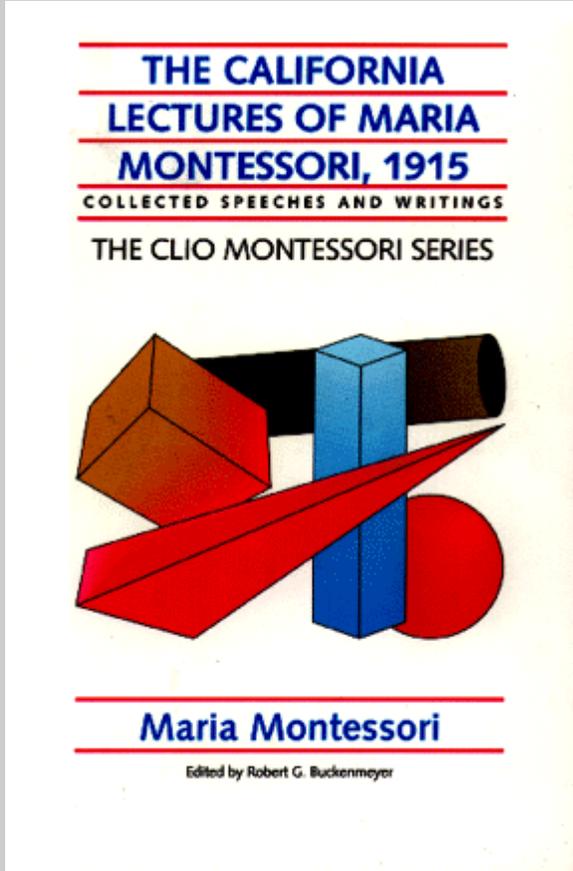




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## FORWARD

Although copies of some of the lectures which Maria Montessori delivered in California in 1915 survived for over eighty years, they have remained unpublished and forgotten. In this volume, we publish, for the first time, all of these lectures, together with several articles which she wrote for local newspapers. The lectures (which were delivered in Italian) and the articles are of historical interest and to some extent reflect contemporary viewpoints which have long been rejected. However, in other respects they represent an important, radical departure from contemporary opinion and discuss educational techniques and health issues concerning children which are only now being popularized by educators and 'discovered' by medical scientists. The lectures were simultaneously translated from Italian into English and recorded as Maria Montessori delivered them. Accordingly, they contain some typographical and grammatical errors and because they were designed to be heard rather than read, cannot be compared stylistically with her written prose. They are reproduced here as important historical documents.

This significant volume will be of value to all those interested in the history of education and the development of Montessori's educational theories and methods.

This online excerpt - - consisting of the Introduction, one lecture, and one newspaper article - - contains additional, exclusive content graciously contributed by Robert Buckenmeyer, including:

- the original 'lead synopsis' edited from the final edition

Also, previously unreleased articles by Mr. Buckenmeyer:

- Biology and Montessori's Cosmic View, Part 1
- Millennia, Children, and Maria Montessori
- About Robert G Buckenmeyer, PhD



Maria Montessori (standing at the back, third from left, wearing a feathered hat) and children in the glass-walled demonstration classroom at the Palace of Education at the Panama Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco, 1915. Reproduced from a photograph published in *San Francisco Invites the World: Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1991) edited by Donna Ewald and Peter Clute. By courtesy of Donna Ewald.

# THE CALIFORNIA LECTURES OF MARIA MONTESSORI, 1915

COLLECTED SPEECHES AND WRITINGS  
THE CLIO MONTESSORI SERIES

Maria Montessori  
Edited by Robert G. Buckenmeyer  
CLIO PRESS  
OXFORD, ENGLAND

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## INTRODUCTION

By Robert Buckenmeyer

### The Exposition

In 1915 Maria traveled to California principally to attend the world-renowned Panama Pacific International Exposition (PPIE) which was held in San Francisco between 20 February and 4 December 1915. The PPIE represented an international celebration of the construction of the wonder of the age, the Panama Canal, which was scheduled for completion that very year. The competition to determine where the Exposition was to be held had begun in 1909 and had been characterized by bitter fights at both national and state levels. As early as 19 December, 1909, the *Philadelphia Press* had published a major article outlining the fierce competition between Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco for the right to hold the exposition. Moreover, the *Portland Telegram* of 3 February 1910 had announced that San Diego had declared 'War Upon Frisco'. Some supporters of San Diego's bid to hold the event claimed that San Diego was the first 'senior' city in California and therefore should automatically be the venue for the exposition.

At the national level Washington, D.C., New Orleans, Louisiana, and San Francisco all vied for the right to stage the event. On 27 November 1910 Atlanta's *Georgia Constitution* published an article which defended the right of New Orleans rather than San Francisco to be the site of the international Exposition. The article included two maps, one showing New Orleans as being a hub city to some seventy other cities and to twenty million people throughout the South and East compared to San Francisco, a hub city to only eight cities and eight million people in an equal 900-mile radius. When it was announced that San Francisco was the winner, the Newark Daily Advocate of 4 November

1910 stated that San Francisco had bought the location at a cost of \$50 million, compared to only \$35 million offered by New Orleans (as reported in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*).<sup>\*</sup> The factor which probably tipped the balance in favor of San Francisco was, however, more than money, since California's Republican Senator Perkins chaired the Committee on Naval Affairs which had had jurisdiction over the Panama Canal. In any even, on 12 February 1911 the US Senate unanimously selected San Francisco as the 'Exposition City'. Delegations from all over the world showed a strong desire to set up fair sites but a threat of boycotts emerged because at this time the American Congress was debating new immigration legislation which would require all immigrants to pass an English literacy test as a condition of entrance into the United States.

### **Maria Montessori at the Panama Pacific International Exposition (PPIE)**

Maria Montessori's presence at the PPIE was widely reported in the contemporary California press. She located her demonstration school at the Exposition in San Francisco and gave several series of lectures in the city including those included as part of the Exposition, thirteen lectures at the San Francisco Civic Center (between 8 September and 21 October 1915) and twelve talks to parents at the Palace Hotel (between 21 October and 15 November). In addition, she made appearances at the San Diego PPIE Exposition (13 July), lectured in Los Angeles (between 27 May and 29 June) and gave a keynote address to the National Education Association held in Oakland on 16 August. Some kind of advance announcement of her visit to the PPIE must have been made because some 2,500 families applied for their children to attend her demonstration school in the Palace of Education. Unfortunately, however, the PPIE records available at the San Francisco Public Library History Center and at the Berkeley Bancroft, University of California Library do not indicate whether her invitation originated from Italy or the United States.

Two San Francisco newspapers, in particular the *Call-Post* and *L'Italia*, gave her visit major coverage. Between 9 August and 1 October the *Call-Post* published 24 articles written by Maria Montessori and translated by Ettore Patrizi, editor of San Francisco's *L'Italia* newspaper. Moreover, between 9 and 28 August *L'Italia* itself published nine more articles written in Italian by Maria Montessori exclusively for its Italian-speaking readership. Other newspaper articles announced the dates and venues of her various lectures.

Although she understood English, Maria Montessori normally lectured in Italian and this was indeed the case when she she spoke in California. Her determination to speak Italian may well have been strengthened by the negative reception she received from American public educators. Certainly, none of the many educational conferences which were held at PPIE made any reference to her and she also appears to have been ignored by the contemporary American educational establishment which at this time was, of course, exclusively male. Nonetheless, her general popularity is clear from the favorable coverage she received in both *Call-Post* and *L'Italia*.

It is interesting to note that two other speakers invited to the PPIE, Professori Charles H. Judd of the University of Chicago and Winifred Sackville Stoner, both Americans, spoke of the same need for the introduction of new teaching methods based on the observation of the child by the teacher.

### **Who Issued the Invitation?**

Eventually, I returned to the question of who had invited Maria Montessori to PPIE and for what reasons. My search naturally began in San Francisco. Initially I visited the California Academy of Science Library, where Karen Elsber, the reference librarian, referred me to the San Francisco History Center in the main San Francisco Library. Here I found very few items relating to Montessori's lectured but I did recover one photograph of her and the children within her 'glass-walled' demonstration classroom (see frontispiece). The History Center reference librarian, Susan Goldstein, then directed me to the Bancroft Library, located behind the Coe, or University of California, Berkeley main library.

The Coe University Library offers an extensive library of California as well as other newspapers and here I made some fascinating discoveries in the form of the San Francisco *Call-Post* and *L'Italia* articles.

Finally, I went to the Bancroft Library and, through the able assistance of two reference librarians, Baiba Strads and Ray Stokes, found that they had one hundred and ninety-one items of PPIE materials. An 'item' could be a box, ledger or a scrap-book of as many as two hundred pages each. None of the items was accompanied by a complete list of its contents but general references were provided, such as 'PPIE invitations', or 'PPIE newspaper articles'. These sources originated from all over the world and were written in several languages. Although I found many interesting and relevant PPIE items, among which were articles about various educators, I could find no reference to any invitation to Maria Montessori. Nor did the ledgers which contained detailed reports, contracts and financial statements of the organizing committee yield any reference to the source of the invitation.

It should be noted in passing that the Web Home Page of the North American Montessori Teachers' Association (NAMTA) state the 'The committee that brought her [Maria Montessori] to San Francisco included Margaret Wilson, the daughter of the U.S. President Woodrow Wilson'. The committee also included Dr. David Starr Jordan who was President of the National Education Association (NEA). It seems possible that the NEA may have been instrumental in issuing the invitation. Unfortunately, however, the Bancroft materials did not contain any documents which could confirm this.

The PPIE papers at the Bancroft Library contained two small specific Montessori references: one in the day-to-day '1915-Calendar' cites August 21 as 'Mme. Montessori Day'. However, I have not been able to trace any San Francisco newspaper reports for that day which elaborate on this. A second reference turned up in Frank Morton Todd's *The Story of the Exposition*, a five-volume work published in 1921. This publication advertises itself as 'Being the Official History of the International Celebration Held at San Francisco in 1915 to Commemorate The Discovery of the Pacific Ocean and The Construction of the Panama Canal'. Within the chapter entitled "The Story of the Exposition' (pages 386-387), a reference notes that 'November 6, Helen Keller Day, was the occasion of a dinner in honor of Madame Montessori, Helen Keller, and Mrs. John Macey, whose remarkable methods were responsible for some of the famous blind, deaf, and dumb girl's attainments in the Massachusetts Building'. However, the PPIE documents concerning the Massachusetts Building do not provide any further details, and nor do the San Francisco newspapers shed any further light on these events.

Thus the question of who invited Maria Montessori to PPIE and why she came to conduct a demonstration classroom remains a mystery. Only one newspaper article provides a clue as to her possible sponsor. The *San Diego Sun* published an article about a dedication dinner party for dignitaries from California, and from further afield, and listed those who were invited. The list mentioned only male guests but certainly their wives together with Maria Montessori attended. One of the guests was Ernesto Nathan, whom Maria had known as mayor of Rome, and who was not Italian Commissioner to the Exposition. It is conceivable that Nathan may have played some part in inviting Maria. Another of the sponsors listed was the founder and then president of the Bank of America, A.P. Gianini. A search of the Bank of America Archives Division in San Francisco revealed no evidence of Gianini's involvement. However, a student enrolled in one of my classes (a computer systems expert who was employed by the Bank of America) was told by a Bank of America employee of long standing that Gianini had been very much involved in PPIE and had sponsored Maria Montessori's 'glass-walled' demonstration classroom.

This oral testimony is of considerable interest, but in the absence of any authoritative, documentary evidence the mystery of who invited Maria Montessori must remain unresolved.

### **The Survival of The Lectures**

The story of how these lectures were originally recorded, how they survived, how they reemerged and appeared in print is, in itself, truly remarkable. That story begins fifty-three years after Maria Montessori delivered these PPIE lectures in California. In September 1969, I was invited by Elisa Harrison, a member of staff at Notre Dame College, Belmont, California, to attend a graduation celebration at the AMI Teacher Training School located in Palo Alto, which was directed by Lena Wikramaratne. Mario Montessori was to preside and deliver a talk. Eugenia Andriano, who had been Maria Montessori's friend and companion was also to be present. In addition, Edna Andriano,

Eugenia's daughter, was to attend. Edna was in fact one of those who had enrolled in Maria Montessori's PPIE lectures.

After Mario Montessori's talk, Edna Andriano introduced me to him as 'a philosophy professor at the University of Santa Clara and an admirer of Maria Montessori'. When he asked me how I came to know his mother and her work, I informed him that one of my students had inquired whether I had ever heard of the Montessori method of teaching. At that state I know of it only by reputation, which she found hard to believe, claiming that I used aspects of the method in my philosophy course.

I told Mario that the student has aroused my interest and that soon afterwards I heard of the Montessori Training Institute, directed by Sister Christine Marie at Notre Dame College, Belmont, California, and had decided to enroll. There, I had met Elisa Harrison, who was responsible both for teaching Montessori and Piaget courses and for directing the graduate students in working with Montessori materials during the daily classroom practice. Elisa, in turn, had introduced me to Edna and Eugenia Andriano and Elisa Harrison about Maria Montessori's educational beliefs and. as a result, Elisa had invited me to Palo Alto that day to hear Mario speak.

We then all entered into a discussion about Maria and teaching method and Mario asked whether I would write an article for the AMI journal to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of his mother's death. I hesitated, because at that time I had only been enrolled at the Notre Dame Institute for a couple of months (although my article was eventually published). Later, Edna and Elisa Harrison remarked that this was the first time, to their knowledge, that Mario has asked an American scholar to write an article about his mother. They told me that this was probably because American 'male' educators had largely rejected Maria Montessori as a 'professional' teacher because she was an Italian, a Catholic, a medical doctor, and a woman.

During the course of the conversation with Mario, Edna asked him if she might provide me with the copies of the lectures which his mother had delivered in California in 1915. These had been given to Edna by Adelia Pyle\*, Maria Montessori's friend during PPIE. Mario agreed, and commented that not even he had copies, or had read them. Later that evening, Edna gave me the lectures which were carefully wrapped in a red ribbon and tied in a large bow. The copies had been typed in blue and the pages were frayed and crumbling at the edges. Edna and Elisa told me that Adelia Pyle had acted as a stenographer and had actually typed the lectures whilst they were being delivered.

It was apparent that the tissue sheets on which the lectures were typed were desiccating, and arrangements were therefore made to photocopy them. Once this task had been completed I interviewed the Andrianos and Elisa Harrison (who later died of cancer), for I had many questions relating to the lectures. This taped interview was very useful in helping me to gain a fuller understanding of the lectures.

