

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE  
EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES  
OF  
SRI AUROBINDO  
AND  
MARIA MONTESSORI

Aleta You Mastny

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EDUCATIONAL  
PHILOSOPHIES OF SRI AUROBINDO  
AND MARIA MONTESSORI**

by

**Aleta You Mastny**

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY  
August 1975

has been approved  
April 1975

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to consider the philosophical and pedagogical approaches of Aurobindo Ghose and Maria Montessori as a way of engendering spiritual values into the public educational system in the United States.

This was done by the use of a comparative study which investigated the primary works of Aurobindo and Montessori in terms of their philosophical systems and their educational theories and practices.

Each person's ontology, epistemology, and axiology were reported. The aim of education, the curriculum, and the ideal teacher were also discussed in light of the views of these two educators.

There were definite similarities in the philosophy and the educational theories and practices of Aurobindo and Montessori. Both essentially agreed that there are two kinds of reality; namely the existence of an immaterial and a material world. They argued that in addition to apprehending reality through reason, additional knowledge may be acquired through other methods. Aurobindo believed that additional knowledge may be obtained through different levels of consciousness such as higher mind, illumined mind, intuition, overmind, and supermind. Similarly, Montessori argued that additional knowledge may be gained through "internal impressions" and revelations or mystical experiences. Both individuals agreed on the importance of a physical, mental, and spiritual education. Although Aurobindo made a distinction among moral, religious, and spiritual education, Montessori made none.

They agreed that the role of a teacher is that of an observer and a guide. Both maintained that it is the child who ultimately teaches himself.

From a comparative study of the educational philosophies of Aurobindo Ghose and Maria Montessori it became apparent that spiritual education, as espoused by these two educators, is largely ignored in the public school systems in the United States. Perhaps the main problem about the absence of any form of spiritual education in the public schools is the erroneous equation that is commonly made between spirituality and religiosity. As Aurobindo

made explicit, there are distinct differences between the two modes of thought. These differences need to be expounded if spiritual education is to ever be taken seriously in the United States.

In addition to emphasizing the concept and practice of spiritual education as expressed by Aurobindo, the conclusion can be made that education in the United States should be based on global awareness and the notion of unity in diversity. Religious, cultural, and national ethnocentrism represent a direct contradiction to the spiritual development of mankind. Aurobindo recognized the problems associated with positing a single idea or opinion as representing the entire truth. Furthermore, although Montessori advocated spiritual education through the teachings of the Catholic Church, she ultimately realized that "religions and languages keep men apart."

If the concept and practice of spiritual education is to be emphasized in the United States, then a conscious attempt should be made on the part of educators to acquaint themselves with the educational theories and practices of Aurobindo Ghose and Maria Montessori.

As a start, the educational philosophies of Aurobindo and Montessori could be introduced at teacher-training institutions as a part of the course work in the area of educational foundations. Educational methods courses might also introduce students to specific techniques, such as the various meditation practices advocated by Aurobindo and Montessori, in teaching children how to learn and how to develop their spiritual natures.

Because of the need for global awareness and the notion of unity in diversity, the junior high school might be an appropriate level in which to acquaint students with divergent points of view in ethics, world religions, and philosophies. These courses need not be taught separately but could be adapted to various parts of the curricula according to the level of sophistication of the students.

Finally, a long-term empirical study of the children educated at the International Centre of Education at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, India is another area that could be pursued. A study dealing specifically with the children's intellectual, physical,

vital, psychic, and spiritual development might prove well-worth investigating.

## **DEDICATED TO**

LAWRENCE JAMES MASTNY, my beloved husband, who, with infinite love and patience, continually encourages me in all my aspirations.

ELEANOR CHUN YOU and RICHARD W. YOU, my parents, who, each in their individual way, have guided me with infinite wisdom.

PAMELA YOU COX, my sister, who has always encouraged me to strive for excellence.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The writer would like to express her appreciation to:

DR. VICTOR BAUMANN, for giving me the freedom and the guidance to pursue that which is important to me.

DR. HARIDAS CHAUDHURI, for providing me with invaluable assistance on this study.

DR. DOUGLAS ARNER, for showing me that kindness and humility are not antithetical to brilliance.

DR. MICHAEL BELOK, for teaching me the value of scholarship.

DR. NELSON HAGGERSON, for demonstrating, through his own life, beauty, caring, and authenticity.

DR. CHARLES THOMAS, for teaching me the true meaning of the "web of life."

# Table of Contents

Chapter 1.....	1
THE GENERAL NATURE AND PROBLEM AREA OF THE STUDY.....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Methodology.....	3
MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS OF AUROBINDO GHOSE.....	3
Initial Summary of Aurobindo's Philosophy.....	4
Initial Summary of Aurobindo's Educational Theory and Practice.....	5
MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS OF MARIA MONTESSORI.....	5
Initial Summary of Montessori's Philosophy.....	6
Initial Summary of Montessori's Educational Theory and Practice.....	7
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	7
ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY.....	8
Chapter 2.....	10
PHILOSOPHY OF AUROBINDO GHOSE.....	10
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	10
INTRODUCTION.....	12
ONTOLOGY.....	13
Hierarchy of Reality.....	13
Sachchidananda.....	13
Supermind.....	16
Mind.....	17
Life.....	18
Matter.....	18
Other Worlds.....	20
Hierarchical Relationship.....	20
EPISTEMOLOGY.....	21
Knowledge and Ignorance.....	21
Levels of Consciousness.....	23
Mind.....	24
Higher Mind.....	26
Illumined Mind.....	26

Intuition.....	27
Overmind.....	30
Supermind.....	33
The Relationship Among the Different Levels of Consciousness.....	37
AXIOLOGY.....	39
The Problem of Evil.....	39
The Goal of Life.....	44
CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	45
SUMMARY.....	48
 Chapter 3.....	 50
EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND PRACTICE OF AUROBINDO GHOSE.....	50
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	50
INTRODUCTION.....	52
EDUCATIONAL THEORY.....	54
Aim of Education.....	54
EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE.....	57
Physical Education.....	57
Vital Education.....	59
Mental Education.....	62
Psychic Education.....	67
Spiritual Education.....	72
The Ideal Teacher.....	79
Curriculum.....	81
CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	82
SUMMARY.....	83
 Chapter 4.....	 85
PHILOSOPHY OF MARIA MONTESSORI.....	85
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	85
INTRODUCTION.....	87
ONTOLOGY.....	88
EPISTEMOLOGY.....	90
AXIOLOGY.....	92
The Problem of Good and Evil.....	92
The Goal of Life.....	95
CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	96

SUMMARY.....	98
Chapter 5,.....	100
EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND PRACTICE OF MARIA MONTESSORI.....	100
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	100
INTRODUCTION.....	105
EDUCATIONAL THEORY.....	106
Aim of Education.....	106
"Sensitive Periods".....	109
EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE.....	115
"Prepared Environment".....	115
"Exercises of Practical Life".....	115
Sensory Education.....	116
Motor Education.....	118
Moral Education.....	118
The Ideal Teacher.....	121
CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	122
SUMMARY.....	123
Chapter 6.....	125
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	125
SUMMARY.....	125
Philosophy.....	125
Educational Theory and Practice.....	126
CONCLUSIONS.....	127
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	129
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	130
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	136

# Chapter 1.

## THE GENERAL NATURE AND PROBLEM AREA OF THE STUDY

Education is the leading of human souls to what is best, and making what is best out of them.

John Ruskin  
Stones of Venice,  
1853

## INTRODUCTION

In the 1970's the nature of education in the United States was undergoing a transformation. Criticism waged against the problems in education were articulated by numerous writers under such titles as The Way It Spozed To Be, How Children Fail, Our Children Are Dying, and Death at an Early Age (Van Til, 1971:1).

Erich Fromm (1955:299) maintained that the system of education in the United States is "woefully inadequate" for, in many instances, education has not succeeded in instilling within students "the faculty of critical thought, or with character traits which correspond to the professed ideals of our civilization."

Frederick Mayer (1967:329-333) argued that real education in the twentieth century should give man a "renewed faith in the dignity of the individual, the sacredness of human life, and the creativity of man's spirit." He further stated that education should teach man to respect "alien ideals and alien concepts; for we must learn how to get along, not only with our friends, but also with those who differ from us.'

According to Yvonne Artaud

Everywhere there is a ferment of educational reform. Nobody feels happy about education as it is. The more education a nation gets, the more people have the feeling that the present system is largely to blame for the failures,

the dropouts, the juvenile delinquency, as well as for the pathological behavior, the criminality and, of course, the wars of adult society [1972:94].

The cry for some kind of "educational reform" appears to be just one symptom encompassing a much larger problem. Radhakrishnan, in an Address at Columbia University, argued that what is plaguing not only the United States but the entire world is a loss of spiritual values. He stated:

Our distressed generation is obscurely aware that the present crisis is a spiritual one and what we need is the healing of the discord between the outward resources of power ... and the inward resources of spirit which seem to be steadily declining. To redeem and recreate our civilization, we need recovery of spiritual awareness, a new and transforming contact with the inner springs of life, a sense of values [Saiyidain, 1967:18-19].

The emphasis on spiritual values is an area that public education in the United States has ignored to a great extent. In the words of Manly P. Hall:

. . . modern education does not give the student any knowledge of his own inner self. Only spiritual knowledge can complete education, by conferring security, moral courage, and spiritual enlightenment [1944:13].

The argument can be stated that during the colonial period in the United States, education was concerned with having students read the Bible and memorize various Biblical passages. However, religious education should not be confused with spiritual education. Spiritual education does not deal with denominational dogmas, ritual or ceremony. Spirituality, according to Aurobindo Ghose, is "an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body [Pandit, 1973:246]." Spirituality involves a complete "conversion" and a "transformation" of the entire being. It is a union not only with man's soul but also with the Divine (God). The concept of spirituality was further explained by Hall.

The end of metaphysical education is not memorizing facts in a textbook, but the expression through trained and developed faculties of the convictions of the inner spiritual life. All the great systems of metaphysical philosophy have included disciplines intended to release and perfect the higher ideals of the individual [1944:13].

In light of these interpretations of spirituality, spiritual education, as differentiated from religious, physical, and mental education, is largely ignored by the public school systems in the United States.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It was the purpose of this study to consider the philosophical and pedagogical approaches of Aurobindo Ghose and Maria Montessori as a way of engendering spiritual values into the educational system in the United States.

### **Methodology**

This was done by the use of a comparative study which investigated Aurobindo's and Montessori's philosophies and their educational theories and practices. Each person's ontology, epistemology, and axiology were taken into consideration. Their educational theories and practices were also discussed in terms of the aims of education, the curriculum, and the ideal teacher.

The selection of Aurobindo Ghose and Maria Montessori as subjects for this comparative study was not to imply that they represent the educational philosophies of the East or of the West. To perceive the East and the West as representing two clear-cut patterns of thought is, at best, a simplistic point of view. Charles A. Moore (1944:249) was even more specific when he stated that to see the situation in these terms "is to do manifest injustice not only to the West but also to the East by overlooking a rich variety of thought that defies any such categorization." Ergo, Aurobindo and Montessori can not be said to represent the educational philosophies of the East or of the West. To assume such a proposition would be naive. The great diversity which exists in the educational philosophies of the East as well as in the West must be remembered.

### **MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS OF AUROBINDO GHOSE**

Radhakrishnan (1966:69) called Aurobindo "the great Indian scholar-mystic," while K. G. Saiyidain (1965:21) noted that Aurobindo was a person "of high intellectual and moral calibre" who left a deep impression on hundreds of people of his generation.

The importance and the outstanding contributions of Aurobindo were also recognized by V. P. Varma in The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo (1960:vii):

Aurobindo has been one of the most creative and significant figures in the Indian Renaissance Movement. He was gifted with surprising powers of intellect. He was a great sage, yogi, and philosophical thinker. Romain Rolland regarded him as the highest synthesis of the genius of Europe and the Genius of Asia. Rabindranath Tagore hailed him as the most pronounced exponent of the spiritual message of India to the world.

Aurobindo was primarily noted for his elaborate philosophical system set forth in the book The Life Divine (1973). In the opinion of Haridas Chaudhuri (1972a:8), possibly the most important contribution that Aurobindo made to philosophical thinking is his "integral insight into the structure of Being." According to Chaudhuri, through man's "integral awareness of Being," man is able to realize his "spiritual potential" and work toward the establishment "of love, justice, peace, and freedom ... on earth [1972a:14]."

Chaudhuri (1973:216) also called Aurobindo "The Great Reconciler" for "reconciling the dominant currents of spiritual thought and practice in India ... ." In unifying the various philosophical systems in India, Chaudhuri maintained that Aurobindo succeeded in reconciling the cultures of both the East and the West.

### **Initial Summary of Aurobindo's Philosophy**

Because Aurobindo received a British education in London and Cambridge from 1879 to 1893 (he earned a classics degree with honors at King's College, Cambridge), the assumption can be made that he studied all the major philosophers of the West (McDermott, 1973:6). Aurobindo evidently studied the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Heraclitus, Hegel, Bergson, and Nietzsche. Aurobindo even wrote essays on Heraclitus and on Nietzsche's concept of the superman (see Heraclitus and The Superman). Because of his British education, it can be stated that the Western philosophers had some influence on Aurobindo's philosophical thought. The exact extent of this influence on Aurobindo's major writings, however, remains open to conjecture.

P. T. Raju, in The Philosophical Traditions of India (1971:229), called Aurobindo "an idealist, absolutist, and monist who rejects the view that the world is an unreal illusion." In light of this interpretation, Aurobindo argued that the material and the immaterial world are both to be regarded as real. His epistemology is based on the idea that there are various levels of consciousness that man may attain. The levels of consciousness range all the way from mind to supermind. Evil, for Aurobindo, is explained in terms of a "distorting consciousness" or "spiritual ignorance." Because of the limited consciousness inherent in the majority of mankind, Aurobindo stated that man is unable to adequately judge the external world in terms of the mental frame of mind. The goal of life, he believed, consists in transforming the material world into a "divine heaven on earth."

### **Initial Summary of Aurobindo's Educational Theory and Practice**

According to Aurobindo, the aim of education should be to help the individual develop the powers of human mind and spirit. In order to be complete, education should take into account five aspects of man's nature; namely, the physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual self. The ideal teacher does not really teach in the traditional sense of the word. The ideal teacher guides and assists the child to ultimately follow his own "law of growth." Aurobindo believed that all subjects represent valid areas of study as long as they aid in the development of man's physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual nature.

### **MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS OF MARIA MONTESSORI**

In Maria Montessori: A Centenary Anthology (1970:37-65), Gabriel Marcel called Montessori a "creative genius" for "she was one who was able to see and to understand better than other people because she was richly endowed with love." In the same anthology, Bertrand Russell praised Montessori for the "great genius" involved in her pedagogical discoveries.

In the "Introduction" to The Montessori Method J. McV. Hunt stated that

Perhaps one of the most important things to be gained by revisiting Montessori's pedagogy is her willingness and ability to observe children working with the didactic apparatus, and from observation to invent, on the spot, modifications of the situation that will foster a child's psychological development [Montessori, 1964a:xxiv].

McV. Hunt also said that Montessori's pedagogy for preschool education contributes toward the solution of one of the major educational problems of our day: educating children coming from "lower class" homes (Montessori, 1964a:xxxiv).

Another major contribution that Montessori made to the field of education was her recognition of "sensitive periods" in the child's development. This, along with her concept of the "prepared environment" and the development of "didactic materials" have contributed to the recognition of her "genius" as an educator.

### **Initial Summary of Montessori's Philosophy**

E. M. Standing, in Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work (1962a:87), stated that, although Montessori received a scientific training (she was the first woman to receive a medical degree from the University of Rome), "she never permitted the scientist in her to go beyond its proper sphere." According to Standing,

She always realized that science deals with secondary causes and not with the ultimate mysteries of life, i.e., with the First Cause and metaphysics. That is why, in spite of her scientific training and outlook, there was never with her—as with many others—a sense of opposition between science and religion [1962a:87-88].

To briefly sum Montessori's philosophy of life, reality consists of a material and an immaterial world. There are essentially two kinds of truths: external and internal. External truth is characterized by the scientific method of apprehending reality primarily through observation, experimentation, investigation, and verification. Internal truth is compared to receiving "internal impressions" or revelations "vouchsafed by God." In her axiology, Montessori attempted to explain the concept of "original sin" and the distinction between good and evil. Although Montessori maintained that man is born with "original sin," she appeared to contradict herself when she stated that the child is "more or less" free from sin. Montessori never really explained evil except to compare it with "death," "remorse,"

and "a malady of the soul." The goal of life, she believed, is to realize peace and human unity through education, "miracles," and a return to the child.

### **Initial Summary of Montessori's Educational Theory and Practice**

Montessori contended that education should be "coextensive with life" and as an "aid to life," education should help to bring about peace and human unity throughout the world, furthermore, she believed that education should take into account the existence of "sensitive periods" within the child. These "sensitive periods" were described as "predispositions" on the part of the child to learn certain skills during a specific development of his life. She continually stressed the importance of a "prepared environment" in teaching children "exercises of practical life." She also emphasized the learning of physical and mental skills through the use of "didactic materials." The ideal teacher is regarded as an observer rather than as an actual teacher of children. Through interaction with the "prepared environment" and the "didactic materials," the child ultimately teaches himself. Therefore, the teacher—or the "directress" as Montessori often called her—has the responsibility of observing and guiding the child. It is also the responsibility of the "directress" to carefully prepare the environment for the child's "natural" growth.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

There were several limitations in conducting this particular study. First, none of Aurobindo's writings on the Veda, the Upanishad, and the Bhagavadgita were consulted. Aurobindo's writings on Indian culture, his poetry, literature, and plays were also excluded, not because of their unimportance, but because they were not germane to this particular study.

Also, an adequate explication of Aurobindo's entire philosophical system was somewhat limited in that Aurobindo's philosophy was dealt with in terms of his educational theory and practice. A great deal of literature has been written on Aurobindo's philosophy alone.

To assume that this study had adequately dealt with his philosophy in all its aspects would be at best, naive, at worst, presumptuous.

Another limitation is that the works of Mira Richard (the Mother) and other writers of the International Centre of Education at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram were used to support and expand on Aurobindo's educational theory and practice. Because Aurobindo often declared that "the Mother's consciousness and mine are the same [McDermott, 1973:16]," the reader should be aware that the Mother had a great deal of influence on Aurobindo's educational theory and practice.

A further limitation was that Montessori had not specifically delineated a philosophical system in terms of ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Therefore, her writings had to be carefully perused in order to elicit a philosophical system according to the various categories.

Finally, Montessori's writings were originally written in Italian. Consequently, the authenticity and credibility of those persons who translated her works into English had to be relied upon.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

The study was organized in six chapters.

Chapter 1 gave an introduction and a statement of the problem and the methodology used. Major contributions of Aurobindo and Montessori were included in addition to an initial summary of their philosophies and educational theories and practices.

Chapter 2 dealt with the philosophy of Aurobindo Ghose. A review of the literature was included along with an introduction to Aurobindo's philosophy. His ontology, epistemology, and axiology were reported along with some critical considerations and a summary of his thought.

Chapter 3 presented the educational theory and practice of Aurobindo. Literature pertaining to his education was discussed along with his aim of education and his concept of a physical, vital, men-

tal, psychic, and spiritual education. His ideal teacher and curriculum were also elucidated.

Chapter 4 dealt with the philosophy of Montessori in terms of ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Several critical considerations were made along with a summary of her philosophical thought.

Chapter 5 presented Montessori's educational theory and practice. Her aim of education, her notion of "sensitive periods" and the "prepared environment" were explained. A discussion was given on her "exercises of practical life," sensory education, motor education, moral education, and the ideal teacher. Again, as with all the other chapters, critical considerations and a summary were provided for the reader.

Finally, Chapter 6 presented a summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 2.

### PHILOSOPHY OF AUROBINDO GHOSE

East and West have two ways of looking at life which are opposite sides of one reality.

Sri Aurobindo  
The Problem of Re-  
birth, 1969

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although Aurobindo is a relatively contemporary figure in the philosophical field, a number of books have been written concerning his contributions to philosophical thought. An excellent introduction containing extracts from some of his basic writings is entitled The Essential Aurobindo (1973), edited by Robert McDermott. The book contains four sections dealing with "Man in Evolution," "Integral Yoga," "Toward a Spiritual Age," and "The Mother on Education and Auroville." Preceding each section, McDermott provided a brief explanatory essay of the ideas presented.

Haridas Chaudhuri also did an excellent job in introducing the reader to Aurobindo's integral thought. In The Philosophy of Integralism (1954), Chaudhuri explicated the philosophical outlook of Aurobindo particularly with regard to Aurobindo's concept of reality and his theory of values. Equally important is Chaudhuri's work, Sri Aurobindo: Prophet of Life Divine (1973). In this book, Chaudhuri clearly elucidated Aurobindo's integral philosophy and showed how it related to the principles of integral yoga.

Also helpful to the reader is S. K. Maitra's An Introduction to the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo (1965). In this study, Maitra introduced the reader to the general principles of Aurobindo's ontology, epistemology, and axiology. In The Meeting of the East and the West in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy (1968), Maitra compared Aurobindo's thought to Western writers such as Bergson, Hegel, Plato, and

Whitehead and showed in what ways their philosophies are similar and yet divergent from each other.

For the reader who is primarily concerned with what Aurobindo had to say about a number of related subjects, i.e., "Evolution and Spiritual Transformation," "Reason," "The Gnostic Being," "The Divine Life," and "How Can Man Realise His Destiny," one might turn to The Destiny of Man (1969) which is a series of Aurobindo's writings compiled by Rishabhchand and Shyamsundar Jhunjhunwala.

For a brief compilation of Aurobindo's philosophical thought, the reader might also turn to K. D. Acharya's Guide to Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy (1968).

In a dissertation entitled "The Reality and Value of the World in the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo" (1969), Beatrice Bruteau examined Aurobindo's philosophy in terms of his concept of reality and values. She evaluated his position in terms of its being Hindu philosophy, world philosophy, and contemporary philosophy as "logically sound, original, and significant." Bruteau concluded that Aurobindo's philosophical system "is genuinely Hindu but also universal and modern."

She stated that his theory of spiritual evolution is perhaps the most important component of his system. Although Aurobindo's system may be criticized for "being diffuse, somewhat ambiguous and lacking philosophical precision in places," Bruteau maintained that, on the whole, it is "judged to be sound" in "offering a new vision of considerable value for the contemporary world [pp. 1593-94]."

A number of other writers have concerned themselves with Aurobindo's philosophy although they have by no means dealt with it as extensively as the above authors have. One of these writers is Pitirim Sorokin, author of The Ways and Power of Love (1954). Sorokin very briefly discussed Aurobindo's concept of reality and values as they related to Sorokin's theme of creative altruistic love. P. T. Raju, in The Philosophical Traditions of India (1971), explained Aurobindo's concept of mind and its place in Aurobindo's hierarchy of knowledge. Perhaps Chandradhar Sharma, in A Criti-

cal Survey of Indian Philosophy (1964), did a better job than Raju had in explaining Aurobindo's epistemology in more detail. Finally, K. Damodaran, in Indian Thought a Critical Survey (1967), did a fairly adequate job in elucidating Aurobindo's concept of reality as it related to a material and a nonmaterial existence.

## INTRODUCTION

According to Chaudhuri (1954:iv), Aurobindo's philosophy may be called "Integral Vedanta" in so far as it reaffirms the original Vedanta; i.e., the ancient integral teaching of the Upanishad. The Upanishad is one of a large number of treatises whose philosophical compositions antedate, for the most part, the beginnings of Greek philosophy (Runes, 1971:327). Briefly and simplistically stated is the idea that all is one and all is spiritual and Brahman. All individual souls and multiplicities are an illusion, for in reality "all is Brahman" and "Brahman is all." In addition to the Upanishad, numerous references were also made throughout Aurobindo's works to the Vedas and the Bhagavadgita.

Chaudhuri (1973:214) noted that Aurobindo's philosophical outlook might also be termed "Integral Non-Dualism" for the following reason:

In providing a synthetic interpretation of the Vedanta Sri Aurobindo does also bring to fruitful consummation the divergent currents of spiritual thought in India. Tantricism with its emphasis upon the element of super-conscious dynamism ... in ultimate reality, Vaishnavism with its emphasis upon the blissful reciprocity ... of the finite and the Infinite, and Vedantism with its emphasis upon the Spirit's transcendent purity and timeless freedom ... , all these have been exhibited by Sri Aurobindo as different formulations, with shifts in emphasis, of the same integral Truth.

Finally, a third label that has often been identified with Aurobindo's philosophy is called "Integral Idealism." Chaudhuri (1954:vi) explained that Aurobindo's philosophical position is not to be categorized as idealism "in the sense that the world cannot exist apart from our knowledge of it, or that the world is a mere function of the mental consciousness, whether finite or infinite." Rather, according to the notion of "Integral Idealism," reality in its highest form of manifestation consists of a "universal spirit." The primary concept

in "Integral Idealism" is the "Integral Idea" or the supermind which will be explained in greater detail later.

Perhaps Damodaran (1967:402) summed it up nicely when he said that

The philosophy of Aurobindo is generally described as Integral Non-Dualism or Integral Idealism. It attempts to integrate materialism and idealism, to synthesize science, metaphysics and religion and seeks to understand reality in its undivided entirety ...

## ONTOLOGY

Reality, for Aurobindo, rested on the fundamental idea that matter and spirit are both to be regarded as real. To affirm that matter is merely "an illusion of the senses" or that spirit is "an illusion of the imagination" would result in Aurobindo's words, in "a great bankruptcy of Life" or "an equal bankruptcy in the things of the Spirit [Maitra, 1965:1]." Thus, the question of what is real, matter or spirit, is not really a valid question in Aurobindo's opinion if it forces one into making an "either-or" choice. An affirmation of the reality of both the material and the immaterial world is the point of view that Aurobindo supported with regard to his model of reality.

### **Hierarchy of Reality**

In Aurobindo's scheme of reality, there is an hierarchy which is made up of different grades of manifestation. The hierarchy (adapted from McDermott, 1973:38) consists of:

Sachchidananda

Supermind

Mind

Life

Matter

### **Sachchidananda**

The highest grade of reality, according to Aurobindo, is Sachchidananda. Aurobindo used this term synonymously with God, Brahman, the Divine, the Absolute, "Ultimate Reality," "Supreme Existence," the "Triune Godhead," to name just a few. It is from

Sachchidananda, or God, that all things originate. Aurobindo (1973b:658) admitted that it is difficult to describe exactly what Sachchidananda is because it "is indefinable and ineffable by mental thought and mental language; it is self-existent and self-evident to itself, as all absolutes are self-existent ... " In other words, one can exhaust the entire English language to describe what God is and still be unable to say all there is to say about Him. However, Aurobindo (1973a:361) told us that if one is to say anything at all about what God is, it is to say that God is ultimately Spirit.

There are three aspects or characteristics that one might mention with regard to Aurobindo's Sachchidananda; namely, that it consists of Being or existence (sat), consciousness-force (chit), and bliss or delight (ananda). Within this trinity of existence, consciousness-force, and bliss, there is an inherent unity which is responsible for the creation of all existence. The two phrases, "all is Brahman" and "Brahman is all" are explained by Aurobindo:

Brahman is the Consciousness that knows itself in all that exists; Brahman is the Force that sustains the power of God ... the Force that acts in man and animal and the forms and energies of Nature; Brahman is the Ananda, the secret Bliss of existence which is the ether of our being and without which none could breathe or live. All realities and all aspects and all semblances are the Brahman ... [1973a:324].

Being or existence is simply that which is; consciousness is "creative self-consciousness [Pandit, 1973:29]"; and bliss or delight is "spiritual ecstasy" which is something more than what one ordinarily thinks of as peace, joy, or pleasure (Pandit, 1973:6).

