



The Montessori

OBSERVER

The Nature of Being

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Child working with practical life "dressing frame" at El Colegio Montessori de Bayamón (Bayamón, Puerto Rico)

El Colegio Montessori in Puerto Rico

El Colegio Montessori de Bayamón (Bayamón, Puerto Rico) is operated under the ownership of a non-profit corporation. This Spanish language Montessori school member of the Society is directed by Selenia de Mercado.

Ms. Mercado has a wide background and experience in the supervision and operation of schools in Puerto Rico. Notably, her prior administration of the Santa Rosa Elementary School in Bayamón led to its participation in the Model Schools Program and public recognition for important experimental work in the field of education.

El Colegio Montessori School offers a full day program, five days per week, for children ages 2-6. Special features of this school include music, parent education and a summer Montessori program. In addition, the school

provides a special program of instruction for teachers in other schools of the region.

For further information, contact: Selenia de Mercado, El Colegio Montessori de Bayamón, Santa Cruz, Number 58, P.O. Box 561, Bayamón, Puerto Rico 00621, Tel. (809) 785-1161.

Teacher Training

Tuition for the Society's Independent Study Course to prepare for Montessori teaching will be increased to \$900.00 effective January 1, 1986. The present rate of \$800.00 will apply to enrollments completed prior to January 1, 1986. Contact the Society for preliminary application and further information.

Expanding Commitment

The work of creating the "new education" necessarily entails an expanding commitment to the three Montessori principles: (1) "Observation," (2) "Individual Liberty," (3) "Preparation of the Environment." Such an expanding commitment emerges generally as enhanced communication and increased consciousness of Montessori principles among those in society with whom one relates and associates in the everyday course of events.

Montessori school members of the Society specifically expand their commitment through a public acknowledgment of such commitment which is the fundamental basis of such association with the Society. Notably, member schools assert a compliance with specific membership criteria which include communication with parents and staff as to the school's vital work and purpose in the world.

Montessori school members are supported by the Society in their expanding commitment to Montessori principles among parents and staff by receiving regular mailings of Society publications. Notably, such member schools receive a free bulk mailing of the 8-page

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Membership Fee Update

Annual fee for new and overdue expired Montessori school members of the Society will increase to \$60.00 per year effective January 1, 1986. Current member schools are advised to promptly renew their membership prior to expiration in order to continue to benefit from the present low rate of \$45.00 per year. Timely renewal of such membership will assure a continuation of the \$45.00 annual fee indefinitely into the future.

The Society now invites multiple-year memberships to reduce one's overall cost and inconvenience of annual renewal. Individuals and schools may join or renew according to the following schedule:

Individual Membership:

\$15 (1 yr.); \$25 (2 yrs.); \$35 (3 yrs.)

Associate School Membership:

\$20 (1 yr.); \$35 (2 yrs.); \$45 (3 yrs.)

Montessori School Membership:

\$45 (1 yr)*

*\$60.00 effective January 1, 1986 for new and overdue expired member schools.



Nature of Being

by Lee Havis

"... as I looked upon these children with great respect and affection, I placed my hand upon my heart and asked, 'Who are you?'"

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.15

Dr. Montessori's remarkable discovery of the child's true nature in Italy in 1907 revealed an entirely new possibility for being in the world to emerge from her environment of commitment to the principles of (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment." A totally "new child" was seen to arise from this "normalizing" environment to challenge long-established false assumptions and prejudices about "reality" and the fundamental nature of being itself. Montessori teaching therefore entails a most profound study of man which probes deeply into the most basic level of one's own identity as "self"; i.e., that which mysteriously forms within oneself as "personality" prior to about six years of age.

Personality

"A child is forced to come to terms with his surroundings and the efforts entailed lead to an integration of his personality."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.15

The little child forms its "personality" through a process which intimately absorbs within itself the totality of its environment. Notably, such a formative creative process absorbs whatever adult presence exists in the child's environment during the critical early years. Deeply ingrained adult prejudices and assumptions about "reality" and life are also therefore incorporated into the child's "personality." Accordingly, the child ordinarily develops a "personality" which mirrors that of the adult(s) present in its environment during the early childhood period.

