book of the Earth* as '*The Embryological Treatise*', beginning with a conception and ending with the birth of a baby. Here I give only a selection of the most important depictions of this tomb.

⁷ Mother *Nut* had four children in her belly, *Isis* and *Osiris* who had already loved each other while in their mother's womb, and *Nephtys* and *Seth*. *Isis* and *Nephtys* are two almost inseparable twin sisters. But *Seth* becomes the great rival to his brother *Osiris* whom he kills and cuts into pieces and hides throughout Egypt. Since that time *Osiris* has been a judge in the Underworld.

⁸ Stricker, Birth Vol. IV: Fig. 43: 354.

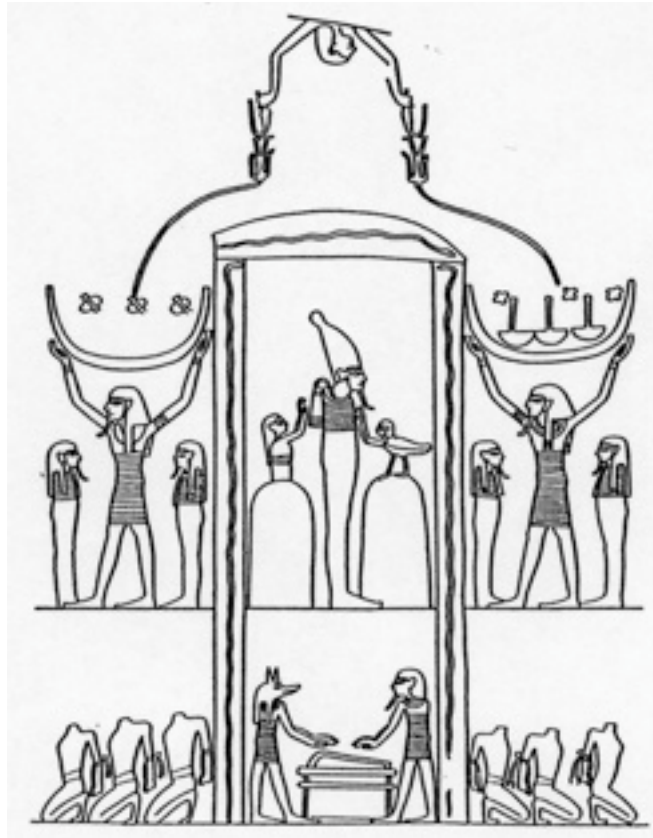


Figure 3. The Male Genitals⁹

In the center of Figure 3, a figure of *Osiris*¹⁰ is standing in a chapel whose walls are formed by three snakes. *Osiris* is located between two hills. A bird with a man's head, a representation of a soul, stands in front of him on that hill. At the upper edge of the picture, the head of the *Sun God Ra* is shown holding in each of his two arms a beheaded man. Instead of the head, a sunbeam falls into a bowl to the left and to the right. Each bowl is held up high by a goddess.

Stricker can show that according to Egyptian mythology, after his death, the king's soul flies into heaven¹¹. The opposite happens at procreation: the soul descends to earth or more precisely, the *Sun God Ra* sends out sunbeams--parts of the soul. On earth, they are caught by a man who directs them to his testicles. The two bowls in the picture represent the testicles, the right one creating a male, the left one a female child. It is the man's task to combine the descending divine essence with the female matter of the womb. In this way, man has been compared with a plant disseminated by/from heaven. Another concept is that the soul is expelled from heaven to reincarnate. In Fig. 3, the soul leaves God and this leaving is circumscribed by pain. The soul has a lifelong yearning to return to God which is only possible at death. Thus, God's contribution to the creation of man is the soul and in this picture God enters through the father¹².

⁹ Stricker, Birth I, Fig. 1: 14.

¹⁰ The enclosed text adds: 'Who is in the hidden room', which means the womb.

¹¹ See Stricker, 1990.

