

# **Spiritual Turning Points: A Metaphysical Perspective of the Seven Life Transitions**

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## **Life Transition one Birth**

We choose the moment we are born.

The soul enters the body at the moment of the first breath, that rush of energy that ushers the soul into the physical body and which marks the beginning of what is called the first monadal transition, the first of seven major transitions for our sentient species. This is the intersection between the divine and the ordinary, when consciousness becomes soma or the body of the human organism. A baby takes his first breath, and consciousness is awakened in an instant as the soul makes the transition from the astral plane to the physical body, continuing the cycle of reincarnation for many, or for some, the very first life in what will become a continuing cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth. The operative word here is transition in that it is during the birth process that the soul changes from being discarnate or not alive to being incarnate or alive.

Many of us think the circumstances of our births are random, a happenstance event that occurs relative to many factors, including the attending doctor's schedule, the phase of the moon, or how busy the hospital was that night—all pointing toward external circumstances that would determine the actual time we entered the world. But what if our soul actually had a say in the matter? Instead of depending on what was happening on the physical plane known as planet Earth, our soul had a bigger picture, a larger perspective that was able to see not only what was happening the days or weeks surrounding the proposed due date, but also planetary influences which would be put into play at the exact moment of birth.

And then there's the matter of our parents. You mean we choose them too? Yes, indeed. There are many reasons we might choose the parents we did, including their genetics, education, interests, and location. We choose the circumstances of our birth in order to set up the foundation for experiences we want to have for our soul to evolve in this lifetime. For example, we might want to be the eldest of six or the youngest of twelve, an only child or a twin. We may want to be raised by our adoptive parents but want the genetics of the birth parents in order to have musical talent or physical prowess. Our life plan may include teaching at a later time, so we need a good primary education with parents who value school. Or we want an agricultural setting in order to have a simpler life. Urban or rural, Western or Eastern, North or South America, multilingual or just plain English, the palate is extensive! Fortunately, for us we have more than one life to live and many opportunities for experience.

### What Happens Before Birth

Soul agreements are made on an essence level before birth in most cases. In fact, many things happen on the astral plane whether or not our personalities are aware of it. Here's an example: Mary and John want to have a baby, and she becomes pregnant. Their personalities are not aware of having an agreement with the soul who will become their new son, but their essences are. In fact, the soul is much bigger than what we usually see in someone. That "spark" in their eyes is, as many say, the gateway to the soul, not the soul itself.

So on an essence level the parents have each made an agreement with the new soul who will soon be born. While Mary's pregnancy develops, the soul is focused or present on the astral plane, without human form, until the moment of birth and the first breath.

Sometimes the agreements that have been made prior to birth just don't work out. Maybe Mary never meets John, or they decide to not have kids, or any number of other things occurs. That's why your personal blueprint comes with an eraser, and you are the one in charge of any changes you need to make. Maybe "baby Sarah" needed a little more time before incarnating again and decided to pass on the chance of being born to Mary and John. That's fine. There are backup agreements and many other souls who would see the opening and take it, sometimes at the last minute.

The overall picture of the upcoming life is viewed through the lens of what will become the *life plan* and the *life focus*. The life focus has to do with what your soul wants to learn in this lifetime, while the life plan is how you will go about learning it. If you are choosing to learn about responsibility, then you might choose various scenarios where you would have the opportunity to experience responsibility from many different angles such as in your family of origin as the eldest of five, the parent of three at a later time, or the head of a company where the buck stopped with you. If your soul wanted to be sure, you would really focus on this task, then you might choose to agree to a karmic repayment where you would take care of your younger brother who was mentally handicapped. This would be called a narrow life plan. On the other hand, a broad sweeping life plan might include many different experiences—travel, relocations, and multiple relationships and jobs—all designed to give you the widest possible range of experience.

Some individuals choose very specific plans and tasks. Gary wanted to experience individual freedom so he chose to become an airline pilot and have only that job for his entire life, visiting many foreign countries, but also remaining single, never marrying or settling down. His family pressured him to “get serious” with his life, and even though he did struggle with some going-against-the-family wishes, he stayed true to his chosen focus. Nancy chose the application of theory as a life focus and chose to get her PhD in science in order to do research on the advancement of cancer treatments. A wide sweeping plan was chosen by Adriana who, over the course of her lifetime, married four times, had six children, two of whom were stillborn, lived in three countries, and frequently changed jobs. The soul who would become Charles wanted a broad life plan but stayed in the same house for forty-five years, changing jobs frequently.