Mirror of Mistakes

"An adult who loves children but unconsciously condemns them inflicts upon them a secret sorrow which is a mirror of his own mistakes."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.5

The child's identity gradually emerges in stable form as "personality" at about the age of six to essentially mirror the unconscious misconceptions and reactive behavior tendencies of the adult(s) responsible for its environment during the early childhood period. The child's "personality" continues to solidify itself as one's identity by the effect of later reinforcement and agreement with others in society. A vast array of mutual dependencies and attachments with others takes on the appearance of a reality whose "truth" is justified by its agreement with one's own various prejudices and assumptions about life developed prior to the age of about six.

Solidarity of Society

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

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

The truth of a child's early childhood environment gradually expresses itself as an adult "society" whose essential reality accurately reflects that which was present as such during the early childhood period. Whatever underlying struggle and emotional drama there was present and left unresolved during the early childhood period now becomes the basic continuing drama of one's later life which is invariably played out in various scenarios and relationship in association with others in society.

Life itself is therefore most accurately seen as a sort of continuing "soap opera" wherein one's role is that of "personality" and the scenes of the drama are those of various continuing emotional struggles from early childhood. What appear as "others" in life are actually sort of "actors" who play certain roles necessary for the unfolding and proper resolution of the original early childhood "script." In general, one's environment as an adult reflects the same vague tyrannical forces of domination and control of expression with which one was compelled to contend during the early childhood period.

The Master of All

"The master of all is a mysterious entity. The tyrant is all powerful, like a god. It is the environment that swallows up and crushes the man."

Maria Montessori
from *The Formation of Man*, p.7

The repressive, tyrannical nature of the little child's environment—unconsciously distorted by parents and teachers—is well-reflected in one's environment as it commonly appears in later life. The child's repressed expression of being in early childhood gradually evolves into a struggle to win approval from parental authority. Ultimately, such struggle results in the continuing "soap opera" drama of adult life to earn a living and otherwise contend with the domination of government and other such parental-type authorities and institutions in society. One's typical resignation and subjugation before these all powerful "tyrants" tends to mask the underlying illusion and drama with which one is fundamentally engaged in the process of living.

Illusion

"to be contented with the imaginary, and to live our lives as if what we imagine actually exists; to run after illusion, and 'not to recognize' reality, is a thing so common that scarcely is it apprehended. . ."

Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Activity in Education*, p.265

The ordinary "soap opera" struggle to fulfill the urgent demands of others and to variously

attain certain pre-determined external goals in society tends to dominate one's conscious being in the world. The illusory nature of such emotional drama is readily hidden from conscious awareness under layers of defensive thought patterns and reactive behavior tendencies which have built up and become intimately associated with one's identity as "personality." Reality as that which is created by being in the present moment is rarely, if ever, recognized.

Creating "Reality"

"A man is capable of becoming anything . . . Making use of his own will in his contact with the environment, he develops his faculties and thus becomes in a sense his own creator."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.33

The distinction between "being" and "personality" is most accurately seen in the inherently creative nature of human life expressing itself in the present moment. While one invariably "has" a personality, one need not necessarily "be" such an identity in the world. The choice and freedom to "be" anything arises most clearly as a recognition of reality as

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Look for the
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featuring
Work

The Montessori Observer

published by
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912 Thayer Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 589-1127
Lee Havis, 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.

INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY

The International Montessori Society is sponsored by Educational Services, Inc., a non-profit corporation organized in Maryland, U.S.A. The purpose of IMS is to support the effective application of Montessori principles throughout the world.

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SUBSCRIPTION

Subscription to this publication may be obtained by requesting IMS membership which is open to all individuals for a \$15 yearly fee. IMS school members also receive a subscription to the *Montessori News*. Complete the membership application form to obtain an individual subscription and other benefits of IMS membership.

ADVERTISING

Advertising space is available for services and products relating to Montessori education. Marketplace ads are \$7/line. Position and Placements ads are \$10 each and will be set and edited by us to conform to space requirements. Write for our advertising outline for rates and other information about design advertising.

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LETTERS TO IMS

October 8, 1985

Dear Mr. Havis,

Brian and I read the "Observer" and both think you're doing a good job fighting the courts. Keep up the work . . . Let us know if we can help with any type of support. Congratulations on Nebraska!

