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### LATE AND IMPORTANT PHASES OF CHILD STUDY.

BY COLIN A. SCOTT, PH. D.,  
Professor of Psychology and Child Study  
in the Wisconsin Normal School.

that beautiful statues should be frequent in public places in order to impress the finest forms on the imagination of mothers.

In the middle ages psychic qualities were also believed to be impressed. The fear of James I for a naked sword due to fright on his mother's part is a typical case. At the present day the belief is widespread. Mrs. Marholme attributes the deficient forms of the present generation of men to modern clothing, which, as a series of shapeless cylinders expressing nothing but the power of the money bag, conceals the masculine forms which, through the imagination of the ancient woman, ought to be transmitted to future generations.

Dr. Drazewicki of the University of Warsaw cites the case of his own child, which was born with a mark on its leg in the same place where he himself had been wounded while swimming. This accident occurred during the first month of his wife's pregnancy, and she had been shocked and frightened by the sight of the wound.

Supplementing the evidence of this character, Dr. Hunter has collected 2,000 cases where mothers were asked in every instance before the birth of the child if they had experienced any apprehension or mental emotion which they might think would cause any mark or deformity, and, although admissions of this kind were very frequent and although many of the 2,000 children were marked in some way or another, in not one single case did the resulting mark correspond with the apprehension of the mother. It is easy to see that if the opportunity had been given after instead of before the appearance of the child it would be a very unimaginative woman indeed who would not be able to remember something in her experience which the irregularity of development could not suggest.

It must be observed that a very slight acquaintance with the science of embryology discounts a large number of these stories. Different organs have different periods of development. The skin is not differentiated as a special organ until comparatively late. The most distant portions of the extremities are developed first, the fingers before the palm, the hand before the forearm, the forearm before the arm proper. Generally speaking, the portions at the sides of the body are developed before the parts in the middle, the joining of the two halves occurring later. Each outer half of the eye develops before the inner half. The various organs and even parts of organs have their nascent periods, and if we hear of a shock which is said to have occasioned harelip, for example, which has been received after the period when the two separately developed halves of the palate normally unite to form a single palate (between the ages of 8 and 10 weeks of fetal life), we can be absolutely certain that this shock has had no effect in producing the deformity, since the deformity has already been in existence in the form presented at birth before the advent of the so called impression. Harelip and cleft palate are very common defects, occurring, according to Dr. Hatfield of Chicago, in 22 out of 109 cases of maternal impression reported to him. They are plainly instances of arrested development, taking place at the time when the two halves of the palate should have been joined together. Lack of developmental energy on the part of the child at this time from whatever cause finds its expression in this defect. No shock or fright on the part of the mother, even if it were possible to communicate it to the child, could possibly have any effect after this time.

Cyclops, or one eyed monsters, to take another example, are due to an arrest in development after the two outer halves, but before the two inner halves, of the eyes are developed. The arrest of development at this point then ceases, and at the proper time the two outer halves are joined. The single eye is thus derived from two outer halves of separate eyes, and the organs between, including the nose, are absent.

As Dr. Kierman of Chicago has forcibly pointed out, the most of the cases reported are distinctly arrests of development and do not represent even remotely photographic reproductions of impressions. A woman sees her enraged husband cut off three toes from the right foot of a chicken. She fears her child will be marked. As anticipated, her child is born with three stubs of fingers on his right hand. Further examination, however, reveals the fact that the fingers are perfectly formed, with complete nails, and do not represent anything cut off. It is an arrest of development occurring at a definite period in embryonic life, and only if the shock occurred at this special time, which does not appear, could it have any effect to do with the deformity.

The conception of arrest of development focuses the attention upon the inner forces of growth rather than upon the external impressions. Parental influences from this standpoint extend far beyond the period of gestation or the life of the individual. The germ plasma from which every human being develops has lived for many millions of years. In the line of descent, between the first germ cell and every cell which now composes human bodies, there has never been a single cell which has ever died. The cells which did die are not the ancestors of any of those which are now alive. We do not inherit death, but life, and death of certain groups of cells is only an acquisition in the struggle for existence to permit of larger life. The germ plasma may be regarded as a continuous race root stock from which individuals bud, like the shoots which come up from an underground stem in spring. Individuals are expressions of the root stock or germ plasma. The germ plasma is not the expression of individuals. It is nearly as true to say that a man inherits from his immediate children as to say that his immediate children inherit from him. The truth is that every individual inherits not from another individual, but from the race stock of which they are both expressions. When hereditary blindness appears in a family, statistics show that it is as likely to be transmitted by the brother or sister who is not blind as by the one who is. Individuals are thus produced as experiments by the race stock or germ plasma and are thrown off and die.

The germ plasma, however, as Weismann himself admits, is subject to influence by its environment in the bodies of individuals which contain it. These influences, however, are never special and can all be regarded as either producing better nutrition or arresting development by interfering with nutrition. The same thing is true of the embryo.

It is perfectly true that psychic disturbances, if sufficiently severe and continued for a sufficient length of time, are associated with and may occasion a defective nutritive condition of the blood and thus cause an arrest of development. The progress of the race is dependent upon the increase of and the perfection of the embryonic processes. To add to nature in nature's way we must increase the protecting influences. Not only the embryo, but for its sake the mother also must be removed from the strain. This does not mean inertia, but a hygienic life, which will produce a well aerated, pure and healthy blood, capable of supplying the best nutritive material for the independent organizing forces of the child. The superstition in favor of photographic maternal impressions, apart from natural maternal conceit, has probably also had some biological significance in emphasizing the protection of the mother, not so much through her imagination, but through that of the husband and the rest of society. When the vast range of heredity was undreamed of, it was natural to overestimate the period of gestation. At present, however, we see that the continuous fears of psychic impressions, by lowering nutritive vigor, are likely to be more injurious than any irregular impressions themselves can possibly be. Mothers should be protected from this fear of fears.

The facts of science imply as follows: The impressions which a mother receives have no direct bearing on the child. The function of the mother during gestation is simply the passive production of nourishment. It is before conception rather than after and not directly, but by a process of sexual selection pertaining to all the powers involved in falling in love or other means of mating, that the real psychic influences that will affect the next generation are determined. The constitution, both physical and psychic; the imagination, the intellect, the emotions revealed and appreciated in this golden aura of life, are the most decisive prenatal influences within the life of the individual. The full discussion of this, however, must be reserved for another lesson.

### I.—Prenatal Influences.

It is a very old notion that the impressions received by a mother during pregnancy are of the greatest importance for her child. The author of the book of Genesis represents Jacob as familiar with this conception in the breeding of animals.

Plato, in harmony with the general Greek sentiment, recommended

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