

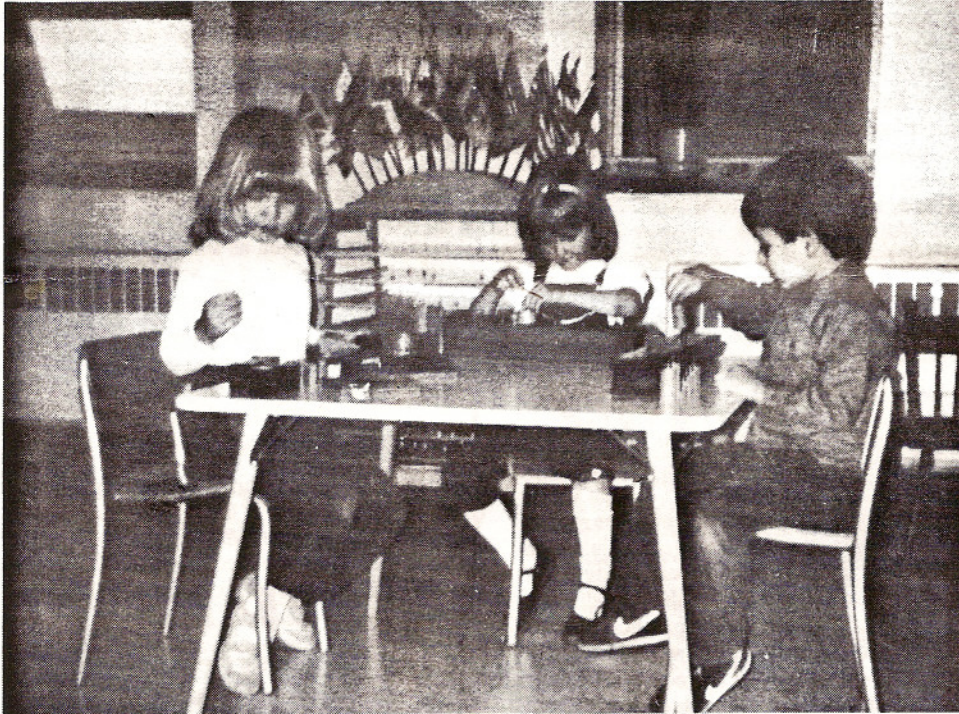


The Montessori

# OBSERVER

Fantasy

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Children working with sensorial apparatus at the Omni Montessori School (St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada)

## Omni in Ontario, Canada

The Omni Montessori School, located in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, was opened by Mary Hoffman on September 3, 1985. Ms. Hoffman, director of this new Society member school, also serves as its head teacher for the primary Montessori environment conducted for children 2½ to 6 years of age. The school is licensed under the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Day Nurseries of Ontario, Canada.

The Omni school program provides two half-day Montessori sessions with flexible weekly schedules. Ms. Hoffman recommends, however, that a full five-day per week schedule be followed to assure a more regular daily routine for the children.

### Faith

*"The teacher . . . must have a kind of faith that the child will reveal himself through work."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.276

Special program features include field trips, parent workshops and a monthly newsletter for parents. For further information, contact: Mary Hoffman, Omni Montessori School, 366 St. Paul St., St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 3N2, Canada, Tel. (416) 641-0801.

## Forest Hills Montessori School in New York

The Forest Hills Montessori School (Forest Hills, New York) provides full and half day Montessori sessions for about 130 children from two to twelve years of age. Sunila Tejpaal is the director of this Society member school.

Since Ms. Tejpaal regards the continuing development and preparation of her staff as a matter of foremost concern, she consistently encourages her staff to extend their knowledge and mastery of Montessori teaching whenever possible. One staff member, Nell Rollo, has been supported to participate in the Society's Independent Study Course. Ms. Rollo, staff member of the Forest Hills School for some

*Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2*

## Society's Law Suit to Supreme Court

The Society's federal court suit to conduct its Montessori teacher training in the state of Maryland is now in the process of being offered to the United States Supreme Court for its authoritative final disposition. Accordingly, a petition for writ of certiorari will soon be submitted to request the high court's consideration of such issues as educational freedom and equal treatment in government "regulation" which have been raised in this case. The Society's complaint has now been pending disposition before various levels of federal court authority since its original filing in September, 1981.

