

Birth, reincarnation, or... what?

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My friend, [Landon Whitsitt](#), and I have an ongoing argument about a particular metaphor. When you complete a piece of art—a poem, book, sermon, painting, or (in Landon's case) song—what is that process like?

For Landon, it's like giving birth. He is the father of four, and so he knows a lot about the process. But birth doesn't seem quite right to me. Perhaps it was my physical proximity to the birthing process that makes it feel like an unfit metaphor.

Birth was much bigger than a book for me. Plus, my egg played host to the sperm, my womb nurtured the fetus, and I have mothered my daughter for 13 years. But she is a different person than me.

But I still long to name that moment in the creative process when the idea becomes concrete. Theologically, we articulate it with the incarnation or the *imago dei*.

There is our Christian belief in incarnation, how Word was made flesh in Jesus Christ.

Then there is the idea that we are made in the image of God. I love how Meister Eckhart describes this. In his commentaries on John, Eckhart speaks of how we are born of God. We emanate from the mind of God. For Eckhart, God is like a cabinetmaker who has the perfect, ideal construction in mind. We are the cabinet. The creatures. The fleshly fruit of God's flourishing creative imagination.

Both ideas speak of how the wisdom becomes flesh, or how the idea becomes creature.

So what happens when the creatures create? What is it called when we are co-creators? What is it called when we complete a sermon, art, poetry, song or writing, and there is a tiny bit of our soul that takes form and shape? Wisdom takes on paint. Beauty becomes clothed in letters. Depths of emotion become suffused in photos. When something ephemeral inside of us takes on a concrete quality that can be

shared. When our art lives on after we have departed. What is it called?

Could it be a sort of reincarnation?

With my apologies to all of those who have constructed well thought out philosophies regarding reincarnation, I know this is not what you had in mind, and I don't mean to mindlessly co-opt. But how do we articulate when our wisdom takes on particular form?

What would you call it?