

AMI Journal

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EDITORIAL AND CONTENTS PEACE THROUGH EDUCATION

a 1937 lecture by Maria and Mario Montessori



AMI Journal 2013
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Editorial

Converging Passages: Social Reform, Peace, and Montessori Education for Life

INTRODUCTION: THE ESSENTIAL PEACE MESSAGE

Maria Montessori had a wide-reaching life and work that reveals the example of an evolving personal vision, a deepening belief and world view regarding the “mission of man”¹ to reform both education and society. The profile of educational social reform is reached through passages or steps that are presented on several concrete levels leading to Montessori’s concept of peace. The history of Montessori’s thought follows an inexorable logic leading definitively to social reform first and peace second; that is, social reform pointing towards a new definition of peace. The mission of man—what Montessori brings to peace—seeks to fulfil education’s final aim to the fullest by benefiting the welfare of human development on the one hand, and the preservation of nature on the other.

The quest for finding the essential peace message from Montessori’s primary writings presents a myriad of topics to discuss including reverence for the formative learning capacity of the child, the ardor of social reform, the grandeur of the organic unity of life, the human-built world (supra-nature) encroaching on the natural world, and the perspective of history showing us the future (see appendix for a full listing of topics by page from *Education and Peace*, a definitive collection of lectures establishing her classical framework for reform).

It is evident that Montessori’s life work of social reform indicates a broad reform agenda that was shaped from her first reform experiences as an adult, fully expecting that education would continue taking on the oppressed and downtrodden. As we consider the origins of social reform, we cannot overlook the power of San Lorenzo as the ultimate foundation for social reform and goal for peace in Montessori’s life.

THE SAN LORENZO STORY: THE ORIGIN OF MONTESSORI REFORM

Paola Trabalzi presented a new viewpoint on the opening of the first *Casa dei Bambini*.² She described a double reality, social and educational, encountered by the young Maria Montessori, a physician, a powerful speaker for the civil rights of women, a university lecturer in anthropology, and a new manager of a building experiment in a neighbourhood known as “the shame of Italy”.³

The young Montessori was on a social mission to minister to the San Lorenzo children in need; but in the experiment, almost like an accident in the lab, Montessori encountered an educational reality she never expected to see. Montessori was no ingénue to social causes. Before 1907, her speeches reached out to the “silences of education,” to mothers with mentally retarded children who themselves had no resources with which to understand or advo-

cate for their children. Montessori persevered for these mothers' rights, in the words of Paola Trabalzini, 'the right to education, training, knowledge, employment, either factory or office work, the right to choose one's partner, and the right to vote...'.⁴

But Trabalzini also pointed out that San Lorenzo was its own *prepared environment*, a new place with indoor and outdoor activities implemented for the sake of intimate family life, 'airy, well lit, comfortable.' Around these new apartments were posted 'educational writings inspired by principles of order and preservation of the common good such as "The hygiene of the home is the children's health" or "He who cares for his home cares for himself"'.⁵

The welfare of the building was thus translated into the exercises of practical life and the responsibilities conveyed to the community. The drama of San Lorenzo is that care of the environment was a social task immersed in reality, intended to enact social reform. As Trabalzini pointed out, both freedom and peace were linked to responsible community life. But when Montessori taught the activities of personal and home hygiene to the young children there, she discovered 'their educational value: control and coordination of movements, concentration, development of independence, of the self and of social relations'.⁶ First came the intention to create social change; then came the discovery of the importance of practical life, which emerged from observing the impact of care of the environment in the framework of the San Lorenzo building.

AFTER SAN LORENZO: THE 1917 SAN DIEGO LECTURES

This journal begins with the 1917 San Diego lectures that described war, pestilence, famine, and the related suffering and loss of

human life. The encounter with the war-torn lives of children is where Montessori began her conscious view of "peace through education."

Erica Moretti introduces the San Diego lectures by discussing the pathology of war and then returns to healing with the substance of Montessori's humanitarian intent.

It was only in her [Montessori] 1917 lectures that the educator began to describe more specifically how her educational methodology could help create a more peaceful society. At the basis of this idea was the notion that her pedagogical approach would help the child form a sound psyche, and that this physically and mentally healthy child would consequently become an adult who could contribute to the creation of a world not plagued by violent conflict.

