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Review of the publication: Maria Montessori “Odkrycie dziecka” [The Discovery of the Child]

Education is an intrinsic part of human life.

Its function is to offer external support for the evolution of the soul.

(Maria Montessori)

Odkrycie dziecka is an original work that has been written by Maria Montessori. First that book was published in Italian language and then translated into many languages including English – *The Discovery of the Child* – and German. The Polish version was published in 2014, thanks to the involvement and knowledge of dr Barbara Surma, who is a specialist and a practitioner of Maria Montessori’s pedagogy, and a translator and a journalist, mgr Aleksandra Pluta, who studied in Rome and knows that culture particularly well. The *Palatum* Publisher has obtained the permission to place the sign of *Association Montessori Internationale* AMI to confirm the reliability and compatibility of translations of this book.

The publication shows the results of long-lasting and interdisciplinary pedagogic research (the theoretical research and observations) of Maria Montessori who was a medical doctor (the first woman physician and surgeon in Italy). She also studied philosophy and psychology. Maria Montessori derived some inspiration and information from the work of E.M. Weber, G. T. Fechner, W.M. Wundt, A. Binet and E. Seguin. Her magnificent books that are popular in Europe (especially in the UK, the Netherlands, Spain), the US and even in Asia (India) fascinate many researchers.

At the beginning of the book there is an interview (carried out 22 March 2014 in Łódź) with the Chairperson of the *Association Montessori*, on Dr M. Miksza, who expressed her gratitude for publishing the book and emphasized the meaning of the Polish version of *The Discovery of the Child* for Polish readers, including teachers and practitioners of Maria Montessori's pedagogy. She also asked two important questions: *Are the thoughts of Maria Montessori relevant nowadays? And: How can we teach children about love and peace?* She did not leave any answers for the readers after they had read the book.

That book consists of twenty-four chapters that present all the contents of the Maria Montessori method and pedagogy, from its historical development to some useful guides connected to the holistic development of a child. The author emphasized that the role teachers play should be understood in an exact and proper way. She claimed that the teacher ought to help the child to develop without any rewards and punishments that she called "slavery for the soul". According to her thoughts, educators are obliged to awake the intrinsic motivation of the child; this can be achieved as a result of the attractive devices and an appropriate approach towards children that she proposed in her books.

The most interesting and useful chapter might be the third one – *The Methods of Teaching*. There are some methodological guides about the observation of the child, keeping discipline during school activities, and his or her self-reliance.. In the fourth chapter, the author described the life of a "wild child" from Aveyron and underlined the role of natural education in raising the interest in nature. The fifth chapter, *Motor Development*, was written in an original way, from both a doctor and a teacher point of view. The author also explains the significance of body movement and actively using anatomy descriptions that become vivid and convincing.

The publication is unique – the reader feels as though they are conversing with the author – Maria Montessori. It includes her own thoughts, "written in the way she used to share with others". It is quite dense and full of knowledge, so it can be treated as an encyclopedia of method and pedagogy. In my opinion, it is necessary to read that book a few times to

understand and remember the content, and to be able to use it during teaching and bringing up a child. The book inspires reflection about the role of the teacher and child in the process of teaching and learning, and their right places in the social world as well. After reading one may want to check out some methods in practice or/and visit some kindergartens and schools that are run according to Maria Montessori's method/pedagogy. The language is understandable for the ordinary reader.

To conclude, I as the compassionate reader of that book can answer the question posed at the beginning of it. I think that Maria Montessori's approach is still vivid and useful. *How can we teach about love and peace?* (this is the the second question); we can find guidelines in *Odkrycie dziecka – The Discovery of the Child*.

Reviewed publication:

Maria Montessori

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