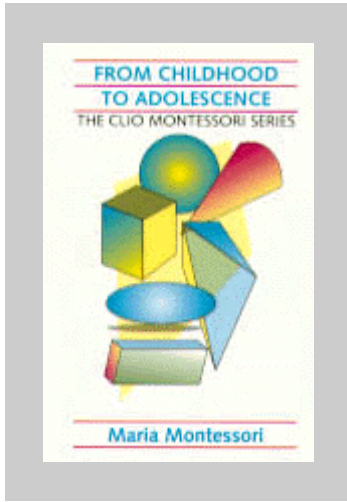




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From the Clio Montessori Series Summary:

In this work, Maria Montessori examines the educational concerns of the older child, the adolescent, and even the mature university student. Montessori first analyses the characteristics and needs of children from seven to twelve, and asserts that when a special environment is provided, the pre-adolescent is easily able to apply himself, or herself, to fields of study normally reserves for older children. At the time when this work was first published Dr. Montessori's ideas for the education of adolescents were radically new. She proposed an "experimental school for social life" where children and their predominately young teachers would live in a self-contained rural community, self-governing and to a considerable extent self supporting.

FROM CHILDHOOD TO ADOLESCENCE

Maria Montessori

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My vision of the future is no longer of people taking exams and proceeding on that certification from the secondary school to the university, but of individuals passing from one stage of independence to a higher, by means of their own activity, through their own effort of will, which constitutes the inner

evolution of the individual.

-- Maria Montessori

CHAPTER ONE

The Successive Levels of Education

Successive levels of education must correspond to the successive personalities of the child.

Our methods are oriented not to any pre-established principles but rather to the inherent characteristics of the different ages. It follows that these characteristics themselves include several levels.

The changes from one level to the other at these different ages could be compared to the metamorphoses of insects. When an insect comes out of the egg, it is very small and has a particular form and colouring. Then, little by little, it is transformed even though it remains an animal of the same species having the same needs and habits. It is an individual that evolves. Then one day something new happens. The insect spins his cocoon and becomes a chrysalis. The chrysalis in turn undergoes another slow evolution. Finally the insect comes out of the cocoon in the form of a butterfly.

We can establish a parallel between the life of the insect and that of the child. But the changing traits are not so clearly defined in the child as in the insect. It would be more exact to speak rather of 'rebirths' of the child. In effect, we have before us at each new stage a different child who presents characteristics different from those he exhibited during preceding years.

Our first level of education, then, applies to the small child from birth to about seven years of age. Since a number of transformations take place during this important period, we have established the following subdivisions:

- the first two years;
- the years from three to five;
- the sixth and seventh years.

For the period from seven to twelve years (the period immediately preceding adolescence) which may also be subdivided, we provide a different plan of education than for the preceding period. If the changes produced during the first period are considered as growth, it may be said that veritable metamorphoses take place during this one.

Twelve to eighteen years: one could say as much for this, the period of adolescence.

In each period we rediscover a growing being, but one who is a quite different person every time.

The last two levels will be considered consecutively. The first level has already been discussed in *The Discovery of the Child* and in *The Secret of Childhood*.

Only a thorough analysis leads to the discovery of the changes that occur continuously in the child, who grows until he becomes a man. It is precisely these changes that have the greatest bearing on the method of education.

The principles that can be applied usefully to the first period are not the same as those that must be applied to the second. We thus come to the practical part of education.

Let us use an example: When the small child begins to feel a loose tooth, it is a sign that the first period of childhood is over. This event occurs without much fanfare within the family. When the tooth becomes very loose it is pulled. A certain amount of fuss is made: the tooth is saved, and that little ceremony constitutes the first step of a new period in the life of the child. It will take a long time before all the baby teeth are gone and the child acquires his new teeth. But if, unluckily, it is necessary to pull one of the new teeth, more will be needed than merely a silk thread; we will have to deal with the extraction of a strong and fixed part. Loss of the baby teeth is only one among the many manifestations of this age. All these traits ñ physical as much as psychic ñ constitute the links of the chain which is the metamorphosis of the child. He is both stronger and slimmer. His hair is less soft. Psychologically, he is less gentle, less accommodating.

CHAPTER TWO

Metamorphosis

From seven to twelve years, the child needs to enlarge his field of action. As we have seen (in *The Secret of Childhood*), a limited environment is suited to the small child. There, social relations are established with others. In the second period the child needs wider boundaries for his social experiences. Development cannot result by leaving him in his former environment.

It is necessary that he come to understand, among other realities, what money ought to represent. Without money we could pass among the most marvellous things without every being able to touch them. We would be like a bird with a broken beak dying of hunger on a pile of grain. Money is the means by which man procures things. That is why it attracts so much interest. We must consider money as the 'golden key' that opens the door of supra-nature*.

It is therefore necessary that children have first-hand experience in buying objects themselves and that they come to realize what they can buy with a unit of the money of their country.

