

Ellen Key and the Birth of a new Children's Culture

Catharina Hällström

University of Stockholm

Hedda Jansson

University of Stockholm

Tiziana Pironi

University of Bologna

Abstract

Catharina Hällström and Hedda Jansson and Tiziana Pironi begin the Special Issue by giving an engrossed introduction to the following articles. Hällström's short biography of Ellen Key sets the background to Key's activities and philosophy that she expressed in lectures and books throughout life. Hedda Jansson gives an over-view of Ellen Key's development toward an individualistic and monistic life philosophy and its impact on Key's concept of feminism and education. Tiziana Pironi continues in a discussion of how Key's book, *The Century of the Child*, influenced Italian pedagogy and social feminism at the beginning of twentieth century.

Keywords: Ellen Key biography, Strand, children's rights, Ellen Key and Italy, Ellen Key and religion, monism

Ellen Key – a short biography. Ellen Key's childhood – darkness and light

Ellen Key, the eldest of six siblings, was born at Sundsholm Mansion in the county of Småland on the 11th December 1849. Her father was Emil Key, landowner, politician and one of the founders of Swedish Agrarian Party (Lantmannapartiet). Ellen Key's mother, Sophie, came from an old aristocratic family (Posse) living at Småland's largest estate Björnö. Emil Key bought Sundsholm two years before his marriage to Sophie. It was a small mansion, more like a manor, calmly situated by a lake, with beautiful furniture, art and above all, an extensive library. This library would become of significant importance for Key's personal development and education as well as for her later ideas in the fields of literature, feminism, love and mar-

Tiziana Pironi, Hedda Jansson, Catharina Hällström – *Ellen Key and the Birth of a new Children's Culture*



riage, politics, philosophy and ethics, parenting and child-rearing. Sundsholm would also stand for the ideal picture of a home throughout Key's life, she perceived and called it a true paradise. Key lived there for 19 years and returned every summer until the age of forty, 1889.

Ellen Key had two sisters and three brothers. Born 1849 to 1856, the difference in age between them was only seven years. In spite of this Key took on the role of big sister with large responsibility. Due to Sophie Key's weakened health and Emil Key's work, the children only saw their father and mother for dinners (served every day at 2 pm) and on special occasions. Consequently the children were often left alone to lope around in the surrounding nature, to play in their big nursery, to visit their neighbors as well as intermix with servants and laborers on the estate, activities Emil and Sophie Key would have disliked, maybe even forbidden, had they known. The parents believed that hard and consistent discipline would generate strong characters. Therefore, the children Key had to obey rigorous rules and were never spoiled with affection, attention, gifts or sweets. Corporal punishment was often used, especially towards Key's brothers. In her book *The Century of the Child (Barnets århundrade)* Key (1900) reflects upon upbringing and education on the basis of her own rigid childhood. Out of experience she had a lifelong hatred as regards to physical punishment: "[...] children ought to have fun and not be afraid! [...] The difference between adult's afflictions caused by misery of life and children's caused by adults is tremendous"¹ (p. 61).

According to Key beating creates frighten children, breaks down their self-esteem and turns them into hypocrites and bullies.

Ellen Key's delight in literature began with listening to adults reading novels after evening meals, especially when staying with her grandparents at Björnö. After learning to read at the age of four, Key read fairy tales, fables and nursery rhymes to her sibling's and the children were often told stories by the governesses and servants. They were all educated at home by French and German governesses. When growing older Sophie Key taught them grammar, English and arithmetic. The parents had strong liberal ideas about equality and made no differences in education on the basis of gender which was unusual at the time. Notwithstanding Key's and her sibling's harsh early life, these years at Sundsholm were of very positive importance and influenced her future lectures, essays and books. A home, says Key, should contain practical chores and books, it is there that knowledge of different kind appears and is learnt naturally. According to Key, a home is the best place to educate and bring up children with mothers ever present. Sundsholm also inspired Key's later views on a home's simplicity and beauty. She frequently discussed domestic settings on the basis of an aesthetic dimension as she meant that aesthetic sensibility is needed in the development of a new society.

Ellen Key's youth – a period of religious brooding and education

At the age of twelve Ellen Key was given a room of her own, a gable-room she returned to for nearly thirty years. Soon after she was permitted to use the huge library at Sundsholm and her literary education began. Key read books in Swedish as well as in French, German, Danish and Norwegian. From this stage Emil and Sophie Key began to show a growing interest and affection for their daughters, especially Ellen. Sadly not for their sons, both Emil jr and Carl Key went abroad to never return. Mac Key stayed in Sweden but had poor, if any, contact with his parents throughout life. When Ellen Key grew older Sophie Key increasingly understood her special individuality, her hunger for reading, self-education, solitude and contemplation as well as for her weariness of practical chores. Key's mother also introduced her to feminist authors, such as Camilla Collett and Henrik Ibsen who had a huge impact on Key. After her 15th birthday there were no longer any restrictions from her parents with regard to the books she selected. Both Emil and Sophie Key were very interested in politics, Key's mother was politically a radical liberal, and when seeing their daughter's keen intellectual capacity Key was also allowed to take more and more part in the parents' political discussions.

In October 1864 Ellen Key was sent to Stockholm in order to attend confirmation instruction. She stayed at the Åhlin's home for board and lodging run by the two Christian sisters Åhlin who Key grew very fond of. She found their form of Christianity true and convincing in contradistinction to the way her confirmation instructor spoke of the Bible without reflection, imagination or emotion. While Key wanted to argue the existence of God and the life of Jesus, her instructor only discussed the Bible and Christianity from a dogmatic, theoretical, "stonedead" (*sw.* stendöd) perspective. Key's religious brooding kept on for many years although during her adolescence it was notably intense. At the age of nineteen she had a kind of revelation which she later called her "Holy Day" (*sw.* heliga dag). From a rather depressive way of experiencing Christianity Ellen Key said she heard a voice commanding her to start living a new life "of truth, goodness, beauty, faith, hope and love" (Wittrock, 1953, p. 43). In Stockholm Key also took lessons in English, Italian, drawing and piano. She visited the Opera and several exhibitions together with relatives. The period in Stockholm opened a new world to Key even though she was homesick nearly all the time (Bendt, 2000).

After returning to Sundsholm Ellen Key was asked to give lessons to her sisters and their friends. A few years later she started a Sunday school for the children at Sundsholm estate. Key also lent children on the estate books from her own library as well as new books from a free library that she initiated. From this early stage of teaching Key increasingly saw how learning proceeds from individual experiences

and needs; an insight she used in her work as a teacher later on. She was also becoming more and more convinced that all human beings have an urge to learn and that knowledge would empower people of different classes as “a truly democratic society presupposed that all its members had much the same civic education” (Ambjörnsson, 2013, p.13).

Ellen Key as a young woman

Ellen Key's father Emil became Member of the Swedish Riksdag 1867. At first he lived alone in Stockholm but from 1868 Sophie Key and the three daughters accompanied their father during winter sessions. Emil jr, Mac and Carl Key went to a boarding school in Uppsala, 60 km from Stockholm. During summers the whole family gathered at Sundsholm. Already in 1868 Key began to work as her father's informal secretary, which gave her a very good understanding of politics and issues of social welfare. Right from the beginning she was especially concerned with questions about education and women's rights, vital matters that Key dealt with throughout life.