### **The Lectures: A Learner Taught By Children**

The popularity of Maria Montessori's method of education children through the free use of manipulative materials within a planned environment is well known, but equally fascinating is the unique insight which underpinned her beliefs, which is admirably illustrated in these lectures and articles. Montessori's method is entirely conditioned by her attitude towards children. Margot R. Waltuch quoted Montessori as saying:\*

*When I am in the midst of children, I do not think of myself as a scientist, an observer, of theorist. I am NOBODY-and the greatest privilege I have when I approach them is being able to forget that I even exist-for this has enabled me to see things that one would miss, if we were somebody-little things, simple, but very precious truths.*

As I edited these lectures and articles, I was impressed by their simplicity and originality. As Waltuch comments:\*

*Montessori's treatment of a theme was brilliant; her delivery faultless. She never wrote her oral presentation down; she never gave the same lecture twice...whenever Montessori spoke, she made it seem so simple, giving very little indication as to how complex her ideas really were.*

Recent scientific studies have suggested that there is an increased growth of the nerve pathways within the brains of newborn and young children whose environments have been characterized by oral and manipulative stimulation. Some contemporary psychologists have observed that children learn languages more easily at a young age, the ideal age being considered to be about eight years old. However, for decades children taught by the Montessori method have successfully begun to learn different languages as early as three years of age. Indeed, one of the *L'Italia* articles, reproduced here, illustrates this very point. None of these 'latest' scientific findings are new, as these 1915 California lectures and articles demonstrate. Moreover, it should be remembered that Maria Montessori, although she had degrees in medicine and psychology, did not have the advantage of the medical technology which is available today.

In three of the San Francisco lectures Montessori warns newly pregnant to be careful about diet and not to drink alcohol or smoke in view of the damage this could cause to the fetus. In addition, Montessori stresses that pregnant women should be aware that sound also affects the fetus, and that they must therefore talk and sing to their unborn child. It is astounding that Maria Montessori made these discoveries almost a hundred years ago.

In the sixth of the *L'Italia* articles, for example, Montessori outlines the chief cause of underachievement as being what she calls 'slavery'. This 'slavery', she maintains, manifests itself in two principal ways within the learning environment. The first is the child's desk, the second is the teacher. In 1915 such arguments were nothing short of revolutionary. In the *L'Italia* article she reiterated that the 'fundamental principle of my method is to leave to children the widest individual liberty in order not to impede in any way the spontaneous development of their actions'. For an American, predominantly Protestant, audience, to whom the phrase 'Do as I say not as I do' was axiomatic, such views challenged every tenet of their beliefs concerning the upbringing of children.

The eighth *L'Italia* article continues this theme and provides a glimpse of what Montessori calls her 'new concept of discipline', i.e. not to teach children that immobility is good and activity is bad. This concept, which stands in sharp contrast to the almost universally held belief at this time that children were to be 'seen and not heard', is central to the Montessori method and one hundred years later, is of course widely accepted.

Most teachers and parents approach the education of their students and children with the best of intentions, but unfortunately decide in advance not only how, but also what, their children should learn. Such an attitude, however, often prevents children from learning, and is, indeed, counterproductive, frequently frustrating parents, teachers and students alike. Children will usually resent forced instruction and, if this persists, will lose their intellectual curiosity altogether. In the lectures and articles reproduced here, Maria Montessori repeatedly challenges this method of forced education and invites teachers and parents to reconsider their attitude to children and the learning process.

Maria Montessori was a unique teacher because she saw the children in her various *Casa dei Bambini* schools not as students to be taught but as sources of inspiration capable of teaching her. At the heart of her California lectures and articles is a call for a radical change in teacher' attitudes. 'The point', she states, 'is that the teacher must not learn a new method, but must acquire new attitudes' (see San Francisco lecture, 6 August).

Montessori wastes no time making the attributes of her 'new type of teacher' clear to this American audience. she states that 'her virtue consists in never interrupting the world of the child [while] at the same time, giving help where she sees that help is necessary'. Elsewhere in this lecture, Maria Montessori emphasizes these points very succinctly:

*The more the teacher has been able to lose or forget her old position the more able she will be to become a good teacher in this method. Another thing which she must learn is to quiet, because she must not give lessons and therefore, she must not give discourses. That is much more difficult than to learn to talk-one learns only after long practice. Another thing which the teacher must learn is to contain, to hold back the impulse to intervene, to counsel or to advise. This is a most difficult thing to learn. The greatest height of the ability of the teacher will be attained when she has reached that point where the children can work entirely alone, without her help in any way.*

In the same lecture, Maria Montessori recounts a simple story to illustrate her concept of the new teacher:

*One of the children who had learned to write and was at the height of his joy because of his ability to write went to the teacher and said to her, 'Signorina, do you know how to write too?' The teacher had succeeded in directing and developing and knew how to hide this to the greatest extent possible; such is the most important, the very greatest triumph of a method which has as its principle the liberty, the development of the individual child.*

This story admirably conveys the essence of Maria Montessori's child-centered philosophy of education, which is clarified and expanded so expertly in this series of historically important lectures and articles.

### **Acknowledgements**

This book would never have seen the light of day without the help and goodwill of Mario Montessori, who allowed the lectures to come into my possession, and the invaluable support of Edna and Andrea Andriano, and Elisa Harrison. In addition, of course, appropriate thanks are due to ABC-CLIO Limited and the patient encouragement of Dr. Robert G. Neville.

Several librarians were generous in providing me with source materials and helpful information. In San Francisco, I would particularly like to mention: Karen Elsber, California Academy of Sciences Library; Susan Goldstein and Pat Akre, San Francisco Archives and History Center; and Baiba Strads and Ray Stokes, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Thanks also to Donna Ewald for the photograph of Maria Montessori with the children in the glass-walled classroom at PPIE and also to Robert F. Buckenmeyer, President, United Digital Color, San Francisco for his help in capturing this image on disk.

The encouragement of friends, Elena Heil and Olga McAdam and also the kind assistance of Fr. Aurelio Villa, O.F.M. in translating many of the articles all contributed in time of need.

Thanks also to my loving wife who met my fits of frustration with quiet suggestions.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to Maria Montessori, a woman so far ahead of her time. Would that all educators might share her passion for observation and her love of children.

1. The San Francisco *Chronicle*, 25 September 1913 and San Diego *Herald*, 9 July 1914.

2. Bearing in mind the fact that \$100 in 1915 is equivalent in about to about \$3000 in 1997, the costs of staging the PPIE were enormous.

3. Dorothy M. Gaudiose, author of the recently published *Mary's House* states that Adelia Pyle was born in Morristown, New Jersey, 17 April 1888, to James Tolman Pyle and Adelaide McAlpine Pyle and christened in the local Presbyterian church. After preparation and instruction under a Jesuit priest, in 1913 Adelia Pyle was baptized a Catholic and took the name of *Mary*. Thus, when she translated Maria Montessori's lectures in San Francisco, she was known as *Mary Pyle*. Edna Andriano also verified Adelia Pyle's name to be Mary Pyle in a letter dated 28 July 1997 to the editor.

4. Margot R. Waltuch, *A Montessori Album* (NAMTA, 1986), p.3.

5. *Ibid.*, p.4.

Robert G. Buckenmeyer

Sonoma, California, May 1997

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## ***Fixing Attention and the Child's Psychic Development***

Maria Montessori, Lecture of September 22, 1915

The way of attracting the attention is the great preoccupation of all those who educate because one does not receive anything within, if one does not fix the attention upon something. There are means of attracting the attention and means of holding it. These are two different things. To attract the attention, any stimulus is necessary; to hold it, on the other hand, an intellectual stimulus is necessary, something (on which) the intelligence may work. Thus, for example, if a teacher in school wants to attract the (child's) attention, and does this (Dr. Montessori taps on the desk with a pencil.), that is a stimulus which serves to attract the attention. When, however, she wants to hold (the child's) attention, she must not simply attract the sense in this way (tapping on the table), but she must try to hold the intelligence of the child.

The difficulty does not lie in attracting the (child's) attention; the difficulty is to hold it. We find all the children will pay attention when one does this (Dr. Montessori claps her hands.), but it is hard to hold a child's attention, if it is a prolonged argument. As a result of this, those who try to hold a child's attention interpolate stimuli. If they are giving a long talk, they put in something to attract the (listener's) attention. The exquisite art of the teacher is to know how to pick up or catch again that attention which every once in a while has fallen away, or wandered. The phenomenon which is verified is that this attention which instantly can be attracted little by little, becomes vague and leaves. (This is the reason) the teacher must try to make herself, what some call, interesting.

The teacher has two means of making herself interesting: one is to have something complex and complete, to give something definite so that the intelligence has some definite line to follow. The other way is every once in a while to catch up this attention which is leaving and, for this reason, telling a story is the favorite means of a teacher. In this way, (the teacher) has something complete to give. It is a complex and complete thing and the interest can be held in the beginning and in the end. There is a purpose in the discourse of the teacher. She has a purpose.

A teacher, for example, wants to make a distinction between a noise and a sound. She wants to hold the children's attention at length on this argument. She does it in this way: she begins a story. She says, "Dear children, as I was coming to school this morning, I met a friend and I was so glad to see him because I had not seen him for such a long time". The children pay attention to the story and it goes on for a great length of time. The teacher had arranged with a friend to come and knock at the door and so one hears this noise and then (the teacher) says, "O, children, what has happened?" This is a way of attracting the attention of the children which was escaping. "Oh, what has happened, I cannot remember anything that I was saying".

On the table, there is a mandolin which is all covered up with some material and I say, "Oh, I cannot go on with my story any longer; I cannot remember what I was saying". I take this child and say, "Oh, how cunning it is. Would you like to see it? I want to talk with it. Oh, I think it is talking". I put my hands underneath the covering and touch a string. It says, "Papa". All the children say, "Oh, it is a mandolin". The teacher says, "Oh, what can it be; let's open it; oh, it is a mandolin". She then plays it. This is a sound that she is playing and the other was a noise. This is the difference between a sound and a noise. I give this lesson because it is really given at a form of examination in Rome and it took a prize because it held the attention (of the children).

Now, that which is called a vivacious lesson, for example, is a lesson which has the possibility of recalling the attention every now and then. This is the art of the teacher. We might say this effort of the teacher to which the torment or suffering of the pupils corresponds comes about because it is very difficult or, we might say, impossible to hold the child's attention at great length. (The reason is that in order for the child's attention to remain fixed, even) in order that it may come about, it is necessary that the intelligence forms a work. ("Intelligence, here does not mean) that the teacher performs a work with her intelligence, but that the child performs the work with his intelligence. In

order that the attention may be fixed, an auto work is necessary, otherwise, it is the teacher who is moving and the child's attention remains motionless.

Imagine a person on a bicycle. The person is still the instant he mounts. Then, immediately the motion must begin, otherwise he must dismount because to be motionless on the bicycle is an impossibility. The teacher puts to herself this problem of riding a bicycle and the children must stay motionless. This is impossible. If the teacher stands near a child in order to make it stay motionless, she must always have her arms about him and she must catch hold of him every once in a while because he will fall. In order that the child may stay for a long time on the bicycle, he must ride and keep on moving. It is useless to try to find the means by which the child may remain motionless; whereas it is very easy to let him ride. When he can remain a long time at a spontaneous work of his own intelligence, then it is that his intelligence can remain fixed for a long time. Thus, when these children make a work and repeat it many times, they remain with their attention fixed for a long time. The reason is that the child is accomplishing a work with his intelligence himself.

Therefore, these stimuli which we give are not (mere) sensorial stimuli, simply attracting the (child's) attention, but they are stimuli which hold the attention with an intellectual work. This stimulus should be interesting to the child. One might say that the object gives itself the same purpose as the teacher. (The object) has the same end as the teacher, that is, to attract the attention, to hold it and to make itself interesting. But, that which makes the object interesting is the fact that it corresponds to an intellectual need of the child. It is because of this, that the child remains at it. That (the object) corresponds to the need of the child has been shown to us by experience. (These objects) have not been given by caprice, but (each) in itself corresponds to the needs of the child, of interesting the child. It is because of this that we do not need to make objects artificially interesting as the teacher does when she presents an object which she is not sure will be interesting to the child.

Take, for example, those solid metal insets which we give. We do not need to dress them up and walk up and down with them, as though we wished to rock them asleep, to seek to make them interesting. But, it is sufficient to present them and then, there is something within (the child) which corresponds to them and the attention fixes itself. The reason for this is not in an external art of the teacher, but in an inner fact within the child. One might say that it is a fact of natural life of the child. Therefore, as a foundation or basis, there is something which one might call an instinct. It is the instinct of life which forms the first motor (within the child) and which in itself is a mystery which is necessary to respect.

Even Dante, although he lived in the twelfth century, has this same principle in the *Divine Comedy*. He speaks of the primitive instincts of the mind, of the innate ideas which are instinctive within us. As in the bee, there is an instinct to make honey. All the works of the intelligence which are natural works of life must take their first roots in the instinct. Then, this phenomenon of the child remains absorbed for a long time in the work. (The child) begins little by little to construct himself, but he needs to follow the natural paths.

The nutrition of the body also starts from an instinct. The newborn babe has the instinct to suck (the mother's breast for) milk and to remain at this for a long time without anybody having taught him. Thus, starts nutrition in man. Although, afterwards, the search for food represents one of the most complex social works of the intelligence. When the teachers in the ordinary school or method want to teach with artifice without taking account of nature, they make a study of the mode or way of proceeding. They give the ideas one after another or, following a logical line, try always to continue to attract or hold the child's attention. One of the most well known ways for succeeding in this, for example, is that of passing from the known to the unknown because one knows that the unknown things are not interesting, so one must bind the unknown and the known. (They must) do it in such a way that the known will be revived with interest and then from there, one passes to the unknown. Thus, beginning to give a lesson in something unknown (and) new to the child, one begins by talking of something known. One holds the interest and then one brings in the unknown thing. Thus, one goes from step to step in a successive growth of the ideas.

But, it is well known, that even in this effort, the teacher did not succeed in holding the pupil's attention. Let us imagine, for example, that this person is not an interesting person and suppose that I am interesting, if I take this

young lady and lead her before you and introduce her and make her known to you. (Yet,) because of this, she does not become interesting. Let us suppose that we are two people who are unsympathetic. I am known and the young lady is not known. I enter and try to make myself as pleasant as possible. I smile and introduce the young lady, but we do not become interesting. To be interesting, there must be a sympathy between us. There must be something in you which corresponds to something in us and in this inner meaning of the sympathy, we can become sympathetic. (But,) it is not the fact of knowing each other, or being introduced, that makes one sympathetic.