Moretti tells us that Montessori observed the symptoms of trauma in the Franco-Belgium orphans of Paris after World War I. Organized by an American, Mary Cromwell, these children made materials for the Montessori school in Paris (1918) while working alongside recuperating war veterans and refugees from World War I. By the end of World War I, Montessori saw clearly that the negative conditions of war and poverty create trauma, which she also mentioned in her peace lectures throughout the thirties. She was strongly influenced by her experiences with the San Lorenzo street children (1907), the children who survived the Messina Earthquake (1908), the single mothers and children of the Maternidad in Barcelona, Spain (1915), and the children of war-torn families at the *Haus der Kinder* in Vienna (1922).

In 1917 Maria Montessori advocated for the creation of a *Croce Bianca* (White Cross) to run parallel to the Red Cross and to be

devoted to the rescue and rehabilitation of children who had suffered from the Great War. She begins a compassionate plea for the White Cross:

There is found, in these refugee children, a special form of mental disturbance, which constitutes a real mental wound—a lesion that is as serious, if not more serious, than wounds in the physical body.

Picture these innumerable little victims, who are suffering; suffering from hunger and fatigue; often physically wounded as well; suffering from infections of every kind; but also from this more profound and prolonged lesion of the nervous system. We know that the treatment of nervous diseases cannot be by medicine. The treatment of the nervous system or nerves may properly be called education. (see page 39)

The White Cross was meant to be an organization of ‘those who seek to save the future of humanity and to heal the wounds in the hearts of these children,’ but it never materialized. However, the healing intent of Montessori most certainly seeded social reform projects like UNESCO (1950) and, after her death, the Help the Children Fund-United Kingdom (1968), Tibetan Indigenous Refugees (1969), South African Initiatives for Townships and Settlements (1978), Australian Indigenous groups (2005), and, most recently, the Corner of Hope in New Canaan, near Nakuru, Kenya (2007). Montessori believed that the best deterrents to war were the strengthening of character, the nurturing of the spirit, and what has come to be known as *positive psychology*. Some considered her discourse idealistic and her theoretical approach unrealistic, unconvincing, and not immediate enough. But she believed in the transforming power of a developmen-

tal education. Children were her call to action and her sensitivity to the personality of the child transformed the house for children into a home.

Lecture three of the 1917 San Diego lectures formulates a positive psychology that reveals a foundational tenet of Montessori’s “peace through education”:

So, we have a method of considering the human being that is different from current thought, because today we know we can influence the...inner life... And that future man, who will be healthier, more sane and more moral than we, will solve problems impossible to us.

In Franco Cambi’s article *Building Peace in interiore homine*, interior peace is distinguished from the peace of the outer world, and he credits Montessori pedagogy with a unique reconstruction of the self.

But, for Maria Montessori, there is also a place where the “secret” potentiality of childhood can and must come to light: it is school, as a space of socialization, on the one hand, and of human development, on the other. Starting from infant school, since it is here that the child is preserved and interpreted, protected and developed.

It is thus the task of education to steer him [the child] back towards his more authentic self. ... Thus, pedagogy becomes the primary instrument to give real final shape to that task of “everlasting peace” which stands before us.

The evolving aspects of Montessori’s personality theory in relation to peace and education are expressed in the concepts of normalization, normality, and valorization. *Norma* means the *norm of the species*, implying

that there are universal natural laws that govern the self-formation of the human being. Montessori writes on normalization in the *Secret of Childhood*:

The essential thing is for the task to arouse such an interest that it engages the child's whole personality...activity, freely chosen becomes their regular way of living. The healing of their disorders is the doorway to this new kind of life. (256)

The normalization concept is a spiritual drive that Montessori also writes about in *The Child and the Church*:

Its object [the Montessori Method] is to influence the whole life of the child: it aims, in short, at a total development of the personality, a harmonious growth of all the potentialities of the child, mental and physical, according to the laws of its being.

Valorization contributes to healing as it brings value back to the devalued child of war and becomes a social process where the community recognizes the contributions of each individual. Mario and Maria Montessori's article 'Peace through Education' (1937) puts the laws of development into a social context:

Each individual is made to feel that he forms a necessary and important part of an organization with aims so lofty as to seem almost unattainable. By allowing them to take part officially in the national activities, the individuals are made to feel that their help and collaboration is truly necessary if these aims are to be reached. What an immense impulse to the formation of their character!

Montessori's vision (*From Childhood to Adolescence*, 1935-pre-publication) bears her think-

ing about the importance of development during adolescence. 'Peace through Education' (1937) reflects her newly acquired framework about the strengthening of the self and uses the term *valorization* to describe this process of strengthening and of realizing one's own value which occurs as the adolescent becomes an engaged and contributing adult in the context of adulthood. The Copenhagen Congress (1937) reflects the confidence of a completed educational developmental plan wherein Montessori declared her vision of peace through six lectures primarily about education and development as the main pathway to peace.

