



The Montessori

Society

# OBSERVER

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## Where is "Montessori" Today?

Montessori today is essentially where it has always been since the "normalized" child was discovered by Dr. Montessori in her first Children's House in Rome, Italy in 1907; i.e., completely within oneself as a reality of commitment to the three fundamental "Montessori" principles of nature: (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". This reality continues to express itself outwardly in the present moment as a process of creating Dr. Montessori's vision of a "new education"; i.e., to free the child from all forms of adult tyranny to enable the emergence of its true "normalized" nature in the world.

Superficially, "Montessori" appears today as an outer form of a growing, widespread assortment of schools and other entities which generally comprise what has come to be known as the Montessori community; i.e., that which is identified with certain specific standardized materials, external behavior of children and teacher certification according to various rationale, philosophy and interpretations associated with the term "Montessori".

Underlying the popular opinion and conscious awareness as to "Montessori" in society there lies the real creative energy and spirit which activates all the vital growth and progress of Dr. Montessori's "new education". Such energy is reflected in outer form as a probing inquiry into the nature of the child and consideration of the meaning and purpose of "Montessori" itself. The direction of this consideration appears as a gradual reconstruction of "Montessori" in the world to reveal its true underlying work and purpose on behalf of the emergence of the "normalized" child in reality.

### The New Child

*"The great majority of teachers, in the absence of sufficient training and experience, end by thinking that the 'new child', so eagerly expected and of whom so much has been said, is nothing but a myth or an ideal."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 270

"Montessori" today therefore finds itself in considerable confusion, turmoil and controversy with regard to its own identity - a sort of swirling mass of dispute, opinion and interpretation amid a vast proliferation of schools and programs generally associated with the "Montessori" label. Although such proliferation has brought Montessori superficially to the attention and awareness of a wide spectrum of the general public, there yet remains a massive ignorance as to its underlying true purpose on behalf of the "normalized" child.

Confusion as to "what is 'Montessori'?" is evident in the emerging diversity of new Montessori organizations and support services which have recently appeared to serve the growing Montessori community. Such confusion is likewise evident in the continuing problematic relationship between government agencies and the private Montessori school community for whom such agencies have assumed regulatory responsibility.

Since Montessori schools are generally regulated in the same way as traditional day care centers, a tension arises with regard to various requirements such as teacher training qualifications, staff-child ratios and group size requirements. Government agencies must fairly determine how to regulate schools associated with the "Montessori" label which increasingly represent a significant diversity of expression and organizational affiliation. Resolution of regulatory difficulties can no longer be achieved by merely deferring to the popular opinion and presumed authority of certain specified dominant organizations in the Montessori community. Government agencies must now expand their awareness of true Montessori in view of the recent emergence of new Montessori organizations, such as the International Montessori Society, which challenge the prevailing popular opinions held in society about "Montessori".

The International Montessori Society, formed in the United States in 1979, challenges the popular opinion of Montessori as commonly asserted in the past by such entities as the American Montessori Society (A.M.S.) and the Association Montessori Internationale (A.M.I.). The new



Child working with cards and counters to associate number with quantity at the Ideal Montessori School (Jamaica, New York).

## Ideal School in New York

The Ideal Montessori School (Jamaica, New York) was founded in 1983 by **Mrs. K.P. Chandu**. This Society member Montessori school presently offers its program to children from the age of 2½ to 9 years of age. The program will be extended to include children up to the age of 12 years in the future.

Mrs. Chandu, founder and director of the Ideal School, has been in education in the capacity of a teacher, principal and educational director for 25 years. She has been extensively involved in introducing Montessori in the day care setting for very low income families in New York City.

The school program runs from 8 am to 3 pm daily throughout the academic year from September to June. Special instructions are provided in Spanish, music and speech.

For further information, contact: Mrs. Chandu, Ideal Montessori School, 86-25 162nd, Jamaica, New York 11432, Tel. (718)523-6237.

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 1



# Society

by Lee Haviv

*"The society of little children . . . are guided by the magical powers of nature . . . We must value it and treasure it, because neither character nor the social sentiment can be given by teachers. They are products of life."*

**Maria Montessori**  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 234

Little children in an environment of complete commitment to the three "Montessori" principles, i.e., (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment", eventually reveal a "normalized" society as that which spontaneously expresses a complete harmony, peace, sympathy and respect for one another. Such harmonious relationship among "normalized" children appears in sharp contrast with today's society dominated by fear, oppression and disrespect among people throughout the world. Adult society therefore reflects an enormous condition of tyranny over the child to deter emergence of its true "normalized" nature as envisioned by Dr. Montessori's "new education".

