

The Four Planes of Education

~ by Maria Montessori

The characteristics of each are so different that the passages from one phase to the other has been described by certain psychologists as 'rebirths.'

First Phase – Birth to six years of age

Even when they are much younger than three, children need social life and a certain amount of independence.

They carry out work which as a practical aim: they sweep, dust, dress themselves etc. Each one carries out his/her own work independently from the other.

Children at this stage are spontaneously active.

They like to learn all the courtesies of social life. If one teaches them, they are interested to know how to greet, how to excuse themselves when they pass in front of other people. They like to see well-dressed people around them: they like to be well dressed and tidy themselves.

The Elementary Years

At 7 years begins a physical and psychological change. The child of 7 years has a different psychic attitude (Age of rudeness).

The older children stood quietly around the aquarium saying, "Why are the fishes dead? Why? Why do things happen, how do they come about?"

Younger children take in things sensorially. The child of 7 enters the abstract field: he wishes to know the reasons. One of the things which preoccupies them is what is ethical in life: what is good: what is bad.

He requires to go out into the world to make wider contacts with both nature and human society.

He wants simple life, independence outside the family circle and school.

On the previous plane of education, the material helped to build the essentials of the individual personality; now the educational material helps the acquisition of culture.

They have a keen feeling towards injustice.

Third Phase

The third phase begins with adolescence and it requires a third plane of education.

It is in this stage that "vocation and 'militancy' occur. These children want to give their direct contribution to society and have it recognized.

They want to investigate and experience on their own.

Adolescents should not only work but also get money by their work.

To gain money by one's own effort is a sign that one has done something useful.

The individual should be the man who knows how to make his own choice of action having passed to perfection the preceding phases. He should be as a live spark and aware of the open gate to the potentials of prospective human life and of its own possibilities and responsibilities.

Now he has reached the problems of the final stage. Culture and education have no bounds or limits. He must realize that culture never finishes.