What can one buy with one small coin? When I have used the coin to buy paper from the stationer, my coin has not disappeared. It will again buy more objects of its value. It is always the same coin that passes from hand to hand, bringing the needed article to someone every time. How much merchandise can a coin minted fifty years ago have bought during these years? The money we handle is always the result of the work of men. It must always remain a means only.

The child needs, then, to establish social relationships in a larger society. The closed school, as it is conceived today, can no longer be sufficient for him. Something is lacking for the full development of his personality. We note a certain regression ñ manifestations of his character which we call anomalies; they are merely his reactions to an environment that has become inadequate. But we do not notice that. And since it is understood that he child must do what adults tell him, even though his environment no longer suits his needs, if he does not comply we say that he is 'naughty' and correct him. Most of the time we are unaware of the cause of his 'naughtiness.' Yet the child, by his conduct, proves what we have just said. The closed environment is felt as a constraint, and that is why he no longer wishes to go to school. He prefers to catch frogs or play in the street. These seemingly superficial factors prove that the child needs wider boundaries than heretofore.

'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' One part of our life belongs to God and the other part to man. It depends on him, on the surroundings of which we form a part, on our social life. When the child is placed in certain conditions that favour him, he manifests an extraordinary activity. His intelligence surprises us because all its powers work together, as is normal for man. We are no longer dealing with the problem of transforming the methods of education: it is properly a problem of life that is being posed.

The spider's web occupies a much larger space than does the animal itself. The web represents the spider's field of action in acting as a trap for insects. It is constructed according to a plan. A thread secreted by the spider joins two branches, two rocks, two supports of any kind; then he weaves the rays. The construction proceeds according to a plan. Finally the spider weaves the threads around the centre, going around at an always very carefully calculated distance. If the points of support are close together, the web is small. The greater the distance of one from the other, the larger the web will be. But it will always be woven with the same exactness according to a precise plan.

As is the web, so is the mind of the child constructed according to an exact plan. The abstract construction enables him to grasp what happens in his field, which was out of his range heretofore.

Depending on whether the child lives in a simple civilization or in a complicated world, his web will be more or less large and will enable him to attain more or fewer objectives.

This is why we must respect the interior construction and its manifestations, which may at times seem useless to us. The construction is necessary. It is thanks to this work that the child enlarges his psychic field and subsequently his receptive powers.

To consider the school as the place where instruction is given is one point of view. But to consider the school as a preparation for life is another. In the latter case the school must satisfy all the needs of life.

An education that suppresses the true nature of the child is an education that leads to the development anomalies.

Scouting, which, outside of school, has brought organized form of life to children, has therefore always interested us.

The passage to the second level of education is the passage from the sensorial, material level to the abstract. The need for abstraction and intellectual activity makes itself felt around the seventh year. Until that age the establishment of the relationships between objects is what is important to the child. This is to say that the child needs to classify and absorb the exterior world by means of his senses.

A turning toward the intellectual and moral sides of life occurs at the age of seven.

One could draw a parallel between the two periods. But they still remain on different levels. It is at seven years that one may note the beginning of an orientation toward moral questions, toward the judgment of acts. One of the most curious characteristics to be observed is the interest that occurs in the child when he begins to perceive things which he previously failed to notice. Thus he begins to worry about whether what he has done has been done well or poorly. The great problem of Good and Evil now confronts him. This preoccupation belongs to an interior sensitivity, the conscience. And this sensitivity is a very natural characteristic.

The seven-to-twelve-year-old period, then, constitutes one of particular importance for moral education. The adult must be aware of the evolution that is occurring in the mind of the child at this time and adapt his methods to conform with it.

If during the first period of development the teacher has used a very gentle approach and has intervened as little as possible in the activity of the child (activity which was above all motor and sensorial), it is to the moral level that his delicacy of approach ought now to be oriented. That is where the problem of this age lies. To think that the problem of morality only occurs later is to overlook the change that is already going on. Later, the moral problem becomes a good deal more difficult unless the child has been helped during this sensitive period. Social adaptations will become more thorny. It is at this age also that the concept of justice is born, simultaneously with the understanding of the relationship between one's acts and the needs of others. The sense of justice, so

often missing in man, is found during the development of the young child. It is the failure to recognize this fact that engenders a false idea of justice.

The justice usually found around the school and in the family could be called 'distributive justice' that is to say, equality for all, as much in the distribution of punishments as of rewards. Special treatment of one individual seems to constitute an injustice; this introduces the concept of legal right. There is here an affirmation of individuality in the sense of egoism and isolation. Such a concept does not encourage interior development. On the other hand, justice is although usually not considered in this light is born specifically from interior education. The principle of distributive justice and individual right, purely external, destroys the inborn, natural sense of true justice.

*Dr. Montessori thus calls the man-dominated and constructed human environment which man brings into being with the help of his own inner resources and those of nature.