## Adult Society

*"An adult society is not a suitable environment for children, but rather an aggregate of obstacles that strengthen their defenses, warp their attitudes and expose them to adult suggestion."*

**Maria Montessori**  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 109

Adult society generally reflects a dominant prejudicial "reality" inconsistent with that of the "normalized" child. Teachers and parents tend to view the child as essentially "empty" and needful of some sort of adult "instruction" so as to properly instill the basic values, customs and direction of adult society. Such instruction may even be considered as a compelling "duty" on behalf of a self-professed "responsibility" in the care of children under one's supervision.

## Duty of Adult

*"The erroneous belief has persisted that it is the duty of the adult to fashion the child according to the pattern required by society."*

**Maria Montessori**  
from *Peace and Education*, p. 18

Parents and teachers typically believe their duty is to "teach" values, such as obedience to certain externally-imposed authority. The wide-spread agreement in society as to the "need" for such teaching readily harmonizes with one's own prejudicial view of the child as "empty" in this regard. Even ordinary teaching of academic subject matter necessarily communicates to children many underlying values, rules, customs and other such social conventions. Underlying prejudices centered around the presumed "need" to

teach values are not generally recognized as such, but rather as a sort of absolute, unquestioned "truth"; i.e., that which prevails in society as a massive sea of popular opinion.

## Absolute Truth

*"The solidarity of adult society . . . assumes the power of suggestion and the appearance of an absolute truth upon which all agree."*

**Maria Montessori**  
from *The Formation of Man*, p. 69

The ordinary adult finds that one's own deeply engrained prejudices about the child and its fundamental "need" for adult instruction is conveniently reaffirmed by dominant institutions and popular opinion in society. Adult pride and sense of well-intentioned "responsibility" tends to further suppress awareness of one's tyranny and repression of the child's spirit which generally accompanies ordinary adult "teaching".

## Collective Subconscious

*"A kind of 'subconscious organization of defense' is achieved by all parents in the world. All lean upon each other. The whole of society forms a collective subconscious wherein all act in complete agreement when they remove and suppress the child."*

**Maria Montessori**  
from *The Formation of Man*, p. 68

The opinion and approval of others readily reinforces a vast range of adult suppressions of the child; i.e., ignoring an infant's cries of pain on the assumption that it is somehow "natural" or "expected"; encouraging a child to repress its unpleasant feelings on the assumption that such expression is "impolite"; imposing the adult's own priorities and scheduling for learning rather than following that which is revealed by the "teacher within" the child itself. Such conventional repressions of the child reflect a sweeping "camouflage" which hide deeply buried feelings of tension, fear and pain from one's own similarly repressed early childhood experiences. Such repressed experiences and feelings invariably permeate and color all social interaction and relationship with others in adult society.

## Camouflage

*"Conventions which camouflage a man's true feelings are a spiritual lie which help him adapt to the organized deviations of society . . . This is the terrible lie lurking in the deepest recesses of the subconscious."*

**Maria Montessori**  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 176

A web of deceitful conventions, masquerading under the camouflage of "politeness" and "diplomacy", characterize the cohesive bonding of ordinary adult social engagement. Such conventions are a customary and routine aspect of that which is acquired by children through traditional education.

## Ordinary Schooling

*" . . . The discipline and conventions of an ordinary school are shot through with deceit."*

**Maria Montessori**  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 175

Despite an external gloss of attention to academic subject matter "teaching", ordinary schooling serves essentially to instill and reinforce the underlying dominant values and popular opinions of adult society; i.e., obey external authority, repress one's own true feelings; maintain a deceitful, insincere facade of "politeness" acceptable to others, etc. By contrast, Montessori education serves a creative purpose on behalf of a new social order in the world, consistent with the nature of the "normalized" child; i.e., reflecting a society of spontaneous cohesion, order, cooperation, sympathy, mutual respect and appreciation in the company of others.

*Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 2*

Look for the

# April Observer

featuring

# Feelings

## The Montessori Observer

published by  
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Lee Haviv, Executive Director

*The Montessori Observer* is mailed eight times each year to IMS members throughout the world. The *Observer* is sent during the following months: Jan., Feb., March, April, May, Sept., Oct., and Nov. The purpose of this publication is to provide news and information about the development of Montessori education to extend awareness of Montessori principles and promote harmony within the Montessori community.

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## LETTERS TO IMS

January 25, 1985

Dear Sir:

I am interested in perhaps requesting funds for our staff development budget that would make it possible for our pre-school teacher and kindergarten teacher to receive additional training by correspondence.

Please send details as to the complete cost of your 22 lesson course and suggest a reasonable time frame in which the course should be completed.

Our school is small, 80 students from 26 different nations in pre-school through eighth grades. We utilize an American curriculum enhanced by instruction in French and German languages and computer assisted instruction. We would like to know more about your society.

Sincerely,

Don O. Hill, Director  
International School of Prague  
Prague, Czechoslovakia

**Where is "Montessori"?***Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 2*

Society asserts "Montessori" as complete within oneself as a commitment to precisely three fundamental principles of nature. This assertion expresses itself as an invitation to specific action on behalf of such commitment which arises generally as a distinction between: (1) "Montessori" as external form, such as that which amounts to a limited set of prescribed, standardized materials, presentations and various conceptualized rationale and (2) "Montessori" as an inner commitment to three fundamental principles of nature whose application with children assures the emergence of the "normalized" child. Such distinction is evident as a consideration of "what is 'Montessori'?" and finds expression in issues such as membership association of Montessori schools, government regulations and teacher training.

The Montessori schools are necessarily deeply involved in the practical inquiry as to "what is 'Montessori'?" in communication with parents and in meeting licensure requirements imposed by government regulation. Montessori school administrators are therefore beginning to work together for solutions to commonly-shared regulatory problems. Such cooperative work and communication invariably promises to extend awareness of their common underlying purpose and commitment on behalf of the "normalized" child—as opposed to the more limited goals of economic benefit and propagation of some sort of belief system associated with the "Montessori" label.

The current controversy surrounding "what is 'Montessori'?" continues to evidence a lively and necessary challenge

*Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 3***A Simple Lesson**

*To obtain a simple lesson . . . is a very difficult task."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Montessori Method*, p. 113

**Society***Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 3***An Orderly Society**

*"Children unaided can construct an orderly society. For us adults, prisons, police, soldiers and guns are necessary. Children solve their own problems peacefully."*

Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 285

The Montessori "normalizing" environment enables the children themselves to create their own "society" in the process of spontaneous interaction, work and activity which naturally occurs in such an environment. The children generally resolve problems with each other on their own since the teacher restrains her own direct intervention in moments of dispute and error. Experience has shown that the solutions that children themselves find to their social problems tend to reveal a far more perfect and satisfactory resolution than would otherwise result from the adult's own imposition of some direct correction or control. There emerges from such a "normalizing" environment a beautiful, natural cohesion and social unity of complete harmony, justice and love among the children.

**Cohesion in Social Unit**

*"Unity born among the children, which is produced by a spontaneous need, directed by an unconscious power, and vitalized by a social spirit, is . . . cohesion in the social unit."*

Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 232-233

"Normalized" children together—having acquired an inner integration of personality and harmony with others—evidence a natural tendency towards social cohesion to constructively support and nurture one another. Such cohesion in the social unit arises ultimately from the adult's effective application of Montessori principles which necessarily includes the preparation of an organized arrangement of physical objects to enable the children to work out the various practical problems which ordinarily arise in the social setting.

**The Work of Others**

*" . . . if there are too many things, or more than one complete set for a group of thirty or forty children, this causes confusion . . . There is only one specimen of each object . . . Important social qualities derive from this . . . The child comes to see that he must respect the work of others."*

Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 223

The organization of the child's physical environment serves directly to enhance social development. Notably, with only one specimen of each object in the environment, children must necessarily learn to respect the work of others and to exercise a due patience and courtesy in this regard. The use and purpose of physical objects therefore extends far beyond the learning of academic subject matter to include the exercise of self-discipline, patience and cooperation.

*Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 1***Positions & Placements**

**Montessori Teacher:** (6-12), opening for Senior Elementary Teacher for fall 1985. Good salary, benefits and opportunity to work and grow with school owned and operated by Joh and Hanna Laven, pioneer Montessorians for over 40 years. School is established in two mansions, on the edge of the prestigious Monte Vista area, just north of downtown San Antonio, Texas. Teachers should send a resume to: Kriterion Montessori School, 611 West Ashby Place, San Antonio, Texas 78212, Attn: Andreas Laven.