More specifically, Aurobindo interpreted Being as "the ultimate ground of the universe, as the Supreme Person ... or the Supreme Being ... endowed with infinite creative energy [Chaudhuri, 1972a:7]." Being, for Aurobindo, is regarded as a father figure who is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. Being expresses Himself in many different patterns and creations throughout the world and also exists in many individual selves. Although the Supreme Being is manifested in many different forms, He is not limited by any or all of these forms combined together. The Supreme Being is perceived as the "Lord of the Universe" who "wills, governs, and possesses its world of manifestation ... [Chaudhuri, 1972a:8]."

Consciousness, Aurobindo (1955:443) explained, is not merely one's mental self-awareness. Rather, consciousness is an "active force" which exists in all forms of animate and what may appear to be inanimate objects. Aurobindo said that "as we progress and awaken to the soul in us and things, we shall realise that there is a consciousness also in the plant, in the metal, in the atom, in electricity, in everything that belongs to physical nature [1955:443]." Aurobindo (1955:444) argued that even our body has a consciousness of its own. Thus, consciousness, as a part of that which creates all things, permeates all forms of existence from the smallest pebble to the complex universe.

Aurobindo (1955:445) asserted that to find or recognize consciousness, as he perceived it, is also to discover "that its essence is ananda or delight of self-existence." Ananda, Aurobindo told us,

... is the secret delight from which all things are born, by which all is sustained in existence and to which all can rise in spiritual culmination. It is the Divine Bliss which comes from above. It is not joy or pleasure, but something self-evident, pure and quite beyond what any joy or pleasure can be [Pandit, 1973:7].

According to Aurobindo, it is quite possible for any object or person to "feel some form of Ananda consciousness on any level" of existence (Pandit, 1973:7). However, this "ananda consciousness," Aurobindo explained, is quite diminished in power. The reason being that the amount of "delight" existing within a person or an object is directly proportional to that person or object's capacity to receive and hold the "delight," i.e., light, within themselves. For example, often a person's ardent desire to be united with God and to experience spiritual ecstasy is not equal to that person's mental and physical capacity to receive the light at that period in time. As a consequence, the light may come, but because the body and mind may not be sufficiently strengthened to receive it, derangement or physical damage may occur. Aurobindo stated that

It [ananda] can come not only with its fullest intensity but with a more enduring persistence when the mind is at peace and the heart delivered from ordinary joy and sorrow. If the mind and heart are restless, changeful, unquiet, Ananda of a kind may come, but it is mixed with vital excitement and cannot abide. One must get peace and calm fixed in the consciousness first, then

there is a solid basis on which Ananda can spread itself and in its turn become an enduring part of the consciousness and the nature [Pandit, 1973:7].

Thus, spiritual ecstasy or bliss is a part of all creation which can be experienced on many different levels of consciousness.

According to Aurobindo (1955:442), the three aspects of Sachchidananda (existence, consciousness-force, and bliss) are not to be regarded as separate entities from one another but rather as "three inseparable divine terms" that are mutually dependent on each other for the creation of all existence. Furthermore, Aurobindo (1973a:43) stated that "Sachchidananda is the unknown, omnipresent, indispensable term for which the human consciousness, whether in knowledge and sentiment or in sensation and action, is eternally seeking."

Following Sachchidananda in Aurobindo's "order" of reality are supermind, mind, life, and matter. Although supermind and mind will be discussed in greater detail in the section on epistemology, some consideration of their relationship to reality will be mentioned at this time.

## **Supermind**

Supermind may be regarded as the "intermediary" between Sachchidananda and mind, life, and matter (Chaudhuri, 1973:27). Aurobindo maintained that the supermind is the "instrumentation" of the Sachchidananda and, as such, contains the "self-determining Truth of the Divine Consciousness [Pandit, 1973:252]." In other words, it is through the supermind that Sachchidananda diffuses its powers to the lower forms of existence; i.e., mind, life, and matter. One might further clarify this relationship by saying that supermind, mind, life, and matter all appear to be extensions or "modes" of Sachchidananda with supermind acting as the primary "instrument" by which the powers of Sachchidananda are channeled through to the lower levels of existence. Above all, Aurobindo stated that although Sachchidananda exists in all forms of reality, it can by no means be confined to any one aspect of reality. In Aurobindo's words,

. . . all Matter as well as all Life, Mind and Supermind are only modes of the Brahman, the Eternal, the Spirit, the Sachchidananda, who not only dwells in

them all, but is all these things though no one of them is His absolute being [1973a:242].

Aurobindo contended that the supermind recognizes the "profound truth" of the notion of unity in diversity or, in his own words, ". . . in every status and condition the spiritual realisation of the unity of all [Pandit, 1973:252]." Chaudhuri explained (1972b:181).

The supermind is integral consciousness. It is the awareness of Being in its integral fullness as distinguished from the mind's sectional or fragmentary cognition. The mind perceives the world piecemeal, section by section, item by item. It sees mountains, rivers, forests, and oceans . . . all existing separately from one another. But the supermind comprehends all the seemingly isolated date of perception as inseparably interrelated parts of the cosmic whole.

Thus, the ability to perceive the world, indeed the entire universe, in all its unity is what characterizes Aurobindo's supermind. It is through the Supermind that the characteristics of Sachchidananda (Being, greater consciousness and force, and indescribable delight and bliss) are manifested in mind, life, and matter. Hence, it is by way of the supermind that Aurobindo's highest conception of reality, i.e., Sachchidananda, is manifested on the mental and material planes of existence.

## **Mind**

As a subordinate power of supermind, mind contains many levels of realization as will be explained in the section on epistemology. However, suffice it to say that while the recognition of unity is characteristic of supermind, the awareness of division and disunity is characteristic of mind. Mind, Aurobindo (1973a:118) said, cannot sufficiently explain existence in the universe because "it is not a faculty of knowledge nor an instrument of omniscience; it is a faculty for the seeking of knowledge, for expressing as much as it can gain of it in certain forms of a relative thought and for using it towards certain capacities of action." Aurobindo appeared to be saying that although mind is unable to have any direct insight into ultimate reality, mind still provides one with a useful though limited function in terms of ideas and mental thought perceptions (Pandit, 1973:158). Thus, for Aurobindo (1973a:268), "mind is necessary,

though it need not be aware of itself as anything but a subordinate action of Supermind ... "

## **Life**

Further down the hierarchy, but no less important, are life and matter. Aurobindo said that life represented a definite part of reality. As "a power of the Spirit," i.e., Sachchidananda, life represents another aspect of reality but is by no means the only reality that exists (Pandit, 1973:146).

## **Matter**

Finally, it is in matter that life appears, ranging all the way from the miniscule cell to complex physical entities. Since all things emanate from Sachchidananda and, above all, it has been noted that Sachchidananda is Spirit, one can say that matter is the means by which the immaterial (spirit) is actualized into the material form. Although matter assumes the form of a material entity, Aurobindo (1973a:6) concurred with India's ancient maxim that "Matter also is Brahman." He stated:

Matter, like Mind and Life, is still Being or Brahman in its self-creative action. It is a form of the force of conscious Being, a form given by Mind and realised by Life [p. 239],

Furthermore, Aurobindo (1973a:240-41) said that matter and spirit are one: "Spirit is the soul and reality of that which we sense as Matter; Matter is a form and body of that which we realise as Spirit." Aurobindo appeared to be saying that because matter is a creation of Brahman, it must necessarily follow that matter contains within itself all the characteristics or potentialities of Brahman. Moreover, because the one thing that can be said about Brahman or Sachchidananda is that it is ultimately Spirit, then it logically follows that matter is also Spirit since all existence is merely a "self-projection" of Sachchidananda. In his own words: "Matter is a form of Spirit, a habitation of Spirit, and here in Matter itself there can be a realisation of Spirit [1973b:664-65]." Maitra (1968:197) explained that according to Aurobindo "even matter is spirit," and "there is no order of existence where Spirit is entirely absent" for "it is the presence of Spirit ... that is the root of all development and progress."

Similarly, one might recall Jung's statement that ". . . spirit has poured himself out into everything, even into inorganic matter; he is present in metal and stone [1963:211]."

But one might ask, what is the *raison d'être* of matter if indeed it is a manifestation of Spirit? Chaudhuri (1954:155) provided some insight on this.

The *raison d'être* of matter is that it functions as the starting-point and basis of the terrestrial scheme of evolution in which we are involved. It represents the lowest limit of the gradual self-alienation or self-concealment of Spirit.

To add to this, one might mention the teleological explanation given by Aurobindo (1973a:256):

... it [matter] is the result of a divine Cosmic Will in the material universe which intends to posit here a physical relation between sense and its object, establishes here a material formula and law of Conscious-Force and creates by it physical images of Conscious-Being to serve as the initial, dominating and determining fact of the world in which we live. It is not a fundamental law of being, but a constructive principle necessitated by the intention of the Spirit to evolve in a world of Matter.

In other words, the whole purpose of the material world, according to Aurobindo, is to realize or manifest Spirit on the material plane. Or, to phrase it another way, to realize "heaven on earth" through the process of evolution.

It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss Aurobindo's concept of evolution. Briefly stated though, it may be said that because all things come from the Spirit, they have the inherent "need" to return to its divine source. This process of transformation from the material to the spiritual is called evolution. However, it is important to note that the evolutionary process could not take place by its own volition. Above all, Maitra (1968:195) explained that

. . . the real determining factor in the ascent of the world to higher stages is the Divine Will. Unless the Divine Will chooses to raise the world by descending into it in higher and higher forms, it cannot by itself raise itself.

One might say, then, that it is ultimately through the "Divine Will," or the grace of God, that the transformation of the material into a spiritual world can become a reality.

But, one might further ask, why would Brahman even want to create a world only to watch it unfold toward some predestined end? Aurobindo (1970c:7-8) said that there is only one reason why Brahman creates and that is because of Brahman's delight with Himself.

It is the delight of a Self-lover, the play of a Child, the endless self-multiplication of a Poet intoxicated with the rapture of His own power of endless creation. Because the Infinite conceived an innumerable delight in itself, therefore worlds and universes came into existence.

## Other Worlds

In addition to the material world, Aurobindo posited six other levels of existence which he claimed were manifestations of the Spirit. They are: the vital, the mental, the supramental, the psychic, the "dynamic spiritual," and the ontological (Chaudhuri, 1972b:190). It is beyond the scope of this paper to explicate each of these additional existences in detail. However, Chaudhuri did say that

In each of these planes the metaphysical principle corresponding to its name is predominantly active as both the foundation and the regulating agency. For instance, in the supramental world, the supermind is the foundation and overtly operative principle. Physical, vital, mental and other energies are arranged and organized there in the light of the integral consciousness of the supermind [pp. 190-91].

It appears, then, that according to the name given to each additional level of existence beyond the material world, it is that name which best characterizes and functions in that particular world. Furthermore, the supermind, acting as an agent of Sachchidananda, organizes and arranges these additional worlds in some sort of order. Aurobindo further explained:

The other worlds are typical worlds, each fixed in its own kind and type and law. Evolution takes place on the earth and therefore the earth is the proper field for progression. The beings of the other worlds do not progress from one world to another. They remain fixed to their own type [Pandit, 1973:286].

## Hierarchical Relationship

The relationship which exists between Sachchidananda, supermind, mind, life, and matter is an integral relationship. When speaking of the higher world (Sachchidananda) and the lower

world (mind, life, and matter), one should not assume that the terms higher and lower somehow imply a greater or a lesser reality. Aurobindo continually emphasized that all levels of reality are equally real and necessary for the outworking of the Spirit's *raison d'être*. The relationship, then, is one of interdependence; for one can hardly speak of the material world without also alluding to its primary cause, i.e., Spirit. Chaudhuri summed it up nicely when he said that

What is ... to be deprecated is the tendency to exaggerate any one of these components of reality into the sole ultimate principle. While none of them [levels of reality] can be said to represent the whole Truth, all of them are without doubt true and real forms of expression of the one multiform Truth [1973:242].

## EPISTEMOLOGY

Aurobindo's epistemology is intimately linked with his model of reality. For Aurobindo, one cannot adequately speak of ontology without also speaking of epistemology. As reality, with all its different grades of manifestation is a "self-projection" of Sachchidananda, concomitantly, knowledge with all its different levels of consciousness is also a "self-projection" of this same "triune principle" (Sachchidananda) (Maitra, 1968:193).

In explicating Aurobindo's theory of knowledge, this section will first deal with his distinction between knowledge and ignorance; second, his levels of consciousness; and third, the hierarchical relationship which exists among the different levels of consciousness.

### Knowledge and Ignorance

Knowledge, according to Aurobindo (1973a:121), is that which goes "beyond mind and intellectual reasoning." He used the hymns of the Rig Veda in supporting his contention that knowledge is a "consciousness of the Truth, the Right ... and ignorance is an unconsciousness of the Truth and Right ... [1973a:489]." Aurobindo maintained that ignorance is the inability to perceive things from the unified viewpoint of the supermind; whereas, knowledge perceives the unity of all things in spite of their apparent differences.

The ability to somehow go beyond appearances and to clearly apprehend the notion of unity in diversity seems to be characteristic of Aurobindo's concept of knowledge. He stated (1973a:490):

... Ignorance is in its origin a dividing mental knowledge which does not grasp the unity, essence, self-law of things in their one origin and in their universality, but works rather upon divided particulars, separate phenomena, partial relations, as if they were the truth ... . The Knowledge is that which tends towards unification and ... seizes the oneness, the essence, the self-law of existence and views and deals with the multiplicity of things out of that light and plenitude.

Aurobindo noted that in his epistemology, ignorance also represents a kind of knowledge although it (ignorance) is very limited in its scope of knowing. He explained that ignorance "is open at any point to the intrusion of falsehood and error; it turns into a wrong conception of things which stands in opposition to the true Knowledge [1973a:490]." As such, ignorance, as a lower level of consciousness, can never truly be regarded as representing the truth.

However, ignorance, like the material is capable of evolving into the spiritual, has the capacity to evolve toward a greater consciousness. Maitra explained (1965:34):

What we require is to realize that Consciousness or Knowledge operates in three different ways. At the highest it is Divine Self-Knowledge, which is also Divine All-Knowledge. At the other extreme we have what seems to be a complete negation of knowledge, an "effective dynamic, creative Nescience." In the intermediate process we call it Ignorance, which is a sort of half-way house between the Supreme Consciousness and the complete Nescience. It [ignorance] is also capable ... of evolving itself into knowledge.

As all reality emanates from Sachchidananda through the supermind, likewise all knowledge with its various levels of consciousness comes from the same source. But, one might ask: Where does ignorance come from? What is its origin? To this, Maitra (1965:38) answered that "ignorance is not a power of the Supreme Being nor does it dwell in Him; there cannot be any primeval Ignorance ... ." Ignorance, then, does not appear to come directly from Sachchidananda because, by definition, Sachchidananda is all-knowing. According to Aurobindo (Maitra, 1965:38), the origin of ignorance arises when the mind begins to perceive itself as separate from all other entities; as a self-contained independent reality.

Maitra (1965:39) argued that ignorance "does not create any dualism. It is not something opposed to knowledge, not something which contradicts knowledge." Rather, ignorance is an aspect of knowledge which chooses to limit itself in order to progress "in the conditions chosen and self-imposed on the nature ... [p. 39]." As Sharma (1964:383) explained: " ... ignorance is not the total denial of knowledge but knowledge hiding itself and thereby appearing as something else. Hence, there is always some element of knowledge even in ignorance ... " Thus, according to Aurobindo, the origin of ignorance lies in the inability of the mind to recognize its inherent unity with Sachchidananda and all other entities outside of itself. Also, ignorance is not contradictory to the notion of knowledge. In reality, Aurobindo maintained that ignorance is merely the "conscious choice" of knowledge to limit itself for the purpose of evolution. Furthermore, as an aspect of knowledge, ignorance is capable of evolving into a higher level of consciousness beyond its present capacity.

The primary distinction, then, between knowledge and ignorance is that the former implies the apprehension of the unity of all things; whereas, the latter connotes the perception of only "dis-jointed" parts. One might also mention that although ignorance represents only a limited aspect of knowledge, it is still capable of evolving towards a higher level of consciousness according to Aurobindo's point of view.

### **Levels of Consciousness**

With regard to his epistemology, Aurobindo recognized the existence of different levels of consciousness. The different levels of consciousness are represented in the following manner (Ghose, 1973b:938):

- Supermind
- Overmind
- Intuition
- Illumined-Mind
- Higher-Mind
- Mind

Aurobindo's epistemology is based on what he called an "evolution" of different levels of consciousness (1955:169). By consciousness, Aurobindo (1973b:1017) is referring to "the power to be aware of itself and its objects" in all its completeness. He stated: "The destiny of evolving consciousness must be, then, to become perfect in its awareness, entirely aware of self and all-aware." Thus, consciousness, for Aurobindo, implies not only a deep awareness of the nature of self but also an awareness of all things outside of self and their unified relationship with one another.

## **Mind**

According to Aurobindo, the lowest level of consciousness is that of the human mind (Rishabhchand,1969:117). When speaking of mind, Aurobindo talked about many aspects of mind such as the "subconscious mind," the "subliminal mind," the "inner mind," and the "vital mind," to name just a few. However, this discussion will primarily concern itself with a very general concept of the function of mind, i.e., mental consciousness according to Aurobindo's point of view.

Mental consciousness, Aurobindo (1955:944) contended, "is not an integral but always a partial knowledge." Aurobindo (1973c:16) argued that mind "cannot arrive at Truth"; it can only make some "constructed figure" that tries to represent Truth. As such, mind, as was mentioned previously, is incapable of adequately explaining existence in the universe.

But, one might ask, if mind is ultimately derived from Sachchidananda which is all-knowing, how is it that mind represents a form of ignorance? One might recall that ignorance exists because of the mind's tendency to perceive itself as separate from all other minds and all other realities. Chaudhuri (1954:180) stated that, with regard to mind:

The belief is ... engendered that every individual Self is ontologically separate from others. The individual Self is now so much identified with its individualised form, so exclusively concentrated in a particular direction, that it loses sight of the fundamental unity of consciousness.

Having lost sight of this "fundamental unity of consciousness," then, is the primary reason why ignorance exists in the mind.

Aurobindo (1973a:118) argued that mind can neither be characterized as a "faculty of knowledge" nor as an "instrument of omniscience." Rather, mind is to be considered as a "faculty" through which one can "seek" knowledge but, unfortunately, can never attain knowledge in the fullest sense of the word. Aurobindo said: "For Mind is that which does not know, which tries to know and which never knows except as in a glass darkly."

What, then, is the true function of mind? According to Aurobindo (Chaudhuri, 1954:176), the function of mind is "to measure, limit, cut out forms of things from the indivisible whole and contain them as if each were a separate integer." In differentiating, identifying, and isolating the parts from the whole, very often the mind will come to believe that it has arrived at knowledge. However, this is a mistake for, in reality, mind can never be completely synonymous with knowledge in the purest sense of the word.

It [mind] knows only its own analysis of the object and the idea it has formed of it by a synthesis of the separate parts and properties that it has seen. There its characteristic power, its sure function ceases [Ghose, 1973a:127].

Chaudhuri (1972b:182) explained that there are three reasons why the mind is unable to comprehend "the indivisible mystery of Being." First, the mind is "governed" by the laws of Aristotelian logic. To the human mind, "if nature is nature, and spirit is spirit, how can the twain meet?" Second, because the intellect is a "finite product" of Being, it is unable to overcome its own limitations. Third, due to "the subject-object dichotomy being ingrained in the intellect, it knows not how to transcend that dichotomy except by undergoing a radical transformation."

Hence, the limitations of mind are obvious indeed. But, one might ask, is mind forever doomed to function in this finite state? Is there any possibility that mind, like Aurobindo's grades of reality, is capable of evolving into a higher state of consciousness? As in his ontology, so in his epistemology. Aurobindo (1973b:665) allows this same evolutionary provision to be made in his theory of knowledge. Mind, he stated,

... can only arrive at its own perfection by admitting the light of a larger knowledge ... All the powers of the lower hemisphere with their structures of

the Ignorance can find their true selves only by a transformation in the light that descends to us from the higher hemisphere of an eternal self-knowledge.

Aurobindo seemed to be saying that mind is capable of evolving toward a higher level of consciousness if: (1) it admits its own ignorance, and (2) it is transformed by the descending light of "eternal self-knowledge," i.e., supermind.

Above all, Aurobindo (1973a:127) said that the "utmost mission" of mind is "to train our consciousness ... to enlighten its blind instincts, random intuitions, vague perceptions till it shall become capable of this greater light and this higher ascension." For ultimately, he noted, mind "is a passage, not a culmination [p. 128]."

### **Higher Mind**

The next level of consciousness is the higher mind which is regarded by Aurobindo (1955:90) as being "loftier, purer, vaster, more powerful than the reason or logical intelligence." Aurobindo stated (Rishabhchand, 1969:117) that the higher mind is able to receive "luminous thoughts" by bypassing the logical or reasoning process that is found in the mind. Aurobindo (1973a:169) likened the higher mind to that of the "pure thinker" who "knows mentality in itself and sees the world not in terms of life and body but of mind." The capacity to receive ideas without the aid of logic or reasoning appears to be the primary characteristic of Aurobindo's higher mind. One might note that Aurobindo does not specifically say how this phenomenon is accomplished, but only that it is accomplished at the level of the higher mind. Aurobindo noted that although the higher mind has the capacity to receive "luminous thoughts," it is still limited in its capacity to receive and manifest the light of the supermind. At best, Aurobindo explained that the higher mind's experiences may be regarded as a preparation for a greater level of consciousness.

### **Illumined Mind**

As the higher mind would transform man into a "spiritual sage and thinker," the illumined mind would transform man into a "seer" and "illumined mystic [Ghose, 1973b:946]." Aurobindo (1973b:944)

stated that the illumined mind is a mind which is no longer subjected to "higher thoughts" but is open, rather, to "spiritual light." Aurobindo seemed to be saying that the illumined mind perceives the world primarily through an inner "spiritual vision." To Aurobindo, apprehending reality by means of a "spiritual vision" is much more superior in comparison to understanding reality by means of the thought process. He stated:

The Illumined Mind does not work primarily by thought, but by vision; thought is ... only a subordinate movement expressive of sight. The human mind, which relies mainly on thought, conceives that to be the highest or the main process of knowledge, but in the spiritual order thought is a secondary and a not indispensable process [1973b:944-45].

Aurobindo further stated that

A consciousness that proceeds by sight, the consciousness of the seer, is a greater power for knowledge than the consciousness of the thinker. The perceptual power of the inner sight is greater and more direct than the perceptual power of thought: it is a spiritual sense that seizes something of the substance of Truth and not only her figure ... [p. 945].

Thus, Aurobindo believed that because the illumined mind apprehends reality by way of a "spiritual vision," the illumined mind is better capable of grasping and understanding "something of the substance of Truth" rather than merely the "shadows" that are cast off by truth that is obtained by the perceptual mind.

Aurobindo (1973b:944-46) said that the illumined mind brings with it a "greater consciousness," an "inner force and power" which enables the individual person to see and feel "the Divine in all things." Thus, the illumined mind is capable of raising man's consciousness to see God in all things; whether it be in the little pebble, the beautiful flower, or in the guise of another person. For one who can truly perceive the nature of reality, the existence of God has no boundaries. However, the illumined mind is not the culminating end of consciousness. There is still a higher level of knowledge that can be found in intuition.

## **Intuition**

S. K. Maitra (1968:77) noted that Aurobindo's levels of consciousness, with the exclusion of mind and higher mind, are intuitive

in nature. By intuition, Maitra meant that the illumined mind, intuition, overmind, and supermind are all capable of providing one with a "non-sensuous, direction experience." However, the quality of each experience differs considerably depending upon the level of consciousness that one has attained; be it illumined mind, intuition, overmind, or supermind.

Although Henri Bergson did not delineate intuition in the precise manner that Aurobindo had, the former did emphasize the importance of intuition.

... it is the very inwardness of life that intuition leads us. ... By intuition I mean instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflection upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely ... intuition may enable us to grasp what it is that intelligence fails to give us, and indicate the means of supplementing it [1928:186-87].

Andrew Weil (1972:152) also noted that the function of intuition has been revered by wise men throughout history.

They [the wise men] have told us again and again, in legends and myths, aphorisms, poems, and allegories that there exists within us a source of direct information about reality that can teach us all we need to know. Maimonides called this source "the still, small voice." A Chinese sage, Hsuan-chiao, said of it: "You remain silent and it speaks. You speak and it is silent." And all of them stress that the only requirement for getting in touch with this source is the suspension of ordinary mental activity.

Although Bergson and Weil have touched upon Aurobindo's concept of intuition, they have not dealt with it as extensively as Aurobindo has.

Aurobindo believed that there are various levels and types of intuition. He asserted that intuition, as man ordinarily experiences it, is not very dependable for very often it is "flashy" in nature, it lacks cohesion, and it is limited in scope (Maitra, 1968:80). These fundamental defects occur because intuition, at this level of consciousness, is still controlled by the mind. Although intuition comes from a "higher knowledge," Aurobindo (1955:915) contended that

The mental powers immediately proceed to lay hold on these things and to manipulate and utilise them for our mental or vital purposes, to adapt them to the forms of the inferior knowledge, to coat them up in or infiltrate them

with the mental stuff and suggestion, often altering their truth in the process and always limiting their potential force of enlightenment ...

Intuition, then, like all the previous levels of consciousness, is still subjected to the control and the influences of the mind. As such, any knowledge that intuition receives from a higher level of consciousness is open to distortion and misinterpretation by man.

However, in spite of these limitations, intuition, Aurobindo (1973a:67) said, "brings to man those brilliant messages from the Unknown which are the beginning of his higher knowledge." Aurobindo went on to say that because intuition is invariably subjected to the distorting influences of the mind, very often one must rely on the "observing and discriminating intelligence" of reason "to control the suggestions of the intuition [Ghose, 1973b:947]." However, one must remember that, with regard to intuition, reason should never be thought of as a "reliable arbiter." Hopefully, as one progresses at this level of consciousness, i.e., intuition, one might experience what is called in Sanskrit a "mass of stable lightnings [Ghose, 1973b:948]." Thus, rather than having the ordinary random flashes of inspiration which one takes to be intuition, one will experience a Constant "play of lightning-flashes," isolated or in continual action. It is at this stage, Aurobindo explained, that reason will clearly have to act only "as an observer" of these experiences. Once one has reached the experiential stage of a constant "play of lightning-flashes," Aurobindo said that it is imperative that the mind should undergo a transformation. Otherwise

. . . so long as the process of consciousness depends upon the lower intelligence [mind] serving or helping out or using the intuition, the result can only be a survival of the mixed Knowledge-Ignorance uplifted or relieved by a higher light and force acting in its parts of Knowledge [1973b:949].

Thus, without the transformation of the mind, one's intuitions will continually be mixed with the mind's independent "preferences, fancies, phantasies, strong insistences and desires [Pandit, 1973:135]."

According to Aurobindo (1973b:949), intuition has a fourfold power: "A power of revelatory truth-seeing, a power of inspiration or truth-hearing, a power of truth-touch or immediate seizing of sig-

nificance. ... a power of true and automatic discrimination of the orderly and exact relation of truth to truth." With these powers, Aurobindo argued that intuition can successfully perform all the functions of reason and "logical intelligence ... with steps that do not fail or falter."

It is possible, then, that a certain amount of transformation, with regard to the mind, can and should take place at this level of consciousness. However, Aurobindo (1973b:949-50) contended that a total transformation of the individual person is dubious for "the basis of Inconscience in our nature is too vast, deep and solid to be altogether penetrated, turned into light. ... " Thus, at best, the "intuitional change" can only serve as an introduction and a preparation for the next higher level of consciousness.

## **Overmind**

As supermind represents the essential link between Sachchidananda and the lower levels of reality, overmind represents the "transition-link" between the upper and lower levels of consciousness and is the primary link between mind and supermind (Chaudhuri, 1973:33).