1868 to 1872 Ellen Key was educated at Rossander's Tuition for Women (Rossanders Lärokurs för fruntimmer). Two years later she also worked at Rossander's during one term giving lectures and teaching Geography of Scandinavia. At Rossander's Tuition Key met Anna Whitlock. They became close friends and when Whitlock decided to start Anna Whitlock School (Whitlockska skolan), after attending National Training College for Women (Högre Lärarinneseiminariet), Key was committed to take part from the very beginning. At first the school welcomed girls exclusively but after a few years it became coeducational. In 1880 Key began to teach at the school herself. Anna Whitlock's and Ellen Key's pedagogical philosophy and practice was radically modern comprising “learning by doing”, practical work, study visits, training in debate and tuition free from religion. Whitlock and Key also published a book for children: *Poetic Reading Book for Children (Poetisk läsebok för barn)* which was a kind of alternative to reading books in the Swedish Folk School that Key heavily criticized and called a “National Misery” (Nationalolycka).

In Stockholm Ellen Key befriended the well-known feminist editor Sophie Adlersparre. From 1874 Key started to write articles published in Adlersparres *Journal of the Home (Tidskrift för hemmet)*, a periodical she began to read at Sundsholm already at the age of ten. During this dynamic period of her life Key also began to write reviews, biographical studies and articles in the daily papers.

In 1873 Ellen Key accompanied her father on a long trip through Europe. Their mission was to study borstal institutions and children's homes. What Key saw affected her and awoke her dislike of gathering, bringing up and educating children in

institutional settings. Emil and Ellen Key also visited Vienna World Fair as well as art museums in Berlin, Dresden, Florence, Paris, London and Kassel, not only once but sometimes two or three times. Alongside Key's deepening distaste for institutions for children her love of paintings flourished during the journey. She began to develop a philosophical stance that grand paintings and artefacts can offer educational benefits; it was everybody's right to experience beautiful art, books and music.

In 1875 Ellen Key wrote a review of Urban von Feilitzen's book *The Protestant Cult of Maria (Protestantismens Mariakult – 24 muntliga föredrag av Robinson i Nya Dagligt Allehanda)* and a very lively correspondence began. She was quite entranced by von Feilitzen's book, calling it a "revelation book" (sw. uppenbarelsebok). It was about male and female assignments, maternal duties and women as mothers; issues that Key had concerned herself with during life so far. von Feilitzen also discussed how men and women were different but had talents of equal value, reflections Key later developed into a philosophy of "gender difference feminism" (sw. särartsfeminism). Key and von Feilitzen met 1876 and she fell in love. For more than ten years Key and von Feilitzen exchanged hundreds and hundreds of letters and lent each other books but rarely met in real life. Urban von Feilitzen was already married and had four children. When Key finally understood that his intention was not to leave his wife and family, the affair ended. All effort and time that Key had given to the correspondence (some letters were over a hundred pages) she could now give to lectures, articles, books and tuition.

Ellen Key as a mature woman

In 1883 Emil Key ended his political work at the Swedish Riksdag. Due to economic misfortune he was thus obliged to sell Sundsholm, and Ellen Key moved permanently to Stockholm. During the same year Key began lecturing at the Worker's Institute in Stockholm (Stockholms Arbetareinstitut). More and more frequently she wrote essays, previews and articles in different periodicals. In addition she was still teaching at Anna Whitlocks School which meant that she rarely took time off. She was offered a well-paid position at the daily paper *Aftonbladet* but rejected the proposal meaning that her work at Whitlocks School was too important.

Over the years Ellen Key had more and more detached herself from Christianity. Influenced by Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin she turned towards evolutionism and created a kind of personal religion, a belief she called "Life Faith" (sw. livstro). She emphasized the importance of nature, freedom, equality and aesthetics as independent developments of human personality. Ideas and principles of individualism and evolutionism also influenced her educational philosophy.

After the separation from von Feilitzen, Ellen Key began to give a vast number of lectures about art, literature and cultural history in Sweden and Scandinavia as well as in Europe. She wrote articles in *Verdandi* on social and political matters, socialism, liberalism and pacifism besides articles about education and aesthetic issues. Within the framework of Key's concern for education as a way to improve people's lives, she also formed "The Twelves" (sw. Tolfterna) together with two friends; an association where middle- and working class women met for intellectual discussions. The overarching aim with the discussion groups, each one comprising of twelve women, was to create female networks based on mutual understanding of each other's problems and conditions. Key also held receptions every Sunday in her home at Valhallavägen and subsequently became a central public and important person in Stockholm. Many of her friends were leading social democrats, among whom Anton Nyström, founder of the Worker's Institute in Stockholm and Hjalmar Branting, future Prime Minister, were the most well-known. Key's political views were social liberal but she never joined the Social Democrats. Her speeches during the 1890s were often about the dilemma between individualism and socialism; the difficulty of trying to combine individualism and collectivism with freedom for everyone. In the mid-1880s Key met Carl and Karin Larsson whose paintings and philosophy concerning interior design had a huge impact on her. In 1899 she exhibited a model apartment at the Worker's Institute in Stockholm together with her friends the artists Gerda and Richard Bergh and the art historian Carl G Laurin. Reproductions of Carl Larsson were displayed and the rooms were influenced by the Larsson family's home at Sundborn.

In the beginning of 1900 Ellen Key left Whitlock School and Sweden and went abroad for nearly ten years visiting friends and giving lectures all around Europe. By this time she was internationally well known as part of the European intellectual elite (Ambjörnsson, 2012). Thanks to economic assistance from her friends she was able to make a living through her lectures and publications, even if humble. When *The Century of the Child* was published in German (1902) and English (1909) Key became world famous and one of the most influential of her time and at last she earned enough money to live comfortably and plan for the future in Sweden.

Ellen Key's Strand – a contemporary manor

After returning to Sweden Ellen Key looked for a place to settle down and build a house in conformity with her childhood memories of Sundsholm and her aesthetic philosophy. She was also influenced by Italian villas that she had seen and stayed in when visiting Italy. Key's sister Hedda was married to the architect Yngve Rasmussen and Key gave him the assignment to build a house according to her very premed-

itated specifications. Key named it Strand (Beach) as it was, and is, located by Lake Vättern. When finished, Strand turned out to be just the kind of mixture of Sundsholm and an Italian villa that Key desired. She loved it; at last she had a home! From 1910 until her death in 1926 Key lived at Strand, leaving it as seldom as possible. Her journeys were over and instead the outside world visited Strand. In the famous Guestbook at Strand there are over 4.000 signatures with Key's comments by most of the names. Key started a foundation which after her death, and in accordance with her last will, would run Strand as a guesthouse for working class women for recreation. Nowadays the Ellen Key Strand Foundation offers two-week accommodation free of charge for female guests during the summer, as well as guided tours for visitors (Jansson, 2013). In 1980 Strand was declared a National Monument.

Ellen Key during prewar and First World War

Since childhood Ellen Key defined herself a pacifist. As mentioned she had harsh early experiences of how brutality can break down and weaken human beings and when reflecting on child-rearing later in life she saw failure as a result of three negative aspects of the modern world: Christianity, capitalism and war. War, said Key, led to destruction of society and of human culture. Ronny Ambjörnsson (2013) highlights that Key was one of few Swedes who vigorously opposed “the warmongering that gripped many of her countrymen when Norway broke its union with Sweden 1905” (p. 17). Before First World War, Key's major works were translated into most European languages, even Yiddish, and she was part of a European intellectual context, not only a Swedish and Scandinavian. She had friends all over the world with whom she had active contact through personal meetings and a vivid correspondence. Therefore she was well aware of what was going on before the outbreak of the war in 1914. Most of her prewar publications as well as her works during wartime dealt with peace, human rights, personal freedom, aggressive nationalism, military barbarism and the immorality of war. She was very affected by the war, horrified and deeply depressed. She saw the postwar future as dark with millions of men killed, countries, cities and villages destroyed, women having to take care of mentally and physically damaged husbands, children surviving without parents etcetera. Key also foresaw a future European community (*sv.* europeiska statssamhället) and predicted that women should be responsible for bringing up and educating a new peace-loving generation in order to reach sustainable peace.