Thus, with the ideas we must enter into the soul of the child. It is not sufficient that they shall be presented and that some things known shall introduce something unknown. But, it is necessary that these ideas shall correspond to something within the child. Without this (sympathy), we make vain efforts to hold the attention of the child. Our objects, our stimuli also seem to have the same intentions as these teachers, to go from the known to the unknown. They also follow all the other principles that the teachers have of going from the simple to the complex, from the concrete to the abstract. But, (our objects) follow different paths (than the teachers). In the beginning, these stimuli correspond to the needs of the (child's) life. In this first period, these objects present the qualities in the most simple way possible, distinguishing the various qualities, the forms from the colors, dimension from forms. The qualities of the surfaces in varieties, the tactile sensations from the thermic sensations, these baric and stereognostic sensations, the sounds from noises. These exercises, which the children do, attract their attention on all the single movements and on all these stimuli - it is useless to repeat - the children do not remain motionless, but they move their intelligence. Thus, on these first reactions (to these objects), the whole organism (of the child) is put in motion.

While the child was doing this work of the intelligence, he would have to have the instinct of life to resist all these stimuli. The child was not only having this activity, but precise and clear notions or ideas entered into his mind, clear and distinct ideas. He knows all these things. He knows colors, forms, the dimensions and movements. The ideas have entered into him; the knowledge has entered into him. He is cognizant. It has not only an instinct in him, but by means of this instinct, something known has been established. It is very clear and well known and this known (sic.) has been established on the foundation of the instinct. After this period, we see that the child lets his attention go to all the objects about him. He is conscious of the color of the sky, of the shape of the windows. He notices the quality of the materials with which people are clothed, that is, he recognizes in all objects that which is known to him because there is no object which has not quality. When the quality is known, every object has something known, although in itself it may represent the unknown. The child passing from this known quality observes all the qualities of the unknown. Thus, he passes from the known to the unknown because of an inner impulse, by means of an inner intelligence. (This) is not a slow progress on a line, but it is an explosion.

Take those fire works, for example - this is, perhaps, not a good comparison because there is no artifice here (in the child). One sees something which bursts forth and spreads out in so many rays; then this goes on and there is another explosion of rays, and so forth. So, here (in the child): there is an explosion and a spreading out of the rays in the life, taking the known; then there is another explosion taking the unknown. All objects become interesting because of the qualities of the objects which have already aroused the interest (of the child). The child has already been interested in the objects.

The other method of proceeding, on the other hand, is entirely different. One goes with linear contiguity from the known to the unknown. One might say, I would try to make the table interesting and then, other analogous objects (interesting), and so on and on. I (would) proceed to awaken the interest in all the objects, such as furnishing a room. Then, I would show one inset and then another and another, until (the child) would pass to the unknown. It (would be) I that shows these objects (to the child) one after another like so many rings in a chain, or, if you will, like that paper which a (magician)<sup>1</sup> places on the table, pulling it out of his sleeve, or (from) his mouth, keeping on pulling it out without end. So that the knowledge is disposed of on a line upon which the teacher works to give little by little another unknown, if there is one.

Here (in our method), on the other hand, the form of expression is entirely different. There is an explosive form in which explosion so many things enter into the consciousness of the child, actively working. It is the child himself who becomes interested in things and who notices everything, having the impression of making discoveries continually. It

is not the teacher who tries to interest him by making the consciousness of things new to him, but the child goes towards these things spontaneously and notices them as though it were a discovery. This discovery animates him.

The discovery, which the child makes spontaneously observing an environment (with) this phenomenon of enthusiasm and feeling, represents the taking of the unknown in the external world. In fact, the child has the impression of having made a discovery. Thus, this represents the unknown which becomes the known and the phenomenon is entirely different than when the teacher teaches externally. But, in order that this spontaneous phenomenon of the interest towards the external may come about, an inner motor force is necessary. It is necessary that the preceding things (the objects) have been founded upon the instinct of life, then little by little constructed upon this (order), comes this successive expansion. Therefore, that the unknown may be of interest, it is not sufficient that it be linked to the known, but it must respond to the instinct primarily. Then, it is a phenomenon of development, instead of a phenomenon of taking in.

With our method, one has the phenomenon of successive development. Other methods have the phenomenon of learning something new. It is very difficult to make this clear. It is the same principle as in the other methods, only it is internal, instead of external. (Here) instead of the interest going simply (and) artificially from the teacher, there must be something within the child. Then all the successive phenomena change into other aspects because, when the teacher teaches from the outside, there is a difficult work which passes in the child. It is a work which is difficult and outside of nature, (so), at most, the child can learn that which the teacher teaches. But, on the other hand, in our method, there are phenomena of an entirely different kind because life in this development gives surprises even to us. It has explosions and all of this does not correspond at all to the work of the teacher. Not only this, but it does not even correspond to the objects. It corresponds to the development of the life which is always richer than that which we can imagine.

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Translations of the L'Italia newspaper articles,  
beginning 5 August, ending 2 September, 1915

**L'Italia Article** 5 August, 1915

### **The Education Course of Dr. Montessori Started Yesterday at the Exposition**

An enormous crowd was present at the revelation of the new method thought out by the gentle and cultured Italian lady which has brought a true revolution into the instructional educational systems

The celebrated Italian educator, while she shows a girl one of the objects of her didactic material, as an essential part of her method and which cost her many years of study and experience. As we explain in this article, it is not Madam Montessori who is teaching the children directly. This kind of teaching is done by teachers taught by Montessori. The picture reproduces the exceptional way she deals with Katherine Musanti for a few short minutes. Katherine is a true angel of a child, full of intelligence and sweetness and is daughter of the great and popular Dr. Musanti and his wife who assisted at the beginning of the course.

(Introduction to the Series of Articles, by Maria Montessori)

Today we start a series of articles Dr. Maria Montessori genially wrote for **L'Italia**. In these articles, the noble lady will give a concise and clear explanation of the method of education invented by her with such love and perception that in a short time the world makes her famous and proclaims her meritorious to humanity. We are proud of this collaboration and we are all extremely happy to make our readers come to know this eminent fellow countryman to whom Americans - we have to give them justice - gave such a welcome as never was given to a lady of this or any other country coming to San Francisco.

Besides the beneficial work made by her to renew the system of education and instruction prevalent in our modern society, Dr. Montessori is more admirable because of the example of abnegation given by her when, in order to dedicate herself to this holy educational mission, she gave up a brilliant career as a doctor in which she had achieved true triumph and from which she could have received great moral and material compensation. She speaks of this in the first article without false modesty and without boasting. Her example is of the person who commands respect and admiration from all and explains the degree of pleasantness with which Montessori is surrounded in Italy, in other European countries and countries in the new world. Her book which speaks about this method was translated in a short time in nine (9) languages, including Japanese. Schools with her method exist already in England, Russia, France, Spain, Germany, Switzerland and in the United States where over 130 schools already are instituted and directed by American ladies who purposely went to Rome to learn the Montessori system.

Now, let us give you the words of our eminent educator and collaborator and we recommend that all our readers, especially lady readers, mothers and spouses give the greatest attention to what the learned madam writes.  
(The Article)

### **How the Idea Developed**

The House of Children opened yesterday (4 August, 1915) at the Education Palace. The House opened to a young generation, to a new science, to teachers and to mothers. The child, a complex nature in development, includes a childhood nature which in itself is our past and our future. The child entered the exposition good and smiling, with a virgin mind whose "I" is free through the works of this great Italian educator, Dr. Montessori.

A crowd of teachers and mothers, of the curious and of learners observe from outside (the windows) of the House of Children the first lessons which Miss Helen Parkhurst delivered to dozens of children.<sup>2</sup>

"Delivered" is not the proper word because the children freely act, freely think, as soon as they experience a word which stimulates their activity, disciplining them toward a specific concept, one given psychological act as the first step toward the acquisition of specific mental and moral attitudes. The children were cleaning furniture or playing with special objects invented and built with the purpose of developing a fixed sense of them, intended to sharpen one fixed perception of them without coercing the children liberty.

Mrs. Montessori stayed outside the House of Children during the lesson, observing what the children were doing with an intelligent, maternal eye. The lessons will take place from 9:00 A.M. To 12:00 P.M. The children participating number thirty, the eldest being six (6) and the youngest being four (4). These thirty children were chosen from 2,500 whose parents requested to be admitted to the House of Children.

### **Article One by Dr. Maria Montessori**

*L'Italia* 9 August, 1915

#### ***Through what an idea this (view of children) came to be practiced***

It was this child whom I met, knew and examined in the (psychiatric) clinic where I found myself confronted with the puzzles and important problems of childhood. This child presents a vital problem to our society and raises a basic question to us because the child of today is the man of tomorrow, that is, the future society, the world which we will not see, the humanity of the future.

The child whom I saw were children of the working people of society, the poor children who were passing through the white walled "walk in" clinics, like a suffering swarm. It seems these children, whose tortured flesh on their small bodies was suffering with illness, seemed to be inhabited by a ferocious smiling evil destiny, incubating, as it were, all

the sicknesses present within the womb of society. But, (more specifically) the children who attracted my attention were the idiots, the imbeciles, the epileptics who were in the psychiatric ward of the mental hospital of Rome.

My grade (type) of job at that time in Italy was never carried by a female. I was the assistant in the psychiatric clinic, helping the professor teach medical students how to examine the crazy children. I was the editor of the special bulletin which was printed about psychiatric illness. This job was entrusted to me to make known through this bulletin the most modern studies being carried on in the world about nervous and idiot children. These children were not the most interesting focus of the experts in psychiatry. At that time, the kind of experiments which represented the maximum progress in healing such sick children were experiments repeated everywhere through treating the thyroids of sick patients. Experimenters thought that many of the mentally ill who had goiters had lesions in the thyroid gland.<sup>3</sup> It was thought that because of these lesions the thyroid gland was functioning insufficiently and that the preparation of thyroid extract might bring about marvelous effects in the state of the intelligence of idiot and nervous children.

Naturally, the fact that with medicine the idiots improved intelligence was satisfying. I was in this way attracted to this colony of children ("colonia dei bambini" in the psychiatric ward).

Contrary to the other doctors, I was attracted to these children by a more spiritual, almost material interest. The possible cure through the treatment with thyroid did not push me to live close to this suffering humanity. It was, on the contrary, an effect of a totally different kind. One day, when I was in the ward of these children at the mental institution, a newspaper fell from my hands and I noticed with surprise that the little ones came running to pick it up, breaking it into pieces in order that each one of them could possess a little piece of paper. I saw that they were showing the profound and inner most joy from possessing that piece of paper. I thought: how little is sufficient to interest these children, to make them happy. They certainly, "more than others" have need of education, of "intellectual" help. Vaguely I knew that half a century ago a French author, Edmund Seguin, was interested in studying idiots and he had written a book about their education. I went to find it in the library of the psychiatric ward. Finding it, I read it passionately. I learned from it that the possibility of the education of idiot children existed.

Why then, I asked myself, do we not educate these idiot and nervous children? The answer was easy: these nervous children were in fear of doctor's actions and doctors did their job, performed their actions outside the field of education.

(However,) to cure and to fortify the intelligence of children without education was a useless job. For this reason, the problem of idiot children in medicine was the most neglected one. Between medical doctors and teachers a deep separation existed, a total separation - at this time doctors and teachers never met each other in their respective social works. I made a resolution: to bring to the teachers the cause of the deficient children, saying it was a pure question of education.

Two thousand teachers participated at the Pedagogic Congress of Turin in 1898 where I presented this new and complex infant category. (I described how) step by step these idiot children go from being poorly intelligent to become little moral children; how these deficient children include groups of extraordinary social and anti-social children from which latter come more miserable men of the world. This means the children who lazy, who are troublemakers as parasites are candidates for the mental hospitals and prisons. I turned over the moral responsibility of the redemption of these unhappy children to the teachers of Italy. They became the defenders and teachers of these deficient with a holy fervor. These problem children then were transferred from the field of medicine to the field of pedagogy and the work triumphed because that was the true place for development.

I made, as it were, my institute of deficient. Those sixty (60) children from the mental institution went out one day from that sad hospital of human idiots and were guided solemnly to my school. I picked up my sick flowers from that hot house not fit for them and took them into the garden where they are transplanted. Roman aristocratic women received them with commotion. These were good and generous mothers, enthusiastic lady teachers as well as civic authorities, a big gathering of people standing along the sides of the road. They, with the children who came out of

that mental dark place, enjoyed their entrance to a place of life. The number one hotels of Rome offered their buses to transport the little unhappy children, so cruelly affected by destiny in such a way that they triumphantly were received into a place which would recognize the childrens civil rights to mandatory education.

To such a school was added an additional class, a class with longer time in which I accepted children who were told they were unable to be educated in the common public elementary school because their mental abilities were insufficient.

My personal teacher, the honorable widow Biccelli, from the Ministry of Public Education of that time, asked me to give a workshop to the lady teachers of Rome about the education of the mentally disturbed.<sup>4</sup> That workshop became the "Magistral School of the Rehabilitation Garden"<sup>5</sup> and I directed that school for two years.

I stayed two years more to prepare colleagues who gently cooperated with me for the realization of the ideal for the teachers of Rome, that is, the special methods of observation and of education of mentally disturbed children. But, I did not stay just for that, this is most important: after visiting London and Paris to study the practical way to educate deficient children, I gave myself to the teaching of these children and to the guiding the work of lady educators of mentally disturbed children at our institute.

But, more than an elementary teacher without any time schedule, I was present and teaching the children directly from 8:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. without interruption, leaving my medical career behind me for this voluntary task without compensation to the only pleasure I could see, realizing my burning dream. But, these two years of practice were my first and true titles in the field of pedagogy. Often in the commitment and the sacrifice exist the unknown start of a future opportunity.

Maria Montessori

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### *Original Synopsis*

#### ***A Learner Taught by Children***

By Robert G Buckenmeyer

Human abilities are a gift of nature. Human attitude, on the contrary, is self-imposed. These two facts are obvious, except when we humans look in the mirror. We frequently loose perspective and find our abilities victims of our attitudes. Our attitudes suffocate our abilities: we claim we cannot, or we think we might, should, would, could, but never do - E.E. Cummings describes humans like this in his poem Effie, whose brains are made of gingerbread. No where does this phenomenon have more disastrous effects than in education. Teachers have the best intentions, but best intentions kill as well as give life. Both teachers and parents seek the good for their students and children.