### Parental expectations and iconography

Before birth, the souls of the soon-to-be parents make an astral plane agreement concerning what will become the familial icon for the child. According to Merriam-Webster, the term icon is defined as an image or symbol of the thing it represents. When such an agreement as this is made, there will be expectations placed on the child that may or may not have anything to do with their true nature and always have to do with parental projections. Both parents can agree upon the icon or they may decide to each give the child one. A subsequent icon may also be given if an event occurs that changes the basic

constitution of the family such as when one parent dies, the surviving parent remarries and a new icon is granted the child.

Some icons are more palatable and include "the one who is compliant" or "the good son." Others are more negative such as "the one who is deviant" or "the lost child." Whether the chosen icons are pleasing is not of great importance, for no matter what the chosen icon is, it is still a projected expectation and one that the child will adhere to in order to gain acceptance in the family. It is in fact not until during the fourth transition that the icon is disassembled and

broken as part of the birth of the true personality. Until then, the icon is the cornerstone of the false or learned personality.

### **What's a Monad anyway?**

A little background on where the term "monad" originated. In the 1970s a small group of students of Metaphysics—more specifically, George Gurdjieff, an Armenian/Greek mystic and spiritual teacher born in 1866—were meeting in the San Francisco Bay Area. One night while using an Ouija board they contacted Michael, a spirit entity that over time transmitted an entire system of soul evolution to them that was later published in a series of books by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro. As part of this system, the term "monads" began to be used to describe both internal and external experiences.

The Michael Definition of the Seven Internal Monads is as given below:

"An Internal Monad is a process that is self-contained and experienced by one fragment as a result of a necessary and pivotal developmental phase . . . The monads are a process through which maturation occurs and includes the following: Birth, Separation from the Mother or the Terrible Twos, Independence from the Family of Origin, Casting off of the False or Learned Personality, Life Review, the onset of what is Fatal and causes Death, and Death itself or the last breath. We would then define the internal monads as self-contained internal "units" of experience." (Marina-Tompkins c. 2009)

Anthropologist Vic Turner defined the concept of liminality, a threshold state where what has been known is fading away and what will be does not yet exist. In his seminal book, *Transitions*, William Bridges introduced the concept of three transitional segments, including a beginning, limbo or neutral state, and an end. Modern psychology includes Jean Piaget's

stage theory, Erik Erikson's eight stages of human development, and B. F. Skinner's studies in child development. All recognize progressive natural stages of human development. The addition of the spiritual or soul perspective is a key element in understanding these life transitions and helps us to validate the higher truths of reincarnation that are not considered in traditional psychological theories.

The combination of higher spiritual perspectives with the aforementioned psychological studies provides a well-rounded understanding of the nature of human evolution. Singularly, they each offer information that helps us accept the rhythms of life. Without the perspective of soul awareness, we do not see the larger picture and one that offers us a glimpse into the nature of the universal truths of reincarnation and choice.

### The Mysteries

The ancient Celts of the British Isles believed each soul to be a "spark of the divine." The Ashanti of Ghana say the infant inherits the soul of the father and the physicality of the mother while the Maoris of New Zealand believe that humans as well as some inanimate objects contain "mana" or spiritual essence. Buddhists hold that the soul enters the body at the fortieth day after conception while Australian Aborigines believe the soul enters the body during the fifth month of pregnancy. Indigenous cultures often tie their understanding of birth to tribal creation myths. These myths mark the foundation of most cultures and explain the creation of the world, many times with the mother and father as central elements in the story and most always with a yang or active element coupled with a yin xi or receptive element.

The symbol of an egg often appears as in the Japanese myth where Izanami gave birth to the Sun and the Moon that were created at the beginning of time from an egg. Aboriginal stories include mother sun going down to earth where she wakened all the plants and animals, created oceans and rivers, while the father spirit watched.

Noted Jungian analyst Marie-Louise von Franz explores mythology in her book *Patterns of Creativity Mirrored in Creation Myths*. She sees myths as "an awakening toward consciousness," and David Leeming, author of *Creation Myths of the World*, writes that stories serve as a model for human creation, modeling everything we as humans do, including creating our families. These myths are passed down from generation to generation through storytelling. Oral traditions explain the nature of human existence by answering

questions that cannot easily be answered by the conscious mind such as how creation of the world took place. Stories then become part of the folklore of the community and are also enacted through rituals and other seasonal community celebrations.