When we speak of peace, we do not mean a partial truce between separate nations, but a permanent way of life for all mankind. This goal cannot be attained through the signing of treaties by individual nations. The problem for us does not lie in political action to save one nation or another; our efforts must be devoted, rather, to solving a psychological problem involving all mankind, and as a consequence acquiring a clear conception of the kind of morality necessary to defend humanity as a whole. (Peace through Education, insert page number from journal)

Looking ahead to the completion of Montessori's educational experience, the concept of Erdkinder adolescent programmes on the farm reorients Montessori thinking to the essential developmental interaction with the natural world. Rekindling the role of nature in balance with supranature is a developmental correlation that is seemingly self-evident, but not necessarily realized until now with the recent implementation of the adolescent Erdkinder environment. To bring Erdkinder theory into action creates a total vision of Montessori nature education and personality formation across the planes.

ERDKINDER THEORY INTO PRACTICE: THE YOUNG ADOLESCENT APPROACHING PEACE

Now, for the third plane, the exploration is even wider, encompassing the farm and the community of the rural area. It echoes what the children explored at the second plane: civilization and how it came about. But now the exploration takes place in reality because the adolescents are actually *doing* it. Cooperation with the land, cooperation in commerce, and cooperation in the cultural life of the rural society touch materially the things studied in the second plane and afford the adolescent the opportunity to see his or her place in society.⁷

Montessori clearly suggested in her pamphlet “The Erdkinder and Functions of the University” (1936) that a farm, a boarding hostel, and a store can create an optimal learning and social environment for the adolescent. She launched her idea of Erdkinder (Children of the Earth or Land-Children) after having visited German land schools (*Landerziehungsheime*) in Berlin in the early 1920s.⁸

The child under six, the elementary child, and the adolescent construct every part of the Montessori “mission of man,” expanding into maturity. Montessori education is on the threshold of its adult stage as its pedagogy climbs the developmental ladder from birth to adolescence, immersed in successive prepared environments. There are glimpses in our experimental construct that the new adolescent will be the embodiment of service to humanity, seeking collaborative ways to enter society as a conscious contributor.

If one studies the unity, diversity, and scope of Montessori’s thinking about the planes of education, then the adolescent becomes *de facto* a Montessori agent of change or of

peace—knowing how to be useful, how to help mankind, developing a social reality through building a responsibility to his or her own farm community, and then the village, and on to the world. The clearest embodiment of Montessori peace is the authentically educated adolescent, who has achieved the following:

- the development of a personal mission and activism;
- the exercise of virtues, values, and skills directed to human work;
- the commitment to social reform that demonstrates how enlightened service can be done as a series of projects and experiments based on community engagement;
- the understanding that personal specialization is a practical method of contributing to society, whilst at the same time possessing a vision beyond the limits of one’s own specialization or role.

The Erdkinder concept, the adolescent on the farm, suggests a community aspect of belonging to a place, to a system of economic production and exchange, to an intimate boarding experience of adults working alongside children, to conditions of learning where the materials are the components of the farm environment leading to academic contexts. And this concept is where Montessori dramatically navigates away from conventional education and carefully defines her approach to reform:

The need that is so keenly felt for a reform of secondary schools concerns not only an educational but also a human and social problem. This can be summed up in one sentence: Schools as they are today, are adapted neither to the needs of adolescence nor to the times in which we live. Society has not only developed into a state of utmost complication and

extreme contrasts, but it has now come to a crisis in which the peace of the world and civilization itself are threatened.⁹

Never in the Montessori literature has the call for “reform” been so intense and so vigorously aimed at the problems of our times as with the adolescent. The importance of adolescence is that it is a second formative period, and Montessori looks to adolescence to give the final personality piece—or even the final missing personality piece—to equip the adolescent as a free agent of social reform and peace-building efforts.

The farm as slice of real life is critical to early adolescence. To experience the hard reality of economics, production and exchange, to care for oneself and for others, to understand the harsh, clashing reality between nature’s balancing systems and the human-built world—these are some of the real outcomes of Montessori education on the land. The Montessori adolescent is “called” to be different, to have a certain seriousness about what one’s life needs to include to be a positive and contributing citizen. In this journal, Laurie-Ewert Krockner writes about the socialization of farm-based young adolescents.