Ellen Key's last years – more darkness than light

The last seven years of Ellen Key's life, from the end of First World War until her death, were very dark filled with personal sorrow and a failing health due to dementia. One dear friend after the other died and in November 1925 her housekeeper and companion since 1914, Malin Blomsterberg, also dramatically passed away.

After a tremendously busy public life, during which Ellen Key had been active in multiple contexts including education, woman's and children's rights, pacifism, cultural history, art, aesthetics etcetera, and a private life permeated by contact with siblings, friends and protégés but also by a never ending longing for marriage and children of her own, she died at Strand on the 26th of April 1926. The day of Key's death, it was head news in Swedish as well as in international press. Alongside August Strindberg and Selma Lagerlöf she was the most famous Swedish author abroad and a significant author in progressive pedagogy. Today Ellen Key's influence is mainly related to aesthetics and the history of children's rights.

Life Philosophy of Ellen Key

When Swedish State Church authority weakened and a new secular society started to emerge in the early 20th century, intellectual radicals in Sweden considered their contribution to the creation of the modern society a necessity and a demand. Among these radicals Ellen Key (1849-1926) distinguishes herself as a front figure. Her deep involvement in women's emancipation, the freedom and evaluation of the child as a person with full human rights and her demand on society to promote education, environmental and spiritual liberation for every individual helped to lead Sweden into the new century.

In her childhood Key had herself experienced the strict boundaries of State Church legislation and the growing protests from more or less radical revivalist movements. The deep and charismatic dedication of pious neighbors gave Key as a young girl lifelong lasting experience of a non-conformist and ultra-consequent attitude toward religion and religiosity. This was an inspiration in her own religious development and followed her through life as a demand for truth to one's ideals. In early adulthood her fight against insincerity and falsehood is expressed in her *Thought Books (Tankeböcker)*, a sort of diary written between 1865 and 1879, and preserved at The Royal Library in Stockholm².

In the final pages of these all in all 10 notebooks, her uproar against Christianity is clearly expressed, and her development toward a life philosophy based on evolutionism and monism more apparent. We shall in the following investigate the impact

of Keys life philosophy, or rather religious conviction in relation to her view on children's development, women liberation and freedom for individuals.

Keys journey away from childhood Christianity, where she was inspired by the pious and devoted lives of the workers at the farm, led to a strong doubt in God when faced with the injustice and impermanence of life. She writes in the sand, 10 years old: "God is dead!" and challenges God: "if God exists he will now strike me down by lightning! But since the sun kept shining, the question remained unanswered"³ (Key, 1912/1900, p. 98).

Further and further her doubts brought her to question the very fundamentals of Christian faith: original sin, mankind's need for redemption through Christ, the divinity of Jesus, the truth of the resurrection and so forth. Strongly influenced in her childhood by liberal Christians and close friends of her father's, like Viktor Rydberg, the reading of Swedish sanscritologist Carl Fredrik Bergstedt, as well as British-German philologist and orientalist Friedrich Max Müller, her spiritual development continued along the more and more skeptical debate of her time⁴. Positivist August Comte made a strong impact in Swedish radical circles through author and doctor Anton Nyström, lecturer at Rossander school for women where Ellen Key studied. Bible criticism and the start of historical critical researches into Christianity, as well as translations and increased knowledge of non-Christian religious texts, helped to shape a need for authenticity, consequentiality and a religious teaching unfettered by cosmesis, bureaucracy and assertion of power.

But in the process Christianity lost its supremacy, and Key among others recognized the increasingly desperate attempts from Christian advocates to adjust the formerly non questionable fundamentals in order to accommodate these to new research, not least in the scientific fields. To Key this was a betrayal against ideals⁵. Furthermore, the process left more and more space open for alternative existential explanations. In consequence both strict materialist views, based on science and for example socialism, and new spiritual movements, like theosophy, could expand and become popularized⁶.

The end of the 1800s provided an excellent environment for radical, avant-garde, experimental and in some cases decadent life-philosophies to emerge. Key moved during the 1880s in culture-radical circles in Stockholm, working as a teacher at a reform-pedagogical school which she had started with her good friend Anna Whitlock, and holding lectures for working class women at Stockholm Workers Institute, instigated by positivist Anton Nyström.

Key's involvement in the current debate had started already in the 1870s with literary critique of authors dealing with crucial issues of her time, such as woman's role in society. Through her father Emil Key, member of parliament and liberal activist, as well as through her mother, Sophie Posse, who provided her with the latest literature in subjects on women and women rights, Key became involved in the most

critical and infected debates of her time. Her dedication and her background left her no other choice but to take an active and official part of the debate. But she was not acknowledged as an important voice for liberal issues until 1889 when she published scripts from three lectures on freedom of speech and thought (Key, 1889)⁷.

Key's name was well-known through her father and her connection with both the so called old liberals as well as the new radicals gave her the necessary platform to contribute to the debate. The first time she officially took a stand was in a heated discussion with liberal author Carl von Bergen, an old friend of her father's and one of the strong voices in the 1860s and 1870s for liberal politics. During the 1880s von Bergen's interest turned to spiritualism and theosophy, but the reason for his polemics with Key was not a disagreement on religion. Rather his critique concerned the culture radicals of Key's time, and how Key with what was termed *The Young Sweden*, according to von Bergen proved to be conservative and reactionary in many questions (von Bergen, 1890). The last part of her 1889 publication included Key's response, and concluded that it was von Bergen and other liberals of his generation who had lost touch with time and more severely with their liberal ideals. They were the compliant conformists (Key, 1889).

Even though the conflict with von Bergen did not directly include discussions on religion the question was apparently there, especially since von Bergen a couple of years earlier had been responsible for introducing theosophy to Swedish audiences through a series of lectures at Svenska Vetenskapsakademien (Swedish Academy of Science), and articles in *Aftonbladet* (von Bergen, 1887). The conflict, including not only von Bergen, but other old liberals as well, touched on topics of religion and how to approach science and super natural phenomena and convictions. Taking sides in the debate proved to be determining for Key in her religious development.

One of Key's closest friends during the 1880s was the young engineer, lecturer and writer Karl af Geijerstam. In the early 1890s he took up the dispute with von Bergen in a series of lectures also held at Svenska Vetenskapsakademien, where he dissects von Bergen's arguments. These lectures were published under the title *Modern vidskepelse : ett inlägg mot teosofi och spiritism jämte ett svar till herr Carl von Bergen* (1892)⁸. Geijerstam's crusade against any form of new spiritualism and alternative religious explanation, especially as expressed by Helena Blavatsky and her followers, took its final form in the book *Den avslöjade Isis* (1897)⁹. Key was highly influenced by af Geijerstam and others of her culture-radical comrades, and even though she turned, as we will see, to non-Christian, preferably eastern philosophies when writing *Lifslinjer II* a decade later, her loyalty was apparently one of the key reasons for her to not to embrace theosophy or any other form of alternative spiritual teaching, despite a strong sympathy with for example Annie Besant.