### Cultural influences

There are many rituals for birth depending on the culture, and these range from quietude as the infant is gently placed into the arms of the mother to spanking the soon-to-be-screaming baby to be sure he is alive and full of vigor. What a startling experience for the infant who has been nestled safely inside the mother for nine months and now emerges to bright lights and a sense of urgency. For the child who is born into such excitement, their first life transition is one of near emergency, a word that is derived from the Latin *mergere*, "to arise out of," and adds a sense of crisis or fear to the mix. What then of the infant who is born in a less hurried and more welcoming way, who is allowed to open his or her eyes to the adoring love of the mother and father with grace and ease rather than confusion and fear? Is it likely that the birth experience will affect the rest of the life to come? Probably. There are no absolutes, but there are tendencies and the interaction between the mother and child is a central one that is more than likely to have a profound impact on the psychological well-being of the infant who will, if all goes well, grow into adulthood.

In the 1960s, French obstetrician Frederick Leboyer began the practice of immersing infants in warm water in order to help them make the transition from the womb to the world. Later, Michel Odent, another French obstetrician, furthered Leboyer's work by placing the mother in a tub during labor primarily to aid in the reduction of pain but later discovered that the infant could be delivered in the water also. The stress of birth for the baby can be lessened when warm water provides a smooth transition from the safety of the womb. American water births have increased over the last decades as mothers and fathers are both in the birthing tubs immediately bonding with their new infants. In her 1975 seminal book, *Immaculate Deception*, childbirth educator Suzanne Arms presents a compelling case against the medical community for high rates of cesarean sections in the United States that occur as a result of early intervention that interrupts the natural labor process, putting women and their babies at risk through the use of pain medications that may slow down labor, which can then make it necessary to induce labor with Pitocin and other stimulants. A vicious cycle can then occur, snowballing into a medical crisis where swift delivery of the infant becomes mandatory.

Arms is a proponent of midwifery, an ancient art that allows women to labor at their own pace with the support of a trained midwife without the need for early medical direction except in the case of high-risk pregnancies where a physician's supervision is recommended. Midwives have been part of tribal cultures for thousands of years but have been pushed to the sidelines as a result of modern medicine where the physician becomes the expert rather than the soon-to-be mother who, if left to her own rhythms, can usually deliver with little outside assistance, save in the final moments of delivery. Allowing for a more relaxed, albeit sometimes lengthier, labor can go hand in hand with vitality, the positive pole of this transition while avoiding undue stress that a sterile medical environment can promote. Fortunately, many medical institutions are now responding to the need for less intervention with homelike labor and delivery rooms, midwives on staff, and fewer medication protocols.

### **Bonding: The First Moments after Birth**

So let's go back to that moment of first contact between mother and infant. If all goes well, the infant has now been placed into its mother's arms and is in the early stages of bonding. Eye contact, nursing, feeling the love and warmth of the mother are all necessary components of the first monad or life transition, which began with the first breath and will end when the infant is breathing on its own following the delivery of the placenta and the cutting of the umbilical cord. A successful transition will result in a healthy baby, a "10" on the Apgar scale, who is dependent on his mother for survival but is breathing independently. The positive of this transition is **vitality** with the negative **life** which is the distinction between simply being alive as opposed to being filled with vigor. Not all infants make the transition smoothly. Some need external help such as ventilators to aid in breathing or warming units to keep the temperature at a healthy level. Modern medicine has made great strides in the past fifty years, reducing the infant mortality rate from 152 in 1,000 births worldwide to 57 in 1,000 by the year 2000.

More specifically the highest infant death rate is currently Angola with 182 out of 1,000 with Singapore, Sweden, and Bermuda averaging 2.5. Some contributing factors to infant mortality include congenital malformations, complications of pregnancy, and respiratory distress, all leading to an incomplete first transition.

According to the Free Dictionary, "vitality" is defined as "the capacity to live, grow, and develop" and "the characteristic, principle, or force that distinguishes living from non-living things" Other descriptions include "good health" or "Chi," the life energy that in Chinese

medicine is the essential ingredient for life. Colloquialisms include "he was full of beans" or "such a live wire," both apt metaphors for a child full of life. On the opposite spectrum, life is defined as "the condition that distinguishes organisms from inorganic objects" and "a living being." One might ask what is the difference between these positives and negatives? The key is in that vitality is vibrant and energetic while life describes more the bodily functions of breath, heartbeat, and muscle reactivity, all rote physical processes.

The Maoris of New Zealand sing traditional lullabies or Orioris not only during the birth itself, but post-birth as well. The mothers sing these soothing songs to the infant during pregnancy to offer comfort, and continue after the infant is born. Practices such as these aid in the overall process and help the newborn make the transition into the new body with less stress and discomfort than might otherwise be the case. Western labor and delivery has in many cases a far less gentle approach though there have been great advances made in recent years to a more mother/child-centered childbirth experience with fewer medical interventions. Still, the percentage of soon-to-be new moms choosing a birth environment with soft lights and no drugs is small in comparison to those who choose the "tried and true" method of physician-directed obstetrics. Whether or not the birth process goes smoothly does not determine whether this specific life transition is completed, or in the positive as an infant can be born under many different circumstances, both positive and negative, and still emerge healthy.