Adolescents do have universal developmental needs and characteristics, and those needs and characteristics have mostly to do with socialization, social identity, and establishing social organization in a group. The development of the individual’s potential, freedom to choose, independence in skill and thought, and individual identity are all important—but *emerge only in the context of the social group*. The quality of the environment in which this social being is nurtured and the culture they adopt within the social group are crucial shaping forces at this time of life. We cannot support adolescent development without seri-

ous consideration of the configuration of the environment if we are concerned about the shaping of morally conscientious human beings for whom the interdependent web of life is real and necessary. (p. _____)

THE MONTESSORI HIGH SCHOOL: ADOLESCENT BECOMING ADULT

The final bridge to a greater society is the Montessori high school, where there is an intensification of the call to action implicit to becoming an adult. Social life must transition from the elementary cooperative cosmic studies to the adolescent farm community to a new, larger context of a limited but real community. This community is squarely placed in an adult world that is urban, socially and culturally diverse, creative, and immersed in business and service to others. Elizabeth Henke writes in this journal,

The developmental needs of the adolescent, particularly as they relate to the academic disciplines, revolve around deeply understanding the times in which they live and discovering how they are capable of positive action within the world. I have come to believe the older adolescent in search of a role to play in society, seeks, at an even deeper level, to understand the universe and his place within it. Adolescents are constantly asking the internal questions, ‘Who am I in relation to human society? Where do I fit into this society? and How can I serve others within society?’ (Davis, 2008). These questions are explored through the shifting lenses of the academic disciplines and the development of social life with the help of teacher-experts. (see p. 145)

The adolescent becoming an adult reveals the essential characteristics of the kind of human that will take on an engaged commitment for peace. As the secondary school

embodies the “mission of man,” Regina Feldman, a history teacher of older adolescents at the high school level, sees a possible realization of the peace mission in her teaching.

The science of peace hence is an education without borders to be taken far beyond the four walls of a classroom to “transform ideals into actions,” as the slogan of the *Montessori Peace Now* initiative says, for the betterment of society. The high school is the training ground for a *scientia conaturalis*, an exalted type of knowledge for a new world where ‘the knower becomes the known, the dancer becomes the dance, the peace seeker becomes peace. No need for concepts, just a displayed, seamless habit of knowledge and action’ (Wyatt) that evolves with change in and around us.¹⁰

THE ROLE OF THE NATURAL WORLD

In 2013 the natural world is emphasized as a means to peace on the planet, because in effect no matter what the age and stage of life, from newborn to senior citizen, nature has a role to play.

The critical function of the natural world is that it provides continuity in the prepared environment at each plane of education; as the child gets older, nature’s role takes on a wider scope as a material for development. Nature is the ultimate psychodiscipline—a network of systems that integrates knowledge and transforms the personality at the same time. The following is borrowed from the *Guided by Nature* exhibit in Portland, 2013, summarizing its intent to showing the unfolding integration of nature and learning across the planes of education leading to Montessori’s broadest concept of peace. (exhibit presentation on page_____)

At the primary level, the absorbent mind reaches nature through the physical indoor and outdoor space for enriched experience in the Children’s House.

At the elementary level, after nature arouses the imagination, classification organizes the child’s knowledge, introducing abstract principles that explain natural phenomena. Nature also provides an evolutionary sequence that points to one’s place in the world. Real experience in nature is still a fundamental and essential requirement.

At the adolescent level, nature is a collaborator. The adolescent produces in partnership with nature. While cooperating with plants and animals, adolescents also need to cooperate with each other. The *Erdkinder* provides a basis for social life and commerce, and it creates a new kind of social knowledge based on farm experiences during the formative years of twelve to fifteen.

While it is the adolescent who brings down the final curtain on our stage of Montessori developmental reform, it is the sweep from early childhood to adolescence in a Montessori school that actualizes reform. If the adolescent programmes by design are small communities in school and outside school, either urban or rural, then we no longer have places called schools that are anything like the traditional schools of the past. Instead, the school reshapes itself to become the organic culture envisioned in the utopian annals of “Human Solidarity in Time and Space”:

This is the great task of education: to make the child conscious of the reality and depth of human unity.... Above all, we must make the children understand how extraordinarily moving it is that men are not united by their inter-

ests alone, but that a deeper bond exists at the very root of their brotherhood....

