

Chapter One

Starting Point - Knowledge of Man

To bring up a child, to prepare him for adulthood, can only be successfully undertaken today if there is some basic knowledge of what an adult human being essentially is. We need a clear picture of our ultimate objective. This would seem an obvious first requirement, and must form the very foundation stone of our future discussion.

Our starting point, therefore, is to arrive at an understanding of the nature of man. Only then can we realistically proceed. Such an understanding can be gained largely by self-observation.

*The Threefold Human Being **

Let us observe ourselves. It is obvious that we have physical bodies perceptible to the senses. Of that we can be sure.

If we look a little more deeply, it is equally evident that we each have an inner life of likes and dislikes, impulses and urges, joys and sorrows. We can experience these as realities within us, although this inner life itself is not perceptible to the senses; one sees only its outer manifestation. Most people call this area of our being the psychological life. Psyche is a Greek word meaning soul, and it is this latter term which will be used throughout this book.

Yet, there is more to be observed. If I look carefully, I see that whether I am liking or disliking, whether I have an impulse to do this or an urge to do that, whether I am happy or sorrowful, throughout these soul fluctuations, I always experience myself as myself. I know I remain the same individual whatever changes there may be within me. Moods come and go, but throughout I remain my own individual self. This I experience also as a reality.

Consider, then, that the three-fold human being consists of an outer physical body, an inner life of soul, and an individual selfhood. *It is this whole that must be considered in bringing up a child*; it must be the basis right from the beginning . . . But this was not always so.

An Art of Parenthood, or a Science of Child-Rearing

In Great-Grandma's day things were different. A conscious knowledge of man as set out above was unnecessary for successful mothering. For Great-Grandma practised what could be described as

an Art of Motherhood, and this arose within her instinctively. Out of herself she knew exactly what to do.

If there were a digestive upset she brewed a herbal potion; for inflammations she made a bran poultice. She acted with an instinctive surety, a confidence often sadly lacking today. And this was fine! Great-Grandma's art was adequate as long as things stayed within the norm.

But often there were abnormalities; and disease and infections struck. Then Great-Grandma was in real trouble for *she had no scientific knowledge to guide her*. At the beginning of this century there was an appallingly high infant mortality rate as gastro-enteritis and other allied diseases spread virtually uncontrolled.¹ Something more than instinct was clearly needed.

From this there arose a scientific approach to child care as doctors, nurses, and other professionals sought to stem the tide of epidemic. Many medical problems were solved, and the infant mortality rate dropped dramatically. It seemed as though the Science of Child-Rearing had all the answers. . . . So it seemed!

But as parents adopted more and more this scientific approach, so in corresponding measure did the old instinctive art diminish. What was once an assured knowing became the subject of scientific debate. There was choice, and thus the possibility of error. This has led to a multitude of anxieties, as parents seek to 'do the right thing' and find their way amidst a vast literature on child care.

The Science of Child-Rearing has certainly solved medical problems, but it has not solved human problems. In fact, it has created and compounded them.

What, then, is to be done? To go back to Great-Grandma's day is neither possible nor desirable. We must ever go forward. Today we must develop a new art, an Art of Parenthood; and this must incorporate within it the scientific knowledge developed over the past decades.

This new art must be *consciously* practised. It cannot rely on instinct alone. Rather, must it have its basis in a conscious knowledge of the reality of the child.

Knowledge of man must indeed be the foundation stone of a new Art of Parenthood. That is the only valid basis for the present and the future.

* See Appendix B

Chapter Two

The Process of Incarnation

If our knowledge of man is to be adequate to our needs, it must include within it knowledge of the child's origin. This requires a science that is able to extend beyond the material – that is, a spiritual science.

The word 'incarnation' means entering into a body of flesh; and this process immediately poses questions. For example, who is it that enters this fleshly body, and from whence does the entering being come? These are crucial questions that need answers if we are to understand the child, and provide an appropriate home care at the practical level.

Our present day language, orientated to a technological society, is not adequate to answering these fundamental questions of life. It is the poets who illuminate such matters. They speak from a deeper level.

Wordsworth has much to say that is relevant –

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's star
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:

Not in entire forgetfulness
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home:

Heaven lies about us in our infancy.¹

The poet Eleanor Trives speaks in the same vein –
Into my childhood days shone the loveliness
Of the Kingdom before birth

In a dream light that knew no death.