At the core of Key's individualistic ambition laid her conviction that individual freedom led to altruism. Given enough freedom to expand and blossom a personality

would evolve a natural talent for philanthropy. Freedom for one would always lead to a consequence of compassion for the many, in accordance with the full title of her book *Individualism and socialism. Några tankar om de få och de många* (1895).

During the 1890s Key expressed her life philosophy in various publications, as a base for other statements. In 1896 she published *Missbrukad Kvinnokraft* on women's liberation. Her conclusion was not at all in accordance with the women's liberation movement of her time, and the book created a landslide of critique. Her views were controversial for many reasons, but at the core Keys non-Christian stand-point was to be considered the most repelling. Not only did she argue that women would do best not to compete with men, but she also claimed that the equalization between men and women could only be realized when society was free of Christian faith and morals as ideal.

The first attempt for Key to summarize and explain her stand point was in *Tankebilder I & II* (1898). The two books were mainly a collection of articles and short essays, previously published in different magazines. In these she touched on spirituality without Christianity. But not until her three parted philosophical manifest *Lifslinjer I-III* was published in 1903-1906 did Key expand her philosophical project and put the religious faith into context of the movements of her time. Her thesis was placed into contrast with old-fashioned Christians, with Buddhists (or at least her concept of what being Buddhist was), with Lao Tse's teachings and Confucius, with spiritualists, supra-naturalists, pantheists and theosophists. And in a true dialectical manner she compared and evaluated her information. Her conclusion led her up to her old-time favorites: Goethe and Spinoza. Spinoza as the foremost representative of the synthesis of eastern and western thought, Goethe as the founder of and the foremost example of someone living the Life Faith. This is the reason Key's mantra for her new faith is a quotation from Goethe: "The meaning of life is life itself" (Key, 1905, p. 168)¹⁰.

Life Faith according to Key is humanity set in motion by the laws of evolution. But with social-evolutionist Herbert Spencer she cannot agree on evolution only in a materialistic and biological manner. Evolution must include body, mind and soul. Consequently dualism has played out its role, and since the foremost promoter of dualistic thought is Christianity, Christian teaching can no longer serve as explanatory system for life, history and society. Evolution has brought humanity to the point of breaking free from the Christian yoke.

Monism, as first explained by Spinoza, but further developed, according to Key, by Goethe and other philosophers, is the only solution if life shall not be divided and by necessity reach a anticlimax due to inconsequence and lack of logic. She writes: "A world view with one world for the 'nature', one for the 'spirit' is for the monist just as much an over won standpoint as a world view with heaven and hell" (Key, 1905, p. 184)¹¹.

Monistic thought, as understood by Key, was closer to eastern philosophical systems than Christianity and she therefore slowly turned towards and examined her concept of Buddhism and her reading of theosophists Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater¹². Later in life she subscribed to the theosophical magazine *Teosofisk Tidskrift*. Her favorite authors were several of them influenced directly or indirectly by esoteric tradition and sometimes by Buddhism or theosophy directly. She read Shopenhauer, but with skepticism towards his pessimism, she explored poetry by Walt Withman and R. W. Emerson. Influential writers from the romantic era, Goethe, F. Schiller and others all had their contact with esoteric thought and inspirational philosophers from earlier centuries, like Giordano Bruno, are included in Key's "pantheon of Life Faith prophets" (Key, 1905, p. 168).

Monism also became, in Key's vision, the solution for women's emancipation. Women not only had greater capacity for grasping the spiritual dimensions of life, according to Key, but furthermore an obligation to remind society of values slowly sinking into oblivion. The powerful female leaders of several religious movements of the time were proof of this theory. But in Key's view resistance against Christian world hegemony was even more essential due to the stigmatizing situation forced on women. The division between mind and matter, culture and nature, reason and emotion, God and man had put women in an inferior position and served as an excuse to discriminate them and their traditional fields of society. If monism instead would prevail man would be as much of nature, emotion and matter as women, and women as capable of reason and culture as man. But dualism, as preached in Christianity, Key emphasized, would have to go. The striving toward heavenly reward after living a pious life, in "paralyzing ascetics and suffering" did not lead anywhere (Key, 1905, pp. 2-12). The only chance for change and fulfillment, accomplishment of human capacity, would be to strive for heaven on earth, to make every individual god over his or her own life.

Key's fundamental demand for consequential living led to a forceful campaign to reform home environment, school system and parenthood, with focus on women's role in family and marriage. For the child to benefit and evolve as an independent and creative member of the new democratic society every level of the child's growth would have to focus on its individual freedom. Key's vision meant radical changes on children's upbringing, education and environment. If the human being was an entity with a fusion of body and soul in monistic union, no aspect of life could be neglected. Therefore Key emphasized the smallest details in child upbringing, while at the same time connecting them to larger philosophical system of thoughts. Ellen Key's book *The Century of the Child* is in this sense a remarkable piece of work since it in accordance with Key's holistic world view alternates between high and low, from the question of which pictures should decorate the walls of the class room to the child's participation in the new bright future.

In the chapter *Religionsundervisningen* (Religious instruction) Key develops her ideas concerning the necessity of the child's liberation in both mind and soul. The first sentence of the chapter sets the tone: "The most demoralizing aspect of upbringing at this moment is education in Christianity" (Key, 1912/1900, p. 85)¹³. Per-Inge Planefors takes his point of departure from the historical context and Swedish Society marked by a several century long dependency of state power and state church, which was the overarching concern and starting point for the liberal movements of Key's time, from liberal Christianity to materialism and the dawn of New Age philosophies, such as theosophy.

In a context of Christian hegemony instituted by law since the mid 1600s the plunge into modern and secular society became turbulent and sometimes aggressive in Sweden, a situation we in Planefors' article can see has led up to current debate on education and religion, a debate concerning the position of religious education generally and Christian education specifically in school today. In Anna Withlock's school, where Key taught for 20 years, Key had the opportunity to practice her ideals of an education relatively free of Christian thought. While education in Christianity at the time was compulsory by law, the radical steps taken by Key and Withlock led to an increasing interest from non-Christian families to enroll their children in the school. This meant for example the development of several lifelong friendships between Key and women from the Jewish community in Stockholm.

As William Grandi shows in his investigation of Key, Montessori and Steiner renewal and reforms of educational methods were considered fundamental to renewal of society as a whole, and the use of alternative spiritual world views and terminology served as inspiration and necessity to re-formulate a somewhat stagnated pedagogical language, impregnated as it was with Christian vocabulary and values. Interest in theosophy came to promote this purpose for all three of pedagogues mentioned, albeit in different ways and for different aims. Theosophy came to be part of the protest movement against superficiality and materialism, a reminder of ancient and unbreakable values. Key is consistent with her monistic view and can therefore not embrace the theosophical vision, with the dualistic realm of Mahatmas and the concept of reincarnation, in full¹⁴. But in her enhancement of folktales, biblical stories and ancient myths - as part of the child's preferred nourishment - she emphasizes its spiritual need and fundamental composition (Key, 1912/1900, p. 132). A child is born with the great gift of having a capacity for religiousness and Key's Life Faith consequently does not emphasize the freedom *from* religion, but rather the freedom *to* religion (Key, 1905, p. 220), i.e. freedom to shape and include a personal, individualistic and freethinking religious conviction without any outer repression or demand. To encourage this talent for religion, knowledge of religious myths, stories from ancient times, reflecting existential questions and answers of peoples from

around the world, is essential. Key becomes the first to promote education in History of Religions, as practiced in many schools today.