What does occur is that when external circumstances interfere with the natural bonding between infant and mother, then psychological traumas can occur, which can at a later time impact the growing child. A two-year-old who wants to begin the second life transition or second monad will need to develop coping skills as it ventures away from the ultimate security blanket, its mother, and if its sense of security was thwarted early on, then it may be reticent to begin the next developmental stage. Therefore, while the physical aspect of this transition does not necessarily include the psychological, whether or not bonding takes place, can affect the overall constitution of the infant and if absent or incomplete, can certainly affect his upcoming developmental processes. In a perfect world, the new infant would be in a vibrant state of health while also experiencing bonding to the mother or other caregiver.

## Birth Stories

Melissa and Dan

The eldest of three children, Melissa always knew she wanted to be a mom. With her own mother working full time, "Mel" was often depended upon to come home right after school in order to take care of her younger siblings who had been in daycare while she was at school. These added responsibilities never bothered her though because she loved children and enjoyed spending time with them. Things changed when she met Dan. She was twenty-one and had just finished getting her AA degree at the local Junior College when they started dating, and within a year they had moved in together. Much to her delight, she became pregnant with their first child, and they married soon after.

My first pregnancy went by so quickly, it was pretty much a blur. I thought it was going to be easy but in fact I was nauseous a lot of the time but still had to work. I had always thought being pregnant would be bliss! Not so much.

As she neared the end of her pregnancy, Mel began to have serious doubts about whether or not she could handle her new infant, so she enrolled for a parenting class, and it was here she met Sarah. A long time childbirth coach, Sarah was reassuring and offered to be a support person at the upcoming birth and, after some serious discussions with her husband Dan, Mel decided that was a good idea. When she went into labor a week later, Sarah was the first person she called.

It was three in the morning when my contractions started, but I didn't want to wake Dan or call Sarah yet, so I stayed in bed and kept breathing. About an hour later, I decided I better wake Dan and call Sarah, and by seven thirty we were all at the hospital, and I was in heavy labor. Oh man! It was nothing like I expected it to be.

Melinda was in active labor for a total of twelve hours. When it came time to push, Dan and Sarah helped her by supporting her legs while they counted from 1-10, helping Mel know how long she needed to hold her focus while pushing the baby down the birth canal. After thirty-five minutes, baby Jessie was born.

The first time I looked at him, I burst into tears. He was so beautiful! Eyes wide open, he seemed to know who I was. Some people say newborns don't smile, but I just know he was smiling at me. I immediately recognized him as if I had known him my whole life.

Melissa went on to say that when little Jessie opened his eyes and looked at her, she could see his soul looking back at her. This early recognition between mother and child established the bond as part of the first transition and would become the foundation of their relationship for she would always look back at this moment as one of the most important days in her life. She would later say "And there he was!" when sharing her birth story, and it's true, the soul who was now little Jessie had arrived.

### Cindy and Vanessa

In today's world, there are many options for parenting, including in vitro fertilization. Named after the Latin "vitro" meaning "within the glass" egg cells are fertilized outside the physical body in a controlled environment, usually a test tube or Petri dish. Later the eggs are transplanted into the womb of the female who will bear the child, providing a creative solution to those women who are unable to conceive naturally.

Cindy met Vanessa in her third year of graduate school when they were each studying psychology. At first they never thought of having children, but later decided that they really wanted to and, after talking it over with friends and family, decided to go for it. Being a lesbian couple, they opted for an anonymous sperm donor whom they chose based on his profile that included ethnicity, educational background, and interests. After several tries, Vanessa got pregnant and when she was thirty-six weeks along, began experiencing complications due to high blood pressure. Placed on bed rest, she was able to postpone delivery until her thirty-eighth week but when her blood pressure continued to spike and the baby's heart rate dropped, her doctor decided to do an emergency C-section. Preparations were quickly made and, after a spinal block, baby Bryan was delivered and placed in Cindy's arms as Vanessa was unable to move her arms. With three faces pressed together, the new moms both wept as Bryan cried and looked up at them. He was not a happy camper but was active and noisy! "He's here, he's here!" sobbed Vanessa as she and Cindy welcomed their new son into the world.

