

Have Faith in the Child

By Dr. Maria Montessori

The following extract is from an article Dr. Montessori wrote on 'Disarmament in Education'. The article first appeared in the Montessori Magazine Vol. 4 No. 3, July 1950 and was later reprinted in Communication 1965, 4.

It is not enough to be well intentioned and perceptive. Love is dynamic. If we love someone, we want to do something for him. If we love the child, we must realise that he has been neglected and forgotten in a world very rich in varied and beautiful things that are superfluous. We must therefore follow a new and wider path. This will not only make the child happier but will be a source of unimagined wealth and glory for our own lives.

From this we realise that an adequate social environment must be created from the start of life. Love teaches us to be constructive. Not only that, but if one looks back on the dim trail of human existence we find something very strange. Love has made us humble and has made builders of us. We are like bees which not only collect honey for their very young, but build for them a house of wax because both the honey and the wax are essential to them. This is so for the physical side, but as far as mental health is concerned the human young is still a 'forgotten citizen'. This is why we must construct a social environment. On the physical side the child's needs have begun to be recognised and many architects are now specialising in the building of houses for children whose needs and tastes are different from ours and who have the right to a house of their own and to all that is needful for their physical life and growth.

This is the direction which we must take if we wish to create a new humanity because the loving child who feels himself loved has a dynamic character. He is a child who works a great deal, who has no fear of effort and who seeks that discipline which is natural to men who live normal lives. The loving child if provided for, when reaching maturity will be the New Man.

I maintain that it is possible to foresee a new society in which man will be more world-social, because when he was a child, people had faith in him. He will also be more cultured, have more mental energy and more equilibrium. I also hold that, if properly provided for, the children - who love to work and who therefore work spontaneously and without fatigue - will absorb by the

time they are twelve as much as is expected now of a child fifteen. 'But', it will be objected, 'when the children grow old, they will not always be fresh spiritually; you have too much confidence in human goodness'.

No, I am not over-confident. My personal experiences with humanity have been such as to make me the most fanatic pessimist. Mine is not a vision, it is reality. It is possible that when these children I speak of will grow old, they will no longer be spiritually fresh, so pure, so dynamic. But they will have this advantage over us, they will have faith in youth and provide for their spirit. The spirit should be eternally young - and it is the spirit which recognises the essential goodness of mankind.

Dr. Maria Montessori

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