In her philosophy Key was immensely influenced not only by great thinkers of the Romantic and Enlightenment era but also by her contemporary fellow free thinkers and radicals. Her European compatriots in the discourse of religion and its impact on society and humans, with whom she corresponded and/or had met were as diverse figures as Leo Tolstoy, Martin Buber, Ernst Haeckel, Thomas Huxley, Peter Krapotkin, William Morris, Rainer Maria Rilke, Romain Rolland, Stephan Zweig, Lou Andreas Salome, and as shown in Grandi's work Rudolph Steiner and Maria Montessori. The thought of liberation through education was stressed by several pedagogues of Key's time.

With British historian Joy Dixon as well as with Norwegian professor in History of Religion, Siv Ellen Kraft, one could see Key as a part of a larger feministic and spiritual liberation project, with goal no less than to deliver human kind from the course which the patriarchal society had chosen (Dixon, 2001, p. 17; Kraft, 1999, p. 197). As an alternative to the materialistic, two-dimensional and simplified worldview developed during the age of reason, and fueled by an over faith in scientific and technological development, Key reminds her readers of another dimension, and other values, threatening to be lost in the new modern world. In this sense she is not the banner holder leading up to the new modern society, but instead considered by many, especially other feminists, as quite reactionary. She reminds everyone of the necessity to be grounded in faith, history, with former and following generations, in blood and in soil but most of all in spirit. Only with one's feet thoroughly rooted in one's own culture could encounters with other people, traditions and religions take place with respect and compassion. Key's ideals on human development in body and soul were part of ideals which developed into racial and biologist philosophies, even though she was happily unaware of how it would be misused in the coming decades. In the dawning of modern time, human development was still viewed in a naïve and optimistic light, and Key was certainly one of the most powerful but also one of the last optimists in European history.

The influence of Ellen Key on the Italian pedagogy

In her famous book, published in Italy in 1906, Ellen Key describes the Twentieth century as *The Century of the Child*. It was the expression of a time when childhood was at the centre of theories and research in the psycho-pedagogical field, but in the meantime she anticipates the theories of the modern welfare as she urges to society to fulfil to a precise duty: "This awareness will make our children, their birth, care and education of the pin every social duty, around which together laws, customs and

tradition; the fundamental point that will determine any resolution and any judgment” (Key, 1906, p. 1).

Emiliano Macinai asserts in his paper that Ellen Key anticipates and fosters some of the principles concerning the new, twentieth-century concept of the Rights of Children: “Even earlier than the juridical dimension, it was the cultural and more precisely educational one that was the key to see how, from the nineteenth-century mentality based on the concept of protection and that related to it of duty, one gradually passed to the positive concept of children's rights in the early part of the twentieth century”. He recognizes that while at the juridical, as it were official level, full entitlement to specific rights would be recognised to children only during the second half of the twentieth century and with many difficulties, in the first quarter of the twentieth century this concept was already beginning to take shape in the works of intellectuals, educationists and enlightened educators who to some extent proved capable of anticipating the times and started the propagation of cultural content that would feed, once they were sufficiently spread in the collective thinking, the basic principles of that culture of childhood rights that could only impose itself in more recent times. The objective of the paper written by Macinai is to identify in the most important work of Ellen Key and, more generally, in her pedagogical thinking with respect to the child, the family and parenthood, one of the sources that from the beginning of the twentieth century fuelled the process of social inclusion of childhood and the full membership of boys and girls in the human structure.

The Century of the Child is firstly dedicated to the parents, as Macinai highlights, and with her book Ellen Key calls upon in order that every child would have the right to come into the world as a desired human being, as fruit of their parents' love. She makes an appeal to consider parenting as a conscious and deliberate choice, not as a moral obligation or a biological necessity, and much less as a social imposition. A marriage contracted and lived without love contradicts this central principle in the vision of the children's rights prepared by Ellen Key. But of course, parental love alone is not enough to express the content of this principle: the child is entitled to be desired by the society that s/he will become a part of. How can the society prove and express the care for every child who comes and will come into the world? The love expressed by the society towards the children is an impersonal love; it expresses “love” for children by taking on the responsibility to support families who decide to give birth to a child and by accompanying mothers before, during and after the birth of the child, realising social assistance and safeguarding motherhood, adopting measures of economic support to families in need, creating places for the reception and care of children during the early years.

Ellen Key's recognition of maternity as a social value is explicit and radical and she goes as far as to propose considering it as a form of “public work”. The theme of women's emancipation is placed in a first rank position even before political issues,

but the personal choice, and the assumption of responsibility that follows from this choice, can be independent and free only on condition that the society supports her fully, concretely and thoroughly, relieving the woman from work outside the home and adopting forms of economic subsidy for mothers during the first three years of a child's life (Pironi, 2010, p. 84).

Ellen Key was also an important reference point for the Italian feminism at the beginning of the twentieth century, even though the historical research hasn't acknowledged her influence yet. There is an extensive letter exchange between Ellen Key and the main Italian leading feminists, like Sibilla Aleramo¹⁵ and Ersilia Majno. In 1905 Sibilla Aleramo introduced and spread Ellen Key's theories to the Italian intellectual world by writing an article published in the magazine *Nuova Antologia*. She highlighted Key's main ideas: "the child is the goal of human life. And the child must be the product of love, of a great love", in that sense infancy and childhood must be at the centre of every social, moral and judicial duty (Nemi, 2005, p. 513). One year later, in 1906, *Barnets årundrade* was translated and published into Italian with the title *Il secolo dei fanciulli*. It was a great success, and in six years it was published in 64 editions. Aleramo introduced Ellen Key to the main leading feminists in Italy. Why was Ellen Key's book so successful and studied by most of the women who in those years were fighting for their emancipation?

Ellen Key gave voice to women's existential problem of combining the public sphere with the private one, the combination of motherhood and individual autonomy. For that reason she was chosen as honour president of the Feminist Congress held in Milan at the end of May 1908¹⁶.

In several occasions Key showed to appreciate the leading ideas of the Italian Women Movement because she herself stressed the importance of not imitating the male way of life and wanted to highlight the female difference. For that reason it is particularly important the intellectual relationship between Ellen Key and Paola Lombroso as it has been analyzed by Ulla Åkerström in which she focuses on the concept of "femininity". Åkerström has pointed out that Paola Lombroso "is convinced that both sexes have innate qualities, she does not exclude the possibility that both sexes can change and become better if environmental and social conditions improve. This is an opinion that she shares with Ellen Key". Both Ellen Key and Paola Lombroso tried hard with their conceptions of what a woman is and what she is supposed to do. They were of the opinion that a woman is mother and wife, but at the same time they were very eager to promote the vision of women's contributions to society. Åkerström exposes also the differences between the two women and underlines first of all the fact that "Ellen Key was much more polemic than Paola Lombroso". Lombroso seems to have admired the Swedish writer so much. As a daughter of the famous physician and criminologist who claimed to scientifically have proved women's inferiority in relation to men she found herself in a strongly ambiguous po-

sition, and for this reason she could not totally accept, at least in theory, the emancipation of women as it was presented by contemporary feminism (Pironi, 2010). Lombroso's approach regarding the position of women in the society is mostly descriptive. Conversely Ellen Key was a visionary reformist with her ideas of collective motherliness she aimed at promoting political and social changes and creating a new and better world. Lombroso shared the same aspiration to improve the women's contributions to society, as she described them as "larvae among the working bees who all possess the potentiality to become a queen", however she seemed not to have adopted Key's revolutionary conceptual framework.