Maria Montessori, medical doctor, however, provides all parents and teachers the opportunity to examine self about attitudes toward the students whom they teach and the children whom they mother and father. Nowhere has she done so in a more succinct, organized and comprehensive manner than in her California lectures and newspaper articles published by CLIO-ABC as The California Lectures of Maria Montessori, 1915, Collected Speeches and Writings within The CLIO Montessori Series. These Montessori speeches and writings provide the third time she provided an analysis of her method to the public at large. The following enables to provide a synopsis of these twenty-one lectures and ten newspaper articles published for the first time.

More frequently than not parents and teachers have decided what children need to learn as well as how they learn; then they treat the children accordingly. Such an attitude, however, precludes children from learning; indeed, such an attitude is counter-productive, frequently frustrating parent and teacher as well as students. Children resent forced learning and, if it persist, reject learning altogether.

Maria Montessori is a unique teacher because she looked upon the world and children as a learner. Montessori had the attitude of a learner toward the children who peopled her various Casa de Bambini schools. Children taught her how to learn. Her 1915 San Francisco World's Fair Exposition Hall lectures may be summed up as a call for teacher attitude change. "The point is," she states, "that the teacher must not learn a new method, but must acquire new attitudes". Indeed, Montessori herself specifies that the difference between "her" teacher and the "regular teacher is one of attitude:

*The attitude of the regular teacher is entirely different. She teaches something. The results she wishes to obtain are results of an entirely different kind. She is like the dress-maker who takes the measurements, cuts out the material, pins it, bastes it, sews it and makes the garment. It is she who is acting, who is cutting off and putting together in her way.*

Of course, this "regular teacher" has such an attitude because of her conviction that what the child needs to learn is what the "adult" thinks the child should learn. Such a teacher conceives of the child as intellectually naked and in need of being clothed as according to the fashion conceived as proper by the teacher seamstress! Such an attitude, however, presumes that the child is passive, an "empty slate" on which the teacher must write! Montessori's view is radically different. None of the Mary Pyle typed translations better illustrate this than a September 20, lecture statement:

*Now, the attention which one pays to things is not passive, but corresponds to an activity and an inner meaning. We do not take the world as it is, but as we are. It is not a picture of the world that is within us; it is our own picture. It is not the world that is in us, but it is that which we have chosen and the possibility of choice is a natural fact. We cannot arrange it so that a person who is struck by one thing is struck by another thing instead. This is a natural fact. We must consider this with the same reality and the same objectivity as we consider all natural facts, so that (the ) person who stands before us has not only his eyes, nose and senses, but has his inner capacities, his mysterious and wonderful capacities of choice.*

Montessori wastes no time making her "new type of teacher" clear to this American audience. She states that "her virtue consists in never interrupting the work of the child (while), at the same time, giving help where she sees that help is necessary". But, is this "new type of teacher" being humiliated, asks Montessori? Her answer is "no" and occasions a comparison between the "old-fashioned type of professor of the university" and "the modern professor of experimental science".

She characterizes the "Old-fashioned type of professor" as having a "high desk upon a platform, which seemed like a throne". Students "sat beneath him to listen. He wore an ermine robe and a wig." He spoke the "absolute verdict, or word" so, his words were believed and sworn to as "being the verdict of the teacher" and were "considered Truth". Students held him in "great esteem and respect" as the source of "Truth". His word was "sworn upon" by the students. The "old" lecture method places its emphasis upon the words spoken by the teachers and the words written in the books. Yet, Montessori looked upon such "words" both as distractions from the student's learning and at best "indirect" means whereby humans learn.

The teachers of the old school, prepared according to the principles of metaphysical philosophy, understood the ideas of certain men regarded as authorities and moved the muscles of speech in talking of them and the muscles of the eye in reading their theories.

The "professor of Modern Science", on the contrary, "remains standing alone", in a "particular space below the students sitting in an amphitheater looking down upon him (who) many times...(is) covered with a sort of workman's blouse, resembling the cotton blouse of the laborer". Sometimes "when the table before him is soiled", he "takes a cloth and wipes the table off". He "may not be an orator"; sometimes his "way of speaking is rough, crude and simple". This "humble person has forgotten himself. The focus of his teaching "is that the fact is true" so "the greatest point of (his) demonstration is that "he" was showing them the truth". This fact not only "attracts the attention of the students, but...the passion of the students". Students rise to his height when "they are able to verify what the

professor" did was true or untrue "because the professor is not teaching the truth absolutely, but he is teaching (them) the means, the paths by which this truth can be found".

Montessori provides her audience with the example of Koch, "the discoverer of the bacterium of Tuberculosis" who spent hours "studying (what) had been expectorated by the Tuberculosis patients". He was "thinking all the time that this was a great and dignified work...because it rendered him beneficial to humanity", not because it gave him external dignity. She asks her audience to think about such scientists: how "in order to find out the truth of whether the bacteria of an animal could be transmitted into the system of a man, had themselves injected with the bacteria"; how to find out whether the bacterium of cholera could be taken into the system through food, would eat a portion of the bacteria in the form of food; who "because of looking constantly into a microscope, lose their sight"; who have "died making chemical researches and reactions by putting together two substances which exploded upon contact with each other". She concludes that "all of these are people who were humble to the point of sacrifice". The scientists Montessori describes make progress "in doing positive and practical work", not by "mere voice or word". Whereas the "professors of the universities limited themselves to say great things", "great progress in science came" when modern scientists did "humble and patient work" through quiet observation.

Similarly, Montessori states this "new method" requires "transformation of the teacher" who "must pass from the type... who talks from a height to a type...humble who works bringing about real benefit". This "transformation", however, "leads us to that difficult and narrow path where we go to seek reality and truth in reality (in the children) and...prepare...for this (through) observation of facts..." So, Montessori requires her teachers to become like "monks" who "...perform their exercises of silence and contemplation..." Yet, she says the teacher's exercise is "...much easier because it is not inner contemplation"; rather, "she must learn ...to be quiet because she must not give lessons and, therefore, she must not give discourses". Such a teacher must "prepare...not only with a culture...easily acquired, but with attitudes of character, called virtues...(acquired) little by little in the exercise of (instructional) work". Montessori provides her audience with a character sketch of this "new teacher".

The more such a teacher "...has been able to lose or forget her old position, the more able she will be to become a good teacher in this method". The "new" teacher "must learn to be quiet"; "...to contain, to hold back the impulse to intervene, to counsel or to advise", "the most difficult thing to learn"; "to step down from (the) platform, to divest (self) absolutely of the older methods, as men have done who have become monks"; "...to have succeeded in directing (the children) and developing (the learning environment) and to have known how to hid this to the greatest extent possible"; "to...know how to observe...to acquire patience -- they are two things which develop together...which give to these persons who have developed these virtues an entirely different aspect from other teachers or people". She concludes that "the greatest height of the ability ... will be attained when (the teacher) has reached that point where the children can work entirely alone, without her help in any way".

Montessori draws upon her past experience to caution that such an attitude change for adults and, thus, teachers is very difficult. She observes, for example, that a person who looks through a microscope or telescope may see nothing, if that person "has not the habit of observing". A professor, speaking to an untrained audience, trying to show them a small difference between two small objects, works in vain "because they cannot see them". So, Montessori comments, "...to learn to see, to observe does not mean simply to look". "To see requires (that) an attitude of observing" be added "to the seeing of things which all do not see..." She adds that "to observe means to be there, means to be making an effort to see...the special phenomenon which will develop in the children". She observes that she has "...never yet found people who were able to follow patiently the work of a patient child to the end".

Montessori gives two examples to illustrate her observation. "A cultured and intelligent lady asked permission to come to one of my lessons..." in Rome. The lesson consisted in having a child touch a sandpaper letter. That day about ten or twelve children became interested in watching this one child. The child continued in perfect silence to touch and re-touch the letter. Montessori commented: "About one hundred other people watched with great interest and in perfect silence". She adds that "I naturally stood at one side trying to control as much as possible my movements". The lady "said to me...out loud", "when is the lesson going to begin?" People told the lady "to be quiet

and I asked her to be silent. Because this was the lesson". The lady then asked, "What is it to consist of?" Montessori told her "...the lesson is in this child touching the letter". Then, the lady asked, "But, what of these twelve children who are standing here and all of these people who are watching the child touch the letter? What are they doing?" Montessori answered, "They are just watching the child touching the letter". Finally, the lady said, "Oh, this is certainly a new method of insanity".

This occurrence made Montessori reluctant to let people into her school to observe and she hesitated to respond to outside requests. So, a second example arose when the city of Milan wanted her to found a school to prepare teachers. She told them the training consisted in the teachers spending a great deal of time observing the children working with the didactic materials. The city fathers of Milan agreed but then they asked, "But how must we organize this?" Montessori instructed them "Simply tell the people that they must be quiet and look on". Finally, they asked, "And is it possible that people will stand for hours without talking and having explanations given?" The difficulty Montessori's view of the "new" teacher and this "new method" faced was the presumption of many who watched the children in her schools. After all, when adults become accustomed to control the learning environment through word means, whether verbal or written lesson plans, they are reluctant to shut their mouths, turn off their duplicating machines and give the children a chance to explore, discover and learn. These "lookers" were habituated to the "old" method of instruction through verbal presentation so they presumed that learning occurred through external verbal transfer to the child as learner. They looked through her microscope and did not see the children learning because they did not hear anything!

So, how can we develop the skills to "see" the children learn so we can assist children to learn? Again, Montessori draws upon her scientific training as a medical doctor. We must, she states, "resemble...the scientists" who are "passionately interested" in their work. She distinguishes the real scientist "from the young doctor who is helping him" as one who has "passion and great love for the science". The real scientist, as a student "has brought himself into contact with some natural truth or reality" and "secrets in this way" are revealed to him. This real student scientist "has the means of experimental sciences, or the methods (as an) end and "is as one who has learned to read in the mysteries our book which is the Book of Nature, a book of nature which in its content is Infinite". She observes that when the student scientist "...has this power to read and when there develops within him the natural phenomenon of this interest, (it) makes him go into this research more and more, (so) he is on the path which will lead him to great discoveries".

Montessori, then compares, the student to a stranger in a Roman museum and the teacher to a bystander. The bystander tells the student stranger "...that is a Raphael and this is a Michael Angelo". So, reasons Montessori, the bystander, or teacher "...is a help by simply showing him (the student stranger) what was before him". Thus it is, says Montessori, "...that in this method we see life developing and the love for this life develops at the same time". Therefore, the student stranger is "more conscious of the objects (before him) and as...interest develops in these objects... activity increases and (the student stranger works) more".

Suppose however, proposes Montessori, that the bystander went on to say "...this picture was painted in such and such a year and is worth so and so much... Then, "...the value of art is taken from it,,," and the student stranger is distracted from the art object. This, she says is "...the same as in the class room of the child". The "old" method and teacher gave the child "...a whole lot of ideas and pictures...(and) prevented him from enjoying the simple object and the clearness of it..." Montessori limits the "new" teacher to telling the child "...only that which (is) necessary and the teacher then (retires) so as not to disturb the child with her own presence..." The effect of such instructional simplicity is significant: "then the child begins to feel the life, the passion for something entirely different for those objects which have attracted him up to the present and that is, love for the person who has lived for him".

Montessori describes the effect of this passion of the student as resulting in heightened interest in the objects of study. This heightened interest increases the student's attention and activity in studying: "...when the child, after his concentrated work, began to lift his mind to the abstractions and generalities..., he felt the joys of this, he was not alone in his joy because he was taught to see the echoing emotion of the teacher who shared this joy with him". "The

child", concludes Montessori, "then begins to be conscious of, to notice the teacher (and)...also begins to notice his companions and to confide in his teacher".

È Montessori then describes the bond which develops between the "new" teacher and this student whom the teacher has left independent, free to attend to the objects within the world of the classroom and, indeed, the wider world of nature. A "feeling" develops "between... (these) Souls". "The Soul of the child", she observes, "begins to blend with the Soul of the teacher and the child becomes obedient". A "spiritual life has formed", she comments and "it remains, grows and perfects itself because it is like a living being which has been generated and therefore, must grow". This "new" relationship between the "new" teacher and the learning child cannot be taught. Rather, states Montessori, the child's love of his teacher "...as his companion (in learning)...comes with the growth of humility and patience and these appear quite naturally of themselves. This "creation of love", as she describes it, "...is a great work of sacrifice, of education, of patience which one cannot bring about with È vain words".

Montessori, herself a mother, observes that "it is always said that the teacher must be like a mother". She reasons that people compare a teacher to a mother because both witness and are instrumental in the birth of new life. "The personality of the mother", she observes, "is characterized by this: that with the sacrifice of her own life, she gives life to another..." Montessori adds what might be termed an editorial comment: "...and there is no other means of giving life and so of being a Mother". Thus, the Montessori "new" teacher gives new life. This "new" teacher creates the environment within the classroom for the child's learning as the mother creates the environment within her womb for the child's conception, development and growth. Neither the "new" mother, nor the "new" teacher can directly influence the conception (outside of providing the egg for conception and of accepting the sperm for fertilization), development and growth of the fetus. Nature is the dir Kect agent. Yet, both the "new" mother and the "new" teacher are critical indirect guides, the former to ensure good nutritional intake, the latter to ensure good environmental objects. So, just as the mother rejoices and stands in awe before the "new" life of the child, so also does this "new" Montessori teacher.

The California Lectures of Maria Montessori, Collected Speeches and Writings, The CLIO Montessori Series, Volume 15, Edited and Translated by Robert G. Buckenmeyer, Ph.D., (Clio Press, Oxford, England, 1997), San Francisco Lecture 1: 6 August 1915, p. 64.

*Ibid.*, San Francisco Lecture 13:4 September 1915, p. 172.

Montessori observes that it is ..."a common idea that the child's mind is like a piece of wax upon which we can carve what we wish...We can give it the form we wish." The California Lectures..., Op. Cit., Lecture 20: 20 September 1915, p. 230.

*Ibid.*, San Francisco Lecture 20: 20 September 1915, p. 229-230.

*Ibid.*, San Francisco Lecture 1: 6 August 1915, p. 61.

The Montessori Method, Maria Montessori, Introduction by J. McV. Hunt (Schocken Books, New York, 1969). p. 7.

The California Lectures of Maria Montessori, op. cit., p. 63.