For Aurobindo (1973b:950), the overmind is characterized by "a principle of global knowledge." He maintained that in order for a person to reach such a high level of knowledge, it is necessary that there be an ascent as well as a descent of the overmind consciousness. In other words, an individual's intense desire to ascend, or raise one's consciousness to the level of the overmind is not sufficient. There must also be a descent or the bringing down of the overmind into the individual person if one is to attain this level of consciousness at all. At the very least, Aurobindo (1973b:950) said that the individual's surface mind must be replaced by a "deeper and wider awareness" before the overmind will even descend into the individual. McDermott (1972:22) explained that the "great difficulty" is for the seeker "to open his consciousness to a global or cosmic scope and to completely subordinate the ego-sense." Once the overmind descends, there is a subordination of one's ego as well as a "boundless, universal feeling" of cosmic consciousness (Ghose, 1973b:950). There may also be, Aurobindo (1973b:951)

explained, a "sense of the universe in oneself or as oneself." In some instances, Aurobindo (1973b:950) contended that not only may one's entire ego be obliterated in the process of transformation, but "all sense of individuality, even of a subordinated or instrumental individuality" may disappear as well.

According to Aurobindo, the means by which one arrives at thought is also changed considerably. Thought, he said (1973b:950), no longer originates "individually in the body or the person but manifests from above or comes in upon the cosmic mind-waves." Furthermore, "all inner individual sight or intelligence of things is now a revelation or illumination of what is seen or comprehended, but the source of the revelation is not in one's separate self but in the universal knowledge [Ghose, 1973b:950]." Aurobindo is saying a number of things here. First, he is stating that at this level of consciousness, thought or cognition is derived not from the individual person but from a higher source of consciousness. Perhaps in understanding this, one might think of Jesus' constant reference to the idea that all the works and ideas that came from him originated from his Father. The quote "It is the Father and not I who does the works" might help one to understand what Aurobindo is trying to communicate. The "cosmic mind-waves" that Aurobindo talked about might refer to the idea that the universe is literally teeming with an infinite number of ideas that are open to us at any time for us to reach out, grasp, and understand. In reference to this, Joseph Murphy (1963:137) suggested that because mind is not limited by time or space, that all the ideas in the universe are ours for the choosing. Consequently, the "revelation" or "illumination" that Aurobindo described does not come from the individual self. Rather, it comes from one's ability to make contact with the universal mind, or in Aurobindo's words, the "universal knowledge." According to Aurobindo (Pandit, 1973:178), by making contact with this infinite source of "universal knowledge," one is better able to arrive at ideas that would ultimately lead one to the "cosmic truth."

Aurobindo (1973a:279) said that the overmind is the "first parent of the Ignorance" because it lacks the "integrality" of the supermind. However, in spite of this, the overmind is still

... well aware of the essential Truth of things; it embraces the totality; it uses the individual self-determinations without being limited by them: But although it knows their one-ness, can realise it in a spiritual cognition, yet its dynamic movement ... is not directly determined by it.

The overmind, according to Aurobindo (1973a:280), has the power to release "a million Godheads into action, each empowered to create its own world, each world capable of relation, communication and interplay with the others." Each world, it appears, has "many independent forms of consciousness and knowledge." As such, each world may act in harmony with other worlds, separately from other worlds, or sometimes even in direct opposition to other worlds (Ghose, 1973a:280). Aurobindo referred to the different conceptions of the nature of the Gods in the Vedas when he said that

. . . it is said they are all one Existence to which the sages give different names; yet each God is worshipped as if he by himself is that Existence, one who is all the other Gods together or contains them in his being; and yet again each is a separate Deity acting sometimes in unison with companion deities, sometimes separately, sometimes even in apparent opposition to other Godheads of the same existence [Ghose, 1973a:280].

Aurobindo (1973a:280) argued that in the supermind all of these realities "would be held together as a harmonized play of the one Existence." However, in the overmind, each of these existences are subject to its own pattern of action, development, and consequences.

In spite of the various realities that the overmind consciousness has the power to create, Aurobindo (1973a:281) said that the overmind is still "global in its cognition and can hold any number of seemingly fundamental differences together in a reconciling vision." Aurobindo used the following example to illustrate his idea:

To the Overmind, for example, all religions would be true as developments of the one eternal religion, all philosophies would be valid each in its own field as a statement of its own universe-view from its own angle, all political theories with their practice would be the legitimate working out of an Idea Force with its right to application and practical development in the play of the energies of Nature. An Overmental Intelligence would ... allow all to live as necessary to the whole or put each in its place in the whole or assign to each its field of realisation or of endeavor [1973a:283-84].

In Aurobindo's (1973b:953) view, it is possible for the overmind to "bridge" the division which exists between mind, life, and matter up to a certain point. The point being "at which [the] separative mind enters into Overmind and becomes a part of its action." The overmind, then, has the power to transform the minds of individual persons according to each individual's readiness and capacity to receive the light. However, Aurobindo maintained that although the overmind would be able "to transform in each man it touched the conscious being, inner and outer ... into its own stuff and impose ... upon the Ignorance ... cosmic truth and knowledge," ignorance in the material world would still exist. The only power, Aurobindo argued, that could transform the material world, and all that is in it, would be the supermind.

### **Supermind**

From his readings of the Veda, Aurobindo (1973a:124) concluded that the supermind may be called a "truth-consciousness" for it is a consciousness that is in constant contact with pure knowledge. By this, Aurobindo meant that the very nature of the supermind is "total knowledge"; "it has not to acquire knowledge but possesses it in its own right" because it is entirely "free from ignorance [Pandit, 1973:253]."

According to Aurobindo (1955:950), "the supermind knows most completely and securely not by thought but by identity, by a pure awareness of the self-truth of things in the self and by the self ... " Aurobindo maintained that with the supermind, there is "no division between the knower, knowledge and the known"; all are fundamentally one. For example, Aurobindo said that if one were to reach the level of the supermind, one would be able to see things not as objects outside of oneself, but rather, things would be seen as part of one's "universal self" contained directly in one's consciousness (Ghose, 1955:950). Aurobindo seemed to be saying that when one has attained the level of the supermind, one would somehow be able to perceive things not necessarily from outside of oneself, but as a part of oneself already existing within one's consciousness (1973a:138-39).

The analogy of a tree was used to clarify his point. "A tree," Aurobindo said (p. 138), "evolves out of the seed in which it is already contained, the seed out of the tree." This is a "fixed law" which the mind normally regards as the birth, life, and reproduction of a tree. On this basis, the mind explains the phenomenon of the tree as "a law of Nature." And yet, Aurobindo claimed, "it has explained nothing, it has only analysed and recorded the process of a mystery." On the other hand, the supermind works in an entirely different manner. Aurobindo argued that the tree and its reproductive process would not be what they are, indeed, could not even exist if they were a separate existence: "forms are what they are by the force of the cosmic existence, they develop as they do as a result of their relation to it and to all its other manifestations." In other words, what appears to be separate laws of nature are, in reality, "only an application of the [one] universal law and truth of all Nature." He goes on to say (1973a:139) that "the tree does not explain the seed, nor the seed the tree; cosmos explains both and God explains cosmos." Therefore, the supermind, "pervading and inhabiting at once the seed and the tree and all objects," recognizes, through identity and oneness, the absolute unity of all existences and their inherent unified relationship with one another.

Aurobindo (Pandit, 1973:252) went on to say that the supermind acts as an "instrumentation" of the Sachchidananda. As a channel or "self-extension" of the Sachchidananda, the supermind is characterized by unity, harmony, "inherent order," power, and many of the qualities that are associated with Sachchidananda except in lesser form. The supermind also possesses an "integral consciousness" which is the ability to comprehend "all the seemingly isolated data of perception as inseparably interrelated parts of the same cosmic whole [Chaudhuri, 1972b:181]."

The primary distinction that the supermind possesses, as compared with all previous levels of consciousness, is its ability to transform the material world into a divine existence. What is meant by the word "divine"? Quoted in the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Booklist (1972:11), the Mother provided us with some insight concerning this term.

This is what we mean by "Divine": all the knowledge we have to acquire, all the power we have to obtain, all the love we have to become, all the perfection we have to achieve, all the harmonious and progressive poise we must make manifest in light and joy, all the unknown and new splendours that are to be realised.

Aurobindo (1973c:1) contended that there have been "glimpses" by the ancient seers of the supermind in the past, but the supermind has never "been brought down into the consciousness of the earth and fixed there." He argued that because the "intellectual mind cannot even realise what the supermind is," that it will not be by reasoning but "by constant experience, growth of consciousness and widening into the Light" that an individual would be able to raise his consciousness to receive and manifest the supermind.

Aurobindo (Rishabhchand, 1969:184) maintained that a manifestation of the supermind in the material world is "inevitable." Remembering that all things ultimately come from Sachchidananda, and that ultimately matter is spirit, Aurobindo argued that

In fact, a supermind is already here but it is involved, concealed behind this manifest mind, life and Matter and not yet acting overtly or in its own power: if it acts, it is through these inferior powers and modified by their characters and so not yet recognisable.

What is necessary for the transformation to take place involves a twofold process: a "descent from above" and "an ascent from below"; sometimes referred to as involution and evolution. Aurobindo's reference to a "descent from above" is that of the power of the supermind to descend upon the earth and transform all that is in it. The "ascent from below" refers to the raising or aspiration in mind, life, and matter toward a higher level of consciousness. Thus, not only is an aspiration and preparation in the material nature necessary for the transformation to take place, but more importantly, according to Aurobindo, there must also be a "Divine Grace" from above or the "active intervention of the Divine Will for the individual or the universe to march to higher and higher levels and ultimately to reach the throne of the Almighty [Maitra, 1968:210]."

Even when the descent of the supermind does come, Aurobindo told us that there would not be the complete raising of all

individuals to the supermind consciousness. The level of consciousness that one has attained at the time when the supermind descends upon earth, would determine the extent to which one's consciousness will have been transformed. In other words, with the descent of the supermind, there would still be different levels of consciousness with some individuals reaching the level of the higher mind, some attaining the level of the illumined mind, and so forth. Aurobindo did say that there will arise a race of what he called "Divine Beings" or "Gnostic Beings," i.e., "Supermen." It is not within the scope of this paper to explicate Aurobindo's concept of the "superman" in detail nor to go over what his divine life on earth would entail. But suffice it to say that in Aurobindo's words, "Supermind is Superman [1973a:44]." To be characterized as a superman would involve the "crucifixion" of one's ego and the ability

. . . to grow in intuition, in light, in joy, in love; to serve by rule and to rule by service; to be able to be bold and swift and even violent without hurt or wickedness and mild and kindly and even self-indulgent without laxity or vice or weakness; to make a bright and happy whole in oneself and, by sympathy, with mankind and all creatures. And in the end it is to evolve a large impersonal personality and to heighten sympathy into constant experience of world-oneness. For such are the Gods, conscious always of their universality and therefore divine [1973d:5].

Aurobindo (Maitra, 1968:331) did mention the fact that many persons "have the erroneous idea that the Supermind immediately and completely transforms the world the moment it descends." In his own words, he pointed out that the supramental change is a gradual process:

My difficulty is that you all seem to expect a kind of miraculous fairy-tale change and do not realise that it is a rapid and concentrated evolution which is the aim of my sadhana and that there must be a process for it, a working of the higher in the lower and a dealing with all the necessary intervals—not a sudden feat of creation by which everything is done on a given date. But in its nature the descent [of the Supermind] ... cannot be done in the whole world at a time, but is done ... first through selecting Adhars and then on a wider scale [pp. 331-32],

One might explain that the term that Aurobindo used for his method of yoga is called sadhana. Yoga literally means "union with the Divine" and sadhana is the means by which one "opens up" one's consciousness to the Divine or surrenders all of one's conscious-

ness and "its activities to the Divine for possession and use by the Divine" for one's transformation (Pandit, 1973:222). In addition, adhar refers to "a receptive vehicle." In a letter dated January 20, 1975, Chaudhuri explained that "a person who is inwardly ready through self-preparation to understand, assimilate and make constructive use of divine grace, knowledge and power is considered [to be] a good adhar."

Although Aurobindo believed that the descent of the supermind is an "inevitable" process of evolution, he maintained that this evolutionary process could be "delayed if human consciousness is not fit to receive it [Maitra, 1968:332]." In Aurobindo's words:

... if there is a general misunderstanding and resistance (not in all, but in many), that makes it difficult and the process more laborious ... by our being unable to concentrate enough on this thing of capital importance and having too much work to do of an irrelevant kind, the descent is likely to take longer than it would do otherwise [p. 332].

In the final analysis, however, Aurobindo maintained that "progress might be slow at first," but progress would ultimately come whereby the supermind would descend and the earthly life would be transformed into a divine "heaven on earth."

### **The Relationship Among the Different Levels of Consciousness**

According to Aurobindo, the relationship among the different levels of consciousness is one of interdependence rather than one of mutual exclusivity. He (1973c:4) stated that "in all the series of the planes or grades of consciousness there is nowhere any real gulf, always there are connecting gradations and one can ascend from step to step."

However, in order to proceed to the next higher level of consciousness, Aurobindo (1973b:931-32) contended that the previous level must be "sufficiently conquered" before one can go on. Before one can progress to the level of the illumined mind, for example, one's consciousness should be sufficiently secure in the higher mind. Thus, each level of consciousness must be stabilized and "integrated" into one's entire physical and mental self if it is to be a firm foundation upon which the next level of consciousness can be

built on. In his own words, Aurobindo (1973b:955) stated that "a sufficient integration of one status has to be complete before an ascent to the next higher station can be entirely secure."

Aurobindo (1973b:956) continually pointed out that the movement from one level of consciousness to the next is not a clear-cut process. The difficulty being that "when the higher descends into the lower consciousness, it alters the lower but is also modified and diminished by it ... [Ghose, 1973b:955]." Likewise, when one's lower consciousness, i.e., mind, ascends to a higher level of knowledge, it too, is "sublimated" and at the same time "qualifies the sublimating substance and power." In other words, whether there is a descent of a higher level of consciousness into the lower, or an ascent of a lower consciousness into the higher, there is an intermingling of what one might call a pure with an impure substance, i.e., knowledge with ignorance. Because of the complexity of this process, Aurobindo (1973b:956) said that "there is not actually a series of simple clear-cut and successive stages in the individual's evolution; there is instead a complexity and a partly determinate, partly confused comprehensiveness of the movement." He used the following analogy to clarify his point.

The soul may still be described as a traveller and climber who presses towards his higher goal ... step on step, each of which he has to build up as an integer but most frequently redescend in order to rebuild and make sure of the supporting stair so that it may not crumble beneath him.

In some instances, Aurobindo (1973b:933) said that it is possible for one to bypass the intermediate levels of consciousness and take a broad and sudden "leap" into an "immediate union with the Divine"; i.e., an immediate transformation into the supermind. However, under these circumstances, Aurobindo did not believe that a full integration of one's mental and physical self can occur. Aurobindo (1973b:934) maintained that "if the transformation of earth life is intended," one must necessarily follow a step-by-step process in moving from one level of consciousness to the next. The reason, according to Aurobindo, is so that a full "integration" of one's mind and physical body can take place at each successive level of consciousness.

Aurobindo (1973b:937) stated that "the circumstances and the lines of the transition" would not necessarily be the same for all persons. But from the point of view of the "ascent of consciousness," he contended that the series of gradations would essentially be the same; that being the movement of consciousness through higher mind, illumined mind, intuition, overmind, and beyond it (1973b:938). However, the means by which one would progress from one level to another would necessarily differ from one individual to the next.

## **AXIOLOGY**

Aurobindo's ontology and epistemology are directly related to his theory of values. He maintained that

Our metaphysical knowledge, our view of the fundamental truth of the universe and the meaning of existence, should naturally be the determinant of our whole conception of life and attitude to it; the aim of life, as we conceive it, must be structured on that basis [1973b:666].

Thus, according to Aurobindo, it is not enough merely to posit a theory of reality or a theory of knowledge. If philosophy is to have any validity at all, he believed that it must be lived and experienced as an integral part of one's own life.

This next section of the paper will primarily be concerned with the problem of evil and the goal of life.

### **The Problem of Evil**

Aurobindo (19/3a:51) raised the question that if all is in truth Sachchidananda, how is it possible that death, suffering, and evil exist in the world? Aurobindo attributed the creation of death, suffering, and evil in the world to a "distorting consciousness" or the lack of a sufficient level of consciousness, on the part of man, to realize his underlying unity with God. The parable in the Hebrew book of Genesis was used to illustrate his point. The "fall of man," he said

... is his deviation from the full and pure acceptance of God and himself, or rather of God in himself, into a dividing consciousness which brings with it all the train of the dualities, life and death, good and evil, joy and pain ... the

fruit of a divided being. This is the fruit of Adam and Eve ... the soul tempted by Nature, have eaten [p. 51].

Thus the "fall of man," according to Aurobindo, resulted when man somehow forgot his divine heritage, i.e., his unity with God and with all other beings, and began to think and act as a separate ego from all other entities. Thus, the unrealization of unity with all beings, an "ignorance of self," and egoism are the primary causes for the existence of evil in the world.

Aurobindo (1973a:96) said that if one were to view the universe as a whole, one would have to admit "that we do not live in an ethical world." "Material Nature," he maintained, "is not ethical." It is governed by laws "of fixed habits which take no cognisance of good and evil, but only of force that creates, force that arranges and preserves, force that disturbs and destroys impartially, non-ethically ... " Although Aurobindo believed that the animal or "vital Nature" is also non-ethical, he contended that as it progresses into a "higher animal" the ethical impulse will result. He said

We do not blame the tiger because it slays and devours its prey any more than we blame the storm because it destroys ... neither does the consciousness in the storm ... or the tiger blame or condemn itself. Blame and condemnation ... are the beginning of ... ethics. When we blame others without applying the same law to ourselves, we are not speaking with a true ethical judgment, but only applying the language ethics has evolved for us to an emotional impulse of recoil from or dislike of that which displeases or hurts us [1973a:96].

Aurobindo (1973a:97) maintained that man has a desire for self-expression and self-development which is his "fundamental delight." Anything that prevents man from attaining this, is for him evil; and "whatever helps, confirms ... aggrandises, ennobles it is his good." As man progresses in his own development, his self-concept changes. Man begins to have a "higher and wider" conception of himself which exceeds "his limited personality"; he begins "to embrace others, to embrace all in its scope," to recognize his inherent unity with all things (Ghose, 1973a:97).

But, one might ask, how is it possible for man to understand and recognize the notion of unity in diversity? Aurobindo explained:

All things, even while different, are yet one. For practical purposes plant, animal, man are different existences; yet when we look deeper we see that the plant is only an animal with an insufficient evolution of self-consciousness and dynamic force; the animal is man in the making; man himself is that animal ... and yet again he is the something more which is contained and repressed in his being as the potentiality of the divine—he is a god in the making [1973a:381].

Aurobindo's explanation is somewhat reminiscent of the ecological idea concerning the interrelationship of all living things, i.e., what is commonly known as the "web of life." Although ecology certainly does not explain its assertions in exactly the same manner as Aurobindo has, there is still the similar implication that man is intimately related to and indirectly affected by the animal, the plant, and even the stone.

For Aurobindo (1973a:97), then, "ethics is a stage in evolution; the urge of Sachchidananda towards self-expression." As such, he believed that the ethical point of view is an important but temporary means by which humanity "struggles out of the lower harmony ... towards a higher harmony ... " Aurobindo argued that if the ethical standpoint is to be regarded as only a temporary passage from one stage of existence into another, one is unable to "apply it [the ethical standpoint] to the total solution of the problem of the universe, but can only admit it as one element in that solution."

From Aurobindo's (1973a:150) viewpoint, then, the existence of pain and suffering may be explained in terms of man's "imperfect evolution." To reiterate, man's imperfection exists in his inability to perceive himself as anything but a self-existent individual independent from all "cosmic action." Aurobindo noted that Possession in oneness and not loss in oneness is the secret.

God and Man, World and Beyond-world become one when they know each other. Their division is the cause of ignorance as ignorance is the cause of suffering [1970c:10].

With regard to the problem of good and evil, Aurobindo (1973a:382) said that for practical reasons, a person has to make certain judgments as to whether a thing is good or bad, just or unjust, and so forth. However, Aurobindo believed that "the law of contradictions ... is only valid in so far as two different and opposite

statements cannot be true of the same thing at the same time, in the same field ... from the same point of view and for the same practical purpose." For example,

A great war, destruction or violent all-upheaving revolution ... may present itself to us as an evil ... and so it is ... in certain respects ... But from others, it may be a great good, since it rapidly clears the field for a new good or a more satisfying order [1973a:382].

Man, according to Aurobindo, is neither good nor bad. Rather, "every man is a mixture of contraries" and "conflicting qualities."

From his statement concerning the "law of contradictions" and the examples given, it appears that Aurobindo is contradicting the very statement that he is making. However, he appears to get out of this dilemma by saying that the only way that one can understand something entirely is by taking the absolute as well as the relativities into consideration: "Look not only at each by itself, but each in relation to all and to that which exceeds and reconciles them all. For behind all relativities there is this Absolute which gives them their being and their justification [Ghose, 1973a:383]." Aurobindo argued that although there exists "an absolute good and an absolute beauty," God still expresses Himself through relativities which one may find difficult to "fathom" and reconcile because of the limitations and divisiveness of one's mental nature. At best, Aurobindo said that one may only catch "a glimpse" of the absolute good, beauty, and so forth, if one were to "embrace all things impartially and get beyond their appearances" to their ultimate source, which is God. To quote Aurobindo:

If to us things appear undivine, if we hasten to condemn this or that phenomenon as inconsistent with the nature of a divine being, it is because we are ignorant of the sense and purpose of the Divine in the world in its entirety. Because we see only parts and fragments, we judge of each by itself as if it were the whole. . . . Perfection cannot reside in the thing in its separateness, for that separateness is an illusion; perfection is the perfection of the total divine harmony [1973a:394].

Thus, according to Aurobindo (1973a:631), evil is the result of a "spiritual ignorance" that can only disappear "by the growth of a spiritual consciousness and the light of [a] spiritual knowledge."

With regard to suffering, Aurobindo (1973b:815) presented the interesting notion that a soul may consciously choose poverty and misfortune as experiences which are "helpful" or conducive to its own growth. Aurobindo said:

It is for experience, for growth of the individual being that the soul enters into rebirth; joy and grief, pain and suffering, fortune and misfortune are parts of that experience, means of that growth: even, the soul may of itself accept or choose poverty, misfortune and suffering as helpful to its growth, stimulants of a rapid development, and reject riches and prosperity and success as dangerous and conducive to a relaxation of its spiritual effort.

Although Aurobindo's concept of rebirth is difficult to scientifically prove at this time, he (1972:24) believed that "evil is good disintegrating to prepare for a higher good." Phrased in another way: "evil tends to good, it comes into existence in order that men may reject the lesser good and rise to the higher."

One might conceivably ask: Must pain necessarily exist if man is to progress to a higher level of existence? Although one can argue with Aurobindo on this point, he believed, from personal experience, that pain is necessary in order for the process of growth to take place. He stated

I used to hate and avoid pain and resent its infliction; but now I find that had I not suffered, I would not now possess, trained and perfected, this infinitely and multitudinously sensible capacity of delight in my mind, heart and body ... [1971b:114].

However, more importantly, Aurobindo (1972:24) viewed pain only as a "temporary development necessary to prepare a higher race which shall rise above pain to a higher capacity for pleasure and happiness." In the meantime, one might also raise the question: Does Aurobindo's concept of pain and suffering imply that one must necessarily tolerate that which exists in the world and not extend a helping hand to assist one's fellowman? Not in the least. For Aurobindo (1971b:12) said: "To feel and love the God of beauty and good in the ugly and the evil, and still yearn in utter love to heal it of its ugliness and its evil, this is real virtue and morality."

At the present time, Aurobindo (1973a:105) maintains that it is within one's capacity to substitute pleasure for pain and pain for pleasure, if one chose to do so through the detachment and "total

indifference" of one's physical and mental self to all external influences. Suffering, he believed, can diminish "if and when Mind in man becomes capable of being free, unegoistic, in harmony with all other beings and with the play of the universal forces [Ghose, 1973a:107]." Eventually, as one progresses in consciousness and the "veil between one's mind and soul is removed," one may ultimately regard both good or evil, happiness or misfortune, pain and pleasure as being one and the same thing; as ananda, which is spiritual ecstasy or bliss (Ghose, 1972:24).

## **The Goal of Life**

What, then, is the goal of life or the reason for man's existence? As was stated in *The Brothers Karamazov* "... the mystery of human life is not only in living, but in knowing why one lives [Dostoyevsky, 1958:298]."

According to Aurobindo (1972a:22), man was set upon earth to fulfill the divine potentialities that exist within him and to transform the material into a "divine world." Therefore, Aurobindo (1972a:23) believed that man should not reject or "despise" the material world for it is through the material nature that the "workings of the Spirit" can be manifested.

In order for the transformation of the material world to take place, Aurobindo (1971a:243) believed that "each man has to grow into the Divine within himself through his own individual being ... But also, the Divine whom he ... sees in himself," man must equally see in all others; "as the same Spirit in all." Thus:

Not only to see and find the Divine in oneself, but to see and find the Divine in all, not only to seek one's own individual liberation or perfection, but to seek the liberation and perfection of others is the complete law of the spiritual being [Ghose, 1971a:244].

Aurobindo maintained that there was a great deal yet for man to accomplish, both individually as well as collectively.

Love, for as yet we have only accomplished hatred and self-pleasing; Knowledge, for as yet we have only accomplished error and perception and conceiving; Bliss, for as yet we have only accomplished pleasure and pain and indifference; Power, for as yet we have only accomplished weakness and effort and a defeated victory; Life, for as yet we have only accomplished birth

and growth and dying; Unity, for as yet we have only accomplished war and association. In a word, godhead; to remake ourselves in the divine image [1970c:6].

Thus, according to Aurobindo, the goal of life is for man not only to realize and manifest the divine potentiality that exists within himself, but also to assist in the transformation of the divine life here on earth.

## CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to explicating Aurobindo's ontology, epistemology, and axiology, it might also be appropriate, at this time, for one to mention several critical considerations in analyzing Aurobindo's philosophy.

With regard to his model of reality, one may recall that Aurobindo posits the existence of "higher spirit-worlds" in addition to the existence of Sachchidananda, supermind, mind, life, and matter. Chaudhuri (1972b:191) argued that "from the empirical standpoint the ... theory of higher spirit-worlds is no more than a hypothesis which can hardly be proved conclusively." He suggested that perhaps Aurobindo's hypothesis might better be explained "in terms of the known laws of nature without postulating any hierarchy of supra-physical spirit-worlds."

Chaudhuri (1972a:8) was concerned with Aurobindo's concept of Being (Brahman) in terms of possessing personal attributes. He asked: "Can the category of personality or divine lordship ... be applied to ultimate reality? In other words, can Being be equated with Person or the Divine Ruler?" Chaudhuri maintained that from the philosophical standpoint, "the notion of the one Supreme Person or Divine Ruler as the all-originating, all-sustaining, and all-fulfilling spiritual Substance is an unverifiable speculative hypothesis ... In Chaudhuri's view, the technological age that man is presently living in has succeeded in moving man quickly to a "state of intellectual maturity." Modern man, according to Chaudhuri (1972a:8), does not "require unverifiable theological or metaphysical hypotheses such as God, Supreme Person ... to reconcile the reality of the world with a firm commitment to supreme spiritual values ... " At

best, Chaudhuri noted that one can regard "theological or metaphysical substances ... as symbols of Being, or phenomenological descriptions of Being."

Chaudhuri (1972b:189) also raised the question as to what experiential or empirical evidence is there to suggest that the "supreme Being" exists "independently of, and prior to, the world process?" Again, he stated that no one really knows for this is an "unverifiable speculative hypothesis" that is open to be challenged "by other rival hypotheses which are nonetheless sympathetic to mystic experience[s]."