**Montessori Teachers:** (3-6), (6-9); primary director/ess (3-6) possibly afternoon class. School is well-established, 20 years old, new building. Send letter of application, and references to Staff Search Committee, Montessori School of Champaign, 1403 Regency Dr., Savoy, Illinois 61874.

**Montessori Teachers:** Minneapolis-St. Paul area, privately owned elementary school seeks qualified levels 1-3 and 4-6 director/ess for September 1985. The Twin Cities is a beautiful place in which to live and offers a high quality of life with the culture and arts of a large metropolitan area. Please contact: Lucy McKay, 3450 152nd Ln. N.W. Andover, Minnesota 55304, Tel. (612)427-8508.

**Montessori Teacher:** (2-6), (6-12). Beginning in fall, 1985, openings for both an elementary and a primary directress. Seton Academy is willing to sponsor Montessori training for a qualified candidate. Private school in a near-Western suburb of Chicago, drawing from a broad socio-economic spectrum with families from both city and suburbs. Catechesis after the method of Montessori and Cavalletti is an integral part of the curriculum. Faculty candidates must be practicing Catholics. Write: Seton Academy, P.O. Box 192, River Forest, IL 60305.

**Announcements**

**Kodaly Center of America** is sponsoring a music education course for teachers of young children June 24-28 at the Center (Newton, Massachusetts). Katalin Forrai, Kodaly authority from Hungary, will direct course which includes a live demonstration by a kindergarten class of inner city children. Course includes learning songs, games and Kodaly music techniques. For information and preregistration, write: Kodaly Center of America, 295 Adams St., Newton, Massachusetts, 02158, Tel. (617)332-2680.

**The Troublesome Child**

*"If . . . there is some child who persistently annoys the others, the most practical thing to do is to interrupt him . . . interruption may take the form of . . . showing a special and affectionate interest in the troublesome child."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 279

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### Society

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 2

#### The Company of Others

*"The undisciplined child enters into discipline by working in the company of others, not by being told that he is naughty."*

**Maria Montessori**

from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 245-246

The practical resolution of many social problems in the Montessori environment is a continuing process of exercise and practice to acquire a natural discipline and courtesy with others. The teacher's conscious restraint of any action to intervene, judge, arbitrate or control of social problems among the children considerably enhances the development of a profound self-discipline. Although a particular solution to some dispute might seem quite surprising or even "unfair" to an adult observer, the "normalized" society of children ultimately reveals a depth of justice, love and sympathy which far exceeds that which would be conventionally predictable or customary in the adult society of today.



Child working with "number rods" at the Ideal Montessori School (Jamaica, New York).

#### A New World

*"Normalization of adult society . . . must be done through education. A social change of this type cannot come about from the ideas and energies of individual reformers but from a slow and steady emergence of a new world in the midst of the old, the gradual appearance of the world of the child . . ."*

**Maria Montessori**

from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 207

The "normalized" society of young children in the Montessori environment clearly reveals a vision of a "new world" which is gradually arising in the midst of today's adult society so dominated by deceitful convention, prejudice and oppression. The creation of such a "new world" necessarily begins within one's self as a realization of a complete commitment to the three fundamental Montessori principles. Expression of such an empowering commitment with children is that which is creating a "new education" to assure the emergence of the "normalized" society of the child in the world today.

### Disorder

*" . . . disorder of the first moment is necessary . . . do nothing but watch."*

**Maria Montessori**

from *Montessori Method*, p. 89

#### REMINDER

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#### Where is "Montessori"?

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 1

and inquiry before the Montessori community and in the general public. Whatever outward confusion, controversy, disharmony and dispute which may appear in this inquiry is merely a superficial secondary effect reflecting the deeper underlying creative activity which is at work within oneself on behalf of Montessori's true purpose.

Although the future of Montessori is inherently uncertain, its present creative energy suggests a continued steady progress of inquiry, growing awareness and discovery as to its essential meaning and purpose in society. Such inquiry is necessarily an essential expression of the present moment reality of Dr. Montessori's vision of a "new education" in the world from which the "normalized" child is gradually emerging.