*Ibid.*

*Ibid.*

*Ibid.*, p. 64.

Ibid.. Note that Montessori links her "new" teacher's "attitude" with "attitudes of character, called virtues, which he may acquire little by little in the exercise of his work". Her "new" teachers do not obtain this virtuous attitude of character from any academic training, but from the "observing" of children within the classroom - something quite contrary to the so-called "American" degree method which requires that credentialed teachers take so many units of "professional methods" courses in graduate school!

*Ibid.*

*Ibid.*, p. 68.

*Ibid.*, San Francisco Lecture 2: 7 August 1915, p. 69,

*Ibid.*, p. 70.

*Ibid.*, p. 74.

*Ibid.*

*Ibid.*

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### ***Biology and Montessori's Cosmic View, Part 1***

By Robert G Buckenmeyer

*My heart leaps up,*

My heart leaps up when I behold  
A rainbow in the sky:  
So was it when my life began;  
So it is now I am a man;  
So be it when I shall grow old,  
Or let me die!  
The Child is father of the Man;  
And I could wish my days to be  
Bound each to each by natural piety.<sup>1</sup>

Within *The Secret of Childhood*, Maria Montessori observes:

We can now describe a child's psychic and physiological growth as a kind of 'incarnation', understanding by this word that mysterious force which animates the helpless body of a newborn child, enables him to grow, teaches him to speak and thus perfects him.<sup>2</sup>

Common sense experience provides us with the "cosmic view" which Maria Montessori understood. The child originates as a set of two sets of chromosomes, twenty-three from the mother and twenty-three from the father, a veritable double social unit, carrying two family lineages within a single fetus. Indeed, this fetus is a social reality within an ontological unity, a unique living being; the DNA reflected by the child's family heritage extends itself through the child's unique self only to become another manifestation of that one family. As a matter of fact, this tiny fetus speaks to us not just as a manifestation of a family, but as another manifestation of the characteristics, powers and skills of the human family, of human nature itself.

But then the "fun" begins because mother nature takes over. She guides the child's development within the mother's

womb. Yet, this fetus, unique in itself and separate from the mother, connected only by an umbilical cord and thus, only *indirectly* connected to the mother, is being nurtured, yet, presents no risk to the mother, notwithstanding the following facts: first, that it is a "foreign" body and, secondly, it should be subject to rejection as a danger to the mother's life. So, we can only conclude that pregnancy and any fetus intended by nature and, so, normal within nature - yet, we are faced with the fact that this child in the womb is the unique example which nature tolerates as a living being developing within another living being.

Montessori insists that Nature is a book whose "content is Infinite" and the "old" way of judging the educational needs of children, as it were, an *a priori* method of what is "good" for the child" must be replaced by the "new", or scientific method:

Thus, scientists who have the means or method of experimental sciences are like those who have learned to read our book of mysteries, the Book of Nature whose content is Infinite. Such a scientist is like the man who simply has learned to read and, because of his power to read, has obtained a number of books which may reveal great things to him. The modern experimental scientists know how to read these infinite mysteries and, as a result, develop within him interest, a natural phenomenon. This interest drives him more and more into this research. Such a scientist is on the path leading to great discoveries.<sup>3</sup>

Now, following her application of the biological development of this fetus, Aristotle, and subsequently Augustine<sup>4</sup> and Thomas Aquinas note that it evolves through various stages. Indeed, both Augustine and Aquinas thought that the fetus initially developed into a living vegetative being, then into a living sentient being, and, finally, given a new creative act of God to ready this vegetative-sentient being for a human soul, an intelligent being, a so-called "rational" animal.<sup>6</sup> As a medical doctor, Montessori insists that biology be the basis of any educational system.

Because it is the only real and positive conception (of man); man does not exist if not in his entirety as a whole. So any other conception (of man or child) whatsoever is not positive, that is, real. It is abstract because it does not think of the real man but of a part which really does not exist. Nothing exists if it is not the whole. The eyes really exist, for example, but not outside of man. Therefore, the oculist wants to become an eye specialist, but in order to be this, he must become a doctor of the whole (human) both because it is known that the eyes alone do not exist...Thus, to educate one part (or another) of a child is also an abstraction.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, the birth of the child enters into a new, but progressive stage of the child's evolution as a social reality while at the same time the child remains an ontological unity. Montessori speaks repeatedly of this development.<sup>8</sup> But, Montessori provided an "...other part of education", that is a part "other" than that of nature's intrinsic developmental design. This "other part of education" is:

the adaption of the individual to his environment (and is) indirectly touched. We prepare with our method the infancy of the *humanity of our time*. The men of the present civilization are preeminently observes of their environment because they must utilize to the greatest possible extent all the riches of this environment.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, here Montessori makes a clear distinction, indeed, a separation of her view of the child's developmental evolution from that of John Dewey, as formulated and presented in his *Moral Principles in Education*,<sup>10</sup> although I can find no direct reference to Dewey or any of his works within Montessori's writings. She specifically castigates the "old" method of educating children which makes "culture" the primary criterion of the child's curriculum.<sup>11</sup> Montessori, therefore, rejects the contemporary notion of American public education, that is, of inculcating culture into the children, or, to put it bluntly, of Americanizing children.

We have seen that the production of intelligence does not require the accumulation of great stores of culture, especially since the accumulation of culture might also imply the accumulation of errors and the deadening of intelligence. Of course, I do not exclude culture by any means, but this possibility of quiet, spontaneous, ordered development in work, without disturbance and in quiet should be the foundation of culture. When this liberty is given,

even the little child follows a special path, the path of concentration of thought and constancy in word. Concentration of the attention and constancy in work seem to be like an inner voice which is developing.<sup>12</sup>

She states flatly that this "old" educational method is self-serving and both ignores nature's intention and the child's development in favor of the "adult's view". So, Montessori states unequivocally that "culture is secondary" in importance, but "the spontaneous inner maturity of the child" is her point of departure in educating the child.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, she states that within her "new" method "...the free child gives us...exactly the revelation of the laws of his life".<sup>14</sup>

So, we found that our children did not prefer the disordered actions which were considered the free acts of liberty, but showed a passionate preference for the acts which showed an intelligent purpose.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, Montessori describes the natural evolution of the child's "...three great efforts..." through the child's own developmental efforts:

And finally, we must know in what part of childhood the child makes its three great efforts, first, teething; (secondly), taking his first steps; and (finally), saying the first word. These are the three first fundamental principles of development. There the greater or lesser strength of the child manifests itself. You know that a child who is retarded in birth, the child who walks too late and the child who can talk only very late is weak and so what do we do when we put the child in the best hygienic condition?<sup>16</sup>

She observes that even the child's parents must be "...observers of the law (of nature) and nothing else".<sup>17</sup> Since Montessori's view of the child is that it is a physical-psychic unity, she insists that both parents and teachers must respect the laws of nature in the child's physical and spiritual development:

God has given the child a nature of his own and has thereby established certain laws of development, in both the physical and spiritual spheres. Whoever has responsibility for the child's normal development must therefore follow these laws. If we deviate from them, we shall lose the direction that God provides to guide the child, for we are not then in touch with the laws which God himself has established.<sup>18</sup>

All education of little children must be governed by this principle - to help the natural *psychic* and *physical development* of the child.<sup>19</sup>

Montessori, as a medical doctor is keenly aware that just as the fetus develops according to a set natural plan within the womb, so also the newly born child develops according to a set natural plan outside the womb:

Our educational aim with very young children must be to aid the spontaneous development of the mental, spiritual and physical personality, and not to make of the child a cultured individual in the commonly accepted sense of the term. So, after we have offered to the child such didactic material as it adapted to provoke the development of his senses, we must wait until the activity known as observation develops. And therein lies the art of the educator; in knowing how to measure the action by which we help the young child's personality to develop. To one whose attitude is right, little children soon reveal profound individual differences which call for very different kinds of help from the teacher...therefore...teaching shall be rigorously guided by the principle of limiting to the greatest possible point the active intervention of the educator.<sup>20</sup>

So, once nature achieves the child's "three great efforts" of teething, walking and speaking, Montessori addresses the evolution of the child's psychic development, specifically, the psychic or "mental order":

We will see that the fundamental mental order is to distinguish the means which help life from life itself. (But, if we feel that our condition, our laws, is (the end, then we) lose from sight the end, which is life, in order to rise, or one might really say die to, in the means. Means are precious as long as they serve life. Our effort, (however) in the development of life crosses this. We must feel (towards) humanity the central feeling of the human soul, so that we may grow with this proposition.<sup>21</sup>

The fascinating insight she describes here runs in direct contradiction to the manner in which American educators define "intelligence", namely, quantitatively. Montessori, on the contrary, defines intelligence qualitatively, that is, as the ability to distinguish one thing from another so intelligence becomes the power to discern differences and similarities between, among and within objects of perception.<sup>22</sup> Montessori states that her method "...awakens in the child the soul of the dormant man".<sup>23</sup>

Then the basis of her "new" method becomes the development the senses, particularly, the most basic and direct sense, that of touch. Now, medical doctor that Montessori is, she sees that the period of life between the ages of three and seven years old "...covers a period of rapid physical development":

It is the time for the formation of the sense activities as related to the intellect. The child in this age develops his senses. His attention is further attracted to the environment under the form of passive curiosity. The stimuli, and not yet the reasons for things, attract his attention. This is, therefore, the time when we should methodically direct the sense stimuli, in such a way that the sensations which he receives shall develop in a rational way. This sense training will prepare the ordered foundation upon which he may build up a clear and strong mentality.<sup>24</sup>

So, she sees that the natural evolutional development of the psychic child develops through the development of the physical child's senses. Therefore, she sees her teachers as being "...sensitive to the mystery and (being) sensitive to the wonder of life revealing itself".<sup>25</sup> Yet, Montessori must find a way to "call to the man who lies dormant within the soul of the child":

Even so those who teach little children too often have the idea that they are educating babies and seek to place themselves on the child's level by approaching him with games and often with foolish stories. Instead of all this, we must know how to call to the *man* which lies dormant within the soul of the child. I felt this, intuitively and believed that not the didactic material, but my voice called to them, *awakened* the children and encouraged them to use the didactic material, and through it, to educate themselves.<sup>26</sup>

She credits Froebel as the source for the "...first didactic material used by us..."<sup>27</sup> But, she notes that her didactic materials are unique from those used in his method and other methods of education in that they have specific "differentiating qualities".<sup>28</sup> The first is ""to attract the attention of the child and to provoke a permanent reaction within the child". The second is "that it is systematic, ...connected in a series and together forms a material of development". The third is "that it contains (what I call) the control of error". The fourth is that "my materials have characteristics of a practical order...that is, the qualities and quantities observed within the materials have been determined to be neither more nor less".<sup>29</sup>

As the child hones his or her sensitive powers through these materials, the child correspondingly develops his or her intellectual powers since:

Our didactic material renders auto-education possible, permits a methodical education of the sense. Not upon the ability of the teacher does such education rest, but upon the didactic system. This presents objects which, first, attract the spontaneous attention of the child and, second, contain a rational gradation of stimuli.<sup>30</sup>

The test of the correct educational method or system, that is, the one based on the laws of development inherent in the nature of a child, according to Montessori, is "...to bring about the spontaneous progress of the child".<sup>31</sup> Montessori's didactic materials become the direct means to accomplish such "spontaneous progress" while the teacher is only an indirect means:

For the teacher, I have substituted didactic material, which contains the principle of the control of error and permits the child both auto-education and auto-correction. Therefore, the teacher under my method becomes a director of the spontaneous actions of the child, which are unlimited except in so far as they interfere with the rights of others. The teacher becomes the patient and practically silent guardian.<sup>32</sup>

Montessori is so insistent upon this that the alternative, namely, the "old" style of teacher who "...thinks that he must study psychology and then that he must make the intelligence of the child work", she calls the "devil" whose efforts lead the child to renounce "his own divine nature".<sup>33</sup>

This reminds one of the remark that someone made to Christ, 'You are good', and Christ said, 'No, the Father is good', 'The creator is good'. Goodness also is a clear guide to helping creation or to help the development (of man). That alone is the Devil which puts on a mask of goodness. The Devil seems very good, but he is the seducer who drags people from the path of their development and their perfection.<sup>34</sup>

So, what happens once Montessori's "new" teachers day by day observe the laws of nature develop through the child's freedom to learn and only indirectly guide the child in using the didactic materials?

Now, once the child's mind has organized itself, it takes a form. Taking a form, the child's mind orders itself because form always brings order. From that organization and that order, the inner life of the child springs up; from both organization and order springs up the child's power of spontaneous production. But, we cannot possibly foresee that which life produces of itself, so we always approach the child with an attitude of suspense, of waiting. Indeed, our attitude must, above all else, be one of waiting.

A lady once gave me a very good motto for this method: wait observing. Nor do we practice a dry and barren observing, but, while we wait, we observe, always in expectation. This is also the poetic description which is given of the Mother of Christ, namely, she waited and watched the child, waiting for the revelation to come.<sup>35</sup>

So, given the fact that "The child's mission is to make a man and he tries to liberate himself so that he can fulfill his mission",<sup>36</sup> what is the purpose of a teacher? First, Montessori assigns education's purpose to be "...the liberation of the child" and such a mission participates in the "Apostolic spirit", working with Christ, "the Lord":<sup>37</sup>

Now, he who works for liberty is working in research for the Lord because all of life is based upon eternal laws which form the essence of life itself. If we think of liberation with preconceived ideas such that laws do not exist, we have a strange idea of liberty formed by ourselves. (This strange idea) leads us to chaos and death (and) is a similar idea to rooting up the plant to give it the liberty and the birth we think it needs. Knowing that life is sustained by laws, we should try to give to the human being the environment which is adapted to and necessary for his life. We should retire and observe the life develop.<sup>38</sup>

A wonderful feeling and another love is born in the teacher and there enters within the teacher and the scientist an Apostolic spirit. This Apostolic spirit sees not only the spirit of study about the child but the child object becomes a teacher full of lessons to teach us (as) his teachers. It is, as Christ said, 'He who wishes to be first in the Kingdom of Heaven must become like a little child'. The study of a teacher is like a study of the Soul. The teacher sees what is to be found there and also sees the path the teacher himself must follow to learn.