### Adoption and Alternative Caregiving

Sometimes a baby is adopted at birth and bonds with both the new parents and the birth parents. Or a new mother who has chosen to give her baby up for adoption and who knows the adoptive parents may not want to bond but allows the new parents to do so. Social workers or adoption agency workers act as the liaison between them, making sure the infant is well cared for and the transition is smooth and also provide counseling to the birth mother who may experience grief at the loss of her child. These types of decisions can be difficult with the best interest of the child at the center of the process. But even so, emotions may run high. Hopefully, any anxieties can be set aside when the infant is present for small babies can be almost sponge-like in the way they absorb the emotions around them and an even-tempered approach to the adoption procedures can do much to help the little one resolve his first monad especially so if the exchange occurs during the first hours after birth.

Other family members, including grandparents, aunts, and uncles, may step in to care for a new infant who is born into a stressful situation. Whatever the result, the soul knows what is happening. From the astral plane perspective, the birth mom may have been chosen for genetics with the knowledge that the likely adoptive parents would provide the necessary educational opportunities for later life work. Or perhaps there is an important soul agreement between the infant and the mother's sister who then steps in as the primary caregiver. Regardless, to the outside world these kind of parenting arrangements may seem to be tragic or unfortunate, but on a soul level they are exactly what was planned for.

### The Role of astrology The Birth Chart

The Sun in the natal or birth chart will indicate where the child will shine and where there is a natural ability for authentic self-expression. The Sun in fiery Aries, for example, expresses through leadership and innovation while the Sun in Virgo, an Earth sign, is more grounded and analytical. Sagittarius Sun tends toward travel, higher education, and adventure while Cancer Sun relishes the comfort and safety of the home. The house number will also affect the manner through which essence is expressed and indicate the place where the Sun energy manifests. Capricorn Sun in the fifth house of creativity and children will seek tangible expression rather than the more fluid expression of a fifth house Pisces Sun.

Another important placement in the natal chart is the Moon that represents the emotional nature. Look to the moon in the chart to see where the native best expresses their sense of home, emotional security, and the role of the mother. A well-aspected moon can indicate emotional stability while stressful aspects to the natal moon, squares and oppositions by other planets in the chart, can indicate difficulties with both personal emotional states as well as in mothering and being mothered. The moon is sensitive. Easily influenced, "the ever changing moon," tends to be impacted by other planets especially when there is a conjunction in the chart, that is to say when the moon and another planet are within five degrees of each other. A Neptune moon conjunction would, for example, accentuate the arts and spirituality, while a Pluto moon pairing would likely play out with intense emotional upheavals as Pluto seeks to transform through the death and rebirth process. Finally, the rising sign reveals how the child will present himself to the world, the "mask" that will be worn. The astrological chart is very complex, and there are many undercurrents flowing that are not easily discernible, but the rising sign will show us how the child will choose to relate to the world at large. A Scorpio rising tends toward the intense and a Taurus rising seeks earthly comforts such as snuggly blankets and a full bank account. Gemini rising can be talkative and mercurial by nature, while Aquarius rising tends to be interested in the higher good for all. Some astrologers say that it is the rising sign that is first noticed by others and that the Sun and Moon signs are next. It's really the combination of these three primary planets that are most visible, and understanding the positions in your natal chart can be an excellent tool for self-discovery.

### Other Aspects

The time of birth determines what positions the planets will have in the chart, their relationship to each other, and sets up the dynamics that will play out throughout the life. Conjunctions, trines, and sextiles indicate flow and cooperation with squares and oppositions indicating tension. The challenges that we see in the natal chart will hopefully be addressed and resolved through the course of the current lifetime and not need to be revisited in a subsequent life. Gifts and talents will be discovered, developed, and fully expressed and if not, will most likely be available in an upcoming incarnation. The chart is not static nor are we as humans as there are many opportunities to choose to engage the lessons we set up prior to birth or to try them at a later time. The beauty is that the possibilities are infinite.

## The Next Years

Following a successful birth and first transition, the infant will learn to roll over, sit up, crawl, and finally walk. He will begin to eat solid food at about age six months, and his vocabulary will blossom in his second year. By the time he reaches age two and if all went well, he will have established his place in the family of origin and will be learning at an accelerated pace as his world expands every day. Sleeping patterns will have been set in place but remain flexible as the need for long periods of rest shorten and are replaced by napping. Parents and other family members will see his personality unfold as the now-toddler wants almost constant interaction with adults in particular but will play alongside other children. The initial adjustments have been made to having a new little family member. As he becomes more mobile, the beginning steps toward the next transition will become apparent as he nears the age of two and becomes willing to risk being separate from the mother.

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