In a letter dated February 24, 1975, Chaudhuri raised a number of critical issues with regard to Aurobindo's philosophical thought. The questions he raised are as follows:

1. Is it possible for intuition to be completely separated from thought? Would this separation not constitute a "psychological dualism"?
2. Does supramental truth-consciousness represent perfect knowledge of the absolute truth? Who has this knowledge? How is that known?
3. Does Aurobindo's The Life Divine "represent the last word of wisdom? Is such a thing possible?"
4. "Can propositional truth be ... adequate to the infinite fullness of reality?"
5. Does the word Sachchidananda mean "one infinite, absolute, eternally perfect spiritual substance?" Is this not an "intellectual construction; an old-fashioned metaphysical interpretation of transcendental mystic experience?"
6. Is there any "eternal essence of things, or permanent 'self-truth of things'?"
7. Is not the concept of the "universal mind" an "unverifiable postulate of wishful speculative thinking?"
8. If Aurobindo's concept of Sachchidananda is both personal and impersonal, in what specific sense is He personal? "Is

not personality an enormously sophisticated product of the evolutionary process? Does it not presuppose an intricately organized cerebro-spinal system such as the human organism has?"

9. If the Supermind is already a part of the human mind, why does it fail in "its unlimited self-revealing, self-luminous, all-transforming ability?"

Furthermore, one may note that Aurobindo's concept of a new race on earth, namely the transformation of man into a superman or "gnostic being" is not a new idea. Bergson (Jones, 1969:279) spoke of a "mystic genius ... who will draw after him a humanity already vastly grown in body, and whose soul he has transfigured." P. D. Ouspensky (1938:324) pointed out that in Bucke's Cosmic Consciousness there was a "nearness of the New Humanity." According to Bucke

The future belongs not to man, but to superman, who is already born, and lives among us. A higher race is rapidly emerging among humanity and it is emerging by reason of its quite remarkable understanding of the world and life.

Chaudhuri (1973a:55) also mentioned that the ideal of a "Divine Humanity" is not altogether new. This same ideal, according to Chaudhuri, is found in the Vedic Ages with the concept of the "Divine Birth in man," in Christianity in the "vision of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth," and with the Jewish prophets who spoke of "the City of God."

In addition, Sorokin (1954:528) pointed out that the notion of the evolutionary divinization of the entire material and bodily world is not a new idea. He noted that other thinkers such as Clement of Alexandria, N. F. Fedorov, and V. Solovey developed the idea of a material and bodily transformation in as great a detail as Aurobindo has.

Finally, with regard to the problem of evil, Maitra (1968:111) mentioned that according to one reviewer, Aurobindo did not handle the problem of evil "properly." According to the reviewer, Aurobindo's primary flaw is his inability to realize the "creative power"

that exists in the notion of ignorance. Whether one chooses to agree with this point of view or not, the reviewer did state that

The test of a thinker in the last analysis is the way in which he handles the problem of Evil. Aurobindo cannot be said to have succeeded where other philosophers have failed ... His chief limitation is that he does not realize the creative power of Ignorance; but here he errs with the whole Hindu race. Were there no mystery, life would lose all its savour. That is the last word of Western wisdom. Aurobindo and his countrymen cannot afford to neglect it [Maitra, 1968:111].

One might also raise the question, is Aurobindo being at all consistent in handling the problem of evil? Does he really explain the existence of evil by merely stating that evil is a product of "ignorance"? Quoted in the Sri Aurobindo 1974-75 Booklist (1974:i) Aurobindo stated that he is not really concerned with being called consistent.

I do not mind if you find inconsistencies in my statements. What people call consistency is usually a rigid or narrow-minded inability to see more than one side of the truth or more than their own narrow personal view or experience of things. Truth has many aspects and unless you look on all with a calm and equal eye, you will never have the real or the integral knowledge.

With this point of view, Emerson would probably concur. In an essay entitled "Self-Reliance," he stated that

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen, philosophers, and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall [Runes, 1955:365].

However, in the final analysis, one can argue that one's lack of concern for being called consistent still does not adequately justify the apparent inconsistency in one's statements.

## SUMMARY

The philosophy of Aurobindo, in terms of his model of reality, theory of knowledge, and theory of values, has been reported in this chapter.

To briefly sum up, Aurobindo's ontological theory is based on the proposition that matter as well as spirit are both to be regarded

as real. There is a definite hierarchy in Aurobindo's model of reality with Sachchidananda as the highest conception of reality and supermind as the "intermediary" between the lower forms of existence of mind, life, and matter. As a lower form of reality, matter is considered to be no less real than the existence of Sachchidananda. In fact, all levies of reality are to be regarded as being equally real and necessary components of the various parts to the whole of existence.

Aurobindo's epistemology is based on what he calls an "evolution" of different levels of consciousness. Consciousness, one may recall, is defined as "the power to be aware of itself and its objects [Ghose, 1973b:1017]." The various levels of consciousness, then, are: supermind, overmind, intuition, illumined mind, higher mind, and mind. Aurobindo considered the supermind to be the highest level of consciousness that is possible for man to attain. On the other end of the continuum is mind which is considered by Aurobindo to be a necessary but limiting faculty of knowledge in man. Aurobindo believed that it is possible for mind to eventually be transformed into supermind by progressing through the various intermediate levels of higher mind, illumined mind, intuition, and overmind. What is necessary, however, for this transformation to take place, is a sincere aspiration to overcome one's "ignorance" as well as a complete surrender to the "Divine Grace" from above.

The goal of life, Aurobindo maintained, is to realize and manifest a complete perfection in one's self as well as in the material world. Chaudhuri summed up Aurobindo's axiology in the following way:

The highest spiritual ideal of man is to attain integral self-perfection so that he can fully and effectively cooperate with the divine will immanently operative in evolution. The spiritual destiny of man is to function as a co-partner of God in life's creative adventure—as an intelligent playmate of the world-spirit in the building of life divine [1973:40].

## Chapter 3.

### EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND PRACTICE OF AUROBINDO GHOSE

The work of education points to the real unity that is hidden behind the multiplicity of aspects.

Martin Buber  
Pointing the Way,  
1957

#### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The amount of literature written about the educational theory and practice of Aurobindo is not extensive. However, an excellent introduction which dealt with Aurobindo's concept of "integral education" is entitled Education and the Aim of Human Life (1967), written by P. B. Saint-Hilaire. In this book, Saint-Hilaire indicated that there is a definite relationship between the purpose of education at a given time and the general aim of human life. The author believed that it is possible to understand the "present crisis" of civilization as "birth pangs" of a new age emerging in the world. He then outlined Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's views on "integral education," and explained what relevance their views have in light of the new civilization that is presently emerging in the world.

Norman Dowsett and Sita Ram Jayaswal have edited two excellent books that also relate to Aurobindo's concept of "integral education." The New Approach to Education (1974) and Education of the Child (1974) contain a number of essays written not only by Aurobindo and the Mother, but also by such noted authors as Friedrich Froebel, Alfred Adler, and Maria Montessori. The primary purpose of these two books was to re-emphasize the notion of "the evolving human potential" and explain what implications this notion has for education.

For a brief compilation of some of the works of Aurobindo and the Mother on integral education, the reader might turn to Indra Sen's Integral Education (1952). Although the author does not footnote or provide any commentary on the excerpts used, this brief little volume does serve to introduce the reader to the general educational concepts of integral education.

In a dissertation entitled "An Introduction to Integral Education" (1972), Enoch Haga did a comprehensive study in a number of areas including "Integral Philosophy," "Integral Psychology," "Integral Education," and "Philosophies of Education." The primary purpose of this study was to introduce the reader to the concept of integral education and show how it related to integral philosophy and psychology through the writings of Aurobindo. Especially noteworthy was the author's comparison of integral education to idealism, realism, existentialism, and pragmatism.

In another dissertation entitled "Evolution, Education and the Destiny of Man" (1971), Robert Bainbridge also dealt with the integral educational philosophy of Aurobindo. Although the primary emphasis in this author's dissertation concerned itself with man as an evolutionary being, Bainbridge did devote several chapters to such topics as "Education and Human Progress," "The Child as Evolutionary Energy," "Education as Self-Unfoldment," "Education and the Unity of Mankind," and "The Teacher: An Agent of Evolution."

In New Frontiers in East-West Philosophies of Education (1958), Ratna Navaratnam did a comparative study on the educational philosophies of the East and the West. The author's primary purpose was to search for "universal constants" which embraced the educational philosophies of the Eastern and Western cultures. Although Navaratnam did not deal with Aurobindo's integral educational philosophy as extensively as the previous authors had, she nevertheless quoted from Aurobindo's The Synthesis of Yoga in explaining the chapter on "The Yogic Principle in Education." In the chapter on "Some Fundamental Aims of Education," the author also quoted from Aurobindo's The Life Divine to substantiate some of the ideas presented.

Also, in George B. Leonard's Education and Ecstasy (1968), the author summed up Aurobindo's belief that the purpose or goal of education is "the achievement of moments of ecstasy," or in Sanskrit, ananda, "the ultimate delight [1968:17]." Although the author did not deal with Aurobindo's concept of integral education per se, Leonard did espouse an educational system which is integral in its approach. In the chapter on "Visiting Day, 2001 A.D.," Leonard maintained that education may cover such areas as meditation, computerized learning, the development of extrasensory powers, and "psychic mobility." The author did mention Aurobindo and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram twice in his book.

In the chapter on "The Rogue as Teacher," Leonard (1968:98) referred to Aurobindo as a "rogue-artist" who demonstrated the interplay between discipline and freedom. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram was mentioned in the context of an individual who had visited the ashram and meditated there for several months. Leonard (1968:239) concluded his book with the remark that ecstasy can be used in the educational situation whereby "every child, every person can delight in learning."

## INTRODUCTION

Aurobindo's notion that education should deal with the spiritual nature in man is not necessarily a new idea. Friedrich Froebel had stated that "education should lead and guide man to clearness concerning himself and in himself, to peace with nature, and to unity with God [Mayer, 1967:217]."

Alice Bailey, in Education in the New Age (1954), argued that education should deal with man's spiritual nature. By "spiritual" Bailey is not referring to religiosity per se, but rather to the bridging between "brain-mind-soul" for the development of an "integrated personality" (1954:6).

Aldous Huxley, in Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Other Essays (1952), described a concept of the "not-self" which may be likened to Aurobindo's interpretation of the "psychic being." According to Huxley,

... there is the not-self who inhabits the world from which we derive our insights and inspirations. This is the not-self who spoke to Socrates through his daimon, who dreamed the text of Kubla Khan, who dictated King Lear ... and the Tibetan Book of the Dead, the not-self who is responsible in all of us for every enhancement of wisdom, every sudden accession of vital or intellectual power [1952:10].

In fact, the curriculum that Huxley proposed for his "hypothetical" course is somewhat similar to that of Aurobindo's. Huxley suggested that his curriculum will include (1) training of the kinesthetic sense, (2) training of the "special" sense, (3) training of memory, (4) training in control of the autonomic nervous system, and (5) training for "spiritual insight [1952:12]."

With respect to Aurobindo's concept of the teacher, one might note that there are other writers who express a similar viewpoint with regard to the qualities that an ideal teacher should possess. Erich Fromm, in The Art of Loving (1956), noted that in previous epochs of his own culture, or in China and India for that matter, the teacher who was most highly valued was one who possessed "outstanding spiritual qualities [p. 98]." Martin Buber, in Between Man and Man (1947), also stated that the teacher should continuously emphasize to students the concept of unity.

... unity of being, unity of life, unity of action—unity of being, life and action together ... It is the longing for personal unity, from which must be born a unity of mankind, which the educator should lay hold of and strengthen in his pupils [p. 116].

Thus, although Aurobindo had carefully delineated his educational theory and practice, one can conceivably argue that some of the ideas underlying his educational philosophy have been expressed in a variety of ways by other writers as well.

In order to adequately understand the educational theory and practice of Aurobindo, reference in this section will be made not only to the primary sources written about the subject of integral education, i.e., in the writings of Aurobindo and the Mother, but also to literature made available through the International Center of Education that is currently established as a part of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, India.

# EDUCATIONAL THEORY

## Aim of Education

According to Bertrand Russell (1954:47): "We must have some conception of the kind of person we wish to produce, before we can have any definite opinion as to the education which we consider best." In light of this quote, one might reiterate that Aurobindo's conception of the ideal person is one who develops and manifests his divine potential and assists God in the transformation of the material into a "divine world; "a divine perfection of the human being is our aim [1955:703]."

With this goal in mind, Aurobindo believes that the primary aim of education does not lie in the acquisition of various kinds of information but, rather, in the development and manifestation of the powers of the human mind and spirit (1966b:4). In his own words, he stated that

... the only true education will be that which will be an instrument for this real working of the spirit in the mind and body of the individual and the nation. It must be an education that for the individual will make its one central object the growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities ... . And at no time will it lose sight of man's highest object, the awakening and development of his spiritual being [1966b:9].

Aurobindo maintains that every person has within him "something divine"; "a chance of perfection and strength in however small a sphere which God offers him to take or refuse." The task of education, then, is to help students discover, develop, and use this divinity that exists within themselves. Thus, Aurobindo believes that education "should ... help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use [1970b:2-3]."

The Greek maxim, "know thyself," is an idea that Aurobindo and the Mother subscribe to in their educational theory. Education, they believe should help persons to find out who and what they are, why they are here, and what they must do (Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, 1973:73). The educational theory of Aurobindo affirms Plato's declaration that "man is a creature who at every moment of his existence must examine and scrutinize the conditions of his existence ... a being in search of meaning

[Dowsett, 1974a:58]." Dowsett explained that education, then, must begin with the student himself, "because all truth and meaning are within [1974a:58]."

Aurobindo said that the discovery that education should really be a process of "educing" knowledge from the child was a step in the right direction. He asserted that at least this discovery was the beginning of the realization that

... each human being is a self-developing soul and that the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material. The true secret, whether with child or man, is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within ... [1971a:27-28].

The "psychic entity" that Aurobindo talked about refers to the idea that man is "inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine" and that the "evocation" of this real self "is the right object of education [1971a:28]."

Thus, the aim of education, according to Aurobindo is to help the child develop his intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, moral, and spiritual capacities according to his own "temperament" and rate of growth (1971a:38). The Mother summed it up very nicely when she said that ultimately, "it is not brilliant students that we want, it is living souls [Dasgupta, 1968:170]."

According to Aurobindo, in order for education to be complete, it must take into account five principal aspects of man's nature: the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic, and the spiritual (1966b:54).

One might note that the Greeks emphasized the harmonious development of the physical, the vital, and the mental nature in man in their educational system. The emphasis on these three aspects in man has influenced Aurobindo's thoughts on education (Kireet, 1968:66).

Furthermore, the emphasis placed on the building of moral character and virtues through the study of some religious texts and

practices was also characteristic of the early forms of education in the English monasteries.

In Aurobindo's system of integral education, the underlying truths and values of the systems of education just mentioned are accepted and incorporated into his educational theory. And yet, the integral system of education may not be solely identified with any one particular system of education. Aurobindo's integral education does stress the harmonious development of the physical, the vital and the mental; "but the harmony is sought to be achieved not by any mental or moral or religious idea of system, but by an uncompromising stress on an inner seeking and discovery of the psychic and spiritual principles" in the personality of man (Kireet, 1968:66). Aurobindo's emphasis on the psychic and the spiritual nature in man is not attained through any religious doctrine, dogma, ritual or ceremony, "but through spiritual example and influence, and through individual or collective spiritual guidance."

Kireet mentioned the ashrams of the Rishis in ancient India where spirituality was not life-negating. Rather, Kireet explained that these ashrams sought to develop the various parts of man's nature by stressing man's "inner psychic and spiritual seeking [1968:67]." However, the primary difference between the aim of the ancient Rishis and that of Aurobindo's educational system is that the Rishis were not aiming toward a complete spiritualization of the material world. Although the characteristics of Aurobindo's educational system are similar in both spirit and form to the ancient ashrams, the integral system of education seeks to go beyond the immediate aim of the ancients by transforming the material into a spiritual world. Kireet stated that

The integral system of education is ... in a sense a continuation and enrichment of the ancient Ashram system; but it is also a new creation, with a more radical and perfect spiritual aim; and in the conditions of the modern world which are very much different from those of ancient times. There is no doubt that if education has to reconcile the underlying values of modern Science, Technology and the dynamism of life with the spiritual ideals, it can be shaped only in this direction [1968:67].

## EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

### Physical Education

Because Aurobindo's ideal is the "divine life" fulfilled on earth, he believes that one's material body must also undergo a transformation if it is to be a fit "instrument" of the Divine. In his own words, he stated that "if our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use" without which no full divine life here on earth is possible (1966b:34). Thus, according to Aurobindo, "the perfection of the body ... must be the ultimate aim of physical culture [1967:5]."

The education of the body involves three principal aspects: (1) control and discipline of functions, (2) a total and harmonious development of all parts and functions of the body, and (3) a correction of defects and deformities, if there are any (Kireet, 1968:84).

Aurobindo maintains that health, strength, and fitness should be the primary requisites for any system of physical education (1967:5).

Aurobindo believes that the natural state of the body is characterized by health and harmony. According to him, the body "inherently" knows what foods are good for the maintenance of its own health. He stated

The body left to itself is marvelously self-conscious; it knows spontaneously and unfailingly what is good for its health and strength. The body, segregated from the mind and the vital can choose very easily the right kind of food and the right quantity ... Common sense is an inherent attribute of the body consciousness; it never errs on the side of excess and immoderation or perversity [1967:163-64].

Thus, children should be encouraged at a very early age to develop a taste for food that "is simple and healthy, substantial and appetizing." A child should particularly be taught "to eat according to his hunger and not make food an occasion to satisfy his greed and gluttony." The necessity for cleanliness and hygienic habits should also be taught to children at an early age. Moreover, it is important to stress to children the value of good health; for ultimately,

"children should be taught that to be ill is a sign of failing and inferiority, not of a virtue or a sacrifice [Kireet, 1968:84-85]."

With regard to a basic program of physical education, the Mother said: "The basic programme will be to build a body, beautiful in form, harmonious in posture, supple and agile in its movements, powerful in its activities and resistant in its health and organic functions [Bhattacharya, 1968:174-75]."

Because of the variety of physical activities needed to develop the different parts of the body, an integral educational system should provide its students with as varied a curriculum as possible. In the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, all persons, ranging from the very young to the very elderly, participate in a program of physical education. These persons are divided into twelve age groups and are given a program of physical education according to their needs. Specific seasons in the year are set aside for games, combative sports, swimming, athletics, and gymnastics. More specifically, games include football, cricket, field handball, basketball, soccer, softball, and tennis. Combative sports include judo, boxing, wrestling, fencing, and stick-play. All areas in swimming are covered including the breast stroke, crawl, butterfly stroke, life saving, and diving. With regard to athletics, there are many running, jumping, and throwing events such as relay races, long jump, high jump, pole vault, shot put, javelin throw, discus throw, and hurdling. During the gymnastic season, several branches of gymnastics are offered including Olympic gymnastics; educational gymnastics; curative, corrective, and remedial gymnastics; body building gymnastics; and many others (Department of Physical Education, 1968:179-83).

Thus, it is obvious that there is no one type of exercise recommended for developing one's physical body. According to the Mother: "Any rational system of exercises suited to one's need and capacity will help the participant to improve in health. Moreover, it is the attitude that is more important [1967:162]."

In addition to developing the body, physical activities are also used to develop such characteristics as good sportsmanship, cooperation, "fair dealings with others," self-mastery, discipline, cour-

age, and confidence. In a booklet entitled The Ideal Child, the Mother has written a "Code of Sportsmanship [1953:6]:

Keep the rules.

Keep faith with your comrade.

Keep your temper.

Keep yourself fit.

Keep a stout heart in defeat.

Keep your pride under in victory.

Keep a sound soul, a clean mind, and a healthy body.

Play the game.

### **Vital Education**

Another aspect of man's nature is his vital being. The vital being consists of one's energy, impulses, desires, passions, and emotions. According to the Mother, the vital aspect in man appears to be the most difficult area to train. However, with great patience and sincerity, she believed that the vital nature can be brought under proper control. The Mother said that the vital nature in man is a "good worker," but very often it "seeks its own satisfaction." If that satisfaction is even partially or totally refused, the vital "gets vexed, sulky and goes on strike. As a result the energy disappears more or less completely and leaves in its place disgust for people and things, discouragement or revolt, depression and dissatisfaction [1966b:52]." The Mother suggested that during these moments, "one must remain quiet and refuse to act; for it is at such times that one does stupid things and in a few minutes can destroy or spoil what one has gained in months of regular effort, losing thus all the progress made [Ghose and The Mother, 1966b:52]."

The education of the vital, then, has two principal goals: (1) to develop and utilize one's sense organs; and (2) to become consciously aware of and master of one's character and, thus, to achieve the transformation of one's character in the end.

The education of the senses involves a life-long process of training. According to the Mother, "the sense organs may be so cultivated as to attain a precision and power in their functioning far greater than what is normally expected of them [1966b:64]." In other words, it appears that one's sense of hearing, sight, touch,

taste, and smell can be developed to a high degree of strength, accuracy, and sensitivity in the performance of their various functions. In fact, the Mother maintained that some ancient forms of mystic knowledge have declared that the number of senses that man can develop is not five but seven and, in certain cases, even twelve (1966b:64). For example, one might surmise that what is known today as extra-sensory perception may, in actuality, be inherent qualities that are accessible for everyone to develop and use.

Besides the education of one's senses as a goal of vital education, the Mother also stated that it is important to cultivate discrimination and an "aesthetic sense" within the child; "the capacity to choose and take up what is beautiful and harmonious, simple, healthy and pure [1966b:64]." She further stated

As the child grows in capacity and understanding, he should be taught ... to add aesthetic taste and refinement to power and precision. He must be shown, made to appreciate, taught to love beautiful, lofty, healthy and noble things, whether in nature or in human creation. It must be a true aesthetic culture and it will save him from degrading influences [1966b:64].

In addition to the development of one's senses through discrimination and aesthetics, "vital education should also be concerned with one's character and the transformation of one's character. This can be done by having the child first become conscious of the actions that he performs and the reasons behind these actions. It is a form of self-analysis, then, when the Mother suggests that

The child must be taught to observe himself, to note his reactions and impulses and their causes, to become a clear-sighted witness of his desires, his movements of violence and passion, his instincts of possession and appropriation and domination and the background of vanity against which they stand with their counterparts of weakness, discouragement, depression and despair [1966b:65].

Also important is helping the child develop, at a very early age, "the will towards progress and perfection." The Mother maintains that the child should always be encouraged to "never ... accept defeat as final." In other words, the Mother believes that the will can be "cultivated and developed ... by methodical and progressive exercises." Therefore, one should never hesitate to demand of one's

will a "maximum effort" in the accomplishment of all things (1966b:65).

The Mother believes that there are various methods that one may utilize in helping the child to develop his will. With some children the use of rational arguments is effective. With others, one may employ the use of "sentiment and good will." While still with others, one may appeal to the child's "sense of dignity" and self-respect.

Above all, the Mother said that it is the teacher's example, shown "constantly and sincerely," which is the "most powerful means" that one can rely on in helping the child to develop his will (1966b:65).

In actual practice, the ideas concerning the area of vital education may be implemented in a number of ways. Kireet (1968:83-84) suggested that the study of science, with its emphasis on sense-observation, can be greatly beneficial for the keen development of one's senses. In addition, the use of audio-visual methods and various kinds of arts and crafts may also help the child to develop his powers of discrimination and aesthetic beauty. Conditions in the environment should also be arranged so that "inner observation and introspection" are encouraged for the purpose of having students analyze their "inner dualities and contradictions with a will to change and transform" one's character. According to Kireet (1968:83), what is necessary is for the existence of

... conditions in which the need for outer advice is minimum, and in which the work of change of the students' character is sought by example, presence, influence and inner work on the part of the teachers. The child is expected and allowed to think for himself and act according to what he thinks best; advice is given where needed but nothing is imposed.

Additional subjects that are recommended are art, music, photography, dancing (including Indian and Western ballet), dramatics, and of course, physical sports. In the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, arrangements are made for interested students to participate in the various departments of the Ashram. These departments include the printing press, tailoring, embroidery, paper manufacturing, farms, building service, workshops for automobile and metal work,

bakery, dairy, laundry, and medical establishments to name just a few. In addition, students may take a technical course along with their academic studies. There is a Home Science and Nursing Course for students who are interested in these fields, in addition to a course in weaving and other cottage industries.

The variety of courses available to implement the ideas on vital education are extensive indeed. In the words of the Mother: "It is by enlightening, strengthening and purifying the vital and not by weakening it that one can help towards the true progress of the being [1966b:87]." However, the education of the physical and vital natures in man is not complete without a further consideration of still another area; namely, mental education.

### **Mental Education**

According to Aurobindo (1966b:11), the human mind can be trained to perform "great feats of intellectual strength." Aurobindo elucidated three principles of education which, although mentioned with regard to the human mind, may indeed be applied to his entire scheme of education. The first principle is that "nothing can be taught." Aurobindo maintained that "the teacher is not an instructor or task-master, he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose." In actuality, then, the teacher does not train the student's mind, "he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process [1966b:11]."

The second principle is that "the mind has to be consulted in its own growth." The tabula rasa theory is considered by Aurobindo to be a "barbarous and ignorant superstition." Aurobindo believes that it is the student himself who must be encouraged to develop his mind according to his own nature. To force the child to abandon his own law of growth is "a selfish tyranny over a human soul and a wound to the nation, which loses the benefit of the best that a man could have given it and is forced to accept instead something imperfect and artificial, second-rate, perfunctory and common [1966b:11]." Thus, according to Aurobindo, it is the mind of the student which must determine its own rate of growth rather than the selfish wishes or desires of the parent or the teacher.

The third principle "is to work from the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be [Ghose, 1966b:113-" In accordance with his belief in the notion of rebirth (i.e., simply stated that man has had many past lives and will continue to have many future lives), Aurobindo contends that one must take into consideration the basis of man's nature in terms of the soul's past, the heredity, the surroundings, the nationality, and so forth in helping man to further develop himself. Aurobindo explains that in light of the notion of rebirth, ideas should not be forced upon one's mind. Rather, ideas should be "offered" to the individual to accept or refuse according to his own nature.

A free and natural growth is the condition of genuine development. There are souls which naturally revolt from their surroundings and seem to belong to another age and clime. Let them be free to follow their bent; but the majority languish, become empty, become artificial, if artificially moulded into an alien form [Ghose, 1966b:12],

Therefore, Aurobindo's third principle of education implies that one must take into consideration an individual's past, present, and future in helping the individual toward the development of himself. In the words of Aurobindo: "The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit. Each must have its due and natural place in a national system of education [p. 12]."

According to Aurobindo and the Mother, mental education must take into account the development of a number of different faculties in man. First is the development of one's powers of concentration or the capacity of "prolonged attention." Aurobindo maintains that attention is an important factor in knowledge for it is "the first condition of right memory and accuracy [1966b:27]." It is important for the student to be able to focus his attention on whatever he is doing at any given time. This attention on a single thing is called concentration. The Mother explains that one may arrive at concentration by having a "conscious control" over one's energies (1967:118). The ability to channel one's energies toward a specific goal can be developed methodically. For example, the mind can be trained to concentrate on a single idea or an object. The first step is "to accustom the discursive mind to a settled unwavering pursuit of a single course of connected thought on a ... subject ... [Ghose,

1955:367]." For instance, a student may be given a flower and is encouraged to learn about it. With concentration, the student notes the scent, form, color, and texture of the flower. Next, he may take the flower apart and carefully examine its various properties. To quote Aurobindo:

All this should be done not as a task, but as an object of interest by skillfully arranged questions suited to the learner which will draw him on to observe and investigate one thing after the other until he has almost unconsciously mastered the whole [1966b:29].

The instance of the flower is only an example provided by Aurobindo as to one way in which a student's power of concentration may be developed. There are many other methods that one may use. For a more detailed discussion on additional methods, the reader might turn to Aurobindo's The Synthesis of Yoga (1955), Haridas Chaudhuri's Integral Yoga (1965), or Manly P. Hall's Self-Unfoldment by Disciplines of Realization (1944).

