

Jarosław Jendza

<https://doi.org/10.26881/pwe.2022.55.08>

ORCID: 0000-0001-7598-9085

University of Gdańsk

jaroslaw.jendza@ug.edu.pl

Invitation to heretical reading of Montessori pedagogy

Summary

In the article the author invites readers to initiate a certain mode of reading that – inspired by Agamben and Holmes – is called heretical reading. Following the latter, the article suggests that it is important to read Montessori in a heretical way in order to keep this idea open and “alive”. This mode of reading demands constant attempts of playing with the pillars or the main categories of this educational approach. The article is divided into three sections. The first part refers to the socio-historical context of Montessori writings and their reception in Poland. The second part problematizes the issue of dogmatization and privatization of the knowledge on Montessori and thus making it difficult for the heretical reading to come into being. The last part is devoted to the preliminary sketch of the idea of heretical reading. Following Bourdieu and Agamben the author presents the mode of *play* – conceived of as an “unappropriate” use of a certain Thing – as a possible initiation of the intellectual experiment that can be called a heretical reading.

Keywords: Montessori, heresy, orthodoxy

Słowa kluczowe: Montessori, herezja, ortodoksja

Introduction

A lot has been written about Maria Montessori and her heritage. In this situation, is it worthwhile to address the issue that seems to be so well discussed once again? In the author’s belief it is not only worthwhile, but also necessary.

The basic goal of the presented text is to *propose* or to *invite* the readers to practice heretical reading of the Montessori method.

As an invitation or a proposal, this study does not purport to any objectivity and is definitely an individual view on a certain issue, even though built on systematic studies of works in this field. Hence, it should only be treated as an impulse which – hopefully – will inspire the readers to a slightly different translation, interpretation or treatment of Maria Montessori’s heritage. The author would also like to mention that in the analyses presented here, references are primarily made to the Polish reality and thus the context of the argument presented has quite a local nature.

The structure of the paper comprises three chapters. The first one is a synthetic summary and a discussion of selected elements of the Montessori pedagogy and a brief characteristic of the works of the famous Italian pedagogue in the context of her biography's dynamic. The second part contains a contemporary context of the practice of the Montessori method (primarily in Poland) by referring to the phenomenon of *knowledge privatisation* pertaining to this method, as well as the risk of *dogmatisation* related to it. In this place, reference is made to various modes of understanding teacher's competences, and the proposal of Astrid Męczkowska (2002) has been selected as the framework. Simultaneously, the author is aware that this issue was the object of analyses of numerous researchers and thus it could be addressed in a completely different way. At this stage of the argument, the author also refers to the concept of personal pedagogical theories in the interpretation of Roman Leppert (1996), which is also a subjective and quite arbitrary choice.

The last part of the proposal is an invitation to treat Montessori as a *heresy* and/or to *read it as a heresy* and even though this part is signalled by the title of the paper, which perhaps should be followed by the systematic and detailed interpretation of such methodology of work with a text, the author focuses on barely initial outline that may be elaborated in further studies and analyses. At this stage, the author has a very modest goal, namely the *initiation* or *invitation* to think and work on the specific mode of dealing with the texts that is neither *reading comprehension* nor *critical reading*, or not even *hermeneutic reading*, but *heretical reading*.

Nevertheless, the author wishes – circulating around the issues of *dogma*, *orthodoxy* and *heresy* – to initiate thinking about the possibility of certain – as defined by Dariusz Szczukowski (2019) – practice of reading.

Interpretations of Montessori pedagogy

It should be remembered that works translated to Polish and other languages are rarely critical discussions of Montessori works, even though in the context of English compilations, a few exceptions from this rule may be noted (including, for example: McCormick-Rambusch 1962; Chattin-McNichols 1998; Brouwer, Sins (eds.) 2022). In general, Montessori literature includes mostly literal translations of her works, or books popularising this approach are also translated (Sjöld, Bröderman Smeds 2007; Badura-Strzelczyk 2008; Czekalska et al. 2010; Pitamic 2010; Davies 2019). This is important because in Poland, scientific publications devoted to Montessori that are also accessible are, in principle, almost absent. The case is similar in other parts of the world and this situation (i.e. the lack of certain type of publications) has been addressed and investigated by the researchers interested in this subject (Marshall 2017).

Naturally, publications which are an exception from this rule are also present in Poland, for example the work of Małgorzata Miksza (2010), the textbook of Sabina Guz (2016), the publications of Ewa Łatacz (1996, 1998), the studies edited and co-authored

by Barbara Surma ((ed.) 2009), the textbook by Barbara Stein (2003), the report by Beata Bednarczuk (2016) or the recently published report from the studies of Anna Jaroszevska (2022) and a number of papers and articles of other authors. In the global context, for instance, the research report by Angeline Lillard and Nicole Else-Quest (2006) and the series of Montessori White Papers published between 2015 and 2018 and edited by Laura Flores Shaw, Deborah Ely Budding, Jayme Jones and Louise Livingston should definitely be mentioned¹.

