
2020

In the Beginning: Musings of a Midwife

Deborah Kutenplon
Rhode Island College School of Nursing

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.fairfield.edu/sana>

Recommended Citation

Kutenplon, Deborah (2020) "In the Beginning: Musings of a Midwife," *SANA: Self-Achievement through Nursing Art*. Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.fairfield.edu/sana/vol1/iss1/6>

This item has been accepted for inclusion in DigitalCommons@Fairfield by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Fairfield. It is brought to you by DigitalCommons@Fairfield with permission from the rights-holder(s) and is protected by copyright and/or related rights. **You are free to use this item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses, you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.** For more information, please contact digitalcommons@fairfield.edu.

In the Beginning: Musing of a Midwife

Deborah Kutenplon, DNP, CNM

The beginning. But where is the beginning, really? The baby's first day, first breath, first cry, that sudden expansion of lungs that slams shut the door between right and left atria, that takes over the job of the pulsating cord, that ocean flow back and forth between mother and baby, the last moment of absolute connection? Or is the beginning further back, the first division of cells, zygote to morula to embryo that somehow, some miraculous how, transforms to skin and bone and brain, to thought and feeling, to first steps, first love, first heartbreak in a future that comes flying so fast it is gone in the space between one heartbeat and the next? What is that impulse forward of cells and growth, of crawling, pulling to stand, then walking? Of cooing, speech, then song? Of scribbling, drawing, then writing—all the myriad ways we shout, “Here I am. I AM.”

Maybe the beginning was written long before the cell first divided. A scientist on National Public Radio once explained that all the carbon in the world is recycled over and over again since the Big Bang. Plankton in one life, dinosaur in another, rock, carrot, baby. Imagine that baby in your arms has carbon that was present at the beginning of time, carbon that saw the face of God. How might we treat each other differently if we kept that in mind?

And what *about* breath, the ever-moving flow of air in and out, while we sleep and awaken, drink morning coffee and fight the traffic to work, delight in the first daffodils of spring and suffer breathtaking loss? The movement we cannot live without, so central that the Hebrew word for breath is also the word for life, for soul. Seeing a dead body, it is the breath that is gone, the breath that animates, that marks life. Like carbon, each particle of air, of oxygen, is

shared by all life, by the newborn, by the rabbits that come out at dusk and the red fox that runs through the woods in the backyard, even by the aggressive neighbor, though the last thing you want is his air in your fragile infant's body. How far do the air particles travel, does the sharing extend? Is there Sanskrit wrapped around those cells of oxygen—Arabic, Urdu, turtle? Does the air sweep down from the Himalayas, blow across the desert, emanate from the branches of the sycamore? Are we breathing, or is the universe breathing us? And what does it mean that we are connected, each of us, across that invisible network of molecules that travel in and out of our bodies throughout our lives, that extend to the limits of our atmosphere? Where do any of us begin, or end?

Maybe there was no beginning, just time stretching backward forever, as far as the future stretches forward, as far as the universe stretches outward, until it folds back on itself. If we could imagine it, what else could we imagine? In this life, we imagine that WE are the fulcrum, the center of time—before our birth, after our death—the center of our own universe, and this too is true in its own way. Having a baby shifts the fulcrum, causes the tunnel to open outward, the light to come in at a different angle, shifting night and day, sight and shadow, past and future. And it sets us firmly in the ever present now, defined by the silky whorl of an infant's hair, a fingerprint that has never existed before, a milky sigh, a lusty cry, an entirely new being. A way of being, made new again.