Whatever means one uses to develop one's power of concentration, the Mother said that "determination and perseverance are indispensable to obtain success [1967:161]." Moreover,

The aim in the training is to develop this power of concentrating the attention at will on whatever subject or activity one chooses from the most spiritual to the most material, without losing anything of the fullness of the power ...

In addition to the development of concentration, mental education should also be concerned with the development of memory and judgment (1966b:29). Aurobindo stated that students should not be required to participate in rote learning in order to cultivate one's memory. To use Aurobindo's example of the flower again, he said that a similar but different flower may be put into the hands of the student. The student should then be encouraged to carefully note the similarities and differences between the first flower and the second flower. By repeating this practice daily, Aurobindo believes that one's memory will "naturally be trained [1966b:30]." In time, the mental capacities of comparison and contrast, "the scientific habit, the scientific attitude and the fundamental facts of scientific knowledge" will also be developed in one's mind. Aurobindo maintains that the study of flowers will lead to the study of leaves, plants, and trees which will ultimately lay down the foundation for the study of

botanical knowledge. Eventually, this will lead to the observation of the stars (astronomy), the observation of earth and stones (geology), and the observation of insects and animals (entomology and zoology). In Aurobindo's words:

There is no scientific subject the perfect and natural mastery of which cannot be prepared in early childhood by this training of the faculties to observe, compare, remember and judge various classes of objects. It can be done easily and attended with a supreme and absorbing interest in the mind of the student [1966b:30].

According to Aurobindo, one's judgment will automatically be trained along with the other faculties. By deciding what is the "right" measurement, color, sound, and so forth, the student is forced to exercise his powers of judgment. Although many errors will naturally be made at the beginning, Aurobindo said that "the learner should be taught to trust his judgment without being attached to its results. It will be found that the judgment will soon begin to respond to the calls made on it, clear itself of all errors and begin to judge correctly and minutely [1966b:30-31]." Aurobindo recommends that the student should often compare his judgments (the student's) with those of other students. When the student has made an incorrect judgment, it should at first be pointed out to him how far he was right and where, specifically, he went wrong. The student should then be encouraged to note these things for himself. Above all, it is recommended that when the student has made a correct judgment, "his attention should be prominently and encouragingly called to it so that he may get confidence [Ghose, 1966b:31]."

Another faculty that should be developed in the area of mental education is imagination. Aurobindo said that this is an important faculty which may be divided into three functions: (1) the formation of mental images; (2) the power of creating new thoughts or images or combining existing thoughts and images; and (3) "the appreciation of the soul in things, beauty, charm, greatness ... the emotion and spiritual life that pervades the world [1966b:31]." Although Aurobindo does not specifically delineate how imagination might be cultivated, the Mother did suggest that a "careful and intelligent selection" of reading materials that is "instructive and attractive" will help the child to develop his imagination. She noted

that "it is imagination that develops the creative mental faculty and it is through that that study becomes a living thing and the mind grows in joy [1966b:69]."

Aurobindo suggested that mental faculties should "first be exercised on things, afterwards on words and ideas [1966b:31]." Because he believes that language is "much too perfunctory," Aurobindo contended that learning should be done "informally, drawing on the curiosity and interest" of the student, thus "avoiding set teaching and memorising of rules [1966b:31]." He stated: "The true knowledge takes its base on things ... and only when it has mastered the thing, proceeds to formalise its information [1966b:31]."

The Mother said that in addition to the development of concentration, memory, judgment, and imagination, mental education should also be concerned with the development of the "capacities of expansion, wideness, complexity and richness [1966b:67]." The human mind, in its natural state, "is always limited in its vision, narrow in its understanding, rigid in its conceptions, and a certain effort is needed to enlarge it, make it supple and deep [Kireet, 1968:74]." Therefore, the Mother recommends that the child should be taught that there are many ways of approaching, dealing with, and solving problems. She further suggests that "all contradictories can be transformed into complementaries" through the discovery of a "higher idea that will be able to harmonise them [1966b:69]." Her recommendation for the formulation of a thesis, antithesis, and a synthesis is reminiscent of Hegel. Nevertheless, the Mother believes that all points of view should be taken into consideration when formulating some kind of "logical synthesis." The underlying reason for synthesizing ideas is attributable to her belief that: "Every idea contains a little of the truth or an aspect of the truth. But there is no idea which is in itself absolutely true [1966b:90]."

Finally, mental education should deal with the development of "mental silence, perfect calm and a more and more total receptivity to inspirations coining from the higher regions of the being [The Mother, 1966b:67]." Silence, in this context, is referred to as a quieting of one's mind; "to be silent within [Ghose, 1969a:12]." According to Aurobindo, when one remains silent, one is better able to

"receive the Light" or some truth from the Divine. The Mother stated:

When one will have learnt to silence the mind at will and concentrate it in the receptive silence, then there will be no problem that one cannot solve, no mental difficulty to which a solution will not be found. Thought, while in agitation, becomes confused and impotent; in an attentive tranquility, the light can manifest itself and open new horizons to man's capacity [1966b:71].

Thus, the scope which mental education should concern itself with is quite broad. Emphasis in mental education should be placed not only upon understanding, but also upon criticism and the control of one's ideas. Comprehension, synthesis, judgment, imagination, memory, observation, concentration, comparison, and reasoning all have their place in mental education. Kireet stated:

Thinkers alone can produce thinkers; and unless the teachers are constantly in the process of building up great thoughts and ideas, it is futile to expect a sound or vigorous mental education. An atmosphere vibrant at once with ideation and silence, an atmosphere surcharged with a synthetic thought and a most integral aspiration, and an atmosphere filled with the widest realisation and a harmonious unity—such an atmosphere is an indispensable condition of the perfect mental education [1968:80].

## **Psychic Education**

In order to adequately discuss the area of psychic education, a brief description of what is meant by psychic being may be in order at this time. According to Aurobindo, psychic being refers to the soul that is in man (1973a:227). The psychic being may be likened to the hidden or inner guide, the daimon that Socrates spoke of, "the inner light or inner voice of the mystic [1973a:225]." The psychic being represents a "conscious form" of the soul "growing in evolution" and, as such, the psychic being is immortal (Pandit, 1973:239). In Aurobindo's words: "It is that which endures and is imperishable in us from birth to birth untouched by death, decay, or corruption, an indestructible Spark of the Divine [1973a:225]." Although the notion of the psychic being can not be scientifically substantiated at this time, Aurobindo argues that the psychic being changes, grows, and develops from life to life (1973a:225). Chaudhuri explains that the psychic being "is the highest representative in our evolving nature of the ... unborn and undying Self, that presides

over the individual's cycle of birth and rebirth ... [1973:89]." Aurobindo believes that it is the psychic being

... which points always towards Truth and Right and Beauty, towards Love and Harmony and all that is a divine possibility in us, and persists till these things become the major need of our nature. It is the psychic personality in us that flowers as the saint, the sage, the seer; when it reaches its full strength, it turns the being towards the Knowledge of Self and the Divine, towards the supreme Truth, Good, Beauty, Love, and Bliss, and opens us to the touch of ... universality, [and] oneness ... [1973a:226].

Thus, according to Aurobindo, although the psychic being is indestructible, it is still subjected to growth, change, and development. Perhaps, to better understand this idea, one might turn to Sugrue's There Is a River (1942) which notes that "psychic powers are attributes of the soul, and in the normal development of an individuality blossom as a result of an ascending consciousness [p. 281]." Kireet explains that the psychic being is thus "the real individual, the real person behind all personalities [1968:72]." Kireet further noted that the psychic being has the power to "project itself" into one's body, life and mind and suffuse these parts with its "purity" thus harmonizing the various parts of man's being. The psychic being, Kireet said, "knows its real mission as an individual expression in the totality of all the individuals in the world. ... Its goal is a higher realisation upon earth and its law of action is that of mutual-ity and unity and an utter dependence on the Supreme [1968:72]."

What, then, would be the goal of psychic education? One may answer that the goal of psychic education is to help the child become aware of the psychic "presence" that exists within himself and assist the child in living from the center of his psychic being as best as he is able to. The Mother said that in "... all exceptional beings it is always this consciousness that governs their life. ... What the human mind does not know and cannot do, this consciousness knows and does. It is like a light that shines at the centre of the being radiating through the thick coverings of the external consciousness [1966b:72]." The Mother noted that in many instances, children are often under the influence of their psychic being which is demonstrated in their "spontaneous reactions and even in their words." Unfortunately, though, because many parents and teachers are unable to understand what is happening, they tend to make

the children "as unconscious as possible" by having the children concentrate their attention upon external things (1966b:72).

In any event, the Mother stated that it is through the psychic "presence," i.e., psychic being, that the truth of an individual comes into contact with himself and the circumstances of his life (1966b:73). According to the Mother, very often the psychic "presence" acts, so to speak, "from behind the veil, unrecognised and unknown." However, in some persons, this "presence" is somehow felt and the action of the psychic being is recognized. In a few other individuals, "the presence becomes tangible and its action quite effective." The Mother said that it is these last few individuals who go forward in their lives with an "assurance and a certitude all their own; they are masters of their destiny [1966b:73]." Thus, psychic education is concerned with becoming conscious of and living through the psychic being which exists within oneself.

The Mother said that the discovery of the psychic being, and one's identification with it, is not among the more commonly recognized subjects of education. She noted that it is possible to find in "special treatises useful and practical hints on the subject." For others who are fortunate enough, they might also meet someone "capable of showing the path and giving the necessary help to follow it." However, very often, one's psychic education is left to the "personal initiative" of individuals who are interested in pursuing this path (1966b:74). It is, then, to these "solitary travelers" that the Mother addressed herself to and provided them with the following advice.

First, the Mother stated that in order to discover the psychic being and be identified with it "a strong will and an untiring perseverance are indispensable to reach the goal [1966b:74]." She explained that one must first begin to seek in oneself that "which is independent of the body and the circumstances of life." In other words, one must disengage or disconnect oneself from that which is independent of the language that one speaks, the habits and cultural experiences of the environment in which one lives, the country that one happens to be born in, and the age to which one belongs. To quote the Mother:

You must find, in the depths of your being, that which carries in it the sense of universality, limitless expansion, termless continuity. Then you decentralise, spread out, enlarge yourself; you begin to live in everything and in all beings; the barriers separating individuals from each other break down. You think in their thoughts, vibrate in their sensations, you feel in their feelings, you live in the life of all [1966b:74].

The Mother appears to be saying that one must find within oneself that which can be universally identified with all things in the universe. This implies that one's language, age, nationality, and all the characteristics which distinguish one human being from another must be transcended or overcome in order for one to feel a unity, a sense of brotherhood, with all things whether they be animate or inanimate. One aspect of the "psychic realisation" that one may experience is explained in the following passage:

What seemed inert suddenly becomes full of life, stones quicken, plants feel and will and suffer, animals speak in a language more or less inarticulate, but clear and expressive; everything is animated with a marvelous consciousness without time and limit. And this is only one aspect of the psychic realisation. There are many others [The Mother, 1966b:74].

The Mother explains that the purpose of this, and other experiences, is to pull one out of the "barriers" of one's egoism, the "walls" of one's external personality, the "impotence" of one's reactions and the "incapacity" of one's will (1966b:74). She reiterates that the path one follows to reach this realization is "long and difficult, strewn with traps and problems, and to face them demands a determination that must be equal to all test and trial."

The Mother also said that one of the most important things to remember, and which must never be forgotten, is that "with the mind it is impossible to judge of spiritual things [1966b:75]." She noted that many who have written on "yogic discipline" have stated so, but very few are able to put this idea into practice. Yet, in order for one to progress on this path of realization, "it is absolutely indispensable to abstain from all mental judgment, mental opinion and reaction."

The Mother also advises that one should "give up all personal seeking for comfort, satisfaction, enjoyment or happiness." She suggests that one should be "a burning fire for progress" who takes

whatever experiences that come to him as a "help for progress [1966b:75]."

In addition, the Mother recommends that one should "try to take pleasure" in all that one does and yet "never do anything for the sake of pleasure." One should avoid getting excited, nervous or agitated and should remain calm and peaceful under all circumstances (1966b:75).

The Mother also suggests that one should avoid complaining of the behavior of anyone unless one has the power to change in another's nature what makes him so behave; "and if you have the power, change him instead of complaining." This suggestion brings to mind the following quotation from Confucius: "When you see a good man, think of emulating him; when you see a bad man, examine your own heart [Wilds, 1961:22]."

According to the Mother, whatever one does, one should never forget the goal that one has set before oneself; i.e., to discover the psychic being that exists within oneself and to be completely identified with it. Whether one is eating, sleeping, acting, or speaking, the Mother stated that one should always keep this inner aspiration in mind behind all of one's actions. For example, before one proceeds to eat, one should concentrate for a few seconds on the idea that the food that one takes in will be beneficial in providing the body with the necessary energy and strength for continual progress. Before one sleeps, one should concentrate for a few seconds "in the aspiration that the sleep may restore your fatigued nerves, bring to your brain calmness and quietness, that on waking up you may, with renewed vigor, begin again your journey on the path of the great discovery [1966b:75]." Thus, one's aspiration for continual progress should never be forgotten in the light of one's actions.

Before one realizes it, the Mother said that

... an inner door will open suddenly and you will come out into a dazzling splendor that will bring to you the certitude of immortality, the concrete experience that you have lived always and always shall live, that the external forms alone perish and that these forms are ... like clothes that are thrown away when worn out [1966b:76].

And yet, the Mother stated that this "release from all slavery to the flesh, this liberation from all personal attachment is not the supreme fulfillment." There are additional steps that one may follow which is the subject that spiritual education is concerned with.

## **Spiritual Education**

Before discussing what is meant by spiritual education, a basic distinction needs to be made among the different notions of morality, religion, and spirituality.

Kireet noted that morality may be identified with the "ordinary life" which seeks to guide mankind according to certain principles governed by rational thought (1968:68). Religion, as it is commonly practiced today, deals with "intellectual dogmas," ritual and ceremony. According to Aurobindo, very often religion implies something "remote from earthly life" and "seems to condemn the pursuit of earthly aims as a trend opposed to the turn to a spiritual life [1971a:167]."

Aurobindo would probably concur with Russell's Why I Am Not a Christian (1957) in support of the idea that very often religion has done more harm than good for mankind. Aurobindo's belief that the attempt made by religions to "universalise and impose" themselves finds support with Radhakrishnan (1971 a:249). Radhakrishnan noted that

The greatest of the temptations we must overcome is to think that our religion is the only true religion, our own vision of Reality is the only authentic vision, that we alone have received a revelation and we are the chosen people, the children of light and the rest of the human race live in darkness. The saints do not believe that God is the exclusive property of any human being or a group of human beings [f956:269].

Aurobindo argues that very often the attempt to make children moral and religious through the teachings of moral and religious textbooks "is a vanity and a delusion, precisely because the heart is not the mind and to instruct the mind does not necessarily improve the heart [1966b:16]." However, Aurobindo does state that it would be erroneous to say that moral and religious teaching have no effect whatsoever. He noted that moral and religious teaching does implant "certain seeds of thought, and, if these thoughts be-

come habitual, they influence the conduct." But the primary danger that can be found with the use of moral and religious textbooks is that they "make the thinking of high things mechanical and artificial, and whatever is mechanical and artificial is inoperative for good [1966b:16]." For, Aurobindo argues that to be of any benefit at all "religion has to be lived, not learned as a creed [1966b:18]."

And yet, on the other hand, Aurobindo asserted that "to neglect moral and religious education altogether is to corrupt the race [1966b:17]." What he appears to be arguing for is that one should go beyond morality and religion in educating children, indeed all persons, for a spiritual life. It is not within the scope of this paper to explicate Aurobindo's concept of the spiritual, i.e., divine life, except to briefly explain what his notion of spirituality entails.

According to Aurobindo,

Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be that, to enter into contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits also our own being, to be in communion with It and union with It, and a turning, a conversion, a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, the contact, the union, a growth or waking into a new becoming or new being, a new self, a new nature [Kireet, 1968:70].

What Aurobindo appears to be saying is that spirituality involves a marked change in one's consciousness. This change in consciousness is like a total "conversion" of one's being whereby one comes into "direct and living contact and then into union with the Divine [Kireet, 1968:69]." Morality and religion, in their deepest experience, may touch upon spirituality and may even prepare one for this change in consciousness. However, "the element of 'spirituality' does not constitute the differentia by which we can define morality or religion [Kireet, 1968:69]." Kireet further explained: "Spirituality not only aims at the total change of consciousness, but even its method is that of a gradual and increasing change of consciousness. In other words, spirituality is an exploration of consciousness through consciousness [1968:69]."

The spiritual being, then, is not only one who has achieved union with God, but is also one who assists others with their

progress in consciousness according to their own individual natures (Ghose, 1973b:885).

The Mother appears to contradict Aurobindo's concept of spirituality when she makes the following distinction between the psychic life and the spiritual consciousness:

... one can say that the psychic life is the life immortal, endless time, limitless space, ever-progressive change, unbroken continuity in the world of forms. The spiritual consciousness, on the other hand means to live the infinite and eternal, to throw oneself outside all creation, beyond time and space [1966b:76].

She further stated that to become fully aware of one's psychic being and to live a psychic life one must abolish all selfishness within oneself. But to live a spiritual life, one must be completely "selfless." In closely examining the Mother's concept of "spiritual consciousness" one might note that perhaps her interpretation, as compared with Aurobindo's, is not as contradictory as it may appear to be. One can conceivably argue that because Aurobindo's spirituality involves a complete "conversion" and union with God, this would necessitate that one's consciousness would naturally go "beyond time and space," and "outside all creation." In the Mother's words, "this merging into the formless" represents for many, an escape from earthly existence. However, the Mother noted that, in many instances, individual liberation does not fully satisfy persons who have succeeded in escaping the earthly life. In the Mother's words:

They dream that others should profit by the wonders they have discovered in their inner explorations. And the means to do so is within their reach, now that they have arrived at the summit of their ascent [1966b:78].

Thus, the Mother concurred with Aurobindo that the true solution to the problem of suffering and ignorance is not through "individual escape by self-annihilation from earthly miseries into the non-manifest," but a total transformation of matter towards perfection (1966b:78).

For the true solution of the problem of suffering ... is a transformation ... of matter ... towards perfection, by the creation of a new species that will be in relation to man what man is in relation to the animal and that will manifest upon earth a new force, a new consciousness and a new power. Then will

begin also a new education which can be called the supramental education [The Mother, 1966b:78].

What, then, does a spiritual or a "supramental" education consist of? According to the Mother, a spiritual education will differ primarily from the other types of education in that the other forms of education progress from "below upward through an ascending movement of the different parts of the being." However, a spiritual education will progress "from above downward, its influence spreading from one state of being to another till the final state, the physical, is reached." Furthermore,

... one can say that the supramental education will result not merely in a progressively developing formation of the human nature, an increasing growth of its latent faculties, but a transformation of the nature itself, a transformation of the being in its entirety, a new ascent of the species above and beyond man towards superman, leading in the end to the appearance of the divine race upon earth [The Mother, 1966b:79].

Thus, the Mother appears to be saying that the primary force for a spiritual education will somehow come from "above." Perhaps this force from "above" refers to the "Divine Grace" that Aurobindo was referring to in his philosophical system. In any event, some kind of power or force coming from above will appear to direct and assist mankind in the development of a "divine race" on earth.

The primary goal of a spiritual education, then, is to help all persons reach a state of spirituality or "divine supermanhood" according to their own individual natures. How, specifically, might this goal be brought about? In addition, to the force and power provided by "Divine Grace," what are some specific things that the educational system might do to assist in this transformation?

Suggestions made concerning the educational practices of spiritual education may also be applied to vital, mental, and psychic education as well. According to Aurobindo, students should be encouraged to read books containing "lofty examples of the past"; "the great thoughts of great souls"; "the passages of literature which set fire to the highest emotions and prompt the highest ideals and aspirations [1966b:17]." In Aurobindo's opinion, books dealing with the "highest ideals and aspirations" are an excellent

source of learning provided that "sententious sermonising is avoided" on the part of the teacher.

Furthermore, Aurobindo said that children should be encouraged to develop all that is "best" in their nature. If the child possesses "bad qualities" or "bad habits, ... he should not be treated harshly as a delinquent, but encouraged to get rid of them by the ... method of ... rejection and substitution [1966b:18]." Aurobindo suggests that the child should be encouraged to think of these qualities not as "sins" or "offenses, ... but as symptoms of a curable disease, alterable by a steady and sustained effort of the will." Aurobindo warns that one has to be careful not to reject unformed virtues as faults. He stated: "The wildness and recklessness of many young natures are only the overflowings of an excessive strength, greatness and nobility. They should be purified, not discouraged [1966b: 18]." The Mother also suggests that because children are unable to understand abstract notions and ideas at an early age, that parables or stories may be used to teach a particular lesson (1966b:55).

The Mother also advises that one should avoid scolding a child "except with a definite purpose and only when quite indispensable." A child that is often scolded "gets hardened to rebuke" and may eventually attach little importance to any scoldings received. The Mother noted that particular care should be taken not to scold or "rebuke" a child for a fault which one may have committed himself. She stated: "Children are very keen and clear-sighted observers: they soon find out your weaknesses and note them without pity [1966b:56]."

In addition, the Mother said that when a child has made a mistake, one should see to it that the child confesses his mistake "spontaneously and frankly." Once the child has confessed, then he should be shown with "kindness and affection" what was wrong with his action and why he should not repeat it. In any event, the Mother maintains that one should never scold the child; for "a fault confessed must be forgiven." She stated: "You should not allow any fear to slip in between you and your child; fear is a disastrous

way to education: invariably it gives birth to dissimulation and falsehood [1966b:56]."

In an essay which deals with the organization of psychic and spiritual education, Kireet provides a brief description of the "salient features" of the educational structure that is prevalent in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram (1968:76-77). According to this system, every student is free to study any subject that he chooses at any given time. However, this freedom "has to be guided"; for the student can and should experience freedom but in some cases, it may be "mis-used." Therefore, the student must "be watched with care, sympathy and wisdom; the teacher must be a friend and a guide, must not impose himself, but may intervene when necessary."

A great deal of emphasis is placed on the individual work performed by students. Individual work may consist of a student's own desire to pursue a particular topic of interest. Individual work may also be prompted by the suggestion of a teacher that is accepted and carried out by the student. In any event, individual work at the ashram is pursued in a number of different ways:

1. Quiet reflection or meditation.
2. Reading books or excerpts in books suggested by the teacher.
3. Doing "work sheets" that are prepared for the students by the teachers.
4. Consulting or interviewing with the teachers.
5. Carrying out experiments.
6. Solving problems.
7. Writing compositions.
8. Drawing, designing, painting, decorating, cooking, carpentry, stitching, embroidery, or any other type of work which the student shows an interest in.

According to Kireet, lectures are occasionally provided in some subject areas. However, for the most part, the number of lecture

classes in the ashram are fewer in comparison with those in the traditional educational system.

There are also a variety of discussion classes between teachers and students, and between students and students. These discussion classes are not compulsory. The discussions which take place in these classes may deal not only with academic subjects but with one's personal growth and "inner search" as well.

In addition, there are a number of work projects conducted in each subject area. Students choose a minimum number of projects for which they may either individually or collectively work on. The results of these projects, as produced on charts, monographs, designs, and so forth, are periodically exhibited for the benefit of the entire school.

Because of the diversity of activities which take place in this particular educational system, provision is made in the ashram for a room or "Rooms of Silence" where students can freely come and go to meditate in silence or do uninterrupted work of their choosing. There are also "Rooms of Consultations" where students can meet with their teachers to discuss their own spiritual growth. "Rooms of Collaboration" are also provided for students who need to work together on some project or shared interest. And finally, there are lecture rooms where teachers can hold discussions with their students and where teachers can also deliver lectures according to the requirements of the subject or the needs of the students.

Kireet explains that all subjects are taught in such a way so that they lead ultimately to the "discovery of the fundamental truths underlying the subject [1968:77]." All subjects are regarded as leading to a fundamental "unity of truths." According to Kireet:

The sense of the unity of the truths would also contribute to the reconciliation of the various branches of Knowledge, thus leading to the harmony of Science, Philosophy, Technology and Fine Arts. In the spiritual ... vision, there is an automatic perception of this unity, and in the teaching of the various subjects the teacher can always direct the students to this unity [1968:77-78].

## The Ideal Teacher

The concept of an ideal teacher has been referred to occasionally throughout this chapter. More specifically, Aurobindo's concept of the ideal teacher was briefly mentioned with regard to the section dealing with mental education. However, a more detailed explanation will now be provided concerning the characteristics which Aurobindo believes that an ideal teacher should possess.

Aurobindo compares the ideal teacher to that of a guru (1955:74). A guru is a person who has realized the Truth and who is able to "communicate the light" and the experience to a disciple or a student (Pandit, 1973:104). In fact, the Mother compares the ideal teacher to that of a yogi which is somewhat similar to that of a guru. She stated:

Teachers who do not possess a perfect calm, an unflinching endurance, an unshakable quietness, who are full of self-conceit will reach nowhere. One must be a saint and a hero to become a good teacher. One must be a yogi to become a good teacher. One must have the perfect attitude in order to be able to exact from one's pupils a perfect attitude. You cannot ask of a person what you do not do yourself. It is a rule [Saint-Hilaire, 1967:137].

In The Synthesis of Yoga, Aurobindo notes that there are three "instruments" of the "wise teacher" or the guru. They are teaching, example, and influence (1955:74). According to Aurobindo, the ideal teacher is one who does not impose his opinions "on the passive acceptance of the receptive mind." The wise teacher will, instead, "throw out" ideas which are "productive" so that these ideas will "grow under the divine fostering" that is within the student himself. Aurobindo stated that the teacher's task "is to awaken the divine light and set working the divine force of which he himself [the teacher] is only a means and an aid, a body or a channel [1955:74-75]." In other words, Aurobindo perceives the teacher as a "channel" or the means by which the student will be directed to ultimately rely on the "divine force" that exists within himself.

Aurobindo says that "example is more powerful than ... instruction; but it is not the example of the outward acts nor that of the personal character, which is of most importance [1955:75]."

Although Aurobindo admits that the example of one's acts and personal character does have some bearing, he argues that the most influential factor in stimulating the aspiration in students is the amount of "divine realisation" that one has reached within himself. This is to say that the amount of "divine realisation" that governs a teacher's life is one of the most influential qualities that a teacher could possess in affecting his students.

By the same token, Aurobindo says that "influence is more important than example." By influence, Aurobindo is not referring to the teacher's "outward authority" over his students. Rather, influence is interpreted to mean the power of the teacher's "contact"; "his presence"; "the nearness of his soul to the soul of another, infusing into it, even though in silence, that which he himself is and possesses." This, according to Aurobindo, "is the supreme sign of the Master." Aurobindo states: "For the greatest Master is much less a Teacher than a Presence pouring the divine consciousness and its constituting light and power and purity and bliss into all who are receptive around him [1955:75-76]."

Finally, the true sign of a teacher is his humility. Aurobindo explains that the true teacher is one who "does not arrogate to himself Guruhood in a humanly vain and self-exalting spirit [1955:76]." The teacher's work, if he has one, "is a trust from above, he himself [is] a channel, a vessel or a representative." Aurobindo further stated that the teacher

... is a man helping his brothers, a child leading children, a Light kindling other lights, an awakened Soul awakening souls, at highest a Power or Presence of the Divine calling to him other powers of the Divine [Ghose, 1955:76].

Thus, according to Aurobindo, the ideal teacher is likened to that of a spiritual leader who, with humility, example, and influence is able to direct his students to ultimately follow the divine light which exists within themselves.