In that period the Italian feminist movement was focused not only on the suffrage and the enfranchisement, it was also struggling for the recognition of the children's rights, particularly for the poor, the disadvantaged and illegitimate ones (Pironi, 2010, pp.41-98). Rossella Raimondo reconstructs in her paper both similarities and different aspects between Ellen Key and Alessandrina Ravizza. She focuses her research "on the key role played by them in favour of delinquent and abandoned children, both in phase of theoretical processing and practical action". The history of these two eminent social reformers is related to that of other women like Ersilia Majno, Sibilla Aleramo, Lucy Bartlett, etc, "who were also engaged in the same difficult, and in some aspects utopian, mission: to the commitment to give support to derelict, deviant and disadvantaged children". The friendship between Alessandrina Ravizza, Sibilla Aleramo, Ersilia Majno and Ellen Key must be outlined, as we can experience by analyzing their correspondence. As Rossella Raimondo shows, in Italy reform movements and philanthropic women at the beginning of the twentieth century nurtured the spread of new ideas about children's rights, and also contributed to the realization of certain experiments in disciplinary intervention for minors. Ellen Key affirmed that because of the industrial development and the consequent migration of large working masses from the countryside to the cities, new large working-class neighbourhoods had suddenly arisen. She also shows some statistics about infant mortality and juvenile delinquency extrapolated from studies carried on in the various European countries which she travelled through. Underlying this propensity for quantitative studies is the positivistic perspective that characterizes her interest in social issues. Reflecting on the data, Ellen Key shows the "transnational nature of the phenomenon" of child exploitation in Europe. Consequently she invokes the intervention of social policies for the protection of women and children because they are considered "inseparable factors of the same problem" (Key, 1906, p. 91), and urges society to make an educational issue for the future parents and to implement measures for the protection of the child.

Schools and kindergartens were opened in the poorest regions of the country where public institutions didn't cover the needs (Pironi, 2007). The main idea was that women shouldn't struggle for equality but for the recognition of "equivalency",

that is women should take power in the same political and social fields as men, but acting differently with “Social Motherhood” as guideline (Cagnolati & Pironi, 2006). Italian feminists followed Ellen Key’s words: woman’s liberation could not be achieved by imitating men’s behaviour. In this sense the feminists were the real initiators of the welfare policy. Not merely in a philanthropic sense, but in name of the recognition of the rights for everybody, starting from the childhood. For this reason the Swedish feminist was an inspiring guiding light.

Ellen Key underlined the dualism of the modern woman’s life, who had to face up the dilemma of making a choice between work and family: “Here is the deeper cause of the neurosis of the modern woman. [...] as long as a mother must dedicate herself completely to her task, she needs (all the) calm and serenity, which consequently must silence the inner voice that encourages her to work for her own development. And at the same time (she) feels that the education of a child requires, like all works of art, absolute devotion, which does not tolerate the duality of the soul, nor the distraction from caring” (Key, 1909, p. 142).

Ellen Key argued that if a woman chose to be a mother, she had to take every responsibility and precaution, in order to avoid to expose her baby’s life to dangers, caused by extreme work condition, and she should not abandon her child to other caregivers in order to come back to her previous job (Key, 1906, p. 49). Therefore she suggested to subsidize all mothers who chose to care for their children’s education themselves during the early years. This is a declaration of Key’s intention to address a vital question in society, which was neglected by institutions.

In her book, *Barnets århundrade*, she considers domestic surroundings more suitable for the development of the child’s personality, as existing educational institutions are likely to create flock humans and not free and independent personalities (Key, 1906, p. 66).

However she was aware of the negative effects of industrialization that if unregulated, ended up in oppressing the weak, and thus realizing the “Ruskin’s judgment on industry that modern man will kill humanism” (Key, 1906, p. 53).

We can therefore highlight Ellen Key’s negative opinion regarding the industrial revolution that had its roots in her reading of Ruskin’s works. This is an aspect that did not meet full agreement inside the Feminist movement.

Ellen Key’s position collided with Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s ideas who argued that a woman would reach her independence only by working outside her home. For this reason, the American feminist stressed the urgent need for collective services in order to free women from their housework¹⁷.

These topics were also covered in the debates of Italian feminism. In particular, Maria Montessori affirmed that independence for women in an economic union founded on sentiment and not on utilitarian calculations would be ensured only if women worked outside their homes. The feminism of Maria Montessori was perme-

ated by the concept of positivism which included empowerment in relation to scientific and industrial progress. For Maria Montessori the technical civilization would liberate women from their domestic commitment, placing them in a position where they would be able to devote most of their time to studies and public life. The Italian feminist did not seem to share Key's concern on the increasingly massive female participation in the working world. Indeed, at a conference in 1902, Montessori stated that non-working women got lost in false dreams of freedom by running after all the futility of their lives, like Ibsen's Nora (Montessori, 1902, p. 204). That is the reason why her feminism resulted in a conception of family life, which promoted the socialization of the traditionally female tasks (infirmaries, ironing facilities, central kitchens, etc.) to facilitate the work requirements of the modern woman.

The Children's House, which was created in 1907 in the district of San Lorenzo, in fact arose as the core of a wider project of the "house of the socialized future", allowing each woman to become a "free human individual". A woman would finally be able to decide in full freedom not only for herself, but also to make a better future for humanity (Montessori, 2000, p. 158). During those years Montessori, aware of the crisis that had initiated the women's movement, was concentrating her commitment to the cause of child education. In line with the Swedish pedagogue, she also saw the newborn as the new person to whom fate of a better world would be entrusted.

As we have seen, if for Ellen Key the family environment was the starting point of human and social regeneration, for Maria Montessori the Children's House became the new centre for the construction of a future humanity through the promotion of a socializing role for motherhood. Indeed, her pedagogical experiment was presented as a challenge to the claims of Key who considered the kindergarten as a place where the child was not approved and not given the opportunity to develop their individual potential. Maria Montessori put her previous psycho-pedagogical research into use in order to create a suitable environment for the development of individual potential of the child and in order to avoid the risks of flattery and approval. Ellen Key criticized firmly the childcare institutions because they forced children to "run all in the same direction, according to a program"; in her opinion "Kindergarten teaches group fun, rather than individual (fun), and produces belief that useless things have a purpose (Key, 1906, p. 161).

The two educators, Key and Montessori, shared a common Messianic inspiration by alluding to "the childhood's mysterious secret" and focused on a "new child" equipped with skills never seen before. A child reaching over an open horizon for new possibilities, a horizon that could not be defined along with principles of unreleased authenticity. Ellen Key wrote: "We will let the children prove this and will receive this revelation with humility" (Key, 1909, p. 187).

William Grandi highlights the fact that Ellen Key, Rudolf Steiner and Maria Montessori were all attracted by the Theosophist doctrine, albeit in different ways and to different degrees.

Grandi analyses their ideas, proposals, and achievements – drawing comparisons among them – in order to verify the extent to which their vast cultural legacy might still be useful for human and educational progress in contemporary European society. In any case it has become apparent the differences between Maria Montessori's model of child as scientist and the model of child as artist, expressed by Steiner and Key. These different conceptions of child have an impact on their concept of the children literature.