Secondly, given this "apostolic" purpose, what should be the preparation of the teacher? The preparation of the teacher involves and means two things. First, the teacher must be sensitive to the wonder of life revealing itself, so the teacher can not just look, but the teacher must see the child's life revealing itself - this takes practice, as Montessori commented within the first San Francisco lecture about the "new teacher": "For example, if he who looks through a microscope or telescope has not the habit of observing, he will see nothing".<sup>39</sup> Secondly, the teacher must be sensitive to the mystery of the child's development. Montessori provides a personal example to clarify her meaning of being sensitive to the mystery:

I will tell you an anecdote which will make clear to you my position and my attitude in connection with mysteries. An uncle of mine was very much interested in my studies, especially when I was studying medicine. When he heard the history of the evolution of man from one small cell, one thousandth part of a millimeter, out of which the present-day complex man developed, with all his specialized organs and potentialities, with all this wonder, having the power of feeling, reasoning and loving, existing today when yesterday man was nothing, he said: 'Yes these things are wonderful, but I must not think about them too much because I feel as though I should go crazy, as though I were

losing my mind'. Another time, I heard another man observe: 'It is very simple for a child to be born - simply a man and a woman marry'. One felt the mystery; the other did not.<sup>40</sup>

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1. Wordsworth Montessori expresses her understanding of "...how the great English poet Wordsworth, enamored as he was of nature, demanded the secret of all her peace and beauty. It was at last revealed to him - the secret of all nature lies in the soul of a little child. *The Montessori Method*, Introduction by J. McV. Hunt, translated from the Italian by Anne E. George, 1912, (Schocken Books, New York, 1964) p. 376. *Ibid.*, p. 214 for another reference to Wordsworth, this time to his "silent peace of nature". See also *The California Lectures of Maria Montessori, Collected Speeches and Writings*, The CLIO Montessori Series, Volume 15, Edited by Robert G. Buckenmeyer (CLIO Press, Oxford, England, 1997), San Francisco, *Call And Post Article* 24: 1 October 1915, p. 334. Here Montessori credits Wordsworth with the "...ennobling belief, that the secret of all life is hidden in the soul of the child, and that the child is the synthesis of all nature".

2. Maria Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood*, (Fides Publishers, 1966, Ballantine Books, New York, 1972, from the Garzanti edition, Milan, Italy, 1960 *Il segreto dell'infanzia*), Chapter 6, *The Spiritual Embryo*, p. 30. A magnificent statement of Montessori, concerning "incarnation" presents itself in her 1932 work, *Education and Peace* and is reproduced in *Basic Ideas of Montessori's Educational Theory, Extracts From Maria Montessori's Writings and Teachings*, The CLIO Montessori Series, Volume 14 (CLIO Press, Oxford, England, 1997), p. 118: "The child is not simply a miniature adult. He is first and foremost the possessor of a life of his own that has certain special characteristics and that has its own goal. The child's goal might be summed up in the word incarnation; the incarnation of human individuality must take place within him".

3. *Op. Cit.*, *The California Lectures*, p. 70.

4. Augustine treats of the conception and evolution of the conceived fetus within his early dialogue entitled *De Musica, Concerning Music*, particularly in Book VI while he is explaining how the immaterial human soul can receive information from sensations within the body. Indeed, a fascinating fact is that Augustine maintains that it is the *attention* which the soul pays to the body's sensations which results in the mind receiving the data sensed. So, just as it is the child's *attention* to the materials which leads to learning in Montessori, so it is the soul's *attention* to the sensations occurring within the human body which results in knowing in Augustine: see *De Musica*, paragraph 10, p. 382, *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin, VII, Dialogues Philosophiques, IV. La Musique, De Musica Libri Sex*, (Desclee, De Brouwer Et. Cit, 1947).

5. Aquinas deals with the conceived child's development within the mother's womb in a number of places, but comments directly about the necessity for God to create the human soul in the *Summa Theologica, I, Q. 75, articulus 6, especially Ad primum*, and *Q 76, in octo articulos divisa, De unione animae ad corpus*.

6. Indeed, all Catholic theologians and philosophers, as Catholics include theories of evolution within the context of creation and redemption. As a matter of fact, some of the early Fathers of the Catholic Church, both eastern and western held that the symbolic six days of creative activity by *Yhwh* within *Genesis* was the basis for their recognition of the truthfulness of the theory of evolution - as history shows, all of the legal claims to the contrary, such as the infamous Scoop's trial are of Protestant origin.

7. *Op. Cit.*, *The California Lectures*, San Francisco, Lecture 12: 1 September 1915, p. 166.

8. Some of the many places Montessori deals with this developmental phenomena are: *Op. Cit.*, *The Montessori Method*, pp. 139-140, where she sees their self-developing as an act of "little men"; *ibid.*, as practicing gymnastics "...to aid the normal development of physiological movements (such as walking, breathing, speech), to protect this development...", pp 138-139;

9. *Op., Cit., The Montessori Method*, p. 217; see also p.64 and p. 95.

10. John Dewey, *Moral Principles in Education*, (Philosophical Library, Inc., New York, 1959). Dewey not only carves out public education as the exclusive concern of those who qualify as people who possess "expert professional service", that is, "educators", "Introduction", page viii, et passim, but he limits the subject matter and method of "professional educators" to what is "socially-useful", so the reflection proper to contemplation, or that "bugaboo" Protestants call an "idle mind". Indeed, whether one reads Dewey's 1900 *The School and Society*, or his 1902 *The Child and the Curriculum*, one finds his application of Darwin's theory of evolution, as Dewey understood it, limited to inculcating the child with the "social mind" of his or her society - of course, one finds that Hitler took a parallel approach with German youth in the early twentieth century!. Anyone who takes this tack *ipso facto* deprives any given child of his or her unique personality development, so the child is not free *to be who he or she is*, but must fit self into the social mold of his or her social environment. Such an approach is anathema to Maria Montessori - which speaks volumes as to why American public education has ignored or railed against Maria Montessori, or, worse, has adapted her method without the clear Catholic base it builds from and the Christlike end which such a base requires. See *The California Lectures of Maria Montessori, 1915, Collected Speeches and Writings* (The CLIO Montessori Series, CLIO Press, Oxford, England, 1997), San Francisco lectures 3 and 4, 9 August 1915, pp.pp. 80-81 wherein Montessori compares the child's reflection upon his work with any given material with a monk's meditation upon the sacred scripture. See also, *Op. Cit., The Montessori Method*, passim, but specifically, p. 223 where she notes that "...we isolate man from his environment...when with intellectual culture we believe ourselves to have completed education...".

11. Montessori's speech to the National Education Association in Oakland dated as 28 August 1915 and found in *The California Lectures... Op. Cit.*, Pp. 241-247 is more fascinating when one reads between the lines. Montessori spends the total lecture on the subject of necessity of freedom for the individual child in his or her learning and on the detrimental effects that educating the child to "culture" can have on "...tearing the soul of the child away from the law of his natural development", p. 244. As I note in footnote 10, such is the purpose and method of Dewey's "socializing the child" through public school instruction. Yet, Montessori neither makes any direct reference to Dewey nor to American public education at the time.

12. *Op. Cit., The California Lectures*, San Diego Lecture 1: 14 July 1915, pp. 32-33.

13. *Ibid.*, San Francisco Lecture 3, 4:9 August 1915, p. 81.

14. *Ibid.*, p.243.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 243.

16. *Ibid*, p. 110.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

18. *Basic Ideas of Montessori's Educational Theory, Extracts From Maria Montessori's Writings and Teachings*, The CLIO Montessori Series, volume 14, originally compiled by Paul Oswald and Günter Schulz-Benesch, Translated from the German by Lawrence Salmon, (ABC-Clio, Ltd., Oxford, England, 1997), p.178.

19. *Op. Cit., The Montessori Method*, p. 216.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 230-231

21. *Op. Cit., The California Lectures...*, San Francisco, Lecture 9: 21 August 1915, p. 134.

22. Within San Francisco Lecture 19: 17 September 1915, p. 222, Montessori states unequivocally: "To know how to

distinguish is a fact of intelligence". Elsewhere she comments that even new born babies distinguish the mother's breast, so they show the "fact of intelligence" to be present within them. Within San Francisco Lecture 20, given on 20 September 1915, she states that the "...common idea that the child's mind is like a piece of wax upon which we can carve what we wish" is radically false and such an idea leads us to "...easily think that we are creators". Such, however, is also untrue. Montessori's view of being able to distinguish as the characteristic of intelligence has a long history and is present within the philosophical tradition, but no where more developed than with the biologist Aristotle and, subsequently in Thomas Aquinas. Aristotle treats of the nature of human intelligence and makes the same observation, namely, that the characteristic which distinguishes human intelligence is its ability to distinguish differences and similarities. Aristotle lays this out in his *Posterior Analytics, Book 1, chapters 1 and 31-34*, pp. 110-111 and 154-158, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Edited by Richard McKeon (Random House, New York, 1941).

23. *Op. Cit., The California Lectures...*, *Call and Post Article 5*: 1915, p. 275.

24. *Op. Cit., The Montessori Method*, pp. 215-216. Montessori reiterates her medical view: "Our aim in education in general is two-fold, biological and social" and then notes that "technical education" must also "...be considered as having a place, since it teaches the individual to make use of his surroundings".

25. *Op. Cit., The California Lectures*, San Diego, Lecture 1: 14 July 1915, p. 35.

26. *Op. Cit., The Montessori Method*, p. 37.

27. *Ibid.*, p.188.

28. *Op. Cit., The California Lectures, Los Angeles, Lecture 2: 12 May 1915*, pp. 11-14.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

30. *Op. Cit., The Montessori Method*, pp. 174-175.

31. *Op. Cit., The Montessori Method*, p. 228.

32. *Op. Cit., The California Lectures...*, *Call And Post Article 21:24* September 1915, p. 326.

33. *Op. Cit., The California Lectures...*, San Francisco, Lecture 17: 13 September 1915, pp. 196-197 and pp.202-203.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

35. *Op. Cit., The Montessori Lectures...*, *San Diego Lecture 1*: 14 July 1915, pp. 30-31.

36. *Ibid.*, *Los Angeles Lecture 5: 10 June 1915*, p. 26.

37. *Ibid.*, *San Francisco, Lecture 2: 7 August 1915*, pp. 72-73.

38. *Ibid.*, *Oakland Lecture: 28 August 1915*, pp. 242-243.

39. *Ibid.*, *Lecture 1: 6 August 1915*, p. 66.

40. *Ibid.*, *San Diego Lecture 1: 14 July 1915*, pp. 36-37.

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## **Millennia, Children and Maria Montessori**

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Close your eyes. Think about God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You are God and stand before the universe you have created, lacking only one being, the human being. You breath into dust and **zelem** is created, out of dust Adam and Eve separately breath. You give them your *image and likeness*; you breath life into them and create the Garden of Eden as their home.

But, Adam and Eve decide that they want more, more than your image and likeness, more than the knowledge of everything which is good. They want to know both good and evil and thereby disobey you as God. They separate themselves from you, their Creator and Father.

Now, think about how you can bring these people, your image and likeness, innocent in their nakedness as created, your children back together, separated from each other in their covering up and separated from you, their Creator and Father by their disobedience. Now, think about how you might bring them together with each other and with you, their Father.

Obviously, the Garden of Eden approach did not work; giving them everything except knowing good and evil did not work. So, what will you now do in order to win these human children back to you, their Father? What will you do in order to bring them together, to win over their love?

Ah, you, God will become like them, a human being, a man - you, God as the Word is made flesh. You, God will empty yourself of your divinity and become a human being; you, God, who created all, will become, in Shakespeare's words "a puking...baby"! How clever: not even as the almighty God, the Creator could you win the love of human beings, but as a baby, you win the love of human beings: "Suffer the little children to come to me, for such is the kingdom of God".

This is the first Montessori classroom lesson of 1 A.D. Christ looked at His apostles and said: "Fellows, I might have chosen you, several fishermen, a *zealot*, a tax collector, two 'hyper' brothers and assorted others. But, '...unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven". (*Matt. 18:1-10*) If you do not become as little children, you will not get to heaven '...for of such is the kingdom of God'. Humans as adults do not go to Heaven; humans as teachers do not go to Heaven. Only children go to Heaven; only learners go to Heaven. People who know do not go to Heaven; people who know that they do not know go to Heaven. Indeed, you will not even be able to learn about me and my message unless you become as little children, for Christ himself exclaimed: "I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth , for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children" (*Matt. 11:25-27*)

Do not blame me for these truths because I did not write the script. The *New Testament* is the script and the statements alleged to have been spoken by Jesus Christ are very clear: "Suffer the little children to come to me for of such is the kingdom of Heaven".

The third millennium, 1 January 2000 calls to us to celebrate not merely a new year, but the beginning of the third thousand years of A.D., that is, **anno Domini**, in the year of Our Lord, the year in which "...the Word was made flesh". Any *calling*, however, is by definition a *vocation* and any vocation (**vocare** in Latin, means *to call*) requires that the person called *hear* the call. I have a philosophical physiognomy: humans have two eyes; two ears; two nostrils and one mouth. But, those two nostrils are located above that one mouth so that we may smell the odor of what we are going to say before we open it - we have six openings in our head to check on one, the mouth! Children are all ears; all eyes; all nostrils and their thumbs are in their mouths since the sides of the tongue are the second most sensitive points within the human anatomy. Most of the time children open their mouths they ask "what", "how" and "why". Children are naturally and persistently inquisitive and insistent seeking to learn, to hear answers to their questions.

So, *to hear* requires that we *open the doors of our ears* and listen - indeed, the Latin word *to obey*, **obedire**, the virtue so characteristic of Christ, the "Word made flesh" originates from the Latin word *to hear*, **obaudire** and this thirteenth day of November provides us a model to follow both for being called and for opening our ears to listen - St. Frances Xavier Cabrini who heard Christ's call: "suffer the little children to come to me for of such is the kingdom of God".<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the Catholic Maria Montessori opened her ears to hear that call; she listened and responded, as must all parents and teachers. The Catholic church celebrates her hearing the call of Christ by opening the sealed doors of the Church of the Lateran in imitation of the Virgin Mary who opened her womb to the Holy Spirit so that the "Word" could be "made flesh". Thus, Pope John Paul II has proclaimed a jubilee the year of this third millennium to celebrate this opening for the coming of Christ and announces such within his apostolic letter, **Tertio Millennio Adveniente**. But, why such attention on hearing and such importance about listening?

