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# Box 09, Folder 40 - "A Revelation, Not a Method" (draft duplicate) (E.M.S.)

Edwin Mortimer Standing

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#### A REVELATION NOT A METHOD

morning

One day in the summer of 1950 I called on Dr Montessori. She was thus stating at a guest house at Iglis a village in the hills above Innebruck. As I entered she put aside a pencil and paper with wich set had been occupying herself beofre I came in . I begger her pardon for intruding and said I would call another time as she was occuppied. "It is nothing she said -nulla - I was just trying to jot down some thoughtsthat had come to me, but it is no use - or words be that effect.

She had a rather sad expression on her face, and I wondered if it had anything to do with the thoughts that she had been tying to put to paper. I made another tentative suggestion that max I should go and leave her h peace : but she insisted on my staying.

In the course of our conversation I discovered that the thoughts that she had been brooding over had to do with the discovery and reception she had met in the world in relation to her lifes work. Not for the fisrt time she then expressed her dissatisfaction - more her sorrow - that the world had come to look upon her chiefly as the discoverer and founder of The Montessori Method of Education .

During the whole of the past decade of her life this suffect seemed to be more and more on her mind. It is not my method that is important she would say : it is the children who are to be studied - .

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The position ( the place ) of the child would not be - as i most religious oders which fie so much good for the children that of a work of charity,xxTherexarexetigissexerderax giving them instruction and an occupation.

This Maria Montessori said quite clearly ; and it was thus that there becaome losar in my mind my dream - or amm - of " assiting thelife of the child ". In fact Montessori did not think of religion as a part of the time table of the school thus " religion from such and such an hour tosuch and such a time "

I haddly know how b express wh at I mean  $\frac{1}{2}$  It is more like a matter of hygene. Everything in thehouse should be hygenic ( physical and mental ) T The organistion of the school -down to the simplest details - should be based on hygene. (But the word hygene in this case has a very wide ntoation :it refers not only ot physical hygene - cleanliness and good food and fresh air and so on - but also to what one might call the hygen of the mind and the spirit ) Montessof did not regard religion simply as a matter of knowledge ,a simily subject to study: but rather the very basis - the form - on which everything proceeds .-and so to respect

and encourage the good . She used to decribes as "conversions " those cases in which a difficult child - or if you like a bad one -

enter into the order . When this happens it resubles a cure in which the medicine which effects it is the ordered environment , the liberty to choose the good in it , and the path which hasopened up in front of the child which leads to self -perfectionament.

COMPARED TO PURGATORY

The religious order , with the child as its centre , makes one thinl of a contiual purification .Somebody , writing of the Montessori "ethod compared it to a sort of Purgatory .( not in the notion of suffering but rather in that of purification . Though actually theologians tell us that the sould in purgaroy are happy - just continual because of their progress towards perfection )I have lost the article but I know it please the Dottoressa .

It is a fact that the child acts - and acts by himself guided of course b the knowledge of ow the materials should be used. By bimself he correctshis own errors - one might say that he "explates them repeating them over and over again. But he also repetas the exercises when he has learned how to do them properly: now he repeats them not in order to do them better , but because by repeating them he sees farer and understands more deeply . This reminds one of an episode in the life of 3t Teresa of Avila .She used to meditiate repeatedly on the humanity of Our Lord . When someone said toher she shoulf meditiate atms on the Divinity of Our Lord the Saint replied "I am waiting for the time when Our Lord will Himself raise me up so that I can meditiate on His Diminity . This puts me in mind of what happened in my school once . A little child called Clare was matching - pairing - the colours - two and two the same , and so on. "ext to her another child was doing the gradation of colours - a more difficult task , grading eight shades of the same colour . Clare did not realise what she was doing . This went on for several days when suddenly Clare saw- her eyes were opened to what Clare had

"I 'm going to do that too "exclaimed Clare and began doing the grading of the colours. And why did she begin doing it just that dys and that moment after several days had gone by ? The impulse came from within --before she was blind now she could see.