I cannot insist enough, therefore, on the importance of history, in any and all its details, if we are to educate the children to an awareness of universal solidarity.¹¹

THE ESSENTIAL PRESENT: THE MONTES-SORI CHILD IN NATURE

Given the focus on nature's evolution and impact on human culture at both the elementary and adolescent levels, Montessori's emphasis on the role of the natural world in the Montessori school approximates the views of E.O. Wilson, who wrote, 'Biophilia, if it exists, is the innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms'.¹² *Innately* means that love of nature is a fundamental human characteristic of development, integral to various levels of how the human learns, feels, bonds, understands his or her place, and grows up in harmony with all of nature. Montessori developmental theory implicitly supports biophilia, providing the psychological basis for what today is considered the green revolution, another avenue of reform. 'It is not enough to study in books about nature; one must encounter the forest, the trees and all life which emanates from the natural world.'¹³

This inner attraction humans have for nature is part of what Montessori called the "love of the environment". The self is propelled by this powerful desire to touch, feel, smell, see, hear, and absorb the surrounding natural world. For the primary child, the home and school grounds offer those experiences. For the elementary child, "going out" into nature for short periods awakens biophilia. Finally, for the adolescent, the farm community provides a variety of nature experiences for study and work. With the

loss of emphasis on the importance of natural places to child development having recently come to the attention of the media, this part of Montessori is especially relevant to overall school reform in our time. For the future, if the human-nature encounter does not improve, there is of course an imminent collapse of the ecosystems we depend on for life itself.

CONCLUSION: EDUCATEURS SANS FRONTIÈRES—A SYMBOLIC RETELLING OF REFORM GOING FROM PAST TO FUTURE

Looking at the altruistic motivations of Montessori's social applications as well as her international outreach provides insight into reform efforts too numerous to detail in this writing: Montessori for children with physical handicaps, Montessori for earthquake and war orphans, Montessori for children of unwed mothers, Montessori for children with mental and emotional handicaps, Montessori for the support of oppressed women, and Montessori as a champion for peace. Montessori's life was one of social reform and it was lived as a pedagogy for the oppressed.

There are also the recent projects of today's developing communities: Montessori in Romania, Montessori in China, Montessori in South Africa, Montessori in Tanzania, Montessori in Thailand, Montessori in the Tibetan Children's Villages, Montessori in urban centres, Montessori for the rural poor of Mexico, Montessori in Nicaragua, Montessori for the Aboriginal peoples of Australia, Montessori for Native Americans. These early childhood initiatives make social waves by empowering the disenfranchised, poor, or damaged communities of the world.

Many of the above-mentioned projects demonstrate a universal form of community

reconstruction through their Montessori schools. The indigenous community leaders themselves take charge of the Montessori schools, forming councils or boards, and they often become organizers of community services as well as Montessori education. Montessori methods and materials, based as they are in universals, contain no cultural bias. The emphasis on practical life specific to the culture; the use of sensory materials based on colour, shape, smell, and touch; the geometric visualization of math and grammar symbols; and the beginning focus of creation tales are all an education that is accessible to mainstream majority and indigenous minority cultures alike.

In 1999, emerging from the inspirational collaboration of Renilde Montessori and Camillo Grazzini, AMI established the Educateurs sans Frontières (EsF):

The Educateurs sans Frontières are to become a new corps of workers in the Montessori movement, cattedra ambulante of Maria Montessori's educational reform with its vision of a deep ecology which, in evolutionary terms, is suddenly and rapidly permeating human consciousness.¹⁴

The educateur "workers" may organize around any kind of social challenge and provide Montessori expertise such as for the elderly, the refugee, the environment, etc., with a general focus beyond that of schooling. Most importantly, the adolescent can work as a junior educateur along side the adult.

Both the educateur and adolescent experiments require us 'to revisit Montessori principles and practices from the perspective of society at large'.¹⁵ Both projects involve activities beyond school and home. Both psychologies represent an augmented view of a humanity without borders: humanity as

a whole. The experience of social valorization (strong social validation) experienced by both the adolescents and the educators in their own seminars during and after their community endeavours, provides a "noble" sentiment to serve the whole of civilization.

The EsF initiative cycle comes back to Montessori's double consciousness of social and educational reform at San Lorenzo. It presents to the Montessori trainer and practitioner a future look at the intersection between Montessori education and social reality:

When Montessori principles are applied in the wider context of society, their possibilities are vast and all-encompassing. They can be of incalculable help to parents, social workers, child-care workers, family counsellors, in short, to any person involved with the developing human being; they can be, and have been applied with children undergoing lengthy hospitalisation, maladjusted children, physically impaired children, children victims of violence, children abandoned, children at risk.¹⁶

We can look at EsF as a symbol of convergence where Montessori pedagogy returns to matters of social relevance. Academic disciplines in Montessori schools are transformed into materials for development of spiritual aims and world peace, where the history of our ideals is immersed in the importance of universal social relationships through concrete community experiences in Montessori schools, and ultimately beyond Montessori schools.