## **Curriculum**

Although some mention has already been made concerning the curriculum in Aurobindo's integral educational system, this section will discuss the kinds of subjects being offered in more detail. Be-

cause education is perceived by Aurobindo and the Mother to begin at birth, indeed even before birth through the preparation of one's parents, and is thought to continue all the way up to post-graduate studies, the subjects that are offered in the integral educational system are diverse as they are numerous. Mention has already been made as to the variety of specific courses that are offered to the students in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Additional courses that have not been mentioned are subjects in humanities, mathematics, geography, history, philosophy, psychology, engineering, and the natural sciences. Equally impressive is the variety of languages that are offered to the students in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Classical languages such as Sanskrit, Latin, and Tamil are taught in addition to English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Indian languages such as Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Oriya, Telugu, and Kannada are also made available for those students who wish to learn them (Kireet, 1968:81).

Perhaps the primary characteristic which may be used to describe the curriculum at the International Centre of Education at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram is the emphasis that is placed on unity. Because "all life is a part of Yoga," all subjects and experiences are regarded as being a valid part of the curriculum [Ghose, 1955:584]." In fact, according to Aurobindo, every branch of knowledge represents some attempt by man to seek and make sense of the Divine in man's own way. In Aurobindo's words: "Science, art, philosophy, ethics, psychology, the knowledge of man and his past, action itself are means by which we arrive at the knowledge of the workings of God through Nature and through life [1955:584]." Aurobindo further notes that as man's consciousness becomes enlightened, man begins to see God

... through the data of science, God through the conclusions of philosophy, God through the forms of Beauty and the forms of Good, God in all activities of life, God in the past of the world and its effects, in the present and its tendencies, in the future and its great progression [1955:590].

Thus, Aurobindo regards all subjects as possessing equal validity in helping students towards their aspiration for perfection.

## CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Aurobindo's aim of education is an honorable endeavor, i.e., to develop and manifest the spiritual nature that is within man not by means of any religious denominational endeavor but rather through the emphasis on "spiritual example and influence, and through individual or collective spiritual guidance [Kireet, 1968:66]." The problem with this aim is that it can and is apparently being accomplished at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. However, the difficulty arises when one tries to adopt his principles outside of the environment in which it was fostered. In other words, Aurobindo's spiritual community represents an ideal environment in which his principles may be put into practice. However, one might ask if these principles can be successfully accomplished in the United States, for example, where there is no overwhelming endeavor on the part of the population to achieve a spiritual transformation? Generally speaking, one can state that the educational goals in the United States are primarily utilitarian in nature. In other words, one is usually concerned with getting a degree in the hopes of eventually finding an adequate job. The goals of Aurobindo's educational system are somewhat different. In fact, in an essay entitled "A Dream," the Mother noted that

Education would be given not with a view to passing examinations and getting certificates and posts but for enriching the existing faculties and bringing forth new ones. In this place titles and positions would be supplanted by opportunities to serve and organise [1966b:100].

In addition to the difficulty in adopting Aurobindo's educational principles in America, one might also mention the fact that the United States' Constitution specifically delineates a separation between the church and the state. Furthermore, public educational systems in the United States are quite adamant in separating religion from the schools. Granted, although Aurobindo's definition of spirituality is not the same as that of religiosity, the schools might still be hesitant in devising any sort of curriculum that deals with the development of one's soul or "psychic being."

Another point that must be considered is the difficulty in securing the aid of "wise teachers" in the vast majority of our public school systems. In light of Aurobindo's criteria for an ideal teacher,

one has to admit that the existence of spiritual qualities in American teachers is not the essential prerequisite that a teacher must meet when applying for a job. And even if a teacher should possess "spiritual qualities," one can speculate that these qualities would more often than not be associated with a particular religious denomination. Hence, the additional problem of religious ethnocentrism is apparent here.

There is also the problem that one must deal with in comprehending the notion that the spiritual or "supramental" education will somehow come from "above." Neither Aurobindo nor the Mother have gone into great detail in explaining this idea. One can only wonder how education will be guided from "above" and through what specific means this will be brought about. Aurobindo and the Mother are nebulous on this point.

It is the opinion of this writer that Aurobindo's educational theory and practice represents an excellent educational philosophy in so far as it attempts to deal with all aspects of man's nature. However, the difficulties that one may encounter in adapting this educational system to that of the United States, or in any other country for that matter, represents the existence of many problems which one can not and should not overlook.

## **SUMMARY**

Aurobindo's educational theory and practice are directly related to his philosophical system as reported in Chapter 2. The aim of education, according to Aurobindo, is to assist all persons in the development and manifestation of their "divine potential." In order for education to be complete, it must take into account five principle aspects of man's nature: the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic, and the spiritual. A specific educational method for the development of each aspect in man has been discussed by Aurobindo and the Mother. Briefly stated, physical education deals with the development of a sound and healthy body, vital education deals with the control and transformation of one's desires and emotions, mental education is concerned with the development of one's mental powers, psychic education refers to the emphasis on one's soul

or "psychic being," and spiritual education deals with the complete transformation of man into a "superman."

The ideal teacher, according to Aurobindo, is a person who is very much like a guru. Through example, influence, and humility, the teacher is able to assist the student in discovering and following the "divine light" that exists within himself.

Finally, the curriculum in Aurobindo's integral educational system covers a wide variety of subjects such as mathematics, languages, geography, history, philosophy, physical and natural sciences, and many other areas. In Aurobindo's curriculum, one might note that all subjects are considered to be valid areas of study provided that they assist the student in his physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual development.

## Chapter 4.

### PHILOSOPHY OF MARIA MONTESSORI

The child would appear among us as the teacher of peace. We must gather around him to learn the mystery of humanity ...

Maria Montessori  
Education and  
Peace, 1972

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The amount of literature written about Montessori's philosophy qua philosophy is not extensive. Very often her philosophy, in terms of her ontology, epistemology, and axiology has been explicated in terms of her educational theory and practice.

Nonetheless, Joan Sheehan, in a dissertation entitled "A Comparison of the Theories of Maria Montessori and Jean Piaget in Relation to the Bases of Curriculum, Methodology, and the Role of the Teacher" (1970), had determined what the similarities and the dissimilarities were in the educational theory and practice of Montessori and Piaget. Because one of the bases of the curriculum was considered to be philosophical, Sheehan dealt with Montessori's philosophy in terms of ontology, epistemology, and axiology. With regard to ontology, the author concluded that reality was revealed as the child developed in growth. Knowledge was acquired through sense-impressions obtained from the environment, while "moral guides" were formed and guided by "group consent [1970:2267]."

In another dissertation, by Michael Birchenall (1971), he compared the perspectives of history and philosophy in light of the educational theories of Comenius, Froebel, and Montessori. The author concluded that similar ideas were present in the educational theories of all three educators. Birchenall maintained that the three educators believed in the importance and necessity of the "correct

method of teaching." Furthermore, if the correct method were used, the three educators believed that practically anything could be taught to nearly anyone. Another similar idea espoused by the three educators was the importance that "sense realism" played in the teaching methodology. And finally, all three educators emphasized the importance that religion played in the entire educational system of the school (1971:4500).

In the "Introduction" to Maria Montessori Her Life and Work (Standing, 1962a), John J. McDermott noted that Montessori shared with William James, Henri Bergson, and John Dewey "the late nineteenth-century awareness of the developmental nature of man in an evolutionary context [p. xi]." He compared Montessori's philosophy with that of John Dewey in so far as they both share an "evolutionary and experimental pedagogy [Standing, 1962a:xii]." However, McDermott noted that Montessori was willing to adopt "religious and spiritual qualities to the rigorous demands of concrete educational processes" far more than Dewey was. McDermott also pointed out that Montessori shared a similar philosophy with William James in the belief that religious experience is a "legitimate aspect" dealing with "the philosophy of the person [Standing, 196]a:xiii]."

R. C. Orem, in Montessori Today (1971), devoted an entire chapter to "The Montessori Philosophy." Although Montessori's philosophy was not structured in an ontology, epistemology, or axiology, the author did explicate her philosophy in terms of her educational theory and practice. Especially noteworthy was the section dealing with the "Twelve Cardinal Points of the Montessori Method." In this section Orem succeeded in explaining Montessori's overall philosophy in light of the specific goals and practices of education.

Finally, in an article entitled, "Montessori Principles in the Light of Scholastic Philosophy," E. M. Standing noted that the scholastic doctrine of man, as composed of body and soul, had a direct influence on Montessori's philosophy (Montessori, 1965a:67). According to Standing, the scholastic notion of body and soul coincided with Montessori's belief that "man's nature consists in the perfect

union of body and soul, not the soul of the animal completely dependent on the matter of its body, but an immaterial, rational, supersensitive soul [1965a:67]."

Although Standing's comparison of Montessori's notion of body and soul with that of scholastic philosophy is a bit simplistic, one might say that there is one parallel idea which exists between the two points of view. One could argue that the emphasis placed on "religious preoccupations" in scholasticism can also be found in the continual references to Biblical scriptures made in Montessori's writings (Runes, 1971:280). Montessori certainly believed in the importance that religion should play in the education of the child. However, the similarity between the two points of view stops here. Runes noted that in scholasticism "the choice of problems and the resources of science were controlled by theology." And furthermore, "philosophy is directly and immediately subordinate to theology [Runes, 1971:280-81]." Although Montessori was a devout Roman Catholic, she did recognize that "religions and languages keep men apart ... [Montessori, 1967c:75]." Because of her overriding concern for human unity, she ultimately maintained that "religion ... will not need to be taught, which indeed it cannot really be, but reverence for truth, inner as well as outer, will grow in natural freedom. ..."

In addition, Standing mentioned that Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas may have influenced Montessori's philosophical thought with regard to her ontology and epistemology (Montessori, 1956a:66-69). However, as far as can be ascertained, one can say that she never really spoke of any direct influence that Aristotle or Aquinas may have had on her writings. One can only surmise that because of Aquinas' historical influence on the Catholic Church, perhaps Montessori was indirectly influenced by Aquinas' thought.

## INTRODUCTION

At the present time, it is difficult to categorize Montessori's philosophy under any particular heading, if indeed, it can be categorized at all. After receiving the degree Doctor of Medicine from the University of Rome, Montessori registered again as a student and took

courses in philosophy and psychology (Standing, 1962a:30). The strong influence of her studies in psychology will be seen in the discussion of her educational theory and practice. However, with regard to her studies in philosophy, one is uncertain as to the exact nature or influence that her philosophical studies had on her educational thought. One can only note that she clearly expresses the idea that her method, which she sometimes referred to as "pedagogical anthropology," does not concern itself with problems that philosophy is ordinarily concerned with. She stated:

Pedagogical anthropology, like all the other branches of anthropology, studies man from the naturalistic point of view; but, unlike general anthropology, it does not concern itself with the philosophic problems related to it, such, for instance, as the origin of man, the theories of monism or polygenism, of emigration, and classification according to race; problems which, as everyone knows, are difficult of solution. ... [1913:34].

However, in spite of her lack of concern for constructing an elaborate philosophical model, one can conceivably come up with a definite, though unstructured philosophical system, with regard to an ontology, epistemology, and axiology.

## ONTOLOGY

Because of the influence of her medical background as a physician in addition to her upbringing in the Roman Catholic Church, reality for Montessori consisted of the material as well as the immaterial world.

With regard to the material world, Montessori noted that "every child should be able to experiment at first hand, to observe, and to put himself in contact with reality [1964b:244].<sup>11</sup> According to Montessori, it is through this "direct contact" with material reality that a child is able to assert his *raison d'être* (1972:95).

Montessori argues that it is through the material world of "concrete things" that the child is able to "rise to the higher order of the spirit [1972:128]." Clearly, Montessori offers no argumentative proofs for the existence of the immaterial world which is the basis for her religious beliefs. However, she does say that "religion is not

a product of fantastic imagination, it is the greatest of realities, the one truth to the religious man [1964b:266]."

Throughout her writings, Montessori continually makes reference to God in the theistic sense of the word. She stated:

When adults come to the sincere conclusion that all are children of God and that Christ lives in each of them and He becomes their model for imitation or better still, for identification with Him to the extent of being able to say: "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me," ... [1955:70].

Montessori does not provide the reader with any specific philosophical proofs or arguments concerning the existence of God; merely the implication that He does exist. However, one might infer that her argument for the existence of God might be teleological in nature for she often spoke of a "cosmic plan in which all living things display characteristic movement and activity [Orem, 1970:40]." More specifically, she stated:

We need to know more of the Law that is behind all humanity, the Source from which came all humanity, every personality, every race, every religion. That great Source has a Plan which is fulfilled not through the influence of the adult man on the child only, but also by the influence of the child upon the grown-up man [1968:6].

E. M. Standing pointed out that there may even be a "mystical side" to Montessori's personality (1962a:31). According to Standing, Montessori believed that "the art of life consisted primarily in adjusting oneself to those unseen but beneficent influences which operate through the lives of men and events." He maintained that although Montessori "never unduly strove to force events," she contended that the art of living consisted in learning how "to be obedient to events." One might raise the question, did Montessori believe in a fatalistic surrender to external destiny? According to Standing,

... it meant nothing of the kind. Rightly understood, and illustrated as she gave it by reference to her own career, it signified rather a life full of generous acceptances of duties, and of hard achievements leading to unexpected developments along the line of her genius [1962a:31].

As previously mentioned, Montessori believed in the existence of a soul in man. She stated: "... the principal part of man, his soul, does not come from man at all, but is created directly by God

[1965a:13]." More specifically, she was concerned with understanding the soul in the child for it is the child who "can, and should—in accordance with the will of God—exercise a formative influence on the adult world [1965a:7]." Again, no attempt was made on her part to necessarily prove the existence of the soul; merely, that the soul exists as a self-evident truth.

One might note that although Montessori clearly believed in the existence of God and the immaterial soul, she tended to structure her philosophy more in terms of the material world from which children could learn. In other words, in spite of her strong religious tendencies, Montessori did not postulate other levels of reality but concentrated primarily on the existence of and the means by which one could learn from the corporeal world. Standing noted:

Montessori ... makes it her aim to create round the child a real and sensible world; and to do it in such a way that the child can act and work in this world independently of the adult; and in a manner proportionate to his needs—carrying out real activities with real responsibilities [1962a:347-48].

## EPISTEMOLOGY

According to Montessori, there are two different kinds of knowledge, as there are two different forms of reality. Her epistemology is based on two kinds of truths: external and internal.

The external truth may be compared to the experimental knowledge of the scientist. This particular kind of knowledge is apprehended primarily through one's senses. The method of the scientist is characterized by experimentation, observation, investigation, and verification. Montessori stated that it is by "scientific and rational means" that her work with the child can be accomplished: "My method is scientific, both in its substance and in its aim [1965b:36]." Clearly, it is from the scientist's point of view when Montessori contends that

A child starts from nothing and advances alone. It is the child's reason about which the sensitive periods revolve. The reasoning process, which is natural and creative, grows gradually like a living thing and gains strength at the expense of the images it receives from its surroundings [1966:61].

According to Montessori, "man is capable of becoming anything" that he wants to become for "it is through the environment that the individual is molded and brought to perfection [1966:33-35]."

A second kind of knowledge is obtained through what Montessori (1964b:246) refers to as "internal impressions" or what Standing (1962a:368) calls "revealed truth." Standing explains that, for Montessori, reason represents man's "highest natural endowment." However,

... there is a realm of reality which yields up its secrets neither to deductive nor inductive reasoning—neither to the syllogism nor to scientific research—but rather to what one might describe as the total functioning of the whole personality—including the obedient will. This is the realm of revealed truth; of which it was said by Him who knew it best that "he that doeth the Will shall know of the doctrine ... " [1962a:368].

In Montessori's own words she stated that

There is the Divine Mind behind the Cosmos which differs from the mind of man in extent, substance, and nature. We cannot penetrate this mind but we can come in contact with it. When you have arrived at the point where you can say your intelligence can go no further, just there it touches the Beyond. This experience does not form an obstacle to the intelligence, it is a contact. The mind of man must work and work until in the end it arrives at this contact, the contact of the created intelligence with the Uncreated [Standing, 1962a:344].

Montessori appears to be saying a number of things here. First, Montessori posits the existence of a "Divine Mind" operating within the cosmos which is significantly different and far more superior to that of the mind of man. Second, she maintains that although one cannot "penetrate" the "Divine Mind," one can at least make "contact" with it. This "contact" is presumably made when one has reached the limits of one's intelligence and one can go no further with one's mental capacities. Also implied is the idea that one must constantly work at making this contact with "Divine Mind." However, in the end it is possible for one to make "contact" between one's "created intelligence" with the "Uncreated," i.e., "Divine Mind."

Montessori spoke of mystics such as Saint Teresa who was able to receive "revelations vouchsafed by God" which were ac-

accompanied by "light, discernment, and wisdom [1964b:246-47]." According to Montessori, persons such as Saint Teresa had "non-sensorial impressions." These "internal impressions," Montessori argues, cannot be taken to be "fruits" of one's imagination but, rather, "must be accepted as realities simply perceived [1964b:246]." Montessori further stated "that they are realities is affirmed not only by the introspection of normal subjects," but by the effect that these revelations have on one's internal personality.

Thus, knowledge, for Montessori, consists of two kinds of truths; an external truth as well as an internal truth. Both, according to Montessori, are valid for they represent two ways in which one is capable of apprehending her two forms of reality.

## **AXIOLOGY**

### **The Problem of Good and Evil**

Montessori does not address herself to the question of absolute good or absolute evil. She does, however, discuss the concept of "original sin," and makes a distinction between what is good and what is evil.

The concept of "original sin" is expressed by Montessori in the following manner:

We have within our souls numerous bad tendencies which develop like weeds in a meadow, the result of original sin. These tendencies are manifold; let us say they can be summed up in seven groups: the seven deadly sins [1965a:46].

The seven "deadly sins" that Montessori refers to are: pride, avarice, anger, sloth, "luxurious habits," gluttony, and jealousy (1965a:47). Among these, Montessori contends that "pride was man's first sin; his attempts to replace God has been the cause of the misery of all his descendants [1966:34]." No attempt is made on Montessori's part to explain the notion that if man came from God how is it that man came to possess "numerous bad tendencies"? The contention that pride caused man to replace God for himself still does not "adequately explain the existence of evil.

Interestingly enough, Montessori stated that the "child is more or less free from sin [1965:46]." She goes on to say that

Not only is a child, compared with ourselves, purer, but he has certain pure, occult, and mysterious qualities, generally invisible to adults, in which however we must faithfully believe because our Lord spoke of them with such clearness and insistence that all the evangelists wrote, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" [1965:46].

Now this idea coupled with the notion of "original sin" appears to be paradoxical. How can a child be "more or less" free from sin? Did Montessori not say that there are "numerous bad tendencies" that already exist within one's soul? Are these "bad tendencies" already innate within one's soul or are they acquired from the external environment? With regard to the child, Montessori appears to change her point of view.

Montessori argues that what one "stigmatizes" as evil in little children from three to six years of age is often the cause of "annoyances" to adults who have failed to understand the true needs of the child (1965b:184). A child's "naughtiness" or "rebellion," then, is simply the inability of the child to follow the "natural tendencies" of his own personal growth. She stated: "What wonder is it that the evil disappears when, if we give the right means for development and leave full liberty to use them, rebellion has no more reason for existence? [1965b:184]." She further stated that "in order that 'the child may be helped' it is essential that the environment should be rightly organized, and that good and evil should be duly differentiated [1964b:336]." One is reminded of the Behaviorist school of thought when Montessori argues that, in reality, much of the "evil" that one theoretically deplores in individuals "may be resolved into external causes [1964b:321]." In other words, if one were to change the environment or remove the causes of evil, Montessori believes that much of what one comes to regard as evil in the little child will disappear. These causes, Montessori admits, are not "absolute and immutable." However, she argues that the "ancient philosophic conception of evil" will "partially" resolve itself when positive changes are made in the educational, social, and economic conditions in which one lives (1964b:321).

And yet, in spite of the impact that the environment has on the individual, Montessori appears to contradict herself again when she notes that there are "certain individuals who feel themselves irresistibly attracted toward evil, who become inebriated with blood"; and there are others "who faint at the mere sight of blood and have a horror of evil [1913:358-59]." According to Montessori, these persons who "act in opposite ways, deserve neither praise nor blame; they were born that way; it is a question of birth [1913:359]." Again, one may raise the question, from whence does evil come from if a person is "born this way? Montessori appears to provide no answer to this question.

What, then, does Montessori consider to be good and what is evil? According to Montessori, a "good" man is likened to that of Christ; "a man who lays down his life for his friends. Goodness means self-sacrifice, a lifelong sacrifice [1972:138]." Montessori alludes to the idea that goodness may be related to the "ten simple commandments" and to the most important "law" of all; the law of love (1964b:337).

In contrasting good and evil, Montessori says that "the good stands for real utility in life far more directly than the beautiful, and ... evil may be roughly said to represent danger [1964b:339]."

Furthermore, "good is life; evil is death [1964b:340]." She notes that "apart from cognitions of morality," one can distinguish between good and evil by means of an "internal sense," a "voice of conscience [1964b:337]." Montessori maintains that this "voice of conscience" exists within every individual.

... good confers serenity, which is order; enthusiasm, which is strength; evil is signalized as an anguish which is at times unbearable: remorse, which is not only darkness and disorder, but fever, a malady of the soul [1964b:337].

Montessori stated that it is these "internal sensations" which warns one of "perils" and causes one to "recognize the circumstances [that are] favorable to life."

Because Montessori was ultimately concerned with the child and with the correction of what one ordinarily considered to be the existence of "evil" within the child, she admits that the "goodness"

of her "little ones in their freedom" will not solve "the problem of the absolute goodness or wickedness of man [1965b:189]." She stated: "We can only say that we have made a contribution to the cause of goodness by removing obstacles which were the cause of violence and rebellion."

Another interesting thing to note is her idea that

The sudden extermination of evil is not a thing to be recommended. This is clearly taught by our Divine Master; it is better to let tares also grow, than to destroy the good grain along with them. The key to the problem is, therefore, not to destroy evil but to cultivate good [1965a:53].

Montessori seems to imply here that the elimination of evil should not necessarily be the goal of mankind. Furthermore, she also stated that God, somehow, supports and "teaches" this point of view. The way, then, in which one should handle the problem of evil is not necessarily to eliminate evil, but to emphasize and "cultivate" the good.

### **The Goal of Life**

The values that Montessori considered to be important are peace, human unity, and a return to the child. She often spoke of the need for a "science of peace" where nations would prepare themselves for a "new orientation of mankind [1971 b:31]." Montessori believed that, in reality, the cause of war "does not lie in armaments, but in the men who make use of them [1971b:25]." Peace, she believed, is a goal that could be attained "only through common accord [1972:27]."

The means by which this "unity for peace" could be achieved are twofold: first, an "immediate effort" must be made to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence; second, there must be a long-term effort "to establish a lasting peace among men." She notes: "Preventing conflicts is the work of politics; establishing peace is the work of education. We must convince the world of the need for a universal, collective effort to build the foundation for peace."

With regard to the question of human unity, Montessori believes that it is through education, based on "human cooperation and

readiness to shed prejudices in the interests of common work for the cosmic plan," that human unity can be achieved. Montessori contends that human unity is the "Will of God, actively expressed in the whole of His creation." Rather than deal with human unity in terms of a "world organization," she argues that the term "organism" should be used instead. She stated:

When it is recognized that the world is already a living organism, its vital functions may be less impeded in their operation, and it may consciously enter on its heritage in the day towards which hitherto "all creation has been groaning and travailing together" [1967c:74].

Montessori admits that "laws and treaties are not enough" to bring about the quest for human unity (1971b:27). In addition to education, "what we need is a world full of miracles; a new world for a new man: that is what we sorely need today."

She stated that taking everything into consideration, "we live morally in a state of degeneracy in a dark and stuffy environment [1971b:15]." In addition to the need for a "science of peace" and human unity brought about through education and "miracles," Montessori argues that mankind must return to reason by going back to the child. Her perception of the child is filled with reverence and hope. In fact, she compares the child to that of a "Messiah, an inspired being, a regenerator of our race and of society [1971b:16]." She further stated:

We must succeed in effacing ourselves till we are filled with this idea, then go to the child, as the wise men of the East, loaded with power and with gifts and led by the star of hope [1971b:16].

Thus, the goal of life, for Montessori, is twofold: to realize peace and human unity throughout the world. These goals, she believes, can be brought about through education, "miracles," and a return to the child.

## **CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In discussing Montessori's philosophy, there are a number of questions that one must address oneself to.

First, with regard to her epistemology and her two ways of knowing, one might raise the question, what is the exact relationship between the "Divine Mind" and the mind of man? How, specifically, does one make "contact" with the "Divine Mind?" Moreover, if one were to make "contact" with the "Divine Mind," how can one be sure that it is the "Divine Mind" that one is making "contact" with rather than some phantasm or a projection of one's own thoughts?

Second, Montessori never really settled the problem of "original sin" nor did she really explain the problem of evil. If one possesses "bad tendencies" within one's soul, how is it possible that a child is "more or less" free from these tendencies? Is a child not born with a soul? And if so, how is it that these "bad tendencies" somehow escape the soul of the child? Furthermore, is a child necessarily considered to be "evil" only when adults prevent the child from following his "natural tendencies"? What about the child who is "irresistibly attracted toward evil" and who is "born" this way? One can raise the additional question as to what degree of influence does the environment or the soul truly have on the individual person? Montessori seems to want it both ways when she states that the "environment is undoubtedly a secondary factor in the phenomena of life; it can modify in that it can help or hinder, but it can never create [1964a:105]." She attributes "the origins of development, both in the species and in the individual" to "lie within." In other words, a child, Montessori argues, does not grow "because he is nourished ... because he is placed in conditions of temperature to which he is adapted." Rather, a child grows

... because the potential life within him develops, making itself visible; because the fruitful germ from which his life has come develops itself according to the biological destiny which was fixed for it by heredity [1964a:105].

One might then ask, how is it possible that a child can start from "nothing" and yet still possess a "fixed ... biological destiny?" Montessori appears to contradict herself on this point.

Finally, one may take issue with the idea that "the sudden extermination of evil is not a thing to be recommended" and that this notion "is clearly taught by our Divine Master." One might raise the question that if God somehow condones the existence of evil, how

can He be all-good? For what purpose might the continual existence of evil be justified in the universe? How might one's "cultivation" of good offset the existence of evil if evil is to be condoned in the first place?

But, alas, these are questions which remain unanswered.

## SUMMARY

This chapter dealt with Montessori's ontology, epistemology, and axiology.

Montessori's ontology is based on the notion that both the material and the immaterial world are to be regarded as real. Although it is primarily through the material world of concrete things that a child asserts his *raison d'être*, it is also through the immaterial world that Montessori posits the existence of God and the immaterial soul.

Her epistemology is based on two kinds of knowledge: the external truth and the internal truth. The external method of knowing is characterized by the scientific method. Close observation, experimentation, investigation, and verification are synonymous with this method. Montessori recognized that the apprehension of the material world through one's reason and one's senses represented man's "highest natural endowment." However, she believed that there is still another realm by which man may obtain knowledge. This realm is the realm of "internal impressions" through which one may make "contact" with God, ie., "Divine Mind." In citing such mystics as Saint Teresa, one might surmise that, according to Montessori, revelation through faith would be an appropriate means for knowing. In Montessori's words, "faith is the very sentiment of truth, which should accompany man even unto death [1964b:266]."

Montessori's axiology was discussed in terms of her concept of "original sin," her distinction between good and evil, and the goal of life.

With regard to "original sin," Montessori appeared to contradict herself when she stated that "we have within our souls numerous

bad tendencies." At the same time, she argues that the child is "more or less free from sin." She maintains that what is ordinarily regarded as the existence of evil within the child is merely the failure of adults to understand or make provision for the true needs of the child.

In distinguishing good from evil, Montessori identifies the good with an altruistic person such as Jesus Christ. Evil, meanwhile, is likened to "danger," "death," and "remorse."

The goal of life, she believes, is to realize "true peace" and human unity through the process of education, "miracles," and a return to the child.