The situation is slightly better outside of Poland, yet also there balanced criticism is marginal (Dohrmann et al. 2007; Laski et al. 2016; Tebano Ahlquist, Gynther 2019)². In this moment of the argument, it is a good idea to ask why this is the case.

One of possible answers might be the condition of pedagogical thought with respect to the status and the mode of practising criticism (cf. e.g.: Śliwerski 2021, Mizerek 2021), but one can also take a look at the development of the movement around the Montessori approach since the moment of its creation in terms of formation of a specific *discourse society* in the Foucauldian understanding of the notion.

Montessori worked on her didactic system for several decades and thus certain turns and clear changes in her views are easily noticeable. Without doubt, her approach to the creation of pedagogical practice theory, not only among the New Education reformers contemporary to her, but also nowadays, is unprecedented insofar as it was generated *a posteriori* – based on didactic experiences and decades of empirical studies. Initially, these were classic quantitative analyses making use of the tools characteristic for the scientific clinical psychiatry that was developing at that time (1890–1910) and the first psychological laboratories, yet in the subsequent years Montessori used *soft-er* approaches that are known today as part of such research strategies as (auto)ethnography, action research in or in-depth analyses based on the *thick description*.

It may be concluded that Montessori's studies can be divided into two periods. The first one was typically scientist-positivist and the next one, which lasted for approximately forty years, was a period of qualitative, interpretative exploration. This turn, so clearly visible in Montessori's works, and signalled here might be important for those who start reading her works. The readers who are interested in this pedagogical approach may thus start studying the first works, for example the very popular *Children's Houses*, the *Montessori Method* or publications of the already mature researcher, such as, for example *The Secret of Childhood* (1936), the collection of speeches, for instance, *The 1946 London Lectures*, or the more research oriented book – *The Absorbent Mind* (1949).

¹ The readers interested in the series can find the publications here: <https://whitepaperpress.us/publications/the-montessori-white-papers-2/>, 16.11.2022.

² Here, the author purposefully does not include the 'criticism' of William Kilpatrick that is often quoted by the opponents of the Montessori method, as careful reading of this work allows for concluding that it is rather an attempt at reducing the accomplishments in the fight for ruling the people's hearts and minds than a reliable discussion with a certain proposal (cf.: Kilpatrick 1914).

It thus becomes clear that an attempt at reconstructing Montessori's pedagogy or rather pointing to the main characteristic features of this approach should be preceded with a question as to 'which' Montessori is of interest to us.

Other important biographic experiences should also be taken into consideration – for example Montessori's stay in India during WWII, where she encountered a radically different culture. Montessori also came across oral tradition there, which resulted not only in preparation of the 'great stories' concept, but also in the *cosmic education* idea.

An attempt at precise definition of the Montessori pedagogy is additionally complicated by the fact that her concept also refers to the four diverse six-year development periods (or planes – as they are sometimes called in this convention) that last from the birth to the twenty-fourth year of age. As Montessori herself would say, these developmental planes mean *new births* or simply rebirths, transitions from *different worlds*, governed by slightly different regularities. Obviously, this does not entail that no *common denominators* can be found for all four planes. Naturally, this is possible and an attempt will be made to show it in brief shortly; nevertheless, the fact of internal differentiation needs to be stressed here, along with some tensions present in this pedagogical idea.

Finally, it must be added that Montessori had a peculiar mode of writing. At times, she sacrificed terminological precision for the sake of good communication. She did not avoid more or less accurate metaphors and adequate, yet sometimes problematic, analogies. Her writings were aimed at bringing about social change and the hermetic, *chiselled* language of science would have been an obstacle in this respect. Montessori was writing for wide-ranging social groups and for non-professional teachers – primarily parents, and thus it is easy to accuse her of imprecision, simplification and exaggeration.

However, let us try to delve into certain premises characteristic for this pedagogy. We may begin with its naturalist character, paying attention to the concept of *human tendencies* and *sensitive periods* in order to proceed to the axiological theme, trying to show the values characteristic for this approach.

Because Montessori defined education as an *aid to life*, she assumed that it is necessary to obtain the information and guidelines from nature. It may be said that the echoes of Rousseau and his concept of education in nature resound strongly here. Every man, according to Montessori, manifests and has opportunity to develop those *tendencies*, which, in this approach, are defined as external manifestations of inner natural needs. Such universalism also implies that the adults need specific competence. If these tendencies are to be used in children's lives, the teacher should skilfully recognize them and then adjust the environment to foster their development. Among these tendencies, Montessori included: *exploration, orientation, order, abstraction, imagination, creativity, repetition, movement, mathematical mind, adaptation, communication and perfection*, as well as *spirituality*³. In

³ The aforementioned tendencies are listed in several texts by Maria Montessori, yet a synthetic summary and elaboration of this theme can be found in a compilation by Maria's son, Mario Montessori Sr (cf.: Montessori 1966).

this context, it must be said that development precedes education in a sense that it occurs naturally and the task of educational institutions is to support these natural tendencies and to foster optimal conditions for flourishing.