¹² The Divine Essence of the Soul, its head, stays in heaven. Only the 'body' of the soul reincarnates on earth. A soul can only individuate through the death and birth cycle. Stricker 1994: 5/6. A brief note may be mentioned concerning the box beneath Osiris which is being guarded by the



Figure 4. The Female Genitals¹³

In the books about the netherworld, snakes can be found in vast multitudes, though their meaning depends on the context. There is, for instance, *Apophis*, the archrival of the *Sun God Ra*, whom he has to fight every morning; or the *Uraeus*-snake introduced as a protection for respected individuals. Moreover, it symbolizes the kingdom. The two snakes surrounding Goddess *Nut* in Figure 4 probably represent the womb which contains the small snake as cord, and the crocodile as symbols of the amniotic fluid. In the text of *The Embryonic Treatise*, the womb often is called *the mysterious one*. Actually, the womb is represented by two female arms that receive a Sun Disk which symbolizes a fetus¹⁴.

jackal-headed Anubis. This box contains the four children of Horus representing the four elements fire, air, water and earth--the basis of all matter and the primal waters out of which everything was created. These four elements play a central role in the perception of the Ancient Egyptians whenever anything is created. They traverse Stricker's work almost like a red string. See also Stricker, 1992.

¹³ Stricker, *Birth I* Fig. 5: 38.

¹⁴ Stricker, *Geboorte I*, Fig. 11: 47 and Stricker, 1975: Illustrations 1 & 2: 80, 81. The two arms of illustration 1 reach out from a mountain. Out of a similar mountain comes a cow with a Sun Disk between her horns: Hathor as a personified womb (Stricker 1975: Illus. 3: 82 und Stricker 1992: 60). Moreover, a cow is also a symbol for heaven (Stricker 1975, Illus. 4: 83). As already mentioned also the cosmic mountain chain Achet and the world cave in it are also understood as a cosmological womb, see my fig. 1 & 2, illustrated by the two goddesses Isis & Nephtys, see Fig 6. For the world cave as a vessel see Stricker 1997b: 12-27. Also the netherworld is imagined as a womb, see Stricker *Birth I*: 56 and V: 665. Stricker has shown that images of the uterus have numerous references in Egyptian Mythology. In this context I covered only the more important ones.