The image of children as artists constantly emerges from Ellen Key's words: it is in beautiful, evocative, and profound stories that children find the content they need to grow and discover themselves and the world. However, Maria Montessori's educational proposals allow fables to be read to children from the age of seven years onwards, because in her opinion, younger children cannot distinguish reality from fantasy, and may therefore be subject to great fear if they listen to fables. The image of children as artists constantly emerges from Ellen Key's words: it is in beautiful, evocative, and profound stories that children find the content they need to grow and discover themselves and the world. Similarly Steiner illustrated his theories on the origins of fables and the connection between fables, childhood, and the spiritual growth of humanity. For Steiner, traditional fables did not result from a people's fantasy; rather, they dated back to very ancient times, when man had not yet developed a rational civilization.

Montessori took an extremely prudent position: in her opinion, children dive in the world of fantasy when they experience problems in their real-life environment. A child who takes refuge in imagination wishes to escape from difficulties or boredom (Montessori, 1999, pp. 209-217).

As outlined by Grandi, Ellen Key devoted a number of significant pages of her best-known book, *The Century of the Child*, to children's literature. She underlined the importance of fables and popular legends in the education of the young generation, conducted acute criticism of the abstract and fragmentary nature of the textbooks used in schools, and put forward the still valid idea that every home should have a bookshelf for its children.

Rudolf Steiner also stressed the fundamental educational role of fables and legends in the spiritual and human education of children. It was their shared interest in theosophy which united the three authors considered in this article. The Theosophical Society offered teachings that promised to merge scientific progress and spiritual aspirations together, through the promotion of brotherhood among peoples, and the respect towards cultural traditions different from the Westerns ones. He also devel-

oped philosophical notions that later influenced a substantial part of recent fiction for young readers.

Finally, Maria Montessori showed that, in order to cultivate a love for reading in the younger generations, the basic tools of literacy (knowing how to read and write) were not enough, and that it was necessary to appeal to the imagination, the need to communicate, and the desire to comprehend the world, which children naturally possess and demonstrate. She stressed the importance for children to have access to ancient legends, folk tales, and Nordic and biblical stories in their original form.

It is important to note here that Key believed that elderly nannies made the best storytellers because they related versions that conformed to the original stories, while adding interesting picturesque features and when children, who are all artistic by nature, listened to a fable, they had a complete impression that was an end in itself and associated only with the pleasure of listening to a good story (Key, 1906, pp. 175-176). Everything that is great, good, heroic, and supernatural attracts children's attention, provided that it is presented in a form that they are able to visualize, as in the case of traditional fables (Key, 1906, p. 176). Ellen Key developed an interpretation of the relationship between fables and childhood that is at once ancient and current: it is ancient because it reprises the romantic idea of popular fables as a simple, authentic literary genre. For the Swedish author, a fable is like a toy constructed by a child, while many books for children, which may be richly illustrated, are like expensive toys that provide only fleeting pleasure at the moment when they are seen for the first time (Key, 1906, pp. 178-181). Ellen Key completed her reflections on children's literature by indicating books that should be on children's bookshelves at home (Key, 1906, pp. 245-247). The modernity of Ellen Key's thought is also apparent in the fact that she hoped the presence of a bookshelf dedicated for the children literature in every Swedish home: her wish means assuring a specific identity to childhood that requires not only material care but also special educational and aesthetic attention.

Notes

¹ "Barn skola ha roligt och ej behöfva vara rädda! [...] skillnaden är oerhörd mellan de vuxnas lidanden genom tillvaron och barnens lidanden genom de vuxna ". Translated by the author.

² *Tankebok I – X* containing topics, mainly from literature read by Key and discussed in essays and notes, which formed a base for her philosophical discourse later on in life.

³ "[...] och jag skrev i sanden: Gud är död. Jag tänkte därvid: finnes Gud, dödar han mig nu med blixten! Men då solen alltjämt sken, var frågan tills vidare besvarad — för att dock snart återkomma." Translated by the author.

⁴ Max Müller, F. (1874/1880). *Inledning till jmförande religionsvetenskap, fyra föreläsningar*. Stockholm: Looström förlag; Max Müller, F. (1880). *Religionens ursprung*

och utveckling. Med särskild hänsyn till Indiens religioner. Stockholm: Joseph Seligmann förlag; Bergstedt, C. F. (1871). *Gamla sanningar, drag ur den äldsta kulturhistorien*. Stockholm: Beijers förlag. These three titles are all from Ellen Key's library at Strand.

5 As a consequence Key admits a certain admiration for the Roman Catholic Church, since it has not wavered from its principles, but rather strengthened them when faced with liberal onslaughts. See further in Anders Fahlbeck, "Ellen Key i Rom", *Parnass* 2000/2 and Ellen Key's letter written in Rome to friends in Stockholm.

6 For theories on new spiritual movements of the late 19th century see, for example, Godwin (1994) and Dixon (2011).

7 "*Huru reaktioner uppstå samt några tankar om yttrande- och tryckfrihet jämte ett genmäle till Carl von Bergen*". A second edition was published in 1909, with a preface where Key comments of the tragedy of the fact that these words need to be repeated after 20 years. In 2006 a third edition was published by Alvastra förlag, Ödeshög, with the language slightly modernized.

8 "Modern superstition: an opinion against theosophy and spiritism, with a reply to Mr. Carl von Bergen". Translated by the author.

9 "The Revealed Isis". Translated by the author.

10 "Der Zweck des Lebens ist das Lebens selbst". For further reading on Goethe and Life Faith see Key (1905, p. 238).

11 "En världsbild med en "naturens" och en "andens" värld är för monisten en lika öfvervunnen ståndpunkt, som en världsbild med himmel och helvete". Translated by the author. For a thorough account on the monisms developed during late 18 hundreds and the beginning of the 20th century see: Weir (2012).

12 In Ellen Keys library at Strand see: Besant (no year); Besant, 1901; Leadbeater, 1902.

13 "Det i denna stund mest demoraliserande momentet av uppfostran är kristendomsundervisningen". Translated by the author.

14 For an in depth analysis of theosophical world view see, for example, Bruce Campbell (1980) and Szalczer (1997).

15 The correspondence between Ellen Key and Sibilla Aleramo was recently published by: Ulla Akerstrom, *Cara e grande amica. Il carteggio Ellen Key-Sibilla Aleramo*, Roma, Aracne, 2012.

16 Unione Femminile Nazionale, *Primo Congresso di Attività Pratica Femminile, Milano 24-28 maggio 1908*, Società Editrice di Coltura popolare, Milano, 1909.

17 In the United States, the journal "Current Opinion" reviewed the comparison between Ellen Key and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. See in particular: *Ellen Key's Attack on Maternal Feminism* (1913, pp. 138-139); *Charlotte Gilman's reply to Ellen Key* (1913, pp. 220-221).

On the feminism of Charlotte Gilman, see: Moschini (2006). The volume of Charlotte Gilman, *Women and Economics in 1898*, was released in Italy, translated by Carolina Academic Press, under the title *La donna e l'economia sociale*.