The *sensitive periods* or *sensitive phases* are related to human tendencies⁴. Montessori, inspired by natural sciences, loaned this term from the Dutch biologist and geneticist, Hugo de Vries (1848–1935). These specific moments appear in the life of every man, especially in the period of early childhood, when children have a natural inner motivation to focus their attention and to delve into a given issue, however, specific sensitive periods have been attributed to every plane of development⁵.

The inner and natural *clock* strikes the hours, opening specific development opportunities. The sensitive periods last for a while then they close and the developmental opportunity disappears or at least becomes distant. A sensitive period is thus a type of an *inner guide* who shows the child what he/she can get engaged in and to what pay attention. Adult companions of the child must possess pedagogical knowledge about specific sensitive periods because their task is to deliver developmental material when a specific *window* opens. Again, this is related to the very specific competence of the teacher, as a careful observer, a sensitive diagnostician and a creative builder of the environment, called the *prepared environment* (Montessori 2019a, 2020a, b).

Without doubt, the first plane of development, and thus the period from birth to the sixth year of the child's life, by Montessori called the *absorbent mind*, on account of the specific processes of acquisition of knowledge and skills, is the time when we can indicate numerous sensitive phases/ sensitive periods. Here, we can find sensitivity to (among others): order, language, movement, social behaviour, assimilation of images, love for small objects, perfection of individual senses.

Let us pay attention to the fact that education, perceived from this perspective, must be strongly individualised because, although the sensitive periods have universal character, they are manifested at different moments in various children. Hence, the organisation of work in an environment depends on the occurrence of individual sensitive periods in children and not – as it happens in traditional education – adopts a frontal form with the same message to all children.

What unites all the planes of development is a certain set of values specific for this educational approach, irrespective of the fact if it is childhood that is fostered in a Montessori crèche or – as it happens more and more often – work with seniors (Brenner, Brenner 2019). The Montessori method is related to respect for individuality, acceptance for diversity, freedom of choice (time, place, content and people), responsibility for the planet and the universe.

⁴ In Polish literature, both terms are used interchangeably.

⁵ It should be added that this concept functioned already back then in psychiatry, especially in the works of two clinical psychiatrists, Eduard Séguin and Jean Marc Gaspard Itard, who inspired Montessori not only to build many concepts, but to apply various didactic solutions.

Maria Montessori saw education as an opportunity for peace all over the world; however, this vision may only be realised when our relations, communication and co-existence comply with nature, mutual appreciation and unconditional love, when education is free of violence, judgemental evaluation and the arrogance of adults (Montessori 1949).

This short summary of the tenets of the Montessori pedagogy obviously does not demonstrate the entire complexity and depth of this approach, but it shows the ambiguity and its intricacy and thus indicates the possibility (or even necessity) of multiple diverse and parallel interpretations.

Privatisation and dogmatisation of personal pedagogical theories

The author of this paper believes that the *privatisation of knowledge* in this area is a barrier that prevents a multi-layered and in-depth scientific criticism of the Montessori approach (Jendza, Zamojski 2015). It must be borne in mind that educational environments of this type, kindergartens (or children's houses) in particular, are the most popular alternative to traditional education and the institutions of this type have a truly global range. Montessori schools are present on all continents and operate in radically different cultural, social and religious contexts (Thayer-Bacon 2012). This *status quo* (i.e. such popularity) contributes to the emergence of both positive and negative phenomena.

The more Montessori schools, the more children around the world have the option of participating in education that – in the author's heartfelt conviction – is much more beneficial for them than the education based on the transmission model.

However, the popularity of the Montessori also makes it a recognizable *trademark*, an attractive *logo* that guarantees demand for the founders of these institutions and thus profitability of investments. It is worth noting Montessori herself never reserved or restricted the name of her pedagogical idea. Hence, everybody can open a school and call it 'Montessori' and, irrespective of what it really is, try to offer it to potential clients. Thus, if Montessori is becoming a desired product, the number of institutions offering courses for candidate teachers working in line with this pedagogy is also growing exponentially.

Therefore, it is understandable that the training institutions do their best to make their product elitist, because it can be sold at a higher price. Public, unlimited and free access to the secrets of the method is therefore – from this point of view – undesired. Hence, these institutions launch diverse mechanisms, including the threat of legal steps in case of publicising the training materials, so that the knowledge about Montessori remains secret and available only to those who are ready to pay a lot for it (Agamben 2006).