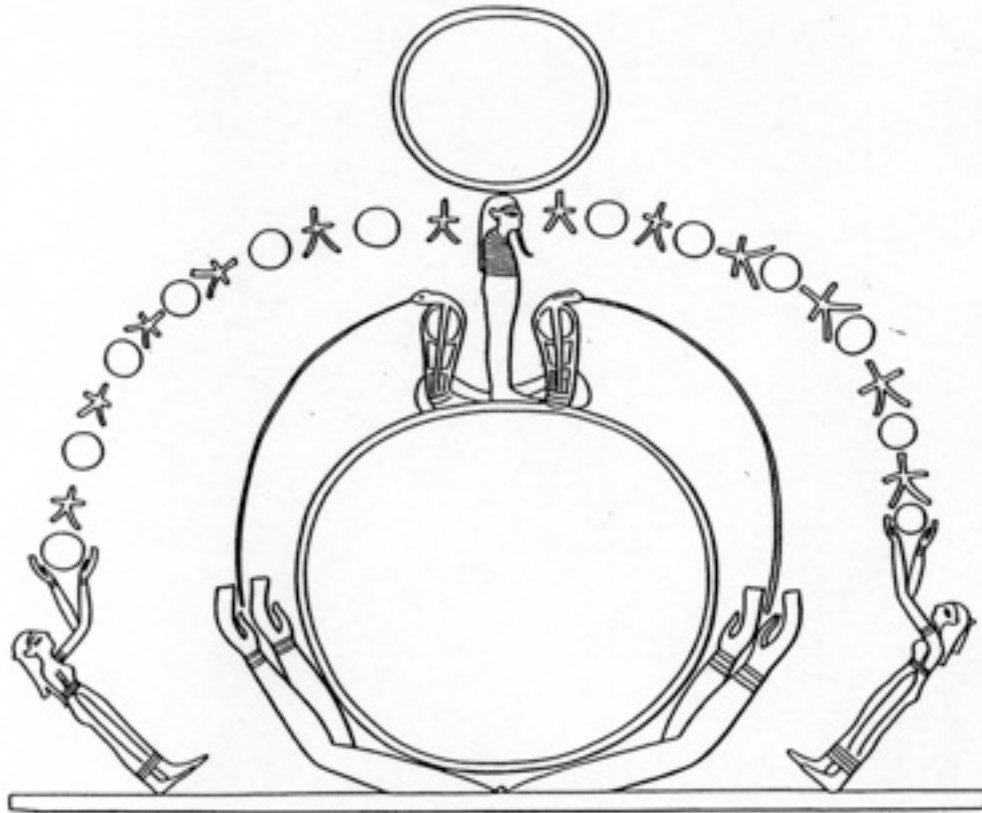


Figure 5. The Fertilization¹⁵

In the center of Fig. 5 there is a divine figure between a small Disk above his head standing with his feet on a large Disk. To the right and to the left Uraeus-snakes belch fire which is caught by two pairs of arms. On both sides of the arms there is a figure of *Isis* and *Nephthys*. Stricker names the god-figure in the center as a macrocosmic man whose body reaches from heaven to earth, the two Disks respectively above and below him¹⁶. This god sends his fire to earth through the Uraeus-snakes. The microcosmic semen is synonymous with the macrocosmic light from the sun, with its cone of beams¹⁷, and the receiver of the seed-beams is the womb, the two stretched pairs of arms¹⁸.

¹⁵ Stricker, Birth IV, Fig. 46: 369.

¹⁶ See Stricker, Birth IV, Fig. 40: 353. The basic concept of this macrocosmic man are as follows: The world is divine in all its manifestations, in man, animals, plants and objects. Everything and everybody has a soul. The world was in this macrocosmic man, this God, before created it. God is immanent; all beings are his limbs. He is this world which is his body. Other pictures for the creation of the world from the body of the god: see the original giant Purusa in Indian Mythology. Moreover, the creation of the world out of the primary matter Tiamat through Marduk with the Babylonians and finally, the prehistoric giant Ymir with the Teutonic Germans.

¹⁷ The Snake as a symbol for the sperm may be seen in Stricker, Birth I, Fig. 2: 15.

¹⁸ The whole image according to Stricker is composed like the cosmic mountain chain Achet see Fig. 1 with the baby Horus in the world's cave.

According to the ancient Egyptian's concept, a man consists of:

1. the divine essence, the divine being, the soul particle of the sunbeam
2. the soul particle enters the man's heart where it is conducted to his testicles
3. and this divine essence *combines* with the matter of the woman, with her menstrual blood, the female seed, to a germ. This germ therefore is called
4. *the god with the two souls*, meaning the soul particle of the *Sun God Ra* which combines with the subordinate soul particle of the father's semen¹⁹.

This essence, the divine being and matter together make up the man.

After fertilization the womb closes. The Uraeus-snakes tie up the germ and defend it by their glow against any intruders.



Figure 6. The Drop of Semen in the Womb²⁰

The bent body of the father *Osiris* lies in the drop of semen in Fig. 6. Out of his body emerges his falcon-headed son *Horus*. The father resurrects as a fetus in his wife's womb--the mystery of unity of father and son, which in all his theories keeps Francis Mott very busy. The *Sun God Ra* is to be seen as a small Disk behind *Horus*. The drop of semen is held by *Isis* and *Nephthys*. Thus the image has again the shape of the cosmic circle-shaped mountain *Achet* (Figure 1) this time as a pregnant cosmic womb. Both *Isis* and *Nephthys* are representations of the world mountain²¹. Consequently, *Horus* has two mothers. Or, two mothers are the symbol of a womb, as *the god with the two souls* represents the fetus.

¹⁹ Stricker, Birth III: 232f.

²⁰ Stricker, Birth II, Fig. 16: 90.

²¹ Also see Stricker 1997a, Fig.7: 19 the two goddesses as the uterus of the world.