References

- Aleramo, S. (Nemi). (1905). Ellen Key. *Nuova Antologia*, 1 ottobre, 511-513.
- Ambjörnsson, R. (2012). *Ellen Key – en europeisk intellektuell*. Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag.
- Ambjörnsson, R. (2013). A European Intellectual. In P-I Planefors (Ed.), *Ellen Key – Creating a European Identity*. Ödeshög: Alvastra Publishing House.
- Bendt, I. (2000). *Ett hem för själen*. Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag.
- Bergstedt, C. F. (1871). *Gamla sanningar, drag ur den äldsta kulturhistorien*. Stockholm: Beijers förlag
- Besant, A. (no year). *Livets og Formernes udvikling*. Copenhagen: Teosofisk Samfunds danske forlag.
- Besant, A. (1901). *Nogle livsproblemer samt forsoningen og ofringens lov*. Copenhagen: Teosofisk Samfunds danske forlag.
- Cagnolati, A. & Pironi, T. (2006). *Cambiare gli occhi al mondo intero. Donne nuove ed educazione nelle pagine de "L'Alleanza" (1906-1911)*. Milano: Unicopli.
- Campbell, B. F. (1980). *Ancient wisdom revived: a history of the theosophical movement*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Dixon, J. (2001). *Divine feminine: theosophy and feminism in England*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press.
- Fahlbeck, A. (2001). *Ellen Keys jul- och nyårsbrev till Tolfterna 1900-01, med kommentarer. Ellen Key 1849-1999 – en minnesbok*. Linköping: Förlaget Futurum.
- Godwin, J. (1994). *The theosophical enlightenment*. New York: State Univ. of New York Press.
- Hällström, C. (2006). *Från upplevelse till tanke 1 – Ellen Keys barndom*. Ellen Key-Sällskapets årsskrift.
- Hällström, C. (2008). *Från upplevelse till tanke 2 – Ellen Keys ungdomsperiod*. Ellen Key-Sällskapets årsskrift.
- Jansson, H. (2013). *Där livets hav gett oss en strand – en bok om Ellen Keys hem Strand*. Ödeshög: Alvastra Förlag.
- Key, E. (1865/1879). *Tankebok I – X*. Stockholm: Royal Library, Ellen Key's collection.
- Key, E. (1889). *Några tankar om huru reaktioner uppstå, jämte ett genmäle till d:r Carl von Bergen samt om yttrande och tryckfrihet: tvänne föredrag*. Stockholm: Bonniers förlag.
- Key, E. (1896). *"Missbrukad kvinnokraft" och "Naturenliga arbetsområden för kvinnan": tvenne föredrag*. Stockholm: Bonniers förlag.
- Key, E. (1900) *Barnets århundrade*. Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag.

- Key, E. (1905). *Lifslinjer II*. Stockholm: Bonniers förlag.
- Key, E. (1906). *Il secolo dei fanciulli*. Torino: Bocca.
- Key, E. (1909). *Amore e matrimonio*. Torino: Bocca.
- Key, E. (1915/1917). *Minnen av och om Emil Key, del 1-III*. Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag.
- Key, E. (2006). *Några tankar om yttrande- och tryckfrihet*. Ödeshög: Alvastra förlag.
- Kraft, S. E. (1999). *The sex problem: political aspects of gender discourse in the Theosophical Society: 1875-1930*. Bergen: University of Bergen.
- Leadbeater, C. (1902). *An outline of Theosophy*. London and Benares: Theosophical Publishing Society.
- Max Müller, F. (1874/1880). *Inledning till jämförande religionsvetenskap, fyra föreläsningar*. Stockholm: Looström förlag.
- Max Müller, F. (1880). *Religionens ursprung och utveckling. Med särskild hänsyn till Indiens religioner*. Stockholm: Joseph Seligmann förlag.
- Miller Lane, B. (2008). An Introduction to Ellen Key's "Beauty in the Home". *Modern Swedish Design: Three Founding Texts*, pp. 19-31.
- Nyström-Hamilton, L. (1904). *Ellen Key – en lifsbild*. Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrands Förlag.
- Montessori, M. (1902). La via e l'orizzonte del femminismo. *Cyrano de Bergerac*, 6, 203-205.
- Montessori, M. (1999). *Il segreto dell'infanzia*. Milano: Garzanti. (Original work published 1938).
- Montessori, M. (2000). *Il metodo della pedagogia scientifica applicato all'educazione infantile nelle Case dei Bambini*. Edizioni Opera Nazionale Montessori: Roma.
- Moschini, L. (2006). *Charlotte Perkins Gilman. La straordinaria vita di una femminista vittoriana*. Roma: Aracne.
- Pironi, T. (2010) *Femminismo ed educazione in età giolittiana. Conflitti e sfide della modernità*. Roma: ETS.
- Pironi, T. (2007). Educational care at Mompiano School and the Children's Houses in Rome and Milan in the age of Giolitti. *Ricerche di Pedagogia e Didattica. Journal of the Theories and Research in Education*, 2, 1-23.
- Szalczar, E. (1997). *Strindbergs cosmic theater: theosophical impact and the theatrical metaphor*. New York: City University Press.
- von Bergen, C. (1890). *Vårt reaktionära Unga Sverige: nutidsbetraktelser*. Stockholm: Adolf Johnsons förlag.
- von Bergen, C. (1887). Vidsomsreligion eller den nya Teosofin. *Aftonbladet*, March 4, 8, 11 and 15.

Ricerche di Pedagogia e Didattica – Journal of Theories and Research in Education 11, 2 (2016). Special Issue. *Ellen Key and the Birth of a new Children's Culture*. Edited by Catharina Hällström, Hedda Jansson and Tiziana Pironi.

Weir, T. H. (Ed.). (2012). *Monism, Monism. Science, Philosophy, Religion and the History of a Worldview*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, St. Martin's Press LCC.
Wittrock, U. (1953). *Ellen Keys väg från kristendom till livstro*. Stockholm: Natur och Kultur.

Catharina Hällström

is Phd in Pedagogy at Centre for the Studies of Children's Culture, University of Stockholm. Hällströms research interest is mainly within the interdisciplinary field of Culture Pedagogy and Child Culture. She belongs to national and international research networks and is Board Member of BIN Norden, a Nordic Research Network initiating conferences and launching a new Nordic Master Course in Methodology in Child Culture Research. Hällströms latest publication: Etiska reflektioner kring vuxnas dokumentation av barn, In Qvarsell, B, Hällström, C & Wallin, A (eds.) (2015) Den problematiska etiken - om barnsyn i forskning och praktik, Göteborg: Daidalos.

Contact: Catharina.hallstrom@barnkultur.su.se

Hedda Jansson

is a Phd student at the Department of Ethnology, History of Religion and Gender Science Hedda Jansson is currently writing her thesis on the Life Philosophy of Ellen Key. Hedda has worked for 15 years as a curator at museum and guest-house Ellen Keys Strand, and is board member of The Ellen Key Strand Foundation. She lectures, beside Ellen Key, on issues of History of the Catholic Church in Sweden, Buddhism in Nepal, Dialogue between Religions as well as Religion and Feminism in late 19th century. Since 2010 she is co-ordinator for EKIR, the Ellen Key International Research Network.

Contact: bildamening@live.se

Tiziana Pironi

is Full Professor of History of Pedagogy at the School of Psychology and Education (University of Bologna). She coordinates the First cycle degree in Educator In Childhood Social Services. She is president of the Centro Italiano per la Ricerca Storico-Educativa (CIRSE), the academic society that brings together Italian historians of education. Among her publications: Percorsi di pedagogia al femminile. Dall'unità d'Italia al secondo dopoguerra (Carocci, 2014).

Contact: tiziana.pironi@unibo.it

Tiziana Pironi, Hedda Jansson, Catharina Hällström – *Ellen Key and the Birth of a new Children's Culture*