## Chapter 5,

### EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND PRACTICE OF MARIA MONTESSORI

My vision of the future is no longer of people taking exams and proceeding on that certification from the secondary school to the university, but of individuals passing from one stage of independence to a higher, by means of their own activity, through their own effort of will, which constitutes the inner evolution of the individual.

Maria Montessori  
From Childhood to  
Adolescence, 1973

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A great deal of literature has been written about Montessori and her educational "method." E. M. Standing, in Maria Montessori Her Life and Work (1962a), provided an excellent introduction into the early life of Montessori in addition to the fundamental ideas of her educational thought. In The Montessori Method, a Revolution in Education (1962b), Standing further elucidated her principles for educating the child. He also included his own observations of his visits to various Montessori schools in England and in the United States. The author noted that because Montessori's work has taken place in so many different countries in the world, "it is not easy to get an over-all picture of what has happened, and is still happening, in the Montessori world—still less to judge what is going to happen [1962b:199]."

Nevertheless, Standing believed that the Montessori movement "represents the beginning of a great new social revolution based on the revelation of the hitherto unknown potentialities of childhood[1962b:199]."

Nancy M. Rambusch, in Learning How to Learn (1962), also did a fine job in introducing the reader to the educational theory of Montessori. In addition to discussing such topics as Montessori's conception of the child, the environment, and the adult, Rambusch also quoted extensively from other educational and psychological authorities to support some of the contentions that Montessori made. Especially helpful to the reader are the appendixes, located at the end of the book, which contain information on the life of Montessori as well as a general bibliography of her works and the Montessori movement from 1909-1961.

In a dissertation entitled "Conditions Associated with the Rise and Decline of the Montessori Method of Kindergarten-Nursery Education in the United States from 1911-1921" (1966), Mary Wills analyzed contemporary sources during the second decade of the twentieth century and concluded that some of the reasons for the decline of the Montessori method were (1967:2841):

1. Educators such as Dewey, Kilpatrick, Shaw, and Morgan thought that: (a) the system was based on an "outgrown" faculty psychology, (b) sense training had "doubtful psychological validity," and (c) the "formal arts of learning" began at too early of an age for children.
2. The financial cost and reliance on the "didactic materials" and on the "prepared environment" did not appeal to administrators and taxpayers.
3. Both educators and parents objected "to the lack of artistic expression, fairy tales, dramatics, make-believe, field trips, and doll corners" in the Montessori system.
4. There were some critics who had reservations about the Montessori system because they felt it was "Catholic-oriented,"
5. According to many educators, the treatise written by William Heard Kilpatrick apparently "disproved" the Montessori system. The most serious indictment that Kilpatrick made against Montessori was that her system "had the spirit, but not the content of modern science."

6. The progressive educational philosophy of John Dewey "seemed to fit the American conception of democracy much better than the philosophy of Maria Montessori."
7. A number of parents and educators believed that a system derived from the work with mentally defective and culturally deprived children would not be "appropriate" for normal children.
8. Due to a lack of qualified teachers (directresses) and a quality teacher-training program, the expansion of the Montessori movement was limited.
9. The method "was European-based—too far from the mainstream of American thought."
10. The Montessori movement "was poorly timed for adoption by American schools": (a) the progressive movement led by John Dewey "was more in keeping with the social evolution taking place" within this country, (b) a well-founded kindergarten movement already existed in the United States, (c) educators were involved in "updating" Froebelian principles, and (d) the emergence of World War I "taxed the economy and energies of the people."

In another dissertation written by David Campbell (1971), a critical analysis was made in reference to William Heard Kilpatrick's The Montessori System Examined (1914). Kilpatrick's main criticisms, in terms of his specific charges against Montessori's faculty psychology, mental discipline, sense training and "unfolding," were examined by Campbell. He evaluated and compared Kilpatrick's criticisms against Montessori's own published works and those of others during the period around 1914. According to Campbell (1971:6465), "in general, no support was found for Kilpatrick's main criticisms in the area of psychology or theory." However, Campbell did find support for Kilpatrick's criticisms with regard to the "lack of creative work, social interaction, and adaptation to varying cultural needs and differences" in Montessori's work. From Campbell's investigation, he concluded that

Montessori was an eclectic in that she appears to have selected fragments of a number of educational theories in order to describe or justify her practice but did not adhere to any one psychology or educational theory and did indeed offer no systematic new theory [1971:6465],

The author also examined and evaluated the work of Montessori in terms of recent studies and experiments in preschool education; namely, by comparing her with writers such as McV. Hunt, Fleege, Piaget, and others. Campbell further concluded that

Generally, in regard to these newer findings and theories, Montessori education holds up quite well and appears, at least in the American version of Montessori, to be the most comprehensive and thorough continuing preschool experiment [1971:6465].

Phyllis Appelbaum, in a dissertation entitled "The Growth of the Montessori Movement in the United States, 1909-1970" (1972), examined the "renaissance" of Montessori education with emphasis on the leadership of Mario Montessori, Nancy Rambusch, Margaret Stephenson, Cleo Monson, and John McDermott. The writer studied the areas of social, educational, theoretical, and communications "for likely reasons for the resurgence of Montessori education in America." Appelbaum (1972:5578) found that the qualities of leadership which led to the original "demise" of the Montessori movement were: (1) lack of trust and direct contact with United States educators and "Montessori promoters" by Maria Montessori, (2) withdrawal of lecture and film rights from S. S. McClure by Maria Montessori, (3) the dissolving of Montessori organizations by Mabel Bell and Helen Parkhurst because of "lack of confidence" in them by Maria Montessori, and (4) the "strong influence" that William Kilpatrick's treatise had on kindergarten teachers.

In comparison, the "rebirth" of the Montessori Movement was influenced by: (1) the "strong adherence" of Mario Montessori to the original ideas of his mother; (2) the "proper use of leadership," timing, and the formation of the American Montessori Society by Nancy Rambusch; (3) the influence of Cleo Monson in organizing the American Montessori Society and its teacher-training and public relations; (4) the "loyalty and knowledge" exhibited by Margaret Stephenson in conducting the Association Montessori International teacher-training course in Washington; and (5) the efforts made by

John McDermott "to put Montessori in an American cultural context in teacher-training and professionalization of Montessori education." The writer indicated that there were "strong indications" which supported the thesis that it was primarily the leadership which effected the growth of the Montessori movement in the United States.

Finally, in a dissertation entitled "Maria Montessori and Modern Educational Thought" (1970), Lawrence Foster investigated whether or not Maria Montessori made a contribution to education and whether "modern educational thought is now in accord with the work she did shortly after the turn of the century." His three main areas of investigation were: (1) was pre-school education for all children feasible, (2) should pre-school education be left in the hands of the parents, and (3) could the home provide an environment that is just as "well developed" as the school? In answering these questions, the writer examined an equal number of "authorities" both for and against the Montessori method. In the final analysis, Foster stated that the criticisms waged against the Montessori method of education "were not scientifically based nor were they thoroughly researched."

As a result of his findings, in addition to the writer's "own extensive experience in both public and private education," Foster (1970:2176) made the following conclusions:

1. The "balance of opinion" appears to favor pre-school education for all three to five-year-old children.
2. The present methods being utilized for the education of American children in the elementary school years "are greatly in need of revision."
3. Maria Montessori possessed "more than an adequate background" in terms of her scientific training "for the critical evaluation of observed phenomena."
4. In contrasting Montessori's theory and methods with that of traditional education, it was found that her methods are, in fact, "scientifically based and scientifically developed."

5. The Montessori method and philosophy provides for "new innovation and change" in light of "new psychological advances."
6. There is evidence which indicates that the Montessori method does provide the answer to "the match."
7. Psychologists are now beginning to understand that Montessori had made a "significant contribution" to the self-actualization of the child.
8. As originally conceived by Maria Montessori, the Montessori method is neither "rigid nor cultish."
9. Any academic revision which takes place in education "must encompass the increased knowledge of techniques allowing growth of self-actualization of the individual."
10. In general, education focused on the homogeneity of the population in any group leads to "the mediocrity of the group."

## **INTRODUCTION**

While Montessori was a medical student serving as an intern in the psychiatric clinic of Rome, her work with mentally deficient children led her to examine the writings of Jean Itard and the methods of Edouard Séguin (1964a:xi). In addition to the profound influence that Itard and Séguin had on her work, numerous references have been made throughout Montessori's writings to such individuals as Jean Piaget, William James, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Rousseau, Tolstoj, Gandhi, and Tagore. Her educational theory and practice, then, have been influenced by a variety of different individuals.

Montessori had variously referred to her method as "scientific pedagogy," "pedagogical anthropology," and even as "experimental psychology [1964a:xxxiv]." The fundamental principle of "scientific pedagogy," she said, is the "study of the individual" through the "liberty of the individual [1964a:28]."

Montessori argued that the characteristics governing her "method" are "experiment, observation, evidence or proof, the

recognition of new phenomena, their reproduction and utilization [1964b:73-74]." Interestingly enough, she maintained that

Credit ... should not be given to our scientific work, nor even to the new method we employed in instructing defective children and later adapted for use with normal children. The point of departure for a true understanding of our work is not to consider it as a method of education, but rather the contrary: Our method is the result of having observed the development of psychological phenomena which had hitherto been unknown and unobserved [1967b:352].

Therefore, the problem, she believed is "not pedagogical but psychological." Furthermore, she maintained that "education which leads to a better life is something which should be of concern to all men."

## **EDUCATIONAL THEORY**

### **Aim of Education**

In accordance with her theory of values, Montessori believed that education should be concerned with transforming and uniting humanity so that education, as Gandhi believed, becomes "coextensive with life [1967a:10]."

Education, in Montessori's eyes, takes on a more global scope when she argued that

Education must begin the day the child is born, and the child must be able to live in an environment built for him, an environment that answers his needs. A new science can thus come into being, and through it the first steps toward building a peaceful world. Harmony between the child and the adult, the creation of a place in the world for human beings who at present do not have one ... [1972:62].

She goes on to argue that education must contribute to the "formation of man" and his personality, and must "raise humanity to the point where it can make genuine progress [1972:123]." An interesting thing to note is her belief that education is "indispensable" not necessarily to "foster material progress but to save humanity."

According to Montessori, there are "four levels" which education should deal with if it is to have any validity at all. She noted that it was not she who made this fourfold distinction; only that it was

based on "the orderly pattern of development" of the child's personality (1972:124). In elucidating her "four levels" of education, one might also mention the fact that she was concerned with coordinating education between all phases "from childhood to maturity, from the nursery to the university [1973a:131-32]."

First, "individual freedom" should be the basis of the first level of education (1972:126). The statement, "help me to help myself" characterizes Montessori's belief that the adult "must be a source of help, not an obstacle" to the child. "Above all," she said, the adult "must aid the child, never make him the helpless victim of a blind authority that does not take his real goal into account." She further argued

... we must let him [the child] do things by himself because his very life depends on his being able to act. He must be allowed to function freely. A human being who cannot carry out his vital functions becomes sick, and we often find that children who are not allowed to develop normally suffer psychic illnesses [1972:126].

Thus, "individual freedom" should be fostered through "personal help" and the "right environment." One might conceivably ask how much freedom should the individual be given? Montessori is not advocating a reckless freedom whereby the child is allowed to do whatever he wishes, sometimes at the expense of other children. She stated: "To let the child do as he likes, when he has not yet developed any powers of control, is to betray the idea of freedom [1967a:205]." The criterion that she follows is that "the liberty of the child should have as its limit the collective interest [1964a:87]."

A second level that education should be concerned with is providing the individual with "social experience." She noted that "all schools today are obstacles to the proper formation of the individual for social life [1972:130]." Moreover, she stated that "schools do not prepare young people for social life but rather for earning a living." It is not that Montessori believed that schools should not prepare individuals for a trade or a profession. Rather, a question of balance appears to be what she is aiming at. She stated

We need whole men. Young people at present cannot acquire social experience because they are forced to devote all their time to studying. In order for the adolescent to acquire social experience, society must build the

right sort of environment for him, a supnature suited to his needs where he can have effective, practical experience of every aspect of social life [1972:131].

Directly related to the previous levels is the need for independence within the individual. It is the responsibility of society to furnish a "special environment in which young people can earn their livelihood [1972:131]." Individuals, then, should be given the opportunity to spend time studying as well as practicing "manual and intellectual skills." She stated that individuals

... must not be forced to study every minute, for this is a form of torture that causes mental illness. The human personality must be given a chance to realize every one of its capabilities. Men today are forced to take up either a trade or a profession. We might say that those who work only with their minds are mutilated men and those who work only with their hands decapitated men [1972:131],

What Montessori appeared to be advocating is the creation of harmony "between those who work with their minds and those who work with their hands." She does not overlook the fact that a young person may have "special aptitudes" in one particular direction. However, she stated that the "choice of which aptitudes to foster must be made individually. There will always be individual differences, but they are not paramount [1972:131-32]." For the most part, she believed that there is a need for "whole men" whereby every aspect of the human personality is developed to its utmost capacity. This total development, she asserted, is therefore accomplished by preparing "the human soul for work" as a "social responsibility [1972:132]." She stated that universities often confer degrees to students who have passed examinations; "but often the student passes by sheer luck."

The real examinations should be spiritual ones. The student should be asked to demonstrate his ability by showing the kind of work he can do. The candidates could thus prove their worth and be recognized as men of value to society. They would then have a sense of responsibility and take it as a guide for their lives [1972:132].

This leads to the fourth level of education which is "life itself." Montessori was definitely in tune with those educators who contended that education can not be limited by age, religion, or nationality. In support of this contention she stated

All mankind must be united and remain united forever. The masses must be educated, and education must be available at all times. On this fourth level society must help every human being and keep all mankind at the same high level as the evolving environment, and then elevate man above the environment so that he may further perfect it as he perfects himself [1972:133].

## **"Sensitive Periods"**

Montessori credited the Dutch scientist Hugo de Vries with first discovering the existence of "sensitive periods" in animals (1966:38). However, it was she who discovered that these same "sensitive periods" also exist in children. She defined a "sensitive period" as "a special sensibility which a creature acquires in its infantile state, while it is still in a process of evolution." In other words, at each stage of development in a child's life, there is a "predisposition" on the child's part to acquire some particular knowledge or skill. Montessori believed that these "sensitive periods" had a definite effect on the total development of the child. She explained:

We call these sensitivities "sensitive periods." These sensitive periods eventually end, and if a certain trait of character is imperfectly acquired in these periods, it will always remain imperfectly developed. These sensitivities disappear later, but they result in definite traits, which become permanent if they are acquired in these periods [1972:60].

Thus, although a child may not have developed a particular skill during a "sensitive period," it is obvious that he will grow up nonetheless. However, according to Montessori, he will be a "diminished individual" by comparison with what he might have been and should have been (Standing, 1962a:135).

"Sensitive periods" may essentially be divided into three stages (Standing, 1962a:108):

### First Stage: 0-6 years

A period of transformation—divided into:

0-3 years: "The Absorbent Mind"(unconscious)

3-6 years: "The Absorbent Mind"(conscious)

### Second Stage: 6-12 years

A period of "uniform growth" which is the "second stage of childhood."

### Third Stage: 12-18 years

A period of transformation subdivided into:

1. 12-15 years: Puberty
2. 15-18 years: Adolescence

First stage: 0-6 years—"the absorbent mind." According to Montessori, "the greatness of the human personality begins at the hour of birth [1967a:4]." Consequently, a child, even at a very early age, is constantly absorbing impressions from the environment. From her observations of children, she noted that even at the age of four months a baby has "already looked at everything around him and can recognize ... pictures of objects [1972:59]." Montessori explained that

These impressions not only penetrate the mind of the child, but they form it; they become incarnated, for the child makes his own "mental flesh" in using the things that are in his environment. We have called this type of mind the "absorbent mind" [1963:17].

During the early part of the child's life up until approximately three years of age, "a child prepares with his absorbent mind all his individual traits even though he is not himself aware of this [Montessori, 1967b:350]." It is because of this unawareness that Montessori said that we are dealing with an "unconscious mind." Carl Jung appears to support this point of view when he stated that

Experience shows us that the sense of "I"—the ego, consciousness—grows out of unconscious life. The small child has psychic life without any demonstrable ego-consciousness; for which reason the earliest years leave hardly any traces in memory [1933:212].

Montessori contended that although a child is unaware of "his unconscious power of absorption" he is still "capable of tremendous achievements [1967b:351]."

As a child grows older in years, the powers of his "absorbent mind" are "gradually dulled" for the conscious mind is beginning to "organize itself." However, Montessori stated that the "absorbent mind" persists throughout childhood and enables a child, "as our experiences with many different races throughout the world have shown, to absorb a far greater amount of learning than we would have ever imagined possible [1967b:351]."

What suggestions does Montessori make with regard to dealing with children during this stage in life? To begin with, she contended that the baby should remain as much as possible with the mother directly after he is born (1963:36). Montessori recommended that the environment not present "obstacles" to the baby's adaptation. In other words, such "obstacles" include change of temperature from that to which he has been accustomed before birth, too much light, and too much noise. She stated:

The child must be carefully handled and moved, not lowered suddenly to be plunged into a bath. ... Best of all is that the new-born child should not be dressed, but rather kept in a room sufficiently heated and free from draughts, and carried on a soft mattress, so that he remains in a position similar to the prenatal one [1963:36].

She noted that in addition to hygienic care and protection, the mother and child should be regarded as "two organs of one body" still vitally connected together. Montessori recommended that the mother and baby be secluded for some time and that "relatives and friends should not kiss and fondle the infant, nor nurses remove him from his mother's side."

She maintained that once this first stage is past, the child will adapt himself easily to the world he has entered and will begin to "travel on the path of independence [1963:37]."

During this particular stage in life, from zero to six years, Montessori noted that children have a need to absorb language, reading, writing, and arithmetic. They also demonstrate a "sensitive period" for order, concentration, repetition of exercises, "perfecting bodily movements," and learning good manners (1965a:59). Although her curriculum for this period will be discussed in greater detail under the headings of "Exercises of Practical Life," "Sensory Education," and "Motor Education," suffice it to say that with regard to the first stage of life, Montessori (1967a:135) believed:

1. that the first two years of life affect all the rest;
2. that the baby has "great mental powers to which little attention has been given;"

3. that the baby is "supremely sensitive" and because of that reason, any kind of violence "produces not only an immediate reaction but defects which may be permanent."

Second stage: 6-12 years—uniform growth. According to Montessori the second stage is characterized by the need for children to have social experiences. The development of social relationships should not be confined to the school. In fact, Montessori contended that the school, at this point, represents a "closed environment." She suggested the need for such organized activities as scouting, hiking, swimming, and field trips as a necessary part of the curriculum (1973a:11).

Montessori noted that this is also a period in which a child may receive what she calls a "cosmic education [1967c:10]." By the time a child reaches the age of six in a Montessori School, he will have already learned how to read and write, have an interest in mathematics, science, geography, and history. From this foundation, Montessori said that we need to give the child "a vision of the whole universe [ 1967c:8]" There is a need to emphasize to the child the unity of all life; that "all things are part of the universe, and are connected with each other to form one whole unity." Montessori admitted that this emphasis on the interrelationship of all knowledge is not a new idea. Hopefully, by seeing the relationship that exists among such things as the stars, earth, stones, and the sun, Montessori believed that the child will eventually arrive at questions concerning his own existence: "What am I? What is the task of man in this wonderful universe? Do we merely live here for ourselves, or is there something more for us to do? Why do we struggle and fight? What is good and evil? Where will it all end? [1967c:10]." The answer to these questions, Montessori maintained, is the same as it ever was: "God has sent you upon the earth to work and do your duty!" This principle, she believed, can be developed on a "scientific plan."

Because the child's intellectual curiosity concerning the "how" and "why" of things is predominant at this stage, courses such as mechanics, physics, all the branches of science such as mineralogy, biology, and chemistry should be a part of the curriculum. In

her book From Childhood to Adolescence (1973a), Montessori suggested some specific ways in which topics such as water, carbon, chemistry, and organic chemistry may be taught to the student at this stage.

During this period in life, Montessori believed that the child is also confronted with questions concerning morality. According to Montessori, prior to this stage the child is not really cognizant of moral questions. However, from six to twelve years of age, she contended, is a "sensitive period" in which children are concerned with questions dealing with right from wrong, the distinction between good and evil (1973a:12). The specific topic of moral education will be discussed in greater detail later on. However, suffice it to say that, in Montessori's view, moral education represents an extremely important part of the curriculum, for it is at this stage that "moral consciousness is being formed [1967a:194]."

Third stage: 12-18 years—transformation. According to Montessori, it is during the third period that the "love of one's country is born, the feeling of belonging to a national group, and of concern for the honor of that group [1967a:194]."

In an essay entitled "Study and Work Plans," Montessori had set down a specific program which adolescents may follow during this particular stage in their lives. The program is divided into three parts.

First, Montessori believed that it is necessary "to open the way to the possibilities of the adolescent for personal expression, that is, to facilitate, by exercises and exterior means, the development of the interior personality [1973a:117]." This can be accomplished by means of "exercises" that are related to the arts, to language, and to the imagination. They include music, dramatic art, and art tasks, and diction (1973a:118).

Second, Montessori maintained that the general program of studies for this particular age group should "supply that which we consider to be the creative elements necessary for the physical being of man in general [1973a:118]." Montessori stated that children, at this age, possess an "instinct" which causes them to see beauty

in everything. This instinct, she said, should be encouraged. She suggested that moral education, mathematics, and languages be taught at this particular age.

Third, Montessori said that education should "put the adolescent into relation with present civilization by bringing him general culture and by experience [1973a:120]." She recommended "the study of the earth and living nature" through such subjects as geology, biology, cosmography, botany, zoology, physiology, astronomy, and comparative anatomy. She also suggested studies relating to human progress and the building of civilization by means of the physical, chemical, and other sciences. Along this line, she mentioned that schools should have their own "museum of machines: manageable machines, permitting the children to disassemble and reassemble them, to use them on occasion, to repair them [1973a:120]." Furthermore, the "history of humanity" should be studied for the purpose of giving children a "complete view" of particular periods in time. In addition, the teaching of explorations, inventions, human development in relation to geographic events should all be accompanied "by an examination of feelings and customs, of the influence of religion and patriotic sentiment, and the behavior of man [1973a:123]."

Montessori suggested that there might also be "special subjects" in which one may look at the present state of a country, its constitution, its laws, its particular characteristics, and its moral character. In addition, visits to places of particular historic interest should also be undertaken.

One might note that although it is Montessori's contention that each "stage" in the "sensitive period" is essentially different from the other two, she believed that each, nevertheless, laid the foundation for the one following it. She stated: "To develop normally in the second period a person must have developed well in the first [1967a:194]."

## **EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE**

Although some of Montessori's educational practices were touched upon with regard to the discussion on "sensitive periods," this sec-

tion will primarily deal with the subjects of "Exercises of Practical Life," "Sensory Education," "Motor Education," "Moral Education," and "The Ideal Teacher." Before reporting on these particular educational practices, one might note that underlying Montessori's method is the notion of the "prepared environment."

### **"Prepared Environment"**

Briefly stated, the "prepared environment" consists of the sum total of objects which a child freely chooses and uses according to his "needs and tendencies [1967b:65]." The objects range all the way from tiny furniture to specific "didactic materials" such as learning games of wood, metal, and cloth which Montessori designed to give the child exposure to number, color, texture, weight, sound, and other dimensions of experience. For specific guidelines as to how the teacher might use the "didactic materials" to teach children specific skills, it is recommended that the reader turn to The Montessori Elementary Material (1973b) for a detailed discussion. Suffice it to say that, for Montessori, the importance of a "prepared environment" cannot be overstressed. For ultimately, "it is really the environment that is the best teacher. The child needs objects to act; they are like nourishment for his spirit [Montessori, 1972:66]."

### **"Exercises of Practical Life"**

Exercises dealing with the practical aspect of life are laid down during the first two stages of the child's "sensitive period." These exercises, Montessori tells us, have "an educational rather than a utilitarian aim" in teaching the child the value of independence (1973a:105).

Because all objects in the school are scaled down to the proportion of the children, they "must be able to do the ordinary tasks of everyday life" such as sweeping, vacuuming the rugs, and washing and dressing themselves (1970:96). Three-year-olds also learn to dust; set the table; serve at the table; learn to eat properly with a knife, fork, and spoon; wash and dry dishes; shine their shoes; clean the room; pour water from one container into another; move chairs silently; clean their teeth and nails; and learn the "external forms of society such as greetings and so forth [1967b:354]." In

short, the "exercises of practical life" teach the child how to realistically cope in the outside world.

## **Sensory Education**

According to Montessori (1964a:221), the education of the senses should begin in infancy and continue on during the entire period of instruction "which is to prepare the individual for life in society."

She explained that the materials used for the development of the senses have been drawn partly from the materials used by Itard and Séguin in their attempts to educate retarded and mentally deficient children, partly from "objects used in psychological tests," and partly from objects which Montessori designed herself in her own experimental work (1967b:104).

Montessori felt that the training and "sharpening" of the senses broadens one's perceptual field in addition to providing a solid foundation for one's intellectual growth (1967b:104).

The "sensorial materials," also known as "didactic materials," are made up of a series of objects which are grouped together according to some physical quality that they have such as color, shape, size, sound, texture, weight, temperature, and so forth.

There are thus, for example, a group of bells which reproduce musical tones, a series of tablets which present different shades of colors, groups of solid objects which have the same shape but different dimensions, or which have different shapes, or which have the same size but different weights, and so on [Montessori, 1967b:106].

Nevertheless, the "sensorial materials," i.e., "didactic materials," present many different qualities—weight, texture, color, form, size, and so forth—for the purpose of encouraging the child to make comparisons, contrasts, and discriminations among the variety of objects.

Although it is not within the scope of this paper to cover all the "didactic materials" that Montessori uses for the education of the senses, mention will be made of some of the materials that are used. There are "didactic materials" which deal with the training of the tactile sense (roughness or smoothness) through the use of sandpaper cards of varied coarseness; "impressions" of tempera-

ture, weight, and form with the use of "baric tablets" and cylinders; the training of one's taste and smell with the use of different herbs and flowers; and the training of visual and auditory distinctions through the use of plane insets, geometrical shapes, and musical bells (1967b:121-51).

One might mention that the "control of error" is the primary characteristic of the "didactic materials." For example, if a child were putting cylinders in their proper holes and he had one cylinder left over, it would be evident that he had committed an error. He would have to discover where he made his error and then correct it. Thus, in Montessori's words,

The control of error through the material makes a child use his reason, critical faculty, and his ever increasing capacity for drawing distinctions. In this way a child's mind is conditioned to correct his errors even when these are not material or apparent to the senses [1967b:108].

One might also mention the fact that Montessori considered meditation as another form of exercise in which one's mental capacities could be developed. Her interpretation of meditation is a child's prolonged concentration in working with an object of his choice. She noted that the aim of the children who persevere in their work with an object "is certainly not to 'learn;' they are drawn to it by the needs of their inner life ... [1964b:220]." Montessori went on to say that after "an exercise of meditation on the objects," the children become capable of enjoying "the silence exercise." Briefly stated, the "silence exercise" is one in which children learn to control their wills by remaining absolutely silent for a certain period of time. Apparently Montessori experienced a great deal of success with this activity for she found that children were "fascinated" by games of this sort (1967b:154).

Sensory education, then, is one that is primarily based on the development of one's senses through the use of "didactic materials." Through the repetition of various exercises, Montessori believed that the mental capacities of attention, comparison, and judgment may be developed within the child (1964a:360).

## **Motor Education**

In addition to sensory education, Montessori considered motor or "muscular education" to be an important part of the curriculum. Her emphasis on motor development throughout the three "stages" of a child's "sensitive period" suggests that it is never too early or never too late to exercise the various parts of one's body.

According to Montessori (1965b:53), "muscular education" has reference to the "primary" movements of everyday life such as walking, rising, sitting, handling objects, and so forth. In addition, muscular education refers to the "care of the person," "management of the household," gardening, manual work, gymnastic exercises, and "rhythmic movements."

