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NOTES ON A LECTURE BY MARIA MONTESSORI

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Stum*

It is our duty to help the psychological as well as the physical development - to help, assist, co-operate with those innate forces by which he is to grow. This is a different thing from what is generally called education -- which is generally thought to be to educate, instruct, direct the child on his way.

We start from a different point of view - which is of a development which is to be carried on (spontaneously) by means of the environment.

In the beginning the child's muscular system is not co-ordinated and there is a parallel development of the physical and psychological - the images which the child receives through the senses and the co-ordination of his movements.

So in the beginning is by means of a development which is carried out through the exercises of his senses and movement.

Not a question of reasoning with the child OF reasoning with him till he understands our way instead of imposing our will.

No we believe in allowing the child to act from his own primitive instincts through movement plus the senses.

When we speak of INSTINCT we mean a force or an energy which WHICH DIRECTS HIS DEVELOPMENT

Lecture -2-

The child becomes more and more conscious of his actions by the exercise of his senses plus movement .

He gains experience and this experience serves him as a hidden guide .

This is a delicate stage of development which deserves our respect .

As with all things which are in process of development the organism has need of calm surroundings .

Instead of - like some people thinking that we must prepare for him sensorial experiences to stimulate his intelligence and that we must act on his senses we think that the child is an energy in itself which derives images for itself as the child's mind stretches out to grasp .

.The child is always an energy which grasps not a passive recipient but an energy which proceeds all on its own from within outwards

He is not a passive recipient of sensations prepared for him by the teacher . He is an ACTIVE AGENT capable of comprehension like a hand

We may compare his intelligence to a searchlight which can be turned at will in any direction -where the band of light falls the things on which it falls become visible . But this choice (on which the light will fall) comes from within - guiding the act of comprehension

II IT NOT A RANDOM AND CAPRICIOUS CHOICE ? A WANDERING CAPRICE . IT IS A DIRECTING DEVELOPMENT One of those

marvellous activities we see in living things .

THE ORDER WITHIN

It is not simply by taking things from without that the organism is formed : it is not only this choice which has a creative force

Within is a wonderful engine at work . There is an inner order by which we are enabled to distinguish things .

DISTINGUISHING DIFFERENT GROUPS

Thus we see the mind of the child quite spontaneously arranges its experiences from without in different groups - e.g. into colours , sounds , numbers etc It not only chooses sensations but places them in order in his mind . This enables him to orientate himself in this confusion of impressions . This explains what we do not sufficiently marvel at - the way the child gets his bearings in the world . (Even his mistakes show this eg.)

HE DISTINGUISHES THINGS - it is not necessary for us to distinguish them for him . He has not in his mind a chaos but a DAWNING ORDER .

Just as his tissues develop in an orderly way as he takes in nourishment from outside so in his psychic being there is formed an orderly Zusammenhang - a harmonious system in his mind $\frac{1}{2}$

The intellect distinguishes . When we say that the child has a developing intelligence we mean he is learning to distinguish things .

The Sensitive period . These activities are more marked at certain epochs than at others S.P order 2-3 $\frac{1}{2}$ yrs .

just as in physical development there are certain epochs which bring into prominence certain developments .

Then follows a paragraph or two about the S.P.f or order . The external order is reflected in an internal order - a non vicious circle .

This power of creating an inner order is in VARIABLY found in nature.

but the environment in which the child finds himself may be too complicated .

THE environment becomes more and more complicated Human nature does not change , but the environment becomes more and more complex . So that at last the child's mind cannot make this order completely ; and the ideas of the child may become blurred and confused .

So to help him out of this difficulty we have to come to his aid by giving him an environment simplified and put in order .

What we give him corresponds to the giving of a light
Effort still needed

But because it is natural for the child to act in this way - to build up a system of order within corresponding to the world without it does not mean that he does it without effort - an effort which may be more or less difficult according to the help we give him in preparing the environment

Therefore we place the small child in this envt. and we know he has this form of activity ; but it is a fatiguing work this trying to figure things out . It is like a person

on a new rold as the dawn comes : it still takes time to
sort things out.

The child is a spontaneous observer of his environment
and continually goes in search of new experience (The
Young Explorer) Our starting point is How are we to
assist him ?

This used to be done by Object Lessons ; but this
is absurd .We are at such a different stage of developmrnt
that it is ridiculous for us to choose his objects .