In 2013 the adolescent is poised for action, the Montessori educator is waiting to enter into the higher calling of world service. The San Lorenzo past is hurtling toward the future, but there is one aspect of Montessori that is unknown, an aspect that

only the ghost of Montessori future knows for sure. Can we make our reform complete and bestow a living reality to the lines and slogans that point to human solidarity, peace, and unity?

These are elevating thoughts, but at the level of day-to-day reality, they remain more vision than sustainable action. Montessori reform must be directly linked to the highest level of adult contribution from our gradu-

ates and future colleagues. These contributions must be in the form of real and focused service to improve spiritual, ecological, social, and economic realities for present and future peace on earth.

David Kahn

APPENDIX

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Table compiled by Renee Pendleton



Peace through Education

Two years before the outbreak of World War II, in 1937, the Sixth International Montessori Congress on Peace was held in Copenhagen. During one of the lectures the Congress participants were addressed by Maria and Mario Montessori who pleaded that humankind must come to terms with themselves and the environment. They recognized that increasing efforts were being made all over the world to understand the elusive concept of peace, as more and more groups of people were organizing peace efforts in their communities.

In organizing its 6th International Congress—on the theme *Educate for Peace*—the Association Montessori Internationale did not intend to depart from its aim of protecting and illustrating the personality of the child, joining instead the political struggle. On the contrary, many societies are fighting in the field of politics to stem the immediate danger of an overwhelming and general conflict. But we want to draw attention away from the blinding and passion-raising actualities and to fix it upon the need for a constructive effort, showing what contributions the child and education can bring to this effort.

The effort for peace must not be limited to last-minute endeavours to remedy political errors, nor can peace be secured by justly or unjustly blaming one or another form of government. Even if these are considered to be the cause of the present danger, the blame cannot be laid upon them but rather upon Society which allowed conditions to develop that made these forms of government necessary. Peace is a complex, many-sided construction that has never yet existed. At present, its name merely implies the cessation of war. In order to attain peace something must be done besides preaching vague idealisms.

To determine the conditions for establishing peace in the world, indirect and complex

factors must be studied and organized into a structured science. The most important of these factors is the human one. Peace is essentially a human problem. Therefore, the human element should be our first consideration. To date, it is given almost no attention at all.

In Man a dual personality exists: the far-sighted conqueror of the external environment and the blind slave, ignorant of his own inner energies. Man has solved many of the riddles of the Universe. Mankind has become united by material and intellectual interests to form one nation. Man has conquered hidden forces and he rules the earth, yet, this ruler of the outer world has not succeeded in conquering his own inner energies. Among the innumerable ideas determining the concept of peace, these energies remain conspicuously absent.

The place education holds in the great interests of humanity is secondary—it is considered a luxury rather than a necessity. In times of stress, if any cuts are to be made, it is the budget for education which usually suffers. This is because, especially in democratic countries, education plays the minimal role of imparting in an abstract way certain ideas contained in a standard syllabus.

The role of education should be a very different one. It should hold first place among human interests and, even if it retains the

same name, its scope must be much wider. It must place the human personality at its very centre. In creating its programmes it must be guided by the laws of psychic development. These have never yet been considered in education. Nor has the fact been taken into consideration that if an adult is strong or weak in character, if he is balanced or unbalanced, it is due to the conditions he met with during his psychic growth. The structure of education should not only have as its basis the protection of Man during his physical development and the response to the vital needs of the growing child but also the knowledge and valorization of the moral attributes inherent in Man.

Much is said today against unitary forms of government which are criticized for restricting the liberties and the rights of Man. Few, however, realize that, no matter how hard their discipline may be towards the adult, the unitarians valorize by every means the personality of Man in the process of development. Although this valorization is built around the ideals of their respective regime, it is nevertheless a valorization and it starts from a very early age. Each individual is made to feel that he forms a necessary and important part of an organization with aims so lofty as to seem almost unattainable. By allowing them to take part officially in the national activities, the individuals are made to feel that their help and collabora-

tion is truly necessary if these aims are to be reached. What an immense impulse to the formation of their character! What a tremendous enhancement of the dignity, of the inner values of the individual, to feel the importance of being a constructive unit in a disciplined organization with altruistic aims and to have this importance recognized officially, even at four years of age, when passing in front of a General the latter renders him the same military salute with the same dignity as he renders to the adult soldier. Is it to be marvelled at that, in individuals so valorized, constructive enthusiasm forms part of the psychic constitution, sacrifice appears as a pleasant means to achieve an aim and discipline and obedience are sought with joy?