Well, the *New Testament* Jesus Christ changes the emphasis from the adult human being of the *Old Testament*, originally Adam and Eve to the human being as a child. So, the first millennium A.D. ushers in the century of the child. Christ did this in two ways: first, through the introduction of the *Our Father*, in Hebrew, **abba** (translated as the familial *daddy* which becomes the *New Testament* way to speak with God). This drove the Orthodox Jews crazy. He established a biological relationship between the human being as a child in the Divine family to God as Father - yet, such a relationship violated the first three of the ten commandments! Secondly, Christ changes the relationship of humans to God through the Sacrament of Baptism. Christ's baptism enables humans separated from God as orphans of Adam's and Eve's disobedience to become adopted children of God. Therefore, I would say that the advent of the *New Testament*, about 1 A.D. ushers in the Christian world as the first millennium of the Child.

So, I also view Montessori as ushering in the second millennium with the century of the child which began with the opening of her **Casa dei Bambini**, 6 January 1907, the Catholic Christian feast of the **Epiphany**, a Greek word meaning *shining through* as well as a *showing forth*. This feast originates the day on which the Divine nature of God shines through the human nature of Jesus Christ, as well as offers the Christ-life of God to the Gentiles.

This is also how Maria Montessori viewed the child: she is waiting for human nature, both material and spiritual to shine through each child within the classroom. So, Montessori conceived her schools and didactic materials as enabling the human being to shine through and show forth in the child as "father" to the human being and the beginning of a new society.

Let me ask you: as you stand on the threshold of the classroom each day, how do you look upon those children? I go to class and I look at the assembling students and think: my God, these are individual human beings, each an *Old Testament zelem* of God, each *in the image and likeness of God* as well as a *New Testament child of God, brother and sister of Jesus Christ*.

Wow! Each wants to do good and seeks the truth. Each is a walking, breathing autobiography: of pain, joy, frustration and success. Each is a unique forty-eight chromosomes, twenty-three from the mother and twenty-three from the father, yet, unique. Although these children resemble the visible tree, trunk, branches and leaves, each has a root structure from the parents, yet, its own tap root, so, what can I possibly do? Well, I know the "didactic materials", in my case, the **Tao**, the *Book of Tea*, the *Apology* of Plato and so forth. So, I guide them through those texts. That is all I can do because it is they who listen to Lao-tzu, to Okakura, to Plato and Socrates and who learn - I can not learn for them. I am but an external guide who prods each one's desire to know and to love but the responsibility of challenging them to listen to the Truth shining through these texts and to learn and then of guiding their learning not to the destination where I am but according to each one's capacity and the destination nature chooses for each of them - that responsibility is terribly humbling.

How open are you to each child's learning? Suppose after you show the child a material, the child correctly uses it, then inventively uses it - take the red and blue rods and the red rods. After I had "learned" them, I sought to build a skyscraper with them - wow, did I get a verbal beating from my Montessori instructor! But, wait. What would

Montessori say about such use, or, more basically, what would God, the Father say about such use - this latter is, quite frankly, all I consider! If you are not open to the child's learning, I hate to think what you might do to your roses as they grow, bud and blossom in your yard, or what you might do to the vegetable seeds as they start to leaf in your Spring garden - do you "train" them, shape them, manipulate them to grow according to your own adult way of seeing a rose, or your own adult way of looking at a carrot, a tomato?

Of course, this is not to say that prior philosophers in B.C. civilizations, both occidental and oriental did not place an emphasis upon the child, but it is to say that the first millennium A.D. centered itself upon the importance of the child vis á vis the adult within the *New Testament*.

Occidentally speaking, the Philosopher Heraclitus in the sixth century B.C. born and raised in Ephesus, a city on the coast of the Aegean Sea told the Ephesians that they all should go out and hang themselves and turn their city-state over to be ruled by children "...for they have banished Hermadorus, the finest man among them, declaring: 'Let us not have anyone among us who excels the rest; if there should be such a one, let him go and live elsewhere'".<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Heraclitus credits the "spirit" with regarding "A man as childish...just as a boy is, by a man", thereby, calling attention to the fact that within the child, man is both virtue and wisdom.<sup>3</sup> Then, in Fragment 48, he states that "A drunken man has to be led by a boy, whom he follows stumbling and not knowing whither he goes, for his soul is moist".<sup>4</sup> Underlying the statement is Heraclitus' conviction that children have "dry" and, therefore, "wise" souls, so they are awake to *reality*, whereas adults and drunks are asleep to the world as *it is*.

If we view the Oriental philosophers, Confucius and Lao-tse, we find the same emphasis upon children as both wise and as the future of the society. Confucius warns in *Analects*, Book IX, number 22 :

The Master said, Respect the young. How do you know that they will not one day be all that you are now? But if a man has reached forty or fifty and nothing has been heard of him, then I grant that there is no need to respect him.

Lao-tse's **Tao** reiterates the need to return to one's youth, indeed, to be like the newborn child for such children are both innocent and gentle, nearest to nature itself in its simplicity and order:

In embracing the One with your soul,  
Can you never forsake the Tao?  
In controlling your vital force to achieve gentleness,  
Can you become like the newborn child?  
In cleansing and purifying your Mystic vision,  
Can you strive after perfection?  
In loving the people and governing the kingdom,  
Can you rule without interference?  
In opening and shutting the Gate of Heaven,  
Can you play the part of the female (that is, the **yin**)?  
In comprehending all knowledge,  
Can you renounce the mind?

To give birth, to nourish,  
To give birth without taking possession,  
To act without appropriation,  
To be chief among men without managing them -  
This is the Mystic Virtue.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, Lao-tse offers the child as the model for human character in following **Tao**, that is, the way to perfection, as a parallel to Christ's *New Testament* use of the child as the model for humans in following God's will and attaining Heaven:

Who is rich in character is like a child.  
No poisonous insects sting him; no wild beasts attack him,  
And no birds of prey pounce upon him.  
His bones are soft, his sinews tender, yet his grip is strong.  
Not knowing the union of male and the female, yet his organs are complete,  
which means his vigor is unspoiled.  
Crying the whole day, yet his voice never runs hoarse,  
which means his "natural) harmony is perfect.  
To know harmony is to be in accord with the eternal,  
(and) to know eternity is called discerning.  
(But) to improve upon life is called an ill-omen;  
To let go the emotions through the heart is called assertiveness.  
(For) things age after reaching their prime;  
That (assertiveness) would be against **Tao**.  
And he who is against **Tao** perishes young.6

Of course, Maria Montessori began the second millennium A.D. both by proclaiming that the "child is father to the man" and by observing that the *New Testament* Jesus Christ placed the child in the center of his gospel, or "good news", at the beginning of the first millennium: "suffer the children to come to me for of such is the kingdom of heaven". Thus, to be childlike, innocent, inquisitive and trusting, becomes the end of being human, rather than a means to becoming an "adult", as she observes in her *Child in the Church*.7

So, Montessori insists that her teachers observe and not interfere, but only guide the individual child's learning. Why? Well, consider the *Old Testament* fact that the first chapter of *Genesis* proclaims, namely, that each human being is a **zelem**, in the image and likeness of God. This means that each of us, each child of God, the Father is a unique image and likeness of God. So, imagine the moment after your death - suppose you spend your life not being who you are and then die in such a state? There you are, calling to God, the Father, but none of the members of the Trinity recognize you because you have ignored who you are! Thus, in effect you have blasphemed: you have not accepted yourself as God's unique gift to this world - you have rejected what God choose and in so doing you have rejected God so now, upon death, you are not recognized as a unique child of God, the Father. Again, how do you look upon each of those children in your classroom, as unique learners, or as merely students to be taught?

But, what is the *New Testament* theology on which Christ bases His extolling of and commanding that adults become children? Ironically, we see Christ's basis for His revelation about children in His response to the Apostles' request to teach them "...how to pray":

In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him. So you should pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,  
may your name be held holy,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.  
And do not put us to the test,  
but save us from the evil one.8

Of course, both Luke and John restate this kind of prayer and its implicitly new way of viewing God.9 As a matter of fact, the centrality of the *Our Father* and, consequently, of being children of God the Father is stated by Christ

Himself in John's Gospel, as He counters the Jew's denial that they "...are not born of prostitution...(and) we have one father: God":

If God were your father, you would love me...If I speak the truth, why do you not believe me? A child of God listens to the words of God; if you refuse to listen, it is because you are not God's children.[10](#)

A child of God the Father listens to the words of God and of Christ, the "word made flesh". If you do not listen, this is due to the fact that you are not a child of God the Father. "Sorry, but you are not adoptable". Few people who call themselves Christians understand this central and basic truth of Christ's *Our Father* within the *New Testament*. This is Christ's way of introducing human beings to the new view of the first millennium, namely, that the *New Testament* ushers in the millennium of the child. To be a Christian it is necessary to be a child among children of God, the Father rather than an adult Orthodox Jew knowledgeable of the *Torah* and living to become a resident of the Promised Land. Any and all other fatherhood is secondary to and must model itself upon God, the Father. Indeed, this is the basis for Christ's central message, namely, "...let the little children alone and do not stop them coming to me; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs".[11](#)

This *Our Father* and Christ's subsequent demand foretell the very Sacramental system rooted in and growing out from the *New Testament* as a result of *grace*, the life of God which flows into the newly baptized Christian human being[12](#) - as opposed to John's *Old Testament* baptism of repentance[13](#) - and consequent upon Christ's claim that "I am the way, the truth and the life".[14](#) Baptism in Christ means that humans as orphaned from God, the creator become adopted children of God, brothers and sisters to Christ. So, the child is the center of the *New Testament*; indeed, being childlike is central to the Christian Catholic *New Testament* community. The center of the *New Testament* Holy Family is the Christ child; indeed, the child is the focus of any community of human beings because the children are the future of that community - children are the rebirth of mankind itself. So, this baptism of orphaned children of Adam and Eve effects both unity and diversity, unity of human beings as children toward God, the Father and diversity of humans within the Mystical Body of Christ.

Yet, this baptism is more. Just as the Blessed Mother became pregnant with Christ as a result of the Holy Spirit's action, so we newly baptized become pregnant with Christ Jesus. Just as Mary carried the fetal Christ within her womb until nature's nine months passed and then He was born as "the Word made flesh", so we carry this fetal Christ conceived within us by the Holy Spirit through Baptism until we bring Him to birth within the world wherein we live. This theological fact was not lost on Maria Montessori and she stated it succinctly as stated in *The Child in the Church*, close to the beginning of the second millennium:

The idea that God has so mysteriously caused a being to grow within us and through us, while we have made only a modest contribution to the process, is likely to arouse great respect. But we shall feel an even deeper reverence for the child when we fully understand how he appears to us after baptism. When a child has been baptized, and thus when his nature, which is corrupted by Original Sin, has been lowered into the grave of baptismal water and has arisen thence to new life with Christ and in the strength of the fruitful death of Christ, then we receive the child anew, who is now born again directly through God, who partakes of God with his own nature and is called a true son of God, and who is now to be in ever fuller possession of divine life. Whoever looks at the child in this way will tremble in awe, for in him he will see God. He will not see in the child the manmade possession with which he can do as he wishes.[15](#) Rather he will be keenly aware that the child belongs to God much more than he does to himself and owes his existence more to God than to himself and that he has received the needy and defenseless child from God's hands, so that as an adult child of God he may guide this little child of God in accordance with the divine will. God reveals his will on the one hand through supernatural revelation, on the other through the nature of the living things which are part of his creation. But however God reveals his will and his desires, we must heed them. When we are faced with the task of helping the child to grow in accordance with nature and the supernatural, the first requirement is to seek reverently the path God wishes us to take.

God has given the child a nature of his own, and has thereby established certain laws of development, on both the physical and spiritual spheres. Whoever has responsibility for the child's normal development must therefore follow

these laws. If we deviate from them, we shall lose the direction that God provides to guide the child, for we are not then in touch with the laws which God himself has established.[16](#)

Montessori insists that her "new" teachers accept children as they are and, as is clear from her forgoing statement this means as both natural and supernatural, as having both the laws of nature and the laws of spirit within them.[17](#) Thus, unless these "new" teachers accept children in this way, they would be subject to the same condemnation which Christ leveled against his contemporary Orthodox Jews who thought of childhood as a means to becoming an adult Jew:

Anyone who welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But anyone who is an obstacle which brings down one of these little ones who have faith in me would be better drowned in the depths of the sea with a great millstone round his neck. Alas for the world that there should be such obstacles! Obstacles indeed, there must be, but alas for the man who provides them![18](#)

Indeed, Montessori states unequivocally:

The respect which we demand for the child, we demand in the name of the Divine Friend of Children...Imitating our Divine Master we shall not let ourselves be motivated by the impulse to pomp and power, but by the respect for Christ-in-the-child who - with our help - must grow into the fullness of his personality.[19](#)

Now, again, as we near the third millennium A.D., the Catholic Church reiterates the importance of the child in a manner reminiscent of Maria Montessori; first, in the statement of Pope John Paul II on 17 August 1994, in a general audience entitled "Children, A Special Gift to the Church"; secondly, by Pope John Paul II in his apostolic letter, ***Tertio Millennio Adveniente***, issued 10 November 1994; finally, in the document entitled "The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium", published by the Congregation for Catholic Education on 28 December 1997, on the Solemnity of the Holy Family. Notwithstanding the fact that Montessori is not mentioned in any of these documents, the fact is that Benedict the Fifteenth wrote out Montessori's *The Montessori Method* in longhand and provided his apostolic blessing to this published work 21 November 1918.

Although Pope John Paul II does not mention Maria Montessori by name in his general audience statement, yet, his statements about the Catholic church's view of children echo many of the statements found in Montessori's works, particularly, the 1915 California lectures and writings and in the *Child in the Church*, Montessori's description of how she organized her ***Casa dei Bambini*** curriculum in Barcelona, Spain.

Pope John Paul II calls children "...heaven's smile entrusted to earth" and likens them to the "...lilies of the field' of which Jesus said that 'not even Solomon in all his splendor was arrayed like one of these'". This Pope states that "The presence of children in the Church is also a gift for us adults...":

(The presence of children) makes us better understand that the Christian life is first and foremost a gratuitous gift of divine sovereignty: 'Children are a continual reminder that the missionary fruitfulness of the Church has its life-giving basis not in human means and merits, but in the absolute gratuitous gift of God'.[20](#)

Pope John Paul is clear: the development of the family, indeed, the development of a community depends upon the development and growth of the child. Just as the head depends upon the heart for the blood to keep it alive, so the family and community depend upon the child as its heart to keep it alive.