Here, a specific understanding of the Montessori teacher's competences also plays a significant role. Astrid Męczkowska (2002) – as one of many researchers interested in this issue – having reconstructed the accomplishments of Polish pedagogy in this respect, drew attention to the fact that the dominant mode of understanding of *competence* is its perception in the categories of subjective capacity/ability to take efficient actions and to

adapt to external conditions. In this context, a competent person is the efficient one and such competence is acquired through *mastering a specific skill*.

If this is so, the key competence of a Montessori teacher would be the efficient user of the development and/or didactic material, i.e. the didactic aids of various types which are present in every Montessori prepared environment.

If the distribution of time devoted in the course of trainings and courses in the area of Montessori pedagogy is analysed, it becomes clear that a vast majority (as a rule approx. 80% of the total number of hours) is devoted to the work with the material and preparation of *albums*, i.e. sets of instructions for subsequent materials, individually edited by the course participants which, in general, describe the procedures of working with and presenting the aids in a very detailed way (Jendza 2019). It must be concluded then that the *technical competence*, as understood by Robert Kwaśnica (2003), is the most important.

The problematic side of this issue is shown not only by Męczkowska, but also by Maria Czerepaniak-Walczak (2006) (emancipatory competence) or Maria Dudzikowa (1994) (self-creation competence), thus expressing a view that technical and instrumental comprehension of competence is by far unsatisfactory and even dangerous.

For example, if we understood the notion of competence as the ‘basis of reflective action’ (Męczkowska 2002) and thus the competent existence of a teacher would imply the “necessity of ongoing reinterpretation of the context (...) [of own – added by J.J.] actions”, the courses for the candidate teachers would be radically different and would most probably focus on the necessity of continuous examination of own practice. In such a situation the methodology of the studies or small scale research carried out in schools by teachers would become a major course content and activity.

The situation would be different if it was assumed that competence is a prerequisite for a ‘distanced understanding’ focused on the scepticism and criticism with respect to any *dogma*. In such a situation, the course participants would perform critical analyses of the Montessori works, evaluate manifestations and potential effects of a *hidden curriculum* (Meighan 1986) of the Montessori education and challenge its basic premises by juxtaposing them with the contemporary theories. Such *critical cultural competence* (Szkudlarek 1999) as significant for the education of the Montessori teachers would probably result in a reformulation of some part of views of the author of this approach.

Finally, those who would agree that *emancipatory competence* is essential in the process of teaching could go even further. If we conceived of this interpretation of competence as a “subjective capacity for informed negation of existing conditions of acting (...) that block the autonomy of individual and collective entity” (Męczkowska 2002: 137), the candidate teacher would have to be invited, during the training, to reflect on what these existing conditions mean for Montessori and how they (b)lock and position (Foucault 1998: 48) both children and parents as well as other social agents involved in education. I can easily imagine that such an emancipatory version of educating Montessori teachers-to-be would not be approved by the ones for whom the ‘purity’ and ‘faithfulness’ of the method are important. At the same time, it should be taken into consideration that there are studies

that show that schools which faithfully (or classically) follow the path set out by Montessori, accomplish better results than the ones that opted for modifications (Lillard 2002).

Summing up the thoughts on *competence*, a certain conclusion needs to be articulated clearly. The centres training the Montessori teachers in the local Polish context (apart from very few exceptions) devote most time to the *technical competence* and this situation may block a critical development of *thoughts* with respect to Montessori among the practitioners and scholars alike.

Two more issues, specifically linked, are also related to the privatisation of knowledge and the technical comprehension of competence. This is the *dogmatisation* and the role of *personal pedagogical theories*.

Montessori and her dogmatic treatment as a research subject seem to have been marginalised by the education theoreticians. However, in this place the author wishes to recall a person who already in 1913 forewarned about the literal and uncritical treatment of the words and the approach of Maria Montessori and simultaneously drew attention to the significance of the phenomenon that – thanks to the theoretisation of Roman Leppert – is called the *personal pedagogical theories* (Leppert 1996; Leppert, Mizerek 1994; Polak 2000). The author says that a personal pedagogical theory is:

a set of internally connected convictions related to the goals of education, its justification, programmes and persons of teacher and pupil acknowledged by the individual [as just – added by J.J.] (Leppert 1996: 30).