No, nor is it to be marvelled at that all efforts of democracies to infuse a spirit of peace in their youth meet with a lukewarm response. It is not—as many believe—that human nature is bad or warlike, far from it. It is only that democracy treats its youth in a benighted fashion.

Democracies valorize individuality when it has reached the adult stage but the adults who have had no active preparation towards any definite aim are divided into classes groups which are in a state of continuous conflict. These often destroy—and always hinder—the method of progress advanced or elaborated by a class with views different



Montessori-Kongressen.

Paa Billedet ses i Midten Undervisningsminister Jørgen Jørgensen, ved hans venstre Side Dr. Maria Montessori, til venstre for hende Fru Ventgødt og Dr. Mario Montessori. Bag Dr. Maria Montessori ses Folketingsmand Zahle, og Forstander for Statens Lærerskole, Vilhelm Rasmussen, ses i hvid Vest.

Christiansborg

Montessori Congress Denmark, from a Danish newspaper clipping

from their own. Yet, democracies valorize freedom of the individual's personal values no matter what class he belongs to nor to what race. Democracies protect and cultivate individuality and personality for their own sakes. By law, any citizen born in the United States can become President. Any attack on, or attempt to restrict, personal liberty is strongly resented individually and collectively. So the democratic state is considered by the majority as the best, as the one most corresponding to our civilization, as the careful protector and cultivator of the independent human personality. And so it is. But only for those individuals who have reached the adult stage. For Man in the course of development, democracies have a dictatorial regime, worse than any witnessed in the past or in the present, among adults. The developing individual is not given any consideration whatsoever. His needs, the natural laws governing the growth of his intelligence and of spiritual and moral values, are not even remotely taken into account. The only real interest in education is the development of programmes in the schools and theoretical inculcation of moral or religious principles outside the schools. Thus is imposed on the developing individual a life in which, hour by hour, he depends—both in action and in thought—entirely on the actions and the thoughts of the adult from whose authority he has no appeal. This weakens the will of the individual who remains apathetic, depressed, unconsciously humiliated, dissatisfied and unable to act without continual guidance. So, on reaching adulthood, in order to live and to take part in the life of the nation, he throws himself into the group which seems to embody ideas that express his inner dissatisfactions. Is it a wonder that these young people will respond with little enthusiasm to the theories of peace which demand from them still further

passivity, still greater resignation to violence? Is it not much more natural to rebel, to find expression in theories and the practice of measuring strength against strength?

Among the means advocated for attaining the *Psychology of Peace* the ones more frequently mentioned are the reform of teaching history, the teaching of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the teaching of a common language. That education ought to be reformed, if we wish to achieve a mentality of peace, is self-evident. Every peace movement is convinced of this and has an educational commission. But we must be very careful as to the path we take for the wrong path will bring wrong results and, through these, discouragement and the conviction that human nature is not made for peace.

If education for peace is to be attained, another path must be taken. The proposed reforms would leave unaltered all the conditions which lower and often destroy the values of the growing individual but the crushing tyranny would remain unchanged. The only difference would be that certain subjects, instead of others, would be imposed upon minds often rebellious. The futility of these reforms by themselves is shown by the following facts. In learning history, nothing is so tiring to the pupil as having to remember a series of dates and names of wars or battles. It is certainly not this boredom which will evoke enthusiasm for war in the pupil, rather the contrary. The use of a common language is recommended under the illusion that, if only one language were used, humanity would reach a universal understanding and solve conflicts by discussion instead of violence. But do they not speak the same language in Spain? (This was written during the Spanish Civil War). Did they not speak the same language in South America during the Paraguayan-Bolivian war?

These are only two of the hundreds of cases that might be mentioned. As for teaching the Covenant of the League of Nations, if theoretical teaching were sufficient to promote a moral construction which would respond to the aim we are trying to achieve, all wars would have ceased in Christian nations some 2000 years ago. The Gospel is something much more inspiring, much more profound and divine than any Covenant since, according to Christian belief, God is its author. It is taught minutely and profoundly to people of all ages. Yet, if we look back upon history, we see that even Christians' wars did not cease. Educational reform cannot be achieved without taking into account the laws of psychic growth.

Long experience has shown the extent of the child's contribution to solving the problem of achieving peace. The child has revealed the laws of human growth and the needs peculiar to each of its different stages of development. The innate tendency of human nature is to achieve an increasingly refined form of independence growing from basic functional independence to mental abstraction and social acquisitions. These different acquisitions are conquered in different epochs of life through a special sensibility placed by nature into each individual, a sensibility that lasts only through the time in which the acquisition is made leaving the perfected mechanism for the individual to use through the exercise of his will.