Sincerely,

Kathy Kearsey



Child engaged in "hand washing" practical life activity at the Montessori School of Elkhart (Elkhart, Indiana)

Montessori in Indiana

The Montessori School of Elkhart serves an enrollment of 155 children ages 1½-5 years in the Elkhart, Indiana area. Pearl Rynski is the administrator of this Society member school which is under the ownership of a non-profit corporation.

The Elkhart School offers diverse weekly scheduling of sessions, including a 2-day program for infants, a 3-day program for toddlers and a full 5-day program for children over 2½ years of age. A flexible tuition payment plan is also offered to meet a variety of circumstances in this regard. Special program features include a summer Montessori program. Spanish as a foreign language, and parent education.

For further information, contact: Pearl Rynski, Montessori School of Elkhart, 416 East Crawford St., Elkhart, Indiana 46516 Tel. (219) 264-3037.

Marketplace

Home Education Resource Guide—8½x11, 88-page reference provides access to over 800 suppliers of materials and services for teaching children at home. Reviewed in the Sept. '85 "Observer." \$10 postpaid. Home School Headquarters, Box 366, Fremont, NE 68025.

Nature of Being

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"one's conscious awareness in the present moment." Creating "reality" is therefore the underlying truth of one's being in the present moment—a "being" which invariably dictates what one "does." The underlying truth of one's ultimate reality in this regard reveals a cosmic harmony with all being with which one is necessarily related in the present moment.

Cosmic Harmony

"Living creatures do not simply preserve themselves in existence. . . but they all work together in a kind of terrestrial harmony."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.188

Although reality as "one's conscious awareness in the present moment" is uniquely individual, its emergence with others nonetheless reveals a certain cosmic harmony in the present moment. With children, such harmony arises into consciousness as an evolving "soap opera" drama wherein the adult assumes the identity of one's "personality"—i.e., the role most closely associated with that of one's own parents. The children, in external form, assume the role of one's own being as a child. The ensuing emotional interplay reflects one's choice as to being either the "author" of the drama or simply one of its actors following the assigned script.

Being a Commitment

" . . . the revelations of the child are not at all so difficult to obtain, the real difficulty lies in the adult's old prejudices concerning him."

Maria Montessori
from *The Formation of Man*, p.22

Montessori teaching assumes that particular type of "being" with children which places oneself as the "author" of the soap opera drama which emerges as life in the present moment with children. Such "being" is that of a "commitment to Montessori principles"—quite distinct from "being" as "personality."

To "be" a true Montessori teacher is therefore simply to engender a conscious awareness of Montessori principles with children; to say to oneself the three phrases given by the Society in this regard to denote the directionality of one's expansive awareness of such absolute principles of nature. Such "being" dictates that which a Montessori teacher "does" as more of a matter of compelling imperative than that of conscious effort. In any case, whatever difficulty is encountered in this simple process of "being" a Montessori teacher generally reveals the depth of ingrained prejudices about the child and a certain failure to regard such an entity as essentially "unknown."

Prejudice

" . . . prejudices. . . are confused and strengthened by the evidence of facts because all, or nearly all, see the child as he is commonly known only, not the child as he is, still an unknown entity."

Maria Montessori
from *The Formation of Man*, p.60-61

Failures in "being" an effective Montessori teacher generally arise as attachment to ingrained prejudices about the child; i.e., "conscious awareness" of certain false assumptions

contrary to the child's true nature. To free the child to express its true being, the child is seen in external form as a mystery whose true nature can only be discovered through non-prejudicial observation in the present moment.

The Child's Being

"The child is an enigma. . . he has the highest potentialities, but we do not know what he will be."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.32

The child's own true being arises only of itself within a reality of complete commitment to Montessori principles. An adult perspective of the child as an "unknown entity" tends to expand one's observation of the child until its true "normalized" nature is ultimately realized. Such patient observation of the child is generously rewarded in time by one's growing insight and awareness as to the source of life and the true underlying nature of human being.

Source of Life

" . . . physiological and psychic development have a single source, life."

Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.61

The process of Montessori teaching—i.e., a growing awareness of Montessori principles and the appearance of the "normalized" child—gradually reveals the source of creation as life itself. Here we have "life" as the source of life itself; being creating being. Whatever confusion or uncertainty to arise from such a self-creative proposition finds its only ultimate resolution in the process of perfecting one's own life in the present moment.

