

Montessori's Hand: From Sensory Organ to a Human Being's Defining Organ.

Sunji, LEE

Doctoral Program, ,The Graduate School of Education.
The University of Tokyo

sunjitousyu@live.jp

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What is a hand? What is the difference between a hand and the animal's forepaw? This research analyzes the philosophical significance of the hand by investigating the concept of "hand" postulated by Maria Montessori, a seminal Italian thinker on education. This is important because previous studies have argued that Montessori said "hand is a sensory organ", that is, it was an important but nonetheless secondary organ. By contrast, this research focuses on those aspects of the hand that are not limited to its status as a sensory organ and which distinguish it as a human being's defining organ, distinct from the animal's forepaw.

Focusing on Montessori's "La mente del bambino" (1952), this research discovered that Montessori argued that the hand has two aspects. First, it can imitate human work and second, it can transmit the idea of the distant past by leaving a trace. This research considers the second aspect as particularly important point because it makes clear that working and growing in the environment of a human being is mediated by a trace of the distant past, and that, as a consequence, the hand may be a human being's defining organ.