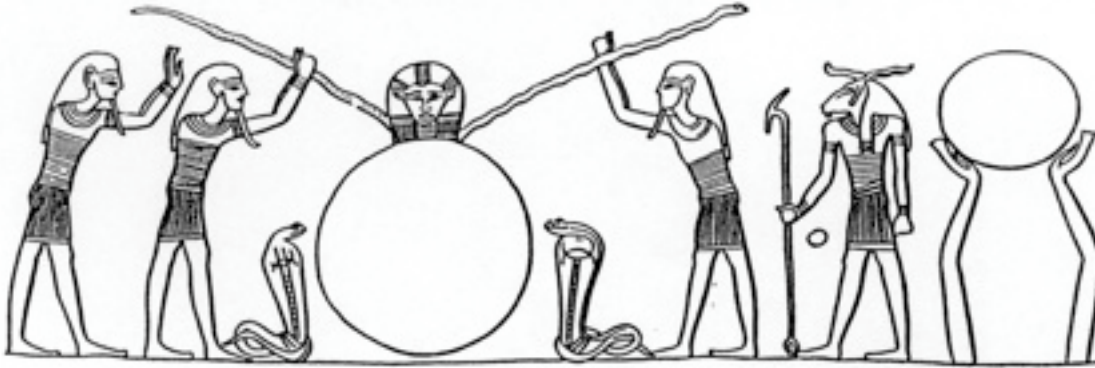


Figure 7. The Churning of the Semen²²

On the right side of Fig. 7 we see two arms receiving the Sun Disk, the womb which takes in the seed. The center, however, is formed by a Sun Disk surmounted by a male face at the top, and this is located between two Uraeus-snakes. The Sun Disk is suspended from a snake that is held by two gods, one on each side²³.

Stricker compares this scenario with the churning of the primal ocean in Indian Cosmology. In primordial time, the gods want to acquire immortality by drinking *Amrita*. So they draw forth the mountain *Mandara* that has been resting on the back of a turtle lying in the sea. This mountain acts as a twirling-stick for the primal waters. And the snake *Vasuke* serves as a cord which is twisted around the twirling-stick. By the god's pulling both sides the mountain twists round.

In addition, it may be said that in ancient cultures churning butter symbolizes the genesis of a baby. Milk can be separated into butter and whey by twisting and shuttling movements. Analogously, the menstrual blood, mixed with sperm, after nine months becomes a baby and amniotic fluid²⁴. Through this churning of the primal water, the Indian gods draw wonderful things out of the ocean, for example, the moon, a lotus, the immortality drink, and finally the jewel, the world.

According to Stricker, we can also compare the snake, which in India is twisted as a twirling-stick around a mountain, to the sea flowing around the whole Disk of the Earth like a broad river (See Fig. 1). This is the giant snake of the ocean that in various presentations bites into its own tail; the *Uroboros* which is also the symbol of the cord that connects heaven and earth²⁵.

The ancient Egyptians had a very precise idea of pregnancy. In its first trimester the germ has a vegetative soul, that is, it doesn't move, it is the period of formation. Herewith, the cord is presented as a root which the plant needs for its nutrition in the womb.

²² Stricker, Birth IV, Fig. 61: 424.

²³ Respectively, this snake is twisted around the disk. In the corresponding text is written: "The King Osiris, in both his sanctuary shrines", which means the Sun Disk is the womb.

²⁴ See the correlated text Stricker, Birth IV, Fig. 68: 494f.

²⁵ The snake as a cord twisted around the twirling stick also represents birth and reincarnation. Or, the snake around dead Osiris is a symbol for eternity. See Stricker, Birth IV: 428f and Stricker, 1953. In the enclosed text, the sprout on Fig. 7 is called Chepri which means the scarab.

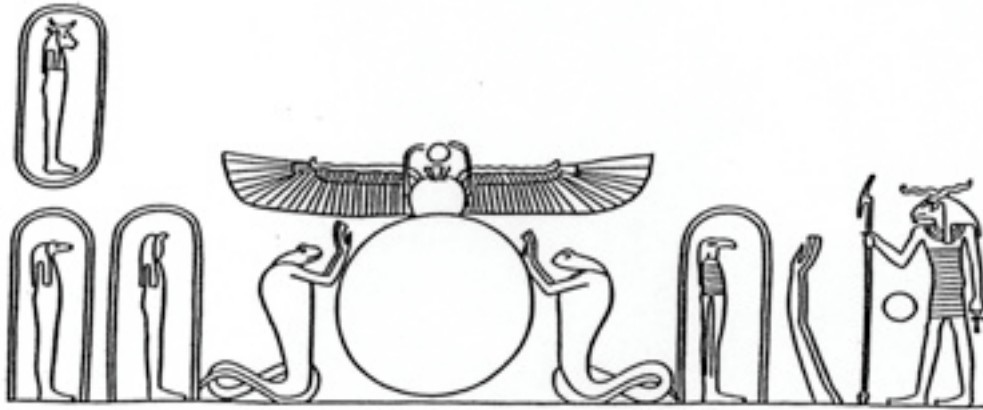


Figure 8. The Fruit of the Womb in Rest²⁶

In Figure 8 we see *Chepri*, the 'Scarab' symbol with the wings of the Scarab stretched along the horizon in a resting position. This is the time when the fetus is still imagined as a plant in the womb²⁷. And, in Figure 8, this germ is held by two Uraeus-snakes symbolizing the defense of the fetus.

