

FIRST LESSONS ON MORAL EXCELLENCE IN CHILDHOOD



Selfishness seems to be the most difficult moral challenge to overcome in the society. It is acquired through education.

It seems like, since birth, parents are inclined to motivate their children to be ruled by bad passions. They then become surprised by the vicious and inferior behaviour seen in society.

We have met a family whose little girl is around four or five years of age. She has a rare intelligence but has little vicious habits. She cries a lot, is very stubborn and does not say 'thank you' when something is given to her. Her parents want to correct her manners tremendously since she is a good girl, apart of these vicious tendencies.

Let's see how they work in order to educate this child. One day, the parents brought a piece of cake in front of the child. They then said, as they are used to: 'You will only eat this cake if you behave as a good girl'. This is related to gluttony. How many times parents tell a child who sits at the table that they won't eat certain sweet if they cry?

"Do this or that, and you will eat this sweet." Parents would even show them something else that will make them envy. The child then feels constrained, since he/she wants to satisfy a desire for this food. It could be much worse if parents say the piece would then

be given to someone else. It is quite common to see parents manipulating their children this way, but this will stimulate not just the gluttony in this case, but also the jealousy. The child will then do as told, but not because he/she want it, but so the other won't get what he/she feels belongs to them.

Would you like to teach children generosity? Tell your child: "give this food or toy to so and so." If your child refuses, do not just say 'I will give you another one', in order to encourage them to share and feel good about it. The child should not be encouraged to be generous only because she/he will get another new present.

One day we were eye-witness to a very interesting situation which is related to this. A two-half year old child was threatened by her parents. They said to her: 'We will give it to your little brother; not to you'. In order to make the lesson more clearly to the child, the parent put a portion of food on the brother's plate. The little brother then eats the portion. The two-half year old child then becomes angry and red. Anger and hate could be seen on the child's eyes. As it can be seen, the seed has been brought up, but do you think it will give a good fruit?

Let's go back to the child we were just talking about. She didn't not understand the intimidation very well. it had been rarely executed by the parents. This time it was done because the parents became aware they needed to dominate this type of behaviour and not wait until the child gets older. Children need to be educated from an early age...

There was a case where a mother said to the child: 'I promise you, if you don't obey me, I will give your cake tomorrow morning to the first poor child that passes by'. What was said was done, in this case. The mother wanted to teach the child a lesson and on the next day she made her daughter give her cake to someone who passed by in the street.

The moral message the child got was: 'I am indifferent to this. If I knew this would happen, I would have hurried to eat my cake yesterday.' The child did receive a great lesson, but a lesson on selfishness since she was forced to be generous. Let's wait and see what types of fruits this seed will bring. Later in life this child will apply this moral lesson to more serious situations than just in regards to a cake. We can't imagine how many thoughts this fact could germinate at this child's mind...

How can we wish this child not to become selfish if, instead of awakening on her the pleasure of giving and the happiness for someone who will be receiving, sacrifice is imposed as some sort of punishment? We should not inspire aversion for the act of giving, or for those who are in need of receiving it... Another very common way of punishment for a child is to make them eat with in the kitchen with the servants who do the housework.

This type of punishment is less to do with being excluded from eating at the table with the family but more to do with eating in the kitchen with the servants; feeling humiliated. Since the early age, selfishness, pride, despair, passions get encouraged. These are the ulcers of Humanity.

You need to have an exceptionally good nature in order not to resist to these types of influences. These are produced provoked at an age where children are very impressionable, since they don't have the experience or will to go against these trends. The majority of the spirits who reincarnate in Earth would develop bad passions under these influences since the seed is probably there already. This is why it is impossible to avoid children development under these influences. These tendencies need to be found at them as early as possible and tackled accordingly.

The problems rest with the parents who make mistakes more due to their ignorance rather than unwillingly. Negligence can be seen, but in some the intentions are good. The issue is the way the lessons are applied to the children. Parents, since they are the first doctors of the soul for their children, should be more instructed. Not just in regards to their duties but also on the ways to accomplish them. It's not enough for a doctor to know he needs to cure; he needs to know how to. What are the ways parents can instruct themselves in order to know about this so important task?

Women nowadays receive a lot of education; go through several tests and exams but it is not required to know how to morally educate their sons. House duties are thought to women, but have they been thought how to govern young hearts? Parents are abandoned with no guidance, which is why they take wrong steps. As a consequence, they are then faced with their children's' mistakes.

Once it is recognised that pride and selfishness are the sources of most human miseries, that whilst these reign in Earth peace, charity, and fraternity should not be expected, the need to address it at an early stage becomes imperative.

Can Spiritism redeem this evil? There is no doubt about that. We shall not hesitate to say that only Spiritism is powerful enough to overcome evil: through the way it sees the parents' mission and responsibility; the source of innate qualities, either good or bad; the way action can influence incarnated and disincarnate spirits; the way unshakeable faith validates their duties; finally, it educates the parents as well. Spiritism proves its efficiency when we look at the rational way children who come from real spiritist families are educated.

The new horizons Spiritism opens make us see things on a different way. Its first objective is the moral progress of Humanity; and reinforces the need to seriously look into moral education as the primary resource to educate the human morality. One day we will understand that the field of education has its principles; its rules. Intellectual education, for instance, is a real science. One day perhaps every mother will be required to have this knowledge, as it is a lawyer is not required to know the Law.

[Allan Kardec, The Spiritist Review 1864](#)

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