Perfection of Being

"A child slowly perfects his activities. An adult can assist in shaping the environment, but it is the child that perfects his own being."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.195

The little child's self-creative development reveals the nature of being as that which spontaneously realizes itself. Montessori teaching recognizes and respects this process of self-perfected being within the child. Accordingly, the Montessori teacher only assists in this inner process by creating a nurturing environment of commitment to Montessori principles. The perfected "new being" thereby arises of itself from such a Montessori environment to reveal the profoundly creative nature of mankind whose being in the world is the fundamental basis upon which new destinies are constantly emerging into existence in each new moment of time.

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Announcements

The Minnesota Alliance of Montessorians (M.A.M.) is sponsoring a workshop on December 7, 1985, 9-3, at the Lake Country School, entitled "Towards Healthy Sexuality." This workshop intends to provide an overview of the subject covering children from 3 to 12 by Kathy Anlauf of the Department of Health, Minneapolis Public School System. For further information, contact: M.A.M., 4901 West 114th St., Bloomington, MN 55437. Tel. (612) 888-1082.

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Expanding Commitment

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"Montessori News" in sufficient quantity to assure distribution to all parents and staff three times each year. This attractive and informative publication is directed specifically towards parents and the general public and includes a variety of interesting and informative articles concerning the work of creating the "new education" in the world.

The Society now further extends its support for expanding commitment to Montessori principles by offering its "Montessori Observer" publication to all schools at discount subscription rates. Any school, regardless of membership status, may now obtain individual Society memberships or bulk mail shipment of the "Observer" for distribution to parents and staff at a considerable saving. This new opportunity for expanded dissemination of Society publications provides a most constructive support for a school's fundamental work on behalf of the emergence of the "normalized" child in society.

For further information about Montessori school membership* and other Society programs to expand commitment to Montessori principles, contact: International Montessori Society, 912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

*Montessori school membership is \$45.00 per year. Effective January 1, 1986, membership fee will be \$60.00 per year for new and expired school members. (School memberships which are timely renewed will continue indefinitely to enjoy the current annual renewal rate of \$45.00 per year).

Positions & Placements

Montessori Teacher: Must have certification for 2-6 year olds. Full or part time position. Immediate opening. Salary negotiable depending on experience. Contact: Wendy Smith, H.C.A.M.S., Box 218, Bolton, CT 06040, Tel. (203) 646-5727.



Candace Sheeran with children at the Kenai Peninsula Preschool (Soldotna, Alaska)

Montessori in Alaska

The Kenai Peninsula Preschool in Soldotna, Alaska was recently founded by Candace Sheeran who serves as its director and head teacher. This Society member school provides a full-day Montessori program for children aged 2-6 in the isolated community of Soldotna (pop. about 800) and the surrounding rural region of the Kenai Peninsula of Alaska.

Ms. Sheeran is a native of Alaska whose educational background and experience includes psychology and teaching in various capacities since about 1977. She is presently extending her preparation for Montessori teaching by participating as a student in the Society's Independent Study Course. Upon completion of this course, Ms. Sheeran intends to train teachers in the effective application of Montessori principles with children.

Ms. Sheeran's work to establish and operate a Montessori school in the remote wilderness area of the Kenai Peninsula of Alaska amply reflects her determined and independent spirit—qualities so appropriate to the challenging responsibility of true Montessori teaching. She states that "I certainly have come up against some obstacles . . . but I have patience,

faith, trust and lots of confidence in myself."

For further information, contact: Candace Sheeran, Kenai Peninsula Preschool., P.O. Box 2952, Soldotna, Alaska 99669, Tel. (907) 283-7677.

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New Destiny

" . . . man is seen as being different from all others. . . His appearance on earth was . . . the starting point for new destinies."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.60

The "new child" emerging from Dr. Montessori's first "normalizing" environment in 1907 continues to emerge today to manifest a whole new changing destiny for mankind. The child's true nature of peace, love and harmony with all being is gradually expressing itself as a self-evident truth in the world. The necessary point of departure along the path of discovery of man's new destiny is that of one's own conscious awareness of the three Montessori principles—the being of a true Montessori teacher.