Again, it is not within the scope of this paper to elucidate all the "didactic materials" that Montessori recommended for motor education. However, with regard to the first "stage" of a child's "sensitive period," she does provide various learning "frames" to which are attached different kinds of material that the child can button, hook, tie together, and zip up. The care of plants and animals is also a common part of the Montessori school in addition to having the children participate in cultivating their own gardens. Montessori considered walking to be an especially valuable exercise that children of all three "stages" should engage in.

Thus, Montessori believed that any series of exercises which aid the normal development of one's body should be utilized in the school curriculum (1964a:138).

## **Moral Education**

As was previously mentioned, Montessori felt that the best time in which moral education should be made a part of the curriculum was during the second "stage," i.e., from six through twelve and continuing on through eighteen years of age. She stated:

The small child has no sense of right and wrong; he lives outside our notions of morality. In fact, we do not call him bad or wicked, but naughty, meaning that his behavior is infantile [1967a:194].

Therefore, Montessori believed that it was from the second period on that the child begins to "become conscious of right and wrong;

this not only as regards his own actions, but also the actions of others [1967a:194]."

In comparison with Aurobindo, Montessori made no distinction among religious, spiritual, and moral training. As far as one can ascertain, she appeared to regard all three as being synonymous with each other. Thus, moral education will be referred to as encompassing both spiritual and religious education according to Montessori's point of view.

Montessori believed that "if the adult needs not only to know but to 'live' his religion, the need is all the greater for the child—who is more adapted to live than to know it [1965a:22]." However, in spite of this belief, in addition to her assertion that religion cannot really be taught (1967c:75), she still argued that moral, i.e., spiritual, religious, training should be made an important part of the school curriculum. This is evidenced by continual references made throughout her works to moral education in addition to her essays dealing with "God and the Child," "The Life of the Child Within the Church," "The Atrium," "The Spiritual Training of a Teacher," and "Teaching Religion to Young Children" as found in her book, The Child in the Church, edited by E. M. Standing.

Although the teaching of religious education was abolished in her "Children's Houses" in Rome "because it was aimed exclusively at instruction in Catholicism," Montessori still argued that religion should be a part of the curriculum (1967b:326). She stated:

Moral malnutrition and intoxication of the spirit are as fatal for the soul of man as physical malnutrition is for the health of his body [1971a:8].

She argued that "to deny, *a priori*, the religious sentiment in man ... is to commit a pedagogical error similar to that of denying, *a priori*, to the child, the love of learning for learning's sake [1964a:371]." Furthermore, Montessori believed that if children were not given religious education "as a guide to the moral life," a "spiritual awakening" may take place later on with an individual and may even give rise to "piteous cases of religious fanaticism [1964a:372]." In commenting on religious education, she stated that "we Europeans are still filled with prejudices and hedged about with preconceptions in regard to these matters."

In any event, what specific recommendations does Montessori make with regard to moral, i.e., religious, spiritual, education? One who wishes to learn how Montessori specifically adopted her beliefs to the teaching of Catholicism might turn to her essays in The Child in the Church (1965a). However, it is not within the scope of this paper to report her suggestions concerning this matter. Rather, this writer will deal primarily with her discussion of religion, in a very general sense, as well as specific suggestions that she makes with regard to how one might "conquer" one's "evil tendencies."

According to Montessori, religion should be presented to children "in terms of God's protection of the individual [1972:130]." One should explain to the child that he has a "guardian angel" who watches over him and that the child may also pray to God to watch over him as well as his loved ones. Montessori believed that the child had a "natural view of God" for "the child knows that there is Someone who watches over him, who loves him, who protects him [1972:130]."

With regard to "conquering" one's "evil tendencies," Montessori suggested that one may accomplish this goal in two different ways: "interiorly and exteriorly [1966:150]." She does not explain this idea in great detail except to say that "the first way is by struggling against our known defects. The second way is by repressing the outward manifestations of our evil tendencies." She further recommended that

Respect for the opinion of one's neighbor enables one to conquer pride; straightened circumstances diminish avarice; a strong reaction on the part of another checks anger; a need to work in order to live conquers prejudices; social conventions are a check on loose conduct; difficulties in acquiring luxuries mitigate prodigality; and the need to retain one's dignity precludes envy [1966:150].

With regard to the acquiring of "luxuries," Montessori emphasized that children should be "urged not to attach themselves to material things. The basis of this instruction is respect for the property of others [1966:164]."

Montessori stated that one should also emphasize the values of love and forgiveness in moral education. She writes: "Love is the

contact between the soul and God; and when this exists, all the rest is vanity. Good springs therefrom naturally ... [1964b:326]."  
Concerning forgiveness, she said:

We must pardon, not from a sense of justice nor for the benefit of the offender, but for our own sakes; he who forgives has divested himself of envy and resentment, of all that oppressed and fettered the spirit, making it powerless to rise. This is why we must forgive: that so we may burst the bonds which impede our free movement, our ascent [1964b:350].

Ultimately, Montessori believed that it is through "creative instincts," rather than "sermons," that the child is able to develop his moral nature (1967a:242). By "creative instincts" Montessori is implying that one's moral nature is affected by constructive environmental activity and not necessarily from "intellectual understanding."

In the final analysis, she maintained that "moral conscience" can be developed. She stated: "Our moral conscience is, like our intelligence, capable of perfection, of elevation ... [1964b:340]."

### **The Ideal Teacher**

The ideal teacher, or "directress" as Montessori often called her, does not teach in the traditional sense of the word. In fact, her primary responsibility is to observe, guide, and assist the child in the working of the "didactic materials." Because it is the "didactic materials" which actually teach the child, the "directress" is responsible for setting up the "prepared environment" and then showing the child how to operate the apparatus that he chooses to learn from. Once this is done, the "directress" gradually withdraws into the background. Montessori stated:

The most difficult thing is to make the teacher understand that if the child is to progress she must eliminate herself and give up those prerogatives that hitherto were considered to be the sacred rights of the teacher. ... Until she is able to resign herself, to silence the voice of all vanity, she will not be able to attain any result [1971a:23].

Thus, education "is not something which the teacher does." Rather, education "is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to words, but in virtue of experiences in which the child acts on his environment

[1967a:8]." The teacher's task, then, is "not to talk but to prepare and arrange a series of motives for cultural activity in a special environment made for the child." Furthermore, because the child has his own "law of growth," Montessori said that "we must follow him instead of imposing ourselves on him [1963:59]."

Interestingly enough, Montessori believed that the teacher should not work "in the service of any political or social creed" but, rather, "in the service of the complete human being [1967c:3]."

Thus, observation, preparation, and "non-intervention" are those things which characterize Montessori's ideal teacher. Above all, Montessori emphasized that "teachers have to learn to be humble, not imposing themselves on the children in their care, but ever vigilant to follow the progress, and prepare all that they are likely to need for further activity [1963:68]."

## **CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In reporting on Montessori's educational theory and practice, several critical considerations need to be made at this time. Perhaps the foremost criticism that one may state against Montessori is the idea underlying and the method by which she advocated the teaching of moral education. According to Standing, Montessori believed that

... her own method could only find its fullest expression when applied to the teaching of the Catholic faith. In fact, she was convinced that this new method was, by a peculiar and providential concatenation of circumstances, placed in her hands for the advancement of the kingdom of God through its application to teaching the truths of the Catholic faith [Montessori, 1965a:viii].

In a world filled with strife, based to a large degree on ideological and religious differences, the last thing that one should advocate is the teaching of a particular religion as possessing a superior point of view. The Christian notion that the only way that one can be "saved" is by accepting Jesus Christ, or by following any particular religion for that matter, is an idea which overlooks other equally great individuals and religions which have contributed to the spiritual development of man. Is it possible that the teachings of Bud-

dha, Confucius, and Mohamed may have the same value as those of Jesus? Would it be beneficial to study the doctrines of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism for their moral value? One might further raise the question can man develop his spiritual nature through means that are other than denominational?

And finally, one may take exception with the "interior" and "exterior" methods which Montessori advocated for the "conquering" of "evil tendencies." In effect, she had said that one must "struggle" and "repress" the "evil tendencies" that exist within oneself. To struggle and repress one's "evil tendencies" appears to be an inadequate way to deal with such emotions. In any event, Montessori did not adequately deal with the inherent problems to the questions raised in her scheme of moral education.

## SUMMARY

Montessori's educational theory and practice were discussed in terms of her aim of education, "sensitive periods," the "prepared environment," "exercises of practical life," sensory education, motor education, moral education, and the ideal teacher.

According to Montessori, the aim of education is to transform and unite humanity. Education, she believed, should be "coextensive with life."

Montessori maintained that children go through certain "sensitive periods" in their lives whereby they are susceptible to learning certain skills. These "sensitive periods" were divided into three stages. The first stage was from zero to six years, the second stage was from six to twelve years, and the third stage was from twelve to eighteen years.

Because education should correspond to life, Montessori's concept of the "prepared environment" was discussed along with specific exercises dealing with "practical life." Within the "prepared environment," the children learned such things as how to dust the furniture, sweep the floor, wash and dry dishes, and so forth.

Sensory education was next dealt with. Specific "didactic materials" were mentioned with regard to helping children develop their

tactile sense, their sense of taste and smell, and their visual and auditory skills. Through the repetition of various exercises, comparison, discrimination, and judgment were developed within the child.

Motor education consisted primarily of such activities as walking, rising, sitting, handling objects, gardening, and gymnastic exercises. Again, specific "didactic materials" and exercises were utilized to develop and coordinate one's physical movements.

The topic of moral education was then discussed. According to Montessori, religion should be taught in terms of a beneficent God who protects and watches over his children. With regard to "conquering" one's "evil tendencies," Montessori suggested that in addition to love and forgiveness, one might also deal with one's "defects" by "interior" and "exterior" means; namely, by repressing and struggling against them.

Finally, this chapter dealt with Montessori's concept of the ideal teacher. Montessori's teacher, or "directress," is not a teacher in the traditional sense of the word. In reality, it is the child who teaches himself through his interaction with the "didactic materials." The primary task of the teacher, then, is not to instruct but to prepare the environment for a variety of learning experiences that the child engages in. Observation, preparation, "non-intervention," and humility are those characteristics which describe Montessori's ideal teacher.

## Chapter 6.

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to consider the philosophical and pedagogical approaches of Aurobindo Ghose and Maria Montessori as a way of engendering spiritual values into the educational system in the United States. This study compared Aurobindo's and Montessori's philosophies in terms of ontology, epistemology, and axiology. A further comparison was made concerning their educational theories and practices.

### SUMMARY

#### Philosophy

Aurobindo's and Montessori's concept of reality is essentially the same. Both posited the existence of a material and a non-material world. Although Aurobindo's ontology is more complex with the existence of the material world, supermind, sachchidananda, and other worlds, he and Montessori agreed on the importance of the material world. Both educators felt that it is through the material world that a person is able to assert his *raison d'être*.

With reference to epistemology, Aurobindo's theory of knowledge is more elaborately structured in comparison with Montessori. Aurobindo posited various levels of consciousness with supermind being the highest level that man is capable of attaining. Meanwhile, Montessori argued that there are essentially two kinds of truths: external and internal. External truth is characterized by the scientific method of apprehending reality primarily through reason and the five senses. The internal method is likened to "internal impressions" or revelations. Aurobindo and Montessori held the opinion that knowledge obtained through the mind is a legitimate form of knowing. However, both educators felt that there is a limit beyond which the mind can progress no further. Once this limit is reached, one has the potential and the capability to resort to other methods of knowing.

The problem of evil is dealt with differently by Aurobindo and Montessori. While Aurobindo tried to explain the existence of evil in terms of "ignorance" or a "distorting consciousness," Montessori did not attempt to explain evil at all. Aurobindo appeared to argue that pain and suffering are the result of "man's imperfect evolution." Although Aurobindo did not really explain the existence of evil, he did say that because of "spiritual ignorance" prevalent in most of humanity, judging the outward circumstances of life from the mental frame of mind should be avoided. Aurobindo further implied that perhaps the existence of evil, as one ordinarily recognizes it, is merely the inability to recognize or understand the ultimate workings of the universe.

Meanwhile, Montessori believed that evil can be partially eliminated by structuring the environment in such a way that little children can follow the "natural tendencies" of their own personal growth. According to Montessori, the adult sees a child's behavior in terms of little "annoyances," or even as evil. This is an illustration of the inability of the adult to understand the normal "needs" of children. Montessori tried to make a distinction between what is good and what is evil. In the final analysis, she never really explained the existence of evil. She somehow implied that man should not be concerned with the immediate elimination of evil because its existence is condoned by God.

Aurobindo and Montessori both agreed that the goal of life is to realize human unity. Both alluded to the notion of a "new man" or a "new race" as a result of the evolution of nature. Aurobindo, however, went a little further by stating that the ultimate goal of life is to transform the material into a spiritual world.

### **Educational Theory and Practice**

Aurobindo and Montessori differed somewhat about the aim of education. Aurobindo stated that the primary aim of education should be the development and manifestation of the powers of the human mind and spirit. He was essentially concerned with transforming the material into a spiritual world; into a "divine heaven on earth." Montessori, however, felt that education should be "coextensive with life." Her ultimate aim then, which does not differ greatly from

Aurobindo, is the establishment of peace and harmony throughout the world through education.

Aurobindo and Montessori both agreed that education should deal with the physical, the mental, and the spiritual nature in man. There is a similarity in their curricula dealing with man's physical and mental development. With reference to the development of mental capacities, however, Montessori went into greater detail with her "sensorial" exercises and "didactic materials." Also, Montessori was more explicit about postulating the "sensitive periods" that a child goes through during the normal development of his life. The primary difference between the two educators is that while Aurobindo posited a vital, psychic, and spiritual education, Montessori combined all three under the heading of moral education. Aurobindo made distinctions among religious, moral, and spiritual training. Montessori did not.

Finally, both educators agreed that the ideal teacher does not teach in the traditional sense of the word. They maintained that ultimately, it is the child who teaches himself. The teacher should never impose his own will upon the child; rather, it is the responsibility of the teacher to observe, prepare the environment, and guide the child according to his own "law of growth." Aurobindo and Montessori also agreed that it is the teacher's responsibility to help the child recognize the unity and the interrelationship of all knowledge. Above all, they believed that humility should characterize the ideal teacher.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based upon a comparative study of the educational philosophies of Aurobindo Ghose and Maria Montessori, it became apparent that spiritual education, as espoused by these two educators, is largely ignored in the public educational system in the United States. Education in the United States emphasizes the development of the physical and mental nature in man. In the area of spiritual development, public education is clearly deficient. Perhaps the main difficulty is that within the minds of many people is the erroneous equation that is commonly made between spirituality and religio-

ity. As Aurobindo clearly pointed out, there are distinct differences between the two modes of thought. These differences need to be expounded if spiritual education is to ever be taken seriously in the United States.

In addition to emphasizing the concept and practice of spiritual education as espoused by Aurobindo, the conclusion can be made that education in the United States should be based on global awareness and the notion of unity in diversity. Religious, cultural, and national ethnocentrism represent a direct contradiction to the spiritual development of mankind. Aurobindo recognized the problems associated with positing a single idea or opinion as representing the entire truth. Although Montessori advocated the teaching of moral, i.e., spiritual education through the teachings of the Catholic Church, she eventually realized that "religions and languages keep men apart [1967c:75]."

To advocate a spiritual education in the United States, as well as the teaching of global awareness and the notion of unity in diversity, is to literally open up Pandora's box. The proclamation concerning the separation of church and state represent, for many, the implication that concern for the spirituality of the child has no place in the public schools. Also, to teach children about the positive attributes that can be found in other countries such as Russia and China, and the wisdom that may exist in other religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism, represent for many individuals, an "undemocratic" and "anti-Christian" point of view. If, as Montessori believed, the task of education is to truly bring about peace and human unity, then the concept of what education should and should not do must be re-evaluated. In order for man to continue to survive as a species, he must learn to recognize and appreciate the beauty which exists in all cultures, religions, and nationalities; for by recognizing the notion of unity in diversity, man is better able to make spiritual progress in ultimately realizing his "divine heaven on earth."

## RECOMMENDATIONS

If the concept and practice of spiritual education is to be emphasized in the United States, then a conscious attempt should be made on the part of educators to acquaint themselves with the educational theories and practices of Aurobindo Ghose and Maria Montessori.

To begin with, the educational philosophies of Aurobindo and Montessori might well be introduced at teacher-training institutions as a part of the course work in the area of educational foundations. Educational methods courses might also introduce students to specific techniques, such as the various meditation practices advocated by Aurobindo and Montessori, in teaching children how to learn and how to develop their spiritual natures.

Because of the need for global awareness and the notion of unity in diversity on the part of all individuals, perhaps more effort might be made, as children begin to raise questions at the junior high school level, to acquaint them with ethics, religions, and philosophies of both the East and the West. This is not to imply that these courses need be taught as entities separate from the prescribed curricula. Rather, instructors can adapt ethics, religions, and philosophies to the courses that they are already teaching according to the level of sophistication of their students.

A long-term experimental study of the children educated at the International Centre of Education at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, India is another area that can be pursued. A study dealing with the children's intellectual, physical, vital, psychic, and spiritual development is an area that might well be worth investigating.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Acharya, K. D. (comp.). Guide to Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy. Pondicherry, India: Divya Jivan Sahitya Prakashan, 1968.
- Appelbaum, Phyliss. "The Growth of the Montessori Movement in the United States, 1909-1970," Dissertation Abstracts, 32A:5578, April, 1972.
- Artaud, Yvonne. "Meet Aurodevenir," Cross Currents, 22:(1):94-111, 1972.
- Bailey, Alice A. Education in the New Age. New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1954.
- Bainbridge, Robert. "Evolution, Education and the Destiny of Man." Unpublished Doctor's dissertation, California Institute of Asian Studies, 1971.
- Bergson, Henri. Creative Evolution. London: Macmillan and Co., 1928.
- Bhattacharya, Pranab Kumar. "The Role of Physical Education in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram," The International Centre of Education at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram (1968), 173-176.
- Birchenall, Michael Sidney Stewart. "A Comparative Historical and Philosophical Study of the Educational Theories of John Amos Comenius (1592-1670), Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), and Maria Montessori (1870-1952)," Dissertation Abstracts, 32A:4500, March, 1971.
- Bruteau, Beatrice. "The Reality and Value of the World in the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo," Dissertation Abstracts, 30A:1593-1594, October-December, 1969.
- Buber, Martin. Between Man and Man. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1947.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Pointing the Way. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957.
- Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, 25:(2):73, April, 1973.
- Campbell, David Norbert. "A Critical Analysis of William Heard Kilpatrick's The Montessori System Examined," Dissertation Abstracts, 31A:6465, June, 1971.
- Chaudhuri, Haridas. The Philosophy of Integralism. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1954.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Integral Yoga. San Francisco: California Institute of Asian Studies, 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Philosophy and Yoga of Sri Aurobindo," Philosophy East and West, 22:(1):5-14, January, 1972a.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Supermind in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy," International Philosophical Quarterly, 12:(2):181-192, June, 1972b.

- \_\_\_\_\_, Sri Aurobindo: Prophet of Life Divine, San Francisco: Cultural Integration Fellowship, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Personal letter. January 20, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Personal letter. February 24, 1975.
- Damodaran, K. Indian Thought a Critical Survey. New York: Asia Publishing House, 1967.
- Dasgupta, Manoj. "Experience of a Student-Professor of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education," The International Centre of Education at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, 1968.
- Department of Physical Education. "Running Commentary During the Physical Demonstration," The International Centre of Education at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, 1968.
- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. The Brothers Karamazov. Vol. 1. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1958.
- Dowsett, Norman C. and Sita Ram Jayaswal (eds.). Education of the Child. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Society, 1974a.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ (eds.). The New Approach to Education. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Society, 1974b.
- Foster, Lawrence Jerome. "Maria Montessori and Modern Educational Thought," Dissertation Abstracts, 31A:2176, November-December, 1970.
- Fromm, Erich. The Sane Society. New York: Fawcett World Library, 1955.
- \_\_\_\_\_, The Art of Loving. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1956.
- Ghose, Aurobindo. The Synthesis of Yoga. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1955.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Ideals and Progress. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1966a.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Heraclitus. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_, No Words—Acts. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Society, 1969a.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Problem of Rebirth. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1969b.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Evolution. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1970a.
- \_\_\_\_\_. A System of National Education. Pondicherry, India: 1970b.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Thoughts and Glimpses. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1970c.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Human Cycle/The Ideal of Human Unity/War and Self-Determination. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1971a.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Thoughts and Aphorisms. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1971b.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Man—Slave or Free? Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972.

- \_\_\_\_\_. The Life Divine. Vol. I. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1973a.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Life Divine. Vol. II. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1973b.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Riddle of This World. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1973c.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Superman. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1973d.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and The Mother. On Education. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1966b.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and The Mother. On Love. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1966c.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and The Mother. On Physical Education. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1967.
- Haga, Enoch John. "An Introduction to Integral Education." Unpublished Doctor's dissertation, California Institute of Asian Studies, 1972.
- Hall, Manly Palmer. Self-Unfoldment by Disciplines of Realization. Los Angeles: The Philosophical Research Society, 1944.
- Huxley, Aldous. Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Other Essays. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952.
- Jones, W. T. Kant to Wittgenstein and Sartre. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969.
- Jung, Carl. Modern Man in Search of a Soul, trans. W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynef. New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1933.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Memories, Dreams, Reflections, ed. Aniela Jaffg, trans. Richard and Clara Winston. New York: Random House, 1961.
- Kireet. "Research in Education at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram," The International Centre of Education at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, 1968.
- Leonard, George B. Education and Ecstasy. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1968.
- Maitra, S. K. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Meeting of the East and the West in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Maria Montessori: A Centenary Anthology. Amsterdam: Association Internationale, 1970.
- Mayer, Frederick. The Great Teachers. New York: The Citadel Press, 1967.
- McDermott, Robert. "The Experiential Basis of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga," Philosophy East and West, 22:(1):15-23, January, 1972.
- \_\_\_\_\_, (ed.). The Essential Aurobindo. New York: Schocken Books, 1973.

- Montessori, Maria. Pedagogical Anthropology, trans. Frederic Taber Cooper. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1913.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Formation of Man, trans. A. M. Jooster. Adyar, Madras, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1955.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Education for a New World. Thiruvanniyur, Madras 41, India: Kalakshetra Publications, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Montessori Method. New York: Schocken Books, 1964a.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Spontaneous Activity in Education, trans. Florence Simmonds. Cambridge: Robert Bentley, 1964b.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Child in the Church, ed. E. M. Standing. St. Paul, Minnesota:...Catechetical Guild, 1965a.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook. New York: Schocken Books, 1965b.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Secret of Childhood, trans. M. Joseph Costelloe. New York: Ballantine Books, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Absorbent Mind, trans. Claude A. Claremont. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1967a.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Discovery of the Child, trans. M. Joseph Costelloe. Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1967b.
- \_\_\_\_\_. To Educate the Human Potential. Adyar, Madras 20, India: Kalakshetra Publications, 1967c.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Reconstruction in Education. Adyar, Madras 20, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Child in the Family, trans. Nancy Rockmore Cirillo. New York: Avon Books, 1970.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Child. Adyar, Madras 20, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1971a.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Peace and Education. Adyar, Madras 20, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1971b.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Education and Peace, trans. Helen R. Lane. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1972.
- \_\_\_\_\_. From Childhood to Adolescence. New York: Schocken Books, 1973a.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Montessori Elementary Material. New York: Schocken Books, 1973b.
- Moore, Charles A. (ed.). Philosophy--East and West. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1944.
- Murphy, Joseph. The Power of Your Subconscious Mind. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963.
- Navaratnam, Ratna. New Frontiers in East-West Philosophies of Education. India: Orient Longmans Private, 1958.
- Orem, R. C. Montessori Today. New York: Capricorn Books, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and George L. Stevens. American Montessori Manual. College Park, Maryland: Mafex Associates, 1970.

- Ouspensky, P. D. Tertium Orqanum. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1938.
- Pandit, M. P. (comp.). Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1973.
- Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. Occasional Speeches and Writings. Vol. II. New Delhi, India: Publications Division, Government of India, 1956.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Indian Philosophy. Vol. I. New York: Humanities Press, 1966.
- Raju, P. T. The Philosophical Traditions of India. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971.
- Rambusch, Nancy McCormick. Learning How to Learn. Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1962.
- Richard, Mira [The Mother]. Ideal Child. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1953.
- Rishabhchand and Shyamsundar Jhunjhunwala (comp.). The Destiny of Man. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Society, 1969.
- Runes, Dagobert D. (ed.). A Treasury of Philosophy. Vol. I. New York: Philosophical Library, 1955.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (ed.). Dictionary of Philosophy. Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1971.
- Russell, Bertrand. Education and the Good Life. New York: Horace Liveright, 1954.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Why I Am Not a Christian. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957.
- Saint-Hilaire, P. B. Education and the Aim of Human Life. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, 1967.
- Saiyidain, Khwaja Ghulam. The Faith of an Educationist. New York: Asia Publishing House, 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_, The Humanist Tradition in Modern Indian Educational Thought. Madison, Wisconsin: Dembar Educational Research Services, 1967.
- Sen, Indra (comp.). Integral Education. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo International University Centre, 1952.
- Sharma, Chandradhar. A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy. New Delhi, India: Shantilal Jain, Shri Jainendra Press, 1964.
- Sheehan, Joan Elizabeth. "A Comparison of the Theories of Maria Montessori and Jean Piaget in Relation to the Bases of Curriculum, Methodology, and the Role of the Teacher," Dissertation Abstracts, 31A:2267, November-December, 1970.
- Sorokin, Pitirim. The Ways and Power of Love. Boston: Beacon Press, 1954.

Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Booklist 1972. Mount Tremper, New York: Matagiri, 1972.

Sri Aurobindo 1974-75 Booklist. Mount Tremper, New York: Matagiri, 1974.

Standing, E. M. Maria Montessori Her Life and Work. New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1962a.

\_\_\_\_\_, The Montessori Method, a Revolution in Education. Fresno, California: Academy Library Guild, 1962b.

Suqru, Thomas. There Is a River. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1942.

Van Til, William (ed.). Curriculum: Quest for Relevance. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1971.

Weil, Andrew. The Natural Mind. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972.

Wilds, Elmer H. and Kenneth V. Lottich. The Foundations of Modern Education. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961.

Wills, Mary Lorene Kerley. "Conditions Associated with the Rise and Decline of the Montessori Method of Kindergarten-Nursery Education in the United States from 1911-1921," Dissertation Abstracts, 27A:2841, January-March, 1967.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Aleta You Mastny was born in Honolulu, Hawaii on April 13, 1947, the daughter of Eleanor Chun You and Dr. Richard W. You. She attended Maemae Elementary School and received her high school diploma from University High School (now University Laboratory High School) in 1965. She attended the University of Hawaii for two years before transferring to Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois where she earned the Bachelor of Science Degree in Speech-Education in 1970. Upon returning to Honolulu- she taught for a semester at University Laboratory High School in the area of speech. After her marriage to Lawrence James Mastny, she pursued her education at the University of Hawaii where she earned the Master of Arts degree in Speech-Communication in 1971. While attending the University of Hawaii, she was employed as a Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Department of Speech-Communication. In 1971 she began her studies at Arizona State University in the area of Social-Philosophical Foundations of Education. While studying for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, she was employed as a Graduate Teaching Associate for approximately three years in the Departments of Secondary Education and Educational Foundations. In addition to her teaching responsibilities at Arizona State University, she served as a College Supervisor for Student Teaching, was the College Coordinator for the Teacher-Aid Program in Secondary Education, and served as a member of the Secondary Education Doctoral Screening Committee. From 1973 to 1975, she was also employed by Scottsdale Community College as a Visiting Staff Member in the area of speech-communication. She is a member of the Far Western Philosophy of Education Society and Cultural Integration Fellowship.