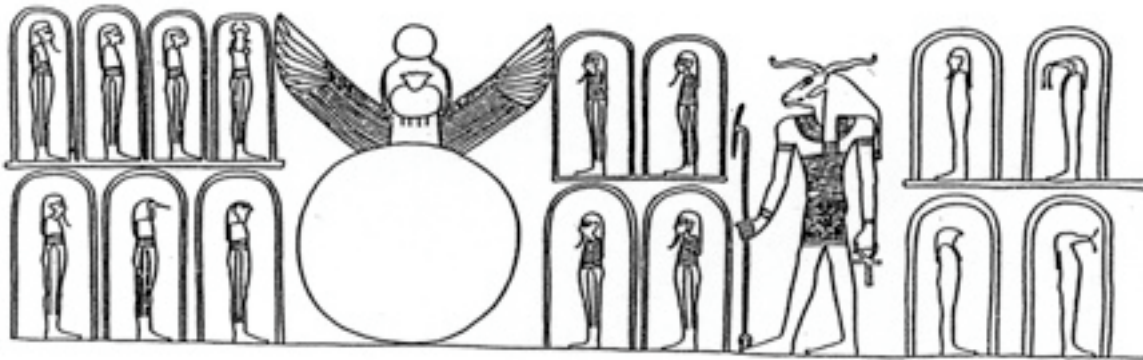


Figure 9. The Fruit in the Womb in Motion²⁸

Already in Fig. 9, the Scarab is raising his wings. This is the beginning of the bestial, animal soul symbolizing the beginning of the child's movements during pregnancy. Now *the dance* in

²⁶ Stricker, Birth III, Fig. 33: 271.

²⁷ Also see Fig. 75 in Stricker, Birth V: 670.

²⁸ Stricker, Birth III, Fig. 34: 272.

mother's womb begins²⁹.

In the last five pictures of *The Book of the Earth*, the pregnancy is almost completed, and finally, the birth itself is presented. The text tells about the enemies of the Sun God Ra and the fetus is no longer shown as one but as four figures (Figure 10 and 11).



Figure 10. The Head Turned Downward³⁰

Stricker understands Figure 10 as a representation of a baby turning his head downward in the eighth month of gestation in his mother's womb. In his work *het Zonne-Offert (the Sun-Sacrifice)*, Stricker reveals how in the temple drawings, the four enemies of Ra had been seen as sacrifices for the Sun God. This ritual was offered in memory of Ra who in the primordial time, having been victorious over Apophis, arose from the primal sea for the first time. It could be true that in those days, people actually were killed at this sun sacrifice, but historically, at some point, animal sacrifices replaced human sacrifices. The victims either had their throats cut or while still alive were thrown into a fire basin—their death sacrifice as a symbol of birth.³¹

Stricker has intensely researched why the fetus in this scene was shown in quadruplicate and beheaded. He has solved the problem primarily by symbolic numbers and he has understood it as an expression of the *becoming* or as a state of original sin³². I would like to briefly compare this with my studies of Sumerian and Babylonian mythology³³. To those peoples, the closer to the end of gestation, the greater the anxiety and threat a baby experiences and the more aggressive and even belligerent the language becomes. In particular, the baby's head is threatened; arms are

²⁹ Compare Stricker, Birth III, Fig. 35: 273, the birth of the Sun God. There the disk between the front legs of the scarab is very large; the disk between the back legs is quite small: thus the pregnancy is completed. Fig. 35 represents time of birth. Following ancient Jewish traditions, each fetus has a light above the head and this light lends him omniscience. The embryo speaks with Jahovah and knows exactly what is happening in the outer world. Furthermore, he has the gift of prophesy. At the moment of birth, the fetus forgets everything he knows (from the Talmud), Stricker, Birth III: 281.

³⁰ See Stricker, Birth V, Fig. 78: 674.

³¹ Stricker, Birth V: 678 and Stricker 1989, § 4 and 5, 50-65. In this context the reader should remember the bloody human sacrifices of the Mayans and also the Aztecs - victims to honor their Sun God. Decoding them in pre- and perinatal terms would be a valuable contribution. I also want to mention that an Aztec woman who died in childbirth received the same 'reward' in heaven as a male warrior who had died in battle for his country during war.

