

Philosophic Encyclopedia

Children

The rearing and educating of our children is the most important contribution we can make toward human development. Wise parents who are desirous of giving the child all advantages commence before the birth of the child, even before the conception, prayerfully to turn their thoughts toward the task they are undertaking. They are careful to see that the union which is to bring about the germination takes place under the proper stellar influences, when the Moon is passing through signs which are appropriate to the building of a strong and healthy body. Of course they have their own bodies in the best possible physical, moral, and mental condition.

Then, during the period of gestation, they hold before their mind's eye constantly the ideal of a strong, useful life for the incoming entity, and as soon as possible after birth has taken place they cast the horoscope of the child, for the ideal parent is also an astrologer. If the parents have not the ability to cast the horoscope themselves, they at least can study the stellar signs that will enable them intelligently to understand what the astrologer tells them. From the child's natal chart the strength and weaknesses of its character readily can be seen. The parents will then be in the best position possible to foster the good and take

appropriate means to transmute the weaknesses before the tendencies work themselves out into actualities. Thus they may, in a large measure, help the incoming entity to overcome his faults.

When we look at Spirit as being eternal and at each Earth life as being an event in time, the different phases of our existence will fall into their rightful place. Pondering on Sir Edwin Arnold's words: "Never the Spirit was born, the Spirit shall cease to be never; never was time it was not—," will give us a real perception of the fleeting nature of time as against the constancy of God. Perhaps this realization can aid us in understanding these who are in the difficult phase of growing up.

The First Breath

The record of a person's physical life on Earth is started when the baby draws its first breath and continues until the last breath is drawn. "When the child takes his first complete breath the physiological conditions in the heart are changed, the foramen ovale is closed, and the blood is forced to circulate through the heart and lungs." By the contact of the blood with the air in the lungs it is able to absorb a picture of its surroundings. The blood is the vehicle of the Ego, and when it rushes through the heart it leaves an imprint on the seed atom of the heart which is located in its left ventricle. Upon this infinitesimal surface are printed all the pictures of the outside world during the person's whole life-time.

Four "Births"

The parent must realize that what we term birth is only the birth of the visible, physical body, which is born and comes to its present high stage of efficiency in a shorter time than do the invisible vehicles of man, because it has had the longest evolution. As the fetus is shielded from the impacts of the visible world by

being encased in the protecting womb of the mother during the period of gestation, so also the subtler vehicles are encased in envelopes of ether and desire stuff which protect them until they have matured sufficiently and are able to withstand the conditions of the outer world.

The vital body is born at about the age of seven, or the time when the child cuts its second teeth, and the desire body is born at about fourteen, or the time of puberty. The mind comes to birth at about twenty-one, when we say a man has reached majority.

There are certain important matters which can be taken care of only during the appropriate period of growth, and the parent should know what these are. Though the organs have been formed by the time the child comes to birth, the lines of growth are determined during the first seven years, and if they are not outlined properly during that time, an otherwise healthy child may become a sickly man or woman.

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The First Septenary Period

As esoteric students, we learn that in the first seven years of a child's life, only the negative poles of all the ethers in the vital body are active. Therefore the faculties of seeing and hearing, which depend upon the negative forces of the Light Ether, make the child "all eyes and ears." It is extremely helpful to the infant's growth if the parents pay attention to the colors surrounding the child and even more important, if they pay attention to the sound and rhythm within the child's hearing. This holds good throughout the first seven years of the child's life.

In the first chapter of St. John, we read: "In the beginning was the word . . . And without it was not anything made that was made . . . and the word became flesh. " The word is a rhythmic sound, and sound is the great cosmic builder. Therefore during the first septenary epoch of its life the child should be surrounded by music of the right kind, by musical language: the swing and rhythm of nursery rhymes are particularly valuable. It does not matter about the sense at all; what matters is the rhythm, the more the child has of that, the healthier it will grow.

Two great watchwords apply to this period of a child's life: imitation and example. There is no creature in the world so imitative as a little child; it follows example to the smallest detail in so far as it is able. Therefore, the parents who seek to bring up their child well will be careful when in the presence of the little one. It is no use to teach it to mind; the child has no mind, it has no reason, it can only imitate, and it cannot help imitating any more than water can help running downhill. If we have one kind of food for ourselves which is highly seasoned perhaps, and we give the child another dish, telling it that what we eat is not good for it, the child may not then be able to imitate us, but we implant the appetite for such food in the little one. When it grows up and can gratify its taste, it will do so. Therefore, the careful parents should abstain from the foods and liquors of which they do not wish their child to partake.

Regarding clothing, we may say that at that time the child should be entirely unconscious of its sex organs, and therefore the clothing should be particularly loose at all times. This is specially necessary with little boys, for oftentimes a most seriously bad habit in later life may result from the rubbing of too tight clothing.