In other words, it is easy to imagine a situation where the declarative knowledge of the Montessori teachers and their practices are not consistent and may even be in complete opposition. The person that comes to mind here is Edmond Holmes (1850–1936). This Irish poet, but also a supervisor of early education institutions and one of the first promoters and theoreticians of progressive education in Great Britain, having read a book by Dorothy Canfield Fisher⁶ about her experiences related to the stay at *Casa dei Bambini* in Rome next to Maria Montessori, did not conceal his amazement with the pedagogy that was formed at that time, but also drew attention to the danger of dogmatic treatment of any ideas and educational solutions even if (and maybe particularly when) they are commonly believed to be innovative and effective. Holmes drew attention to the role of personal teaching theories postulating in the introduction to his book:

The dogmatist is one who controls, or seeks to control, the ways and works of others. This is dogmatism in its simplest and crudest form. Thoroughgoing dogmatism goes much further than this. Not content with imposing his will on others, the thoroughgoing dogmatist seeks

⁶ The first edition of the book is dated at 1911, yet the issue of 1913 includes an introduction penned by Edmond Holmes. By the way, the *opus magnum* of this author should also be mentioned, which is a detailed critique of the traditional education and quite a precise proposal of transition to progressive education (see: Holmes 1911).

also to impose on them his views, his opinions, his beliefs, his theories, his tastes, his preferences, his type of mind (Holmes 1911: XXIV).

Having discussed three subsequent strategies and effects of holding dogmatic authority over other people, the author goes back to the praise of the Montessori education and shows its empowering potential.

Montessori as heresy and invitation to heretical reading

In reference to Holmes' views, an interesting observation should be noted. This supervisor of educational institutions recalls the fact that the Fisher's publication is written for the parents and not the teachers. Relying on his extensive knowledge about the specifics of early education and his experiences from serving as the head supervisor of Great Britain's schools, the author concludes that teachers act under pressure of overwhelming (especially in England) *fossilised/hardened systems* and that is why Holmes sees an opportunity for promoting the *Montessori heresy* in mothers who 'are free' (Holmes 1911: XLV–XLVI).

In other words, any educational system – in Holmes' opinion – is susceptible to consecration of specific dogmatisms while a *dogmatist* is a characteristic mode of being of a significant number of teachers, educational authorities and those who teach the candidate teachers. The Montessori method should develop and spread, but it cannot become *orthodox*, but it should rather function in the *heretic* logic. Let's quote Holmes once again:

Heresies are sometimes right. Orthodoxies – systems which have come under the patronage and control of the average man – are always wrong. When the Montessori heresy becomes an orthodoxy, the period of its decadence – as a system, not as a *principle* – will have begun [emphasis – J.J.]. (...) But we must set to work with tact and caution, making no attempt to impose it as a system on those who are unable to assimilate the *living principle* [emphasis – J.J.] which is *vibrating* [emphasis – J.J.] in every nerve and fibre of it, and without which its method would be so much deadening routine, and its apparatus so many meaningless toys (Holmes 1911: XLV–XLVI).

The *vibration* of nerves and fibres resembles the *pulsation of categories* in the approach of Joanna Rutkowiak who, while constructing her idea, wished to attract our attention to the vital tension in the dynamic of individual pedagogical categories and in the absence of their clear-cut semantic borders, but she also pointed to an opposite trend manifested in the tendency to the *congealing* of theoretical and pedagogical concepts in the processes of *historical solidification* (Rutkowiak 1995: 20). In this sense, one may risk a hypothesis that the Montessori method is unfortunately no longer a heresy neither in Poland nor outside of it. The *nerves* and *fibres* of this theory no longer form pulsating categories. In such atmosphere, the young teachers are susceptible material for indoctrination. Trained in listening and waiting for the correct answers, they do not accept chaos and vibration

as something that may not only be positively treated, but also considered a necessity in professional development (Klus-Stańska 2010).

Privatisation of knowledge, dogmatisation and the primacy of technical competence are all related to the issue of a *neo-liberal shift* in culture and thus in education (Potulicka, Rutkowiak 2010). Many Montessori institutions not only do not diverge from this rule, but are (at least in Poland) a clinical example of pressure that the market exerts on the sphere of education. Since the majority of Montessori institutions in Poland are preschools and non-public schools, attending to which means significant costs, the economic and pedagogical arguments clash there.

The schools, wishing to satisfy the clients, offer education that is more attractive than the sole Montessori logo (Mendel 2007). Some founders of these businesses promote a list of famous Montessori schools' graduates where the giants of corporate global business occupy the first places. Others present press articles showing that the effects will measure up to the investments and business will definitely bring profit⁷. This neo-liberal shift also leads to the schools' focus on measurable effects and thus raises the necessity of instruction-based performance of educational classes oriented at developing these technical, practical skills that are so appreciated by the neo-liberal world.