³² See Stricker, Birth V, § 125: 663-85 and Stricker 1989 and 1992.

³³ I understand their myths on the background of early separation between mother and child after birth, in the next lower level as a symbolic representation of the birth itself. And, finally, each divine mythic story about gods represents a baby's experience in mother's womb. This book is published by Walter in Dusseldorf, Germany, 2002.

bound together; and the fetus is beaten into pieces by demons; or the baby is threatened by the enemy's weapons, tortured, mutilated, or even killed. Simultaneously, these experiences are accompanied by a mass of water and fire. In my opinion, the *Flood* is a representation of the amniotic fluid breaking or as the burning sensation on the skin during birth. Thus, I understand the last pictures in *The Embryological Treatise* as a representation of the baby's *actual* physical sensations at coming into the light of the world.



Figure 11. Birth as Sacrifice³⁴

In Figure 11 we see four goddesses who tie up the arms of the kneeling fetuses to their backs. As in picture 10 there are four, and again they are regarded as *the enemies of Ra*. The four fetuses all wear a hieroglyph for fire on the head. On the left side one *enemy* has been raised and is taken away to the left by two goddesses (as we are going to discover) to the altar of birth. In the attached text you can read:

'*Ra*, I'm passing through this mysterious cave, large of fire,
Oh, mysterious one, who thou burns the body in Hades and guards the darkness.
Look at me! I pass through you, you mysterious one!
I am coming though you, great fire.'

And, of course, the mysterious cave or the mysterious one is the womb. If the *Sun God Ra* is speaking, then it is obviously the voice of the fetus who gets ready for the great blaze, for the birth, for 'the cave, large of fire'.

³⁴ Stricker, Birth V, Fig. 79: 677.

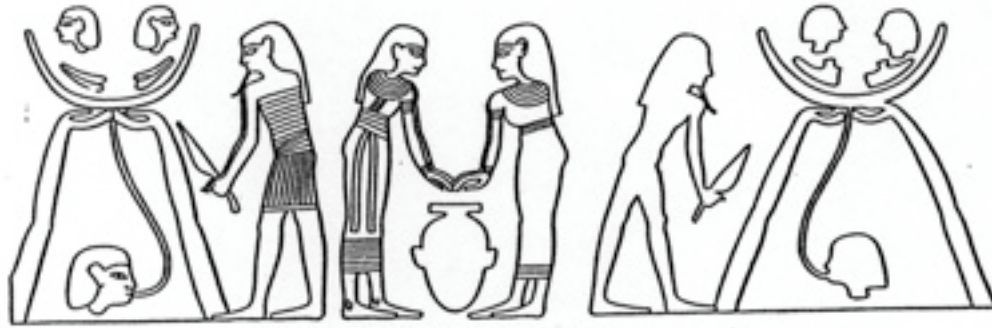


Figure 12. The Expulsion³⁵

On the left and right side of Figure 12 you can see a pair of arms holding up a bowl. In each bowl there are two heads and two further unidentifiable parts of a body. Between the arms there is a head and each is connected to the bowl by a string. Two male gods (note the beards) threaten this bowl with knives. Two women in the center are holding their hands over a heart shaped vessel for protection. The two arms on each side are the womb. The still enclosed head in that vessel is the placenta, which through the cord is connected with the bowl, the baby. The arms and hands *push off* the bowl, suggesting the phase of expulsion during labor. It remains unclear why the heads on the right do not show any features, although the cord between placenta and baby still functions. In this left picture, all heads are drawn with eyes, hair and mouth.

According to Stricker, the whole picture, the pair of arms, the right as well as the pair to the left, again forms a composition similar to the cosmic circle-shaped mountain *Achet* seen in figures 1 and 2. Therefore, the heart vessel in the center sheltered by *Isis* and *Nephtys* has to be understood as the fetus. The embryonic heart is still united with the mother and nutrition takes place as long as the cord functions.