Punishment

There is also the question of punishment to be considered; that too is an important factor at all times in awakening the sex nature and should be carefully avoided. There is no child so refractory that it will not respond to the method of reward for good deeds and the withholding of privileges as retribution for disobedience. Besides, we recognize the fact that whipping breaks the spirit of a dog, and we complain that certain people have cultivated a wishbone instead of a backbone—that they are lacking in will. Much of that is due to whippings, mercilessly administered in childhood. Let any parent look at this from the child's standpoint. How would any of us now like to live with someone from whose authority we could not escape, who was much bigger than we, and have to submit to whippings day by day? Leave the whipping alone and much of the social evil will be done away with in a generation.

Birth of the Vital Body

At seven years of age the vital body is brought to birth, and now perception and memory will play their fundamental parts. In this seven-year period, the child is unbiased and without preconceived ideas. Therefore he is more teachable at this period than at any other time. He has faith in his parents and in his teachers and will follow their authority.

When the vital body has been brought to birth in the seventh year, the faculties of perception and memory are to be educated. The watchwords for this period should be authority and discipleship. We should not, if we have a precocious child, seek to goad it into a course of study which requires an enormous expenditure of thought. Child prodigies usually have become men and women of less than ordinary mentality. The child should be allowed to follow his own inclination in that respect. His faculties of observation should be cultivated; he should be shown living examples. Let him

see the drunkard and what vice has led him to; show him also the good man, and set before him high ideals. Teach him to take everything you say upon authority and endeavor to be such that he may respect your authority as parents and teachers.

Sex Education

At this time he should also be prepared to husband the force which is now being awakened in him, and which will enable him to generate his kind at the end of the second period of seven years. He should not be allowed to gather that knowledge from polluted sources, because the parents shirk the responsibility of telling him from a mistaken sense of modesty. A flower may be taken as an object lesson, whence all the children, from the smallest to the biggest, may receive the most beautiful instruction in the form of a fairy tale. They may be taught how flowers are like families without bothering at all with botanical terms, so long as the parents have studied in the slightest degree a little elementary botany. Show the children some flowers. Tell them: "Here is a flower family where there are all boys (a staminate flower), and here is another flower where there are only girls (a pistilate flower). Here is one where there are both boys and girls (a flower where there are both stamen and pistils). Show them the pollen in the anthers. Tell them that these little flower boys are just like boys in the human families; that they are adventuresome and want to go out into the world to fight the battle of life, while the girls (the pistils) stay at home. Show them the bees with the pollen baskets on their legs, and tell them how the little flower boys bestride those winged steeds, like the knights of old, and go out into the world to seek the princess immured in the magic castle (the ovule hidden in the pistil); how the pollen, the flower boy-knights, force their way through the pistil and enter the ovule; then tell them how that signifies that the knight and the princess

are married, that they live happy ever afterward and become the parents of many little flower boys and girls. When they have fully grasped that, they will understand also the generation in the animal and human kingdom, for there is no difference; one is just as pure and chaste and holy as the other. And the little children brought up in that way will always have a reverence for the creative function that can be instilled in no better way. When a child thus has been equipped, it is well fortified for the birth of the desire body at the time of puberty.

Birth of the Desire Body

Children under fourteen are in a way still a part of their parents, because in the thymus gland is stored an essence of the parental blood which the child uses in manufacturing its own blood during the years of childhood. The thymus gland of the infant is largest just before birth and diminishes as time goes on. At about the fourteenth year the Ego is ready to assert itself and is able to manufacture its own blood. It becomes an "I"-dentity.

Now is the time for parent and teacher to practice tolerance and to feel sympathy for the growing youth who faces many problems. If the child has learned to trust and love his elders, he will now follow their advice and the hazards of growing up are not great.

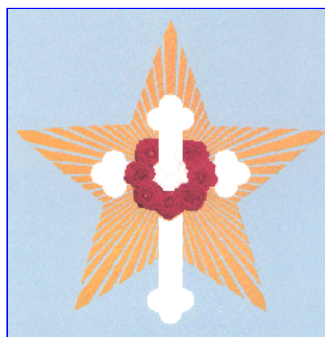
At this time, when the individual desire body is born, feelings and passions are making themselves felt. The individualized mind is not yet in evidence and nothing holds the desire nature in check. It is easy at this period for the child to drift into undesirable habits which may have disastrous results. It is true that many lessons are learned in this way, but parents and teachers must stand ready with kind interest and loving understanding.

Now is the time when the child should be taught to search for himself; he should learn the value of careful investigation of anything he wishes to judge. He should also be taught that "the more fluidic he can keep his opinions, the better he will be able to examine new facts and acquire new knowledge."

When the desires and the emotions are unleashed, the youth enters upon the most dangerous period of its life, from fourteen to twenty-one. At that time the desire body is rampant, and the mind has not yet come to birth to act as a brake. Then it is well for the child who has been brought up as here outlined, for its parents will then be a strength and an anchor to it to tide it over that troublesome period until the time when it is full born, the age of twenty-one, when the mind is born.

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