

Review

The First Three Years of the Child

Karl König

Floris Books, 192 pages, £14.99, \$25.00

Review by Monika Gordon

This new edition of Karl König's book *The First Three Years of the child* is a treat for anyone whose interest lies with the development of the human being, especially the development of the little child. It enriches our experience of what life is as a whole, and also in detail, with the descriptions of the processes of learning to walk, speak and think. This invaluable book with its extensive, helpful footnotes and references, helps us to understand the amazing process of human development. In today's society with all its complex difficulties and ever increasing problems and needs in the educational realm, it is wonderful to be given a renewed fresh outlook through this book.

Karl König not only helps us to understand the little child : he also makes us conscious of the steps of its development. Thus we become more able to understand and educate little children in a better way.

Anyone whose interest lies with child development and education has surely considered the wonder of life and the questions : how does life work? how can I find the key to the door which is life? how can I find awe to inspire my understanding of life? Karl König in his well-written, easy to read book gives us helpful ideas and amazing facts concerning this beginning of our time on earth, which act as a kind of key to finding the answers to these questions.

When we as adults may seem still unable, the most important steps are established in the child and we must become aware and conscious of what is happening. The subtitle of the book : 'How children learn to walk, speak and think' points to this wonder of the foundation of learning to live as who we are and wish to become : a free, independent, worthy individual.

The First Three Years hold the significance of our life. Karl König teaches us that in these three first years, our whole life's origin makes itself known and we lay foundations down the foundations for our future.

With his insight as a doctor and healer and his indefatigable strength and his generous ability to love others, König gives us the opportunity to follow him into an understanding of the child's soul with its intuitive power of perception, through his insight into child development. We are helped to compare and unite modern scientific understanding with a spiritual scientific understanding and find through this the importance of : fantasy, speech and ideas; memory, play and the comprehension of space and time. He leads us into the realm of not only learning to speak but also the structure of language,

describing nouns, verbs adjectives and so forth, and the use of past and future.

Have you ever thought about the importance of human speech and with its difference from the sounds of animals and what this means? König brings us astounding revelations about sound, speech and language and their development. With the help of various contemporary professionals, König shows us what takes place when we talk. He describes not only the healthy but also the ill child in its physical and psychological state of development.

Did you know that saying, naming, talking can all be differentiated? And did you know that as a babbling baby we are citizens of the world and that through uprightness (learning to stand and walk) we separate ourselves from the world and that we achieve consciousness through learning to speak.

Describing the process of learning to think, König makes us aware of the differences between: actual thought and the memories which arise out of recognition; between thinking, and movement dictated by desire; between the abilities of a human being and those of an animal. Did you know that memory comes before thinking but is the foundation of it?

Through giving lively examples of children's inventions of words, Karl König makes this profound and interesting book also very delightful to read.

In this book we discover and learn to understand how important

the first three years of our lives are as we learn to walk, speak and think. These are the foundations of our whole life on earth. Looked at from a physical, spiritual or religious point of view or all three together, we always come to the same result: the first three years of life are the most important in the whole of our lives as it is then that we learn the most fundamental subtle processes for our development.

König then leads us further through all the different senses we use, often unconsciously, to complete our understanding of the importance of developing as a human being able to find our true mission on earth. He shows us in this wonderful book the importance and meaning of life and development. It leads us to be able to experience again the wonders of early childhood and find love and understanding of the processes of education. Through this we can find the right approach to the little child. and our morality will be heightened through the wonder, love and different awareness which we gain.

Monika was a Waldorf School kindergarten teacher for seven years in Germany and in Aberdeen, Scotland.

She also has experience as a Waldorf school class teacher and is the mother of a large family.