Attention should also be paid to the fact that, as the discourse about a good, willing to explore child who deserves respect is still the existing mode of understanding childhood in these schools, yet this often does not refer to the relations among adults. In line with the farm (folwark) and capitalist logic/imaginary (Zamojski 2017), the owners of the means of production exploit their employees to the very limits. Hence teachers from alternative schools in Poland, in particular the Montessori ones, belong to the group of most acutely exploited teachers. No objective reports are available in this respect, as this is still a taboo subject matter, yet based on several years of practical and research experience of the author in this area, it can be said straightforwardly that some of the Montessori teachers work in the conditions of pressure and constant tension both from the parents who sometimes demand absurd actions (e.g. knowledge checks, use of textbooks, system of prizes and penalties) and owners of schools, who are not greatly preoccupied with the labour law, fail to act in the *Montessori spirit* with respect to their colleagues. Nonetheless, as stated before, this aspect would demand further research to formulate some macro-scale conclusions.

The reasons mentioned above naturally do not cover all the causes of absence of a reliable and multi-layered scientific insight into the Montessori pedagogy, yet, without doubt, they belong to some of the most significant ones.

However, let us go back to the *potential* of this approach. As mentioned at the beginning of this study, literature in this respect is extensive. However, the author is deeply convinced that the formula of *heretical reading* and *profanation* proposed here, in the sense of this term used by Agamben, will allow for constant vibration of Montessori pedagogy and thus may contribute to the renewal of its potential.

⁷ Cf. e.g.: *Who Are Famous Montessori Educated People?* (2014).

In other words, this is an invitation to *profanation* and to *heretical* and *unorthodox* thinking (Hańderek 2014: 44). When talking to Karol Jałochowski, David Krakauer, a researcher of evolutionary history of information processing, recounting his work in science, and simultaneously talking of culture, said:

This is about culture that supports the tendency to experiment, to destroy and to oppose the establishment, rigour, mischievousness, ability to cooperate (...). Artistic and scientific inquiries are radical. (...) [S]cience is rebellion. It is a lack of respect for prior ideas (Krakauer 2019: 23–26).

Hence, heretical reading requires – using one of the most important Montessori categories – a specifically *prepared environment* which, in our case, is a specific *cultural environment*. Here, the author has in mind a community of people thinking and deliberating about education (in general) and about Montessori (specifically) who continually keep the threads of thoughts of the famous Italian vibrating.

Heresy as a term – before it was defined by the religious context – was used by the Greeks. At that time, it denoted – as shown for example by Leszek Kołakowski – a personal choice – *hairesis* (Kołakowski 2010: 9). This is an act of personal choice, but also an object of choice. The Montessori method in its foundations does not exist without a personal choice, and thus we can say that – at least to a certain degree – Montessori herself shows us the necessity of heretic attitude to the world and to any text.

Hairesis comprises personally meaningful categories and interpretations which definitely refer to the pressing orthodoxy. However, heresy is not simply a critical schism, cancellation and abandonment. Heresy does not reject. Heresy refers to a specific doctrine ‘in its own way’ and that is why it is not an attempt at the search of simply deeper senses and does not claim rights to building a new text.

George Santayana claimed that every philosophy is heresy (Santayana 1915; Berlinerblau 2001), and in his understanding, heresy is an *individual play with thought* (Santayana 1915: 561). Pierre Bourdieu, describing the relationship of orthodoxy and heresy, draws attention to the fact that heresy may exist thanks to the *competing possibilities* (Bourdieu 2007). Hence, heretical reading could be described as touching the pillars of a specific doctrine, a view or a theory in a way that it is a mental experimentation, which does not have to be productive, conclusive, explanatory but it rather does with a thought what a cat – as described by Giorgio Agamben (2006) – does with a ball of wool. By playing with it, it *does what is inappropriate*. The cat uses the wool in an inappropriate way in a sense that it does with it what it has not been designed and produced for; yet still, it is used for *something* – even if it is only the pleasure of playing. Hence, **heretical reading may be playing with a text, a theory, a concept in an improper way, which means experimenting with them in a frivolous way** which keeps their threads vibrating.