Indeed, Montessori calls the child an "apostle to the adult", while observing that:

The child is indeed not conscious of his formative influence on the adults and, therefore, does not consider himself an apostle. But, what is proper to the child - his natural innocence, his affection, his self-abandon, his defenseless condition and his touching appeal for help, his timorous cry when he finds himself alone in danger - all of these marvelously move the human heart.[21](#)

Montessori wrote of a similar vision in 1946 within her *Education for a New World* as she sees the children in her classrooms to be gifts of love for the teachers because their self-revelations generate a unique love within the teachers themselves:

Our teachers thus penetrate the secret of childhood and have a knowledge far superior to that of the ordinary teacher who becomes acquainted only with the superficial facts of the children's lives. Knowing the child's secret, she has a deep love for him, perhaps for the first time understanding what love really is. It is on a different level from the personal love shown by caresses and the difference has been brought about by the children, who by their revelations of spirit have profoundly moved their teacher, bringing her to a level of which she had not known the existence; not she is there and she is happy Her happiness before was perhaps to draw as high a salary as she could get and do as little as she need for it...But there is no real happiness in this and one would readily leave it all to feel the greater spiritual happiness which the child can give, for 'Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven'.[22](#)

Pope John Paul goes on to call all to become like children and, as Christ, the suffering servant did to accept them:

The disciples were called to become like children, it was the 'little ones' who accepted revelation as a gift of the Father's gracious will (Mt 11:25). For this reason too children would be welcomed like Jesus himself: 'Whoever welcomes one such child for my sake welcomes me' (Mt 18:5).[23](#)

Montessori also echoes this call to be a servant of and to children, a fitting echo with which to begin the third millennium, 2000 A.D.:

The task of the teacher becomes that of preparing a series of motives of cultural activity, spread over a specially prepared environment and then refraining from obtrusive interference. Human teachers can only help the great work that is being done, as servants help the master. Doing so, they will be witnesses to the unfolding of the human soul and to the rising of a New Man who will not be the victim of events, but will have the clarity of vision to direct and shape the future of human society.[24](#)

Of course, Pope John Paul II not only generally recognizes the importance of the "formation" of children, but specifically requires the child's spiritual Christian formation:

The Church feels zealously committed to promoting the Christian formation of children, something that is frequently inadequate. It is a question of forming them in the faith by teaching Christian doctrine, in charity toward all, in prayer according to the most beautiful traditions of the Christian family, which for many of us are unforgettable and ever blessed.[25](#)

But, Maria Montessori anticipated this papal emphasis some sixty-two years earlier. She not only attested to the child's spiritual nature, but specified the necessity to educate children taught within her Casa Dei Bambini about the Catholic liturgy of the Mass. She saw the child as "...a human entity having importance in himself...not just as a transition on the way to adulthood...", so she discovered within children "spiritual manifestations...the interior laws for the formation of man". So, in effect Montessori recognizes that this second millennium is the millennium of the child's self-revelation:[26](#)

It is interesting to observe that in this century peculiar phenomena have occurred in children's souls. It seems that children have really succeeded in revealing themselves in all the splendor of their spiritual manifestations....The little children showed us the interior laws for the formation of man, which have given rise to a method of education that has spread throughout the world among every race.[27](#)

As a matter of fact, Montessori herself insisted that each and every one of her **Casa Dei Bambini**, even those in India install copies of "Raphael's '**Madonna della Seggiola**'" (*Madonna of the Chair*, the Virgin Mother sitting in a chair, holding the Christ Child in her lap), "...a picture we have chosen as the emblem of the children's Houses.[28](#) She chose this picture because not only is the Christ child the center of the Catholic Christian religion,

given the fact of the Our Father, but also because the child is the center of any and every family, including the community itself - as is clear within various papal documents since the Virgin Mother is the symbol of Holy Mother the Church on earth and all *New Testament* Christians are child members of that family of God the Father.

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1. *Mark*, 10:14; Scriptural texts from: *The Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday & Co., Inc. N.Y., 1966.
2. *The Presocratics*, edited by Philip Wheelwright (Odyssey Press, Inc., New York, 1966), *Fragment 95*, p. 77.
3. *Ibid.*, *Fragment 105*, p. 78.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
5. *The Wisdom of Lao-tse*, translated, edited by Lin Yutang (The Modern Library, New York, 1948) p. *Tone poem 10*, p. 83.
6. *Ibid.*, *Tone poem 55*, p. 252.
7. *The Child in the Church, Maria Montessori and Others*, edited by E.M. Standing, (Catechetical Guild, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1965), p.7.
8. *The Jerusalem Bible*, (Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1966), *Matthew*, 6: 7-13. An interesting observation on Matthew's gospel sequence is that after this description of prayer, Matthew writes that Christ rejected people who call him "Lord, Lord" and laid claim to heaven because "...did we not prophesy in your name, cast out demons in your name, work many miracles in your name?" (7:21-25). Of course, one can infer from such placement that their "sin" is that notwithstanding all these "acts" they did in Christ's name, they failed to internalize Christ's demand that they become "children" of the Father; thus, they were ineligible to be adopted into God's family!  
Now, change the scene: you, a Montessori teacher, dies and wakes up in Maria Montessori's presence; will she recognize you? After all, you will argue, "I taught the children the red and blue rods, the sandpaper letters, the cylinder blocks". "Ah, yes", she says, "but you were not little children when you did so, so you did not also learn in the process of demonstration!"
9. *Ibid.*, *Luke 11: 2-4* and *John 17:6,26*. Luke is the location wherein Christ's response is to "...one of his disciples..." request "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples". John's location provides the identification of the "Father" with Christ making God's "name" known to the world - such *naming* of **Yhwh**, of course, was a violation of the first three commandments which Moses gave to the Jewish people as part of the covenant, since such a name includes a biological basis, namely, "abba", the paternal name children use to address their fathers.
10. *bid.*, *John 8:39-47*.
11. *bid.*, *Matt. 19:13-15*.
12. Christ announces this "new life", which is to come, through Him not to the Jews but to a Samaritan woman, that is, to someone doubly "unclean", first a Samaritan and secondly a woman - both of whom were especially rejected and avoided by Orthodox Jews. *John 4:1-26*.
13. *bid.*, *Matt. 3: 13-17* and *John 1:19-51*.
14. *Ibid.*, *Matt. 10:37-39; 16:24-28; and John, 14:1-7*.
15. "Looking at" is significant. How do you, Montessori teachers look at the children? Well, you will look at the children in no different a manner than you look at yourself in a mirror. So, look into your eyes. Yes, there you will see the life of your soul, or, perhaps, the lifelessness of your soul - your boredom, your indifference, your fear, your hatred. As you observe these children, watch their eyes. You will see the life of each one's soul, the child's interest, intensity, boredom, hesitation or distraction. If you see interest and intensity, do not distract the child. If you see boredom, hesitation or distraction, then "move in" and ask about interest, suggest a material. Just as Montessori insists that the teacher control through observation, I say you must exercise that control by reading the child's eyes - the child's eyes will show you what to do.
16. This statement is reproduced in translation and taken from: *Basic Ideas of Montessori's Educational Theory, Extracts from Maria Montessori's Writings and Teachings*, (The CLIO Montessori Series, CLIO Press,

Oxford, England, 1997) pp. 177-178. This Catholic Christian insight of hers means that the three, four, five and six year old baptized children are basking in the brilliant light of Grace, literally, clothed in Jesus Christ-life. Wow! How beautiful each one is and God has entrusted them to you as sheep are entrusted to the Shepherd so that they can nurture themselves and grow! When was the last time you crossed the threshold of the class and looked at those children like that, as Maria Montessori did?

17. Thus, when one asks where you teach, or where your children go to preschool or child care and you say "Montessori school", many people listening say "Oh, really, how wonderful, a Montessori school". This response frequently has the tone of prestige, of riches, of power. But note carefully: there is no poverty here; no riches here; no power here, no privilege here - only children are here, children of God the Father and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. "Mom and Dad, you must understand", Montessori would say, "this child is a gift, not just to you, but to the community, to the world - so you, the community and the world may become people, a better place to live, a better place to live in the future than it is now".

18. *Ibid.*, *Matt: 18: 1-10*.

19. *Op. Cit.*, *The Child in the Church*, pp. 18-20. Thus, a Montessori teacher as an instrument of God the Father seeks to facilitate each child's self-development so that the new and unique physical and spiritual life each one is gifted with might be loosed into society for its betterment and increased share of living humanly.

20. Pope John Paul II, "Children, A Special Gift to the Church", 99th in the series of general audiences on the laity's role and mission in the Church and the world, 17 August 1994.

21. *Op.*, *Cit.*, *The Child in the Church*, p. 9.

22. Maria Montessori, *Education for a New World*, (Kalakshetra Publications, Adyar, Madras 20, India, 1946), p. 89.

23. *Op. Cit.*, *Children, A Special Gift to the Church*.

24. *Op. Cit.*, *Education for a New World*, p. 3.

25. *Op.Cit.*, *Children, A Special Gift to the Church*, p. 2.

26. *Op. Cit.*, *The Child in the Church*, p. 7.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

28. *Op. Cit.*, *The Montessori Method*, p. 82; this fact is further expanded upon within *The Discovery of the Child*, pp. 76-77.

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## **About Robert G. Buckenmeyer**

### **Education:**

B.A. Liberal Arts/Education, Gonzaga University, 1955;

M.A. Languages and Education, Gonzaga University, 1957;

M.A. Social and Political Theories, Univ. of So. Cal.1965;

Ph.D.Philosophy, University of Southern California, 1967.

Post-doctoral:

Montessori & Piaget, Notre Dame College (Belmont), 1968

Linguistics, University of Notre Dame (Indiana), 1969

McGeorge School of Law (Sacramento), contracts, torts, agency, 1982

### **Teaching Experience:**

Loyola High School, Sept. 1957-June 1959: English/Latin/Speech/Debate;

Belmont High School, Los Angeles USD, Oct. 1963-June 1964: English/Reading (special education)/American/Literature Composition; Mt. St. Mary's College, Sept. 1960-Aug. 1963: Latin/Philosophy/Honors Program;

Canisius College, (Buffalo, NY), Sept. 1964-Aug. 1966: Philosophy/Education;

University of Santa Clara, June 1966-Aug.1971: Philosophy/Education;  
San Jose State University, Sept.1966-June 1968,(pt-time): Phil./Education;  
Sacramento City College, Sept. 1984-June 1985, (pt-time): Philosophy/Religion;  
American River College, Sept. 1972-present, (part-time);  
Philosophy/Religion (& part-time at various state community colleges, Los Rios Com. Col. District from 1972 present).

### **Administrative Experience:**

Chair, Dept. of Phil., Mt. St. Mary's College, L.A.1961-63  
Director, Honor's Program, Mt. St. Mary's Col., L.A., 1961-63  
Secretary, Phil. Dept., Univ. of Santa Clara, 1966-68  
Originator/Director/Coordinator, Student Teachers of Purpose (STOP), a tutorial program, Osborn School, Santa Clara County Office of Education,  
United Fund of the Year Award, 1968  
Coordinator, Graduate Humanities Program, Calif. School of Professional Psychology, San Francisco, CA, 1970-71  
Director: Staff Training and Child Care: Foundation for Research and Community Development, Model Cities Program, San Jose, CA, 1971-72  
Manager, State Interagency Child Care Contracts, Office of Educational Liaison, Dept.of Health and Welfare, 1972-73  
Auditor and Auditor in Charge (AIC), Office of Audits, St. Dept. of Finance,Preschool Program Audit, 1973-74  
Principal Consultant, Assembly Subcommittee on Bilingual/Bicultural Ed.,Calif.State Legislature, 1974-75  
Auditor and Auditor in Charge (AIC), Office of Field Audits, St. Dept. of Education (SDE), child care and child care food programs, 1975-81  
Consultant contract, Feb-July, 1989, Senate Republican Caucus, John Felice, Director, Research, report on status of the Private Post-Sec. Ed. in Cal.  
Consultant, Private Post-Secondary Education Division, SDE, 1985-1990  
Program Specialist, Amnesty Education, Calif. Community College Chancellor's Office, Saeed Ali, Dean, Mar. 1991-July 1991 (retired)

### **Publications:**

Articles:

Edited "Aristotle" in Catholic Youth Encyclopedia, by Joseph Owens, 1963.  
"The Meaning of Judicium and Its Relation to Illuminatio in The Dialogues of Augustine," Augustinian Studies, Vol. 1, 1970;  
"The Life of the Body in the Early Dialogues of Augustine," Augustinian Studies Vol.2,1971.  
"The Principles of Montessori Education", American Montessori Society, Bulletin # 8, 1970;  
"Maria Montessori: Psychologist for Educators," Communicationes Association Montessori International, Holland, # 4, 1970;  
"Discovery of the Child", Constructive Triangle, Vol. 6, # 2, Fall, 1970.  
"The 'Exercise of Silence' and the Child in Montessori's Educational Theory," American Montessori Society Bulletin, 1971.  
Toward Meaningful Educational Opportunity, a history of bi-lingual education in the United States and California, Assembly Office of Research, California State Legislature, Sacramento, California, 1975.  
"Collaborators of New Helvetia: Sutter's Hawaiian Connection," to be published Spring, 1996.

### **Books:**

The Morality of Peace and War, Itelman Publishing, Santa Barbara, 1974;  
California Lectures of Maria Montessori, 1915, CLIO-ABC Publications, 1997.

**Studies:**

Toward Meaningful Educational Opportunity, Legislature, State Publishing House, Sacramento, CA., 1975.  
Fiscal and Management Status of the Licensing Office, State Department of Parks and Recreation - for Doris Allen, Assemblywoman, 71st District, Rm. 5126, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA, 95814.  
Status of the Private Post-secondary Education Business Within California & Student Default Rates By School and Accrediting Agency, Senate Republican Caucus, John Felice, Director, 1989.

**Credentials:**

General Secondary (Fisher), Grades 7-14, (GT165740).  
Supervisory/Administrative Credential, life, (No. 12595).  
Community College, life - Areas: Phil., Religion, and Education (No.17107).  
Black Belt, Tang Soo Do, Moo Duk Kwan, October, 1986, license number: 26,914

**Related Skills:**

Knowledgeable both in Mac and IBM PC computer use, WP 3.5 (preferred), Lotus 123, QuarkExpress 3.3 and Illustrator 5.5 as well as others.

## Confidential File:

Stuart Gothold, Director  
USC, Office of Educational Placement  
Waite Phillips Hall 802  
University Park - MC 0031  
University of So. California, Los Angeles, CA. 90089-0031 (as of 7/97)  
telephone: 213--740-2773  
6/99