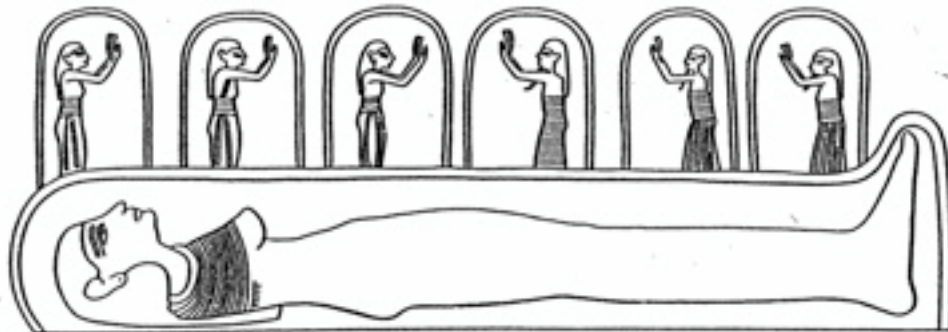


Figure 13. The Body of Destruction³⁶

In the text to Figure 13 the mother is named *the body of destruction* indicating the belief that birth is experienced as destruction. But, out of this *mother earth* six people and plants have evolved; three women to the left and three men to the right; people who in figure 3 were to be seen left and right of the chapel, be-headed and with their arms tied behind their backs.

³⁵ Stricker, Birth III, Fig. 36: 284.

³⁶ Stricker, Birth III, Fig. 37: 285, also see V: 682ff.

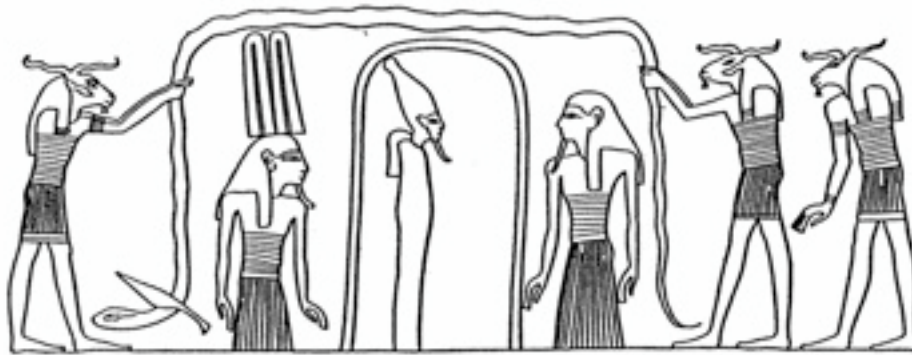


Figure 14. The Reincarnated Osiris³⁷

A stretched snake is being held by three ram-headed gods in Figure 14 and its head is being cut off. In the interior of the arbor we see the child *Horus*, the reincarnated *Osiris*. This snake shows the cord being cut. In Egyptian mythology it has nurtured the child during pregnancy, but now at birth it would kill him if it were not cut off. In the same way that water has been essential to the child's prebirth life, water makes it possible to drown at the moment of birth. Therefore, in the microcosmic sense, the baby has to *kill* the cord as it bumps or breaks through the membrane of the amnion. In the macrocosm this is the fight of the *Sun God Ra* with *Apophis*. And, the victory is, in microcosmic terms the birth of *Horus*.

A further thought may be added: In a baby's experience, birth means also a death experience. On the other hand, for the ancient Egyptians, death is a birth. It is like *seeding in the womb of life* (Figure 3): death is the birth to eternal life. Therefore, the deceased who expects this reincarnation, stays in Hades, head upside down as does the baby in the eighth month of pregnancy³⁸. Also, the deceased in the grave is waiting for resurrection from death, for a second birth. This resurrection is to be seen as a becoming, a transition from the not-being of death to the being of eternal life³⁹.

THE BOOK OF THE EARTH AS EMBRYOLOGICAL TREATISE

Of course, I have not done justice to Stricker's vast knowledge because wherever we start reading in his work, we are at once in the middle of solar theology and philosophy-- in the ancient cultures and their hypotheses, the origin of man. For example, Stricker describes the Roman circus, which in microcosm is structured like a human body but in macrocosm like the whole world. In the Egyptian predecessor of this circus, the Pharaoh alone runs toward his future grave, that is, toward his death in order to return to life in the end. His running is an expression of his reincarnation. This Egyptian predecessor and the horse races in the Roman circus finally imitate the course of the sun, a deeply religious background about which the Romans had been

³⁷ Stricker, Birth III, Fig. 38: 286.

³⁸ Stricker, Geboorte V: 670.