References

- Agamben G. (2006), *Profanacje*. Warszawa, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.
- Agamben G., Fort J. (2007), *In Praise of Profanation*. "Log", 10.
- Badura-Strzelczyk G. (2008), *Pomóż mi policzyć to samemu – Matematyka w ujęciu Marii Montessori od lat trzech do klasy trzeciej*. Opole, Nowik Sp. J.
- Bednarczuk B. (2016), *Osobowość autorska absolwentów klas Montessori w perspektywie doświadczeń i celów życiowych*. Kraków, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”.
- Berg H.K. (2007), *Maria Montessori – poszukiwanie życia razem z dziećmi. Odpowiedzi na aktualne pytania pedagogiczne*. Kielce, Jedność – Herder.
- Berlinerblau J. (2001), *Toward a Sociology of Heresy, Orthodoxy and Doxa*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Bourdieu P. (2007), *Szkic teorii praktyki poprzedzony trzema studiami na temat etnologii Kabylów*. Kęty, Antyk Marek Derewiecki.
- Brenner T., Brenner K. (2019), *The Montessori Method for Connecting to People with Dementia: A Creative Guide to Communication and Engagement in Dementia Care*. London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Brouwer J. de, Sins P. (eds.) (2022), *Perspectives on Montessori*. Deventer, Saxion Progressive Education University Press.
- Chattin-McNichols J. (1998), *The Montessori Controversy*. New York, Delmar Publishers Inc.
- Czekalska R., Gaj A., Lauba B., Matczak J., Piecusiak A., Sosnowska J. (2010), *Odkryjmy Montessori raz jeszcze... Program wychowania przedszkolnego opracowany na podstawie założeń pedagogiki Marii Montessori w Przedszkolu Miejskim nr 106 w Łodzi*. Kraków, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”.
- Czerepaniak-Walczak M. (2006), *Pedagogika emancypacyjna*. Gdańsk, GWP.
- Davies S. (2019), *Montessori w Twoim domu – przewodnik dla rodziców małych dzieci chcących wychować ciekawych świata i odpowiedzialnych ludzi*. Wrocław, Bukowy Las.
- Dohrmann K., Nishida T., Gartner A., Lipsky D., Grimm K. (2007), *High school out-comes for students in a public Montessori program*. „Journal of Research in Childhood Education”, 22.
- Dudzikowa M. (1994), *Kompetencje autokreacyjne – czy i jak są możliwe do nabycia w toku studiów pedagogicznych*. In: H. Kwiatkowska (red.), *Ewolucja tożsamości pedagogiki*. Warszawa, Instytut Historii Nauki, Oświaty i Techniki PAN.
- Fisher D.C. (1913), *A Montessori Mother*. London, Constable & Company LTD.
- Foucault M. (1998), *Nadzorować i karać. Narodziny więzienia*. Warszawa, Fundacja Aletheia.
- Guz S. (2016), *Edukacja w systemie Marii Montessori – Wybrane obszary kształcenia*. Lublin, Wydawnictwo UMCS.
- Hańderek J. (2014), *Nauka krytycznego myślenia herezji, czyli o pożytkach ukrytych w heretyckich poglądach*. „Humanistyka i Przyrodoznawstwo”, 20.
- Holmes E. (1911), *What Is and What Might Be. A Study of Education in General and Elementary in Particular*. London, Constable & Company.
- Jaroszewska A. (2022), *Kultura szkoły Montessori w XXI wieku. Od teorii do praktyki w skali mikro*. Kraków, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”.
- Jendza J. (2019), *Pedagogika Montessori jako pedagogika rzeczy*. In: M. Chutorąński, A. Makowska (eds.), *Rzeczy – Kultura – Edukacja*. Szczecin, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego.

- Jendza J., Zamojski P. (2015), *Privatizing Montessori. The Capitalization of Knowledge and the Inability to Renew Meanings*. "Studia Pedagogiczne", 68.
- Kilpatrick W.H. (1914), *The Montessori System Examined*. Boston–New York–Chicago, Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Klus-Stańska D. (2010), *Dydaktyka wobec chaosu pojęć i zdarzeń*. Warszawa, Żak.
- Kołąkowski L. (2010), *Herezja*. Kraków, Znak.
- Krakauer D. (2019), *Permanenna rewolucja. O buntownikach, iluzji spokoju oraz o tym, jak nie zostać polipem*. In: K. Jałochowski, *Heretycy, buntownicy, wizjonerzy. 22 podróże z największymi umysłami naszych czasów*. Warszawa, Copernicus Centre Press.
- Kwaśnica R. (2003), *Wprowadzenie do myślenia o nauczycielu*. In: Z. Kwieciński, B. Śliwerski (ed.), *Pedagogika. Podręcznik akademicki 2*. Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Laski E.V., Vasilyeva M., Schiffman J. (2016), *Longitudinal comparison of place-value and arithmetic knowledge in Montessori and non-Montessori students*. "Journal of Montessori Research", 2(1).
- Leppert R. (1996), *Potoczne teorie wychowania studentów pedagogiki*. Bydgoszcz, WSP.
- Leppert R., Mizerek H. (1994), *Od ukrytego programu do osobistej teorii wychowania*. In: S. Kawula, A. Moździerz (eds.), *O nowy model wychowania*. Part 1: *Potrzeby i możliwości*. Olsztyn, Glob.
- Lillard A.S. (2002), *Preschool children's development in classic Montessori, supplemented Montessori and conventional programs*. "Journal of School Psychology", 50.
- Lillard A., Else-Quest N. (2006), *The Early Years: Evaluating Montessori Education*. "Science", 313, DOI: 10.1126/science.1132362, 9.12.2019.
- Łatacz E. (1996), *Recepcja teorii pedagogicznej Marii Montessori w Polsce do roku 1939*. Łódź, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.
- Łatacz E. (1998), *Wprowadzenie do wychowania religijnego Marii Montessori*. In: B. Śliwerski (ed.), *Pedagogika alternatywna – dylematy teorii i praktyki*. Kraków, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”.
- Marshall C. (2017), *Montessori education: a review of the evidence base*. "npj Science of Learning", 2(1), DOI: 10.1038/s41539-017-0012-7, 9.12.2019.
- Mc Cormick-Rambusch N. (1962), *Learning How to Learn. An American Approach to Montessori*. Baltimore, Helicon Press.
- Meighan R. (1986), *A Sociology of Educating*. 2nd ed. New York, Holt Rinehart and Winston.
- Mendel M. (2007), *Ometkowane serce szkoły. O tym, jak widać w szkole ślady wielkich korporacji w przestrzeni uczniowskiej i co one oznaczają*. In: M. Dudzikowa, M. Czerepaniak-Walczak (eds.), *Wychowanie. Pojęcia – Procesy – Konteksty*. Vol. 3. Gdańsk, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.
- Męczkowska A. (2002), *Od świadomości nauczyciela do konstrukcji świata społecznego. Nauczycielskie koncepcje wymagań dydaktycznych a problem rekonstrukcyjnej kompetencji ucznia*. Kraków, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”.
- Miksza M. (2010), *Zrozumieć Montessori – czyli Maria Montessori o wychowaniu dziecka*. Kraków, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”.
- Mizerek H. (2021), *Refleksja krytyczna w edukacji i pedagogice. Misja (nie)wykonalna?* Kraków, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”.
- Montessori M. (1949), *Education and Peace*. Chicago, IL, Henry Regerny.
- Montessori M. (2018), *Sekret dzieciństwa*. Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