Now at the end of my life

Rays from the farther shore

Reveal the immortality of all things mortal.²

The poets clearly indicate that the incarnating being is a human Soul/Spirit coming from a Kingdom or from God, and that during infancy there is an awareness of this 'heavenly' origin.

There was a time when meadow, grove and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem

Apparelled in celestial light. . . .³

Wordsworth and Trives are not indulging in poetic fantasy, but what they say can be substantiated by spiritual science. In a series of lectures on 'The Study of Man', Rudolf Steiner had this to say: "Man descends, as it were, as Spirit-Soul or Soul-Spirit from a higher sphere into earthly existence. . . . Physical existence here is a continuation of the spiritual."

It is difficult to find an adequate everyday terminology to indicate these areas of life, and in choosing terms one exposes oneself to misinterpretation and accusations of being totally unscientific. However, in spite of this, I have chosen to use Wordsworth's term 'heaven' to denote a non-material, non-spatial and non-temporal reality - a 'realm of being' rather than a place, from which the incarnating soul-spirit comes.

Thus it can be said - *the human spirit comes from heaven bringing a soul life with it.* ("Trailing clouds of glory do we come from God. . . .") This is the reality of the incarnating child. The parents give a wonderful gift, a body, but do not create the essential being of the child. This human spirit already is, a living entity that enters the cell which will grow and provide the earthly body.

The process of incarnation must now be traced, and first we will turn to the scientists. It is a fascinating story.

In the 1920s a team of research embryologists in Vienna made an astounding discovery. They found that in the human being, the first fertilized cell does not grow into the baby, but develops into the so-called house of layers - that is, the chorion, amnion, allantois and yolk sac. Only at about the seventeenth day does the growth of the embryo actually begin.

After this, it takes another twenty-three days before the formation of body organs, kidneys, heart, etc., begins. That is, there is a period of forty days from fertilization until all the foundations of the body are laid down. We will take special note of this forty days. It is roughly six weeks. This procedure is quite different in animals. There, with the exception of certain apes, the first cell fertilized becomes the embryo. It simply increases in size and complexity until the form of the baby animal is produced. It could be said that the animal is born, but man incarnates.⁴

Obviously, man is related to the animals, yet he is no naked ape. He belongs to a different species altogether, to the family of man.⁵ The human being, from the moment of fertilization onwards, has a different origin and different destiny from the animals. We will see this illustrated again later on. It is of the greatest significance.

At the beginning of this century, Rudolf Steiner, from his own spiritual-scientific research, found that the ego does not enter the body at fertilization, but 'waits' until the above mentioned sheaths are built. In 1906 he stated that the ego enters between the second and third week, that is, about the seventeenth day. At that time, the facts of the very early stages of embryonic growth were unknown. When they were discovered in the mid 1920s, it was found that they fully substantiated what Steiner had given twenty years earlier.

It is when the ego enters that many a mother-to-be has a vivid dream of a white bird or a shaft of light raying down upon her. She later discovers that she is pregnant. Other mothers report that they are aware of the child's presence hovering about them for some days prior to their dream. The incarnation of the Spirit (perhaps one could say, the annunciation) is not theory for these perceptive young women. It is a reality.

What are we to learn from these astonishing facts, and how can they be applied in a practical way to the care of the child?

Stanley Drake, in his book *Path to Birth* points out that, "in forty days, the incarnating being, who has previously lived free of time and space in the heavenly world, has achieved the first stage of adaptation to existence in a world of space and time.

"So this period of forty days can be seen as a period of adjustment between spiritual and physical states."⁶

We thus recognise that forty days or six weeks is the time needed for the Spirit to adapt itself to new conditions.

It is interesting to note that in old myths, sagas and biblical lore, the period forty days is used to denote a significant change from one state of consciousness to another. From Genesis we learn that Noah spent forty days in the ark, and waited until the fortieth day to open the window. (See Appendix C.) Likewise, after the baptism in the Jordan, there was a forty day period of fasting in the wilderness of the desert.

Other examples could be given, but from what has already been said, it will be obvious that six weeks is a period demanding special attention. We must observe the baby carefully during the first six

weeks of life, for here another adaption occurs. The baby comes from the watery realm into the realms of air and earth; and as well as physiological changes, there is a total change of consciousness. *The first six weeks of baby's life will call for very special care and understanding.*

Before discussing what this means in practical day-to-day caring, we must now turn to consider the mother's preparation during this wonderful progression of events.

It is a time for pondering deeply on the meaning of things as practical preparations are made.