³⁹ Stricker, 1997b: 14.

much less aware. The game of the circus thus represents the course of human life with the racer as soul and the horse and carriage as his body (Stricker 1970).

Stricker shows how a god's shrine, formed from a single mighty rock, a so-called monolith in the inner sanctum of a temple, shelters the god-figures. In the morning, at sunrise, the wooden doors of the monoliths are ceremoniously opened so that the sunlight directly shines onto the god-figures within, who are thus revived. So the monoliths, too, symbolize wombs. The god-figures are like a baby in the mother's womb (Stricker 1978). In the same way, every temple can be compared with a mother's womb, and accordingly, the entrances to such sanctuaries are decorated.

In addition, every ancient town regarded itself as the *navel* of the world, as the metropolis. And people often honored a divine stone in a particular temple, the seed of the *Sun God*, which fell from heaven and out of which, then, the whole world had developed. Think, for example, of the *Omphalos* at the famous oracle of Delphi in Greece. *Omphalos* is literally translated *navel*. In primordial time, the *Sun God Apollo* had here defeated the python-snake. And, in each center of the world there is an axis of heaven: a column that connects and supports the center of the world with heaven. The throne of the *Sun God* is at the top of the axis of the world, at the zenith⁴⁰.

Furthermore, the axis of the world can be compared with the tree of the world which drives its roots into the netherworld with the crown of the tree reaching into heaven. The trunk of this tree joins heaven and netherworld, baby and placenta. The axis of the world is, again, a symbol of the *navelcord*⁴¹. In the pyramid, the highest peak, the apex which in those days was gilded, represented materialized light. This, too, established the seat of the *Sun God Ra* in a symbolic sense. So, the peak of the pyramid is the unity of divine essence or divine being, whereas its square base expresses the multiplicity of matter. And, all that exists is like a pyramid--a mix of divine being and earthy matter. Finally, this pyramid is a symbol for the sun cone, the radiant beams the sun sends down and is reflected by the hieroglyph ☉. This pyramid configuration reflects that all of creation is *animated* by the *Sun God Ra*.

In this context, you may be reminded of Francis Mott who interprets the trigeminal function of the cord (on the level of dreams as well as on the level of myths) by a large vein taking fresh blood to the baby and two arteries taking the exhausted blood from the baby to the placenta. Consequently, this beam cone is identical with an *illuminated baby* linked with his cord. It is a representation of the fetal sensation on the skin of the *primal self* during gestation. Stricker's conclusions complete and broaden those of Francis Mott who as a psychoanalyst had researched the embryonic and fetal sensation of the self.

What we in the 20th century have slowly and laboriously researched and discovered lies open in the ancient Egyptian culture. As in every other old high culture, people still had a direct access to their subconscious, to their primal experiences without all the mechanisms of repression found in succeeding cultures. The higher a culture develops, the more radical becomes its repression and split mechanisms. With the ancient Egyptians, the embryonic or fetal world was still represented everywhere in everyday life. All of Stricker's research enables us on the one hand to

⁴⁰ Stricker, Birth IV: 386-396 and 1989: 18f, 1997b: 78f. The world axis can be compared to Apophis the snake, see Stricker, Birth IV, Fig. 56 and 57: 402 and 403 see also Stricker 1997a, Fig. 5 and 6.

⁴¹ See Stricker, Birth IV: § 84: 381f, & III: 239 for information on the World Tree. For example, the Indians mythologize the World Tree to be like a tree that stands upside down with the roots reaching out into heaven. This means heaven represents a placenta with the earth representing a developing baby. In this context, also see Dowling's work.

understand the mythology of other cultures and on the other opens a way to explore a baby's experiences in a mother's womb. Egyptian mythology is like the *great dreams* of these ancient cultures.

IN CLOSING

I have written this essay as a first introduction to the work of Bruno Hugo Stricker to help overcome the barrier of his Dutch language and to make his work available particularly to psychologists and psychotherapists with prenatal and perinatal interests.

Furthermore, I deeply appreciate the courage and the power of this Dutch religious historian who has been deepening and tracing this subject since the 1940s without much acknowledgement from the world. Even today, at over 90 years of age, he is working on his final book *Zijn en Worden (To Be and To Become)* in which he is decoding Indian mythology in prenatal terms. I would like to thank Mr. Stricker for his life work, and also, in the names of my colleagues, sincerely wish that all his work will, in time, be translated into English or German.

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