

Nurtured by Love or Matured by Nature?

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By Susan du Plessis

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There is nothing new under the sun, states Ecclesiastes 1:9. This is certainly true of the nature–nurture debate, the modern name for the ageless argument about the importance of learning in the development of the child. While one side argues that the development of the child is mainly a process of maturation, with learning playing no more than a supportive role, the other side maintains that learning determines the entire course of a child's future.

The wise king Solomon certainly supported the nurture assumption when he stated in Proverbs 22:6, Train the child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. The famous French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, on the other hand, posited a natural development of the child. In fact, he wanted the child to be protected from the influences of society so that he can grow up as Nature intended him to be.

A thorough study of feral children, and children who were raised or kept in extreme isolation, makes it difficult NOT to support the nurture assumption.

FERAL CHILDREN AND WHAT WE LEARN FROM THEM

Probably the best–known story of feral children is that of the two girls, Amala and Kamala, who were raised by a she–wolf. In 1920 the reverend J. A. L. Singh saw a mother wolf and cubs, two of which had long, matted hair and looked human. After considerable preparation and difficulties, the two human creatures were captured. They turned out to be two girls whose ages were assessed by Singh at about eight years and one and a half years respectively.

The creatures were taken to an orphanage in Mindapore, India, where the Reverend and his wife were stationed. Singh described them as wolfish in appearance and behavior. They walked on all fours and had calluses on their knees and palms from doing so. They were fond of raw meat and stole it when the occasion presented itself. They licked all liquids with their tongues and ate their food in a crouched

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position. Their tongues permanently hung out of their thick, red lips, and they panted just like wolves. They never slept after midnight and prowled and howled at night. They could move very fast, just like squirrels, and it was difficult to overtake them. They shunned human society altogether. If approached, they made faces and sometimes bared their teeth. Their hearing was very acute and they could smell meat at a great distance. Furthermore, while they could not see well during the day, they could orientate themselves very well at night. In September 1921 both girls became ill, and Amala, the younger, died.

There are many other stories of feral children in the literature, amongst others the story of a boy who lived in Syria, who ate grass and could leap like an antelope, as well as of a girl, who lived in the forests in Indonesia for six years after she had fallen into a river. She walked like an ape and her teeth were as sharp as a razor.

These stories do far more than just to confirm the important role of education. They actually show that

a human being not only can but **MUST** be educated to become a human being at all. A bear does not have to learn to be a bear; he simply is one. A duck needs no lessons in duckmanship. And an ant leads a perfectly satisfactory life without any instruction from other ants. Even when isolated from birth, animals usually retain clearly recognizable instincts. A cat that is raised among dogs, will still behave like a cat. He won't try to bite the postman. There are only a few exceptions, such as the lion cub, which would not be able to hunt the wildebeest when raised in isolation.

Man, however, enters this world very poorly equipped. The knowledge a child needs to become fully human is not dormant. Everything the child eventually knows, or can do, must be learned. This of course excludes natural body functions, such as breathing, as well as the reflexes, for example the involuntary closing of the eye when an object approaches it. Everything else, however, must be learned.

A child must **LEARN** to walk erect, to talk, to eat with a knife and fork, to catch a ball, to ride a bicycle, to swim, et cetera. The mastery of these skills does not fall from the sky. A child must also learn to sustain his attention, to listen when spoken to, to follow through on instructions, to control his behavior and to sit still and remain in his seat when the situation so requires. These abilities, which play a determining role in school success, also do not happen automatically. The same applies to qualities such as friendliness, thankfulness, honesty, truthfulness, unselfishness and respect for authority. All these skills and qualities and many more must be learned for the child to eventually lead a happy and successful adult life.

PARENTS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT EDUCATORS

The road to adulthood can be compared to a traveler who wants to travel from one place to another, but does not know the way. He therefore needs directions. If he receives the wrong directions, he will never reach his destination. A child who enters this world is in exactly the same situation. He also has a destination he must become a grown-up man or a grown-up woman but he has no idea how to get there. Consequently, he needs to be directed by grown-up persons, who have already traveled along this route, and who therefore can lead him to adulthood.

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The problem is that most people have come to identify the term education and learning only with schools and schooling. The school has grown from the modest institution it was in the nineteenth century to one that is blamed for all the ills of society and is seen as potentially capable of curing them. The schools functions and influence have been extended some would say over-extended and therefore the school is exceedingly vulnerable to criticism. It is, however, very important to note that the whole of education does not take place in the school. The school is especially responsible for the FORMAL aspects of education, namely subject instruction, in order to provide society with an able workforce. The parents, on the other hand, are the PRIMARY educators of their child. And, as the primary educators of their child, THEY have the greatest responsibility to direct their child to adulthood.

Being a parent is a tremendous privilege. But it is also a tremendous responsibility. Therefore parents must make sure that they are properly equipped for the task at hand because, as the late violin teacher Shinichi Suzuki so rightly stated, The destiny of children lies in the hands of their parents.

Susan du Plessis is the co-author of "The Myth of ADHD and Other Learning Disabilities; Parenting without Ritalin, and the author or co-author of four other books on learning and learning disabilities. She has been involved in helping children reach their full potential for 15 years. She holds BD and BA Hons (psychology). Visit her website at

The Earth Mother

By Judi Singleton

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The Earth Mother was people's first deity. The Chinese called Her Kwan Yin; the Egyptians knew Her as Isis; the Navajo call Her Changing Woman. To the Greeks She was Gaia, and to many black peoples She is Yemanja. She is Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love, and She says: "All acts of love and pleasure are my rituals." She is also the ancient Crone Hecate, who gives us both wisdom and death. Maka Wakan, the sacred Earth, as the American Sioux thought of her.

She had many names throughout the ages. Her stone effigies ushered in the Neolithic in Europe. The concept of the Earth Mother is a natural thing all humans and animals are nurtured by a Mother who succor them and protect them. So to extend this idea to the Earth itself is a natural thing. It gives people an infinity with the earth as if she is the Mother of all things then we are brothers and sisters to each other and the all things.

Ancient man believed when they took an animals life that the animal sacrificed himself or herself to feed man. It's soul then returned to the Mother to be reborn. Earth religions believe everything came from the Mother's flesh so all is sacred. Having sacredness for all things made our bodies sacred, the plants and animals sacred, with this belief there is a real connection with nature and respect for oneself and all things.

The Goddess teaches us to love ourselves and to be authentic, nothing is more important in life than to love one and to be just what you are. That does not mean we cannot change but that we always

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express our highest self. What the Goddess teaches us is that all is sacred even us. She teaches us that we need to respect our bodies. We need to respect what we put into our bodies. We need to respect one another as we are all related. She also teaches us that we are unique creations the only one she made the way she created us so we need to express that self authentically to honor the Goddess. When one respects everything then it is easy to choose to be kind to one another. It is easy to be kind to the environment and know that we are co-creators with the Great Goddess of our environment. We respect the animals for they are our brothers and sisters. We respect the plants for they too are related to us. We honor the entire world and in being authentic, honoring the world, respecting giving nothing but love, our world and ourselves is created into all we could ever desire.

We are ONE with the Great Goddess, the sacred Earth, and we are one with the furthest star in the furthest galaxy. We sense, we feel, that somehow in some way, we are all together singing into being the song of the soul.

About the author: Judi Singleton is the owner and publisher of Jassmine's Journal Goddess Gospel edition you can subscribe at <http://www.motherearthpublishing.com>

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