Usually no consideration whatever is given to the vital needs of the developing human being: the basis of education is a cultural and moral programme which the experience of centuries has dictated as necessary: this is imposed and to this the individual must adapt himself. Human nature rebels, not against the programme, but against the way it is imposed. The impulses of growth compel the individual in one direction, the

imposition of the adults force him into another path. Thus work becomes hateful, and a natural defence arises in the individual. The result is a permanent conflict both in the home and the school where 'the healthy hate between pupil and teacher', as a modern writer has expressed it, has become historical. To curb rebellion and encourage children towards the path, indicated by the adult, punishments and prizes are used. Collective discipline is achieved but only external discipline, which lasts as long as fear lasts, but which turns into the wildest disorder as soon as the restraining hand is taken away. Resentment, hate of work, cruelty, love of possession, competition and facility to be influenced by suggestion become part of the personality. And this is so prevalent, and so general as to be considered natural to mankind.

Children in their school communities—in the old systems of education—gave a picture, in miniature, of the masses which form society. If a teacher left the class pandemonium broke loose as soon as his steps died away. Objects were thrown, ink was splattered about, the walls of the room were soiled with balls of chewed paper, children screamed at the top of their lungs. When, for some reason, the government and the commanders of the army lose control the same phenomenon—but with more tragic consequences—happens in the country. Arson and murder are committed, convents are burned, priests and innocent citizens are tortured by people who, until some days before, had led peaceful and respectful lives.

The master comes back to meet with sullen and defiantly triumphant silence on the part of the pupils to which he responds with scathing words, punishment and sharpened discipline. Repression, punishment and stern disciplinary action are the results of any outbreak in the adult world: 'for only

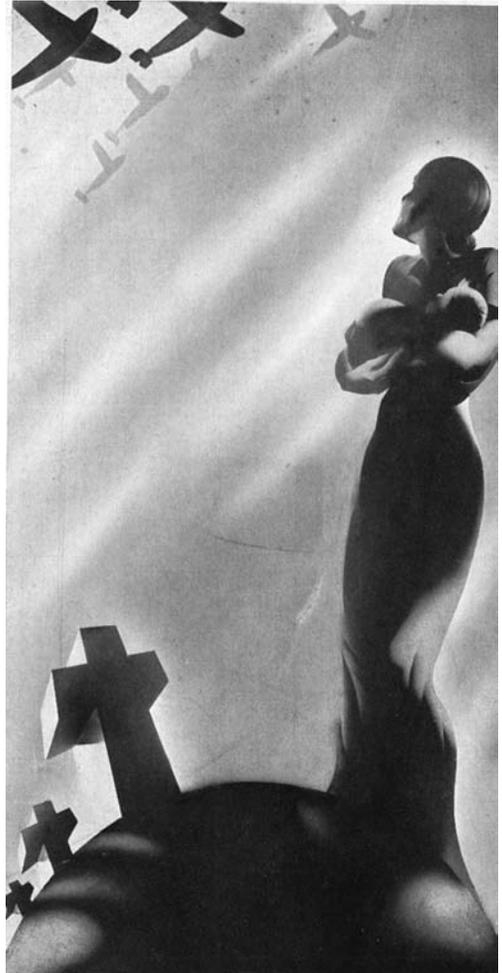
discipline will keep anarchy away, the world cannot function without law and order’.

True, very true! Even anarchy, when triumphant, must and does resort to law and order. But there is a good and better world! Anarchy need not exist and imposed discipline may become unnecessary. When children were given what corresponded to their needs they showed something fundamental—the real nature of Man—heretofore hidden under the cloak of psychological defences. They not only adapted to the moral and cultural programme considered necessary by our civilization but they sought it with enthusiasm and a spontaneous discipline developed. It was a calm inner discipline caused by activity and collaboration. Also, such a love for work developed as to clearly prove that in childhood work is a natural necessity. Possessiveness disappeared because objects were only means to an end and had no other value in themselves. The children showed love for their companions and for their teachers. They went out of their way to assist those who needed help and they did it with simplicity and enthusiasm, not as a sacrifice, but as a pleasure.

The children, under the old conditions, reflected the mass psychology of society even as it exists today. Let us provide new conditions that will allow them to give us a true picture of the society of the future.

Maria Montessori
Mario M. Montessori

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A poster symbolizing women of the world protecting life against the aggressions of war.