- Montessori M. (2019a), *O kształtowaniu się człowieka*. Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Montessori M. (2019b), *Wykłady Londyńskie 1946*. Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Montessori M. (2020a), *Co powinieneś wiedzieć o swoim dziecku*. Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, AMI.
- Montessori M. (2020b), *Dziecko w rodzinie*. Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, AMI.
- Montessori M. (2021), *Psychoarytmetyka*. Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Montessori M.M. (1966), *The Human Tendencies and Montessori Education*. Amsterdam, AMI.
- Pitamic M. (2010), *Naucz mnie samodzielności. Zajęcia metodą Montessori dla Ciebie i Twojego dziecka*. Warszawa, Kropki Trzy.
- Polak K. (2000), *Podążając ku niewidocznemu (teorie indywidualne nauczycieli)*. In: K. Kruszewski (red.), *Pedagogika w pokoju nauczycielskim*. Warszawa, WSiP.
- Potulicka E., Rutkowiak J. (2010), *Neoliberalne uwikłania edukacji*. Kraków, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”.
- Rutkowiak J. (1995), *“Pulsujące kategorie” jako wyznaczniki mapy odmian myślenia o edukacji*. In: J. Rutkowiak (red.), *Odmiany myślenia o edukacji*. Kraków, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”.
- Santayana G. (1915), *Philosophical Heresy*. “The Journal of Philosophy and Scientific Methods”, 21(12).
- Sjöld Wennerström K., Bröderman Smeds M. (2007), *Pedagogika Montessori w przedszkolu i szkole*. przeł. I. Łabędzka-Karlöf. Kraków, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”.
- Stein B. (2003), *Teoria i praktyka pedagogiki Marii Montessori w szkole podstawowej*. Kielce, Jedność.
- Surma B. (red.) (2009), *Pedagogika Marii Montessori w Polsce i na świecie*. Łódź–Kraków, Palatum, Ignatianum.
- Szczukowski D. (2019), *Praktykowanie lektury*. Gdańsk, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego.
- Szkudlarek T. (1999), *Media. Szkic z filozofii i pedagogiki dystansu*. Kraków, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”.
- Śliwerski B. (2021), *Wprowadzenie do teorii krytykoznawstwa. Krytyka naukowa (nie tylko) w pedagogice*. Kraków, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”.
- Tebano Ahlquist E.-M., Gynther P. (2019), *Variation Theory and Montessori Education*. “Journal of Montessori Research & Education”, 2(1), DOI: 10.16993-jmre, 9.12.2019.
- Thayer-Bacon B. (2012), *Maria Montessori, John Dewey, and William H. Kilpatrick*. “Education and Culture”, 28(1).
- Zamojski P. (2017), *Cultural Codes and Education in Poland – a Plea for a New Educational Imaginary*. “Policy Futures in Education”, 16(4).

Internet sources

- Who Are Famous Montessori Educated People?* (2014), Daily Montessori, <http://www.dailymontessori.com/montessori-questions-answers/famous-montessori-educated-people/>, 9.12.2019.