Presently, the Society's complaint is under a dismissal ruling by the Federal District Court for the District of Maryland, decided on December 18, 1984. Such dismissal has brought sharply into focus the extent of governmental power to censor and otherwise prohibit and restrict the operation of private school education in Maryland. The state certification and control of private religious schools is also raised in this case since the court's decision has implicitly assumed that "educational institutions operated by bona fide church organizations would be subject to state certification."

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## New Publication Schedule for "Montessori Observer"

The Society will now publish and distribute its "Montessori Observer" newsletter in the following months only: January, March, May, September, October and November. This new publication schedule, six issues per year instead of the former eight-issue schedule, intends to enhance the quality and newsworthy content of each issue while still maintaining the Society's regular supportive communication with its membership throughout the year.

The "Montessori Observer" will continue to provide Society members with an interesting and lively consideration of the three fundamental Montessori principles in each issue, as well as useful communication and information on a wide range of noteworthy topics of concern to all: Articles and letters for publication in the "Observer" are always welcome. Send communication to: International Montessori Society, 912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.



# Fantasy

by Lee Haviv

*"In the surroundings which we provide . . . excited fantasies and restless movements disappear . . . (the children) calmly face reality and begin to perfect themselves through their work. They become normal children."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.156

Dr. Montessori discovered that truly "normal" children — reflecting their own true nature given at conception — find harmony and peace in an intimate attachment to the reality of being in the present moment. One's own Montessori teaching - i.e., that which is implicated by a conscious awareness of the principles of (1) "Observation;" (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment"—would accordingly reveal that normal children do indeed prefer "work" over "play"; "reality" over "fantasy". In truth, a child's common fantasy play is not "normal" behavior but rather fundamentally a refuge from painful environmental experience; i.e., a mask to hide from the realization of excessive suffering and in a hostile reality dominated by adult repression and tyranny.

## Flight into Fantasy

*"A flight into play or a world of fantasy . . . represents a subconscious defense of the ego which flees from suffering or danger and hides behind a mask."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.157

Childhood fantasy is nature's merciful means of delivering a child from the conscious awareness of intolerable pain resulting from hostile environmental impositions, such as the trauma of birth, schedule feeding, sensory deprivation, punishment, blame and other such forms of detrimental experience. A child's revulsion to a wide range of specific painful impositions becomes gradually generalized to all external stimuli and the child escapes into a regular pattern of fantasy expression.

## 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.35

By about the age of six, the child's random fantasy begins to stabilize in the form of its "personality"—i.e., beliefs, thought patterns, self-image, attitudes, etc. The painful origin and purpose of one's being as "personality" to defend against painful repressed feelings is thereafter hidden from conscious awareness. Such repressed feelings are further camouflaged under the guise of "truth" which is integrated within oneself as the organized deviations, prejudices and conventions of adult society.

## Truth

*"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

One's own self-deceptive being as "personality" becomes even more intimately woven into the fabric of society through a dependent, manipulative association and relationship with others. Institutions such as "government" solidify yet further the apparent "truth" of popular opinion which gradually comes to justify, determine and reinforce the ultimate bounds of one's "reality".

## Reality

*"To be contented with the imaginary, and to live 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 Educ.*, p.265

Reality emerges as conscious awareness in the present moment—a being ordinarily defined by one's "personality" (i.e., that which is stabilized within oneself to mirror the repressive environment of one's own early childhood life). With such a being as "personality", the adult thus approaches the child in traditional education. Consciousness of such a self-deceptive tyrannical being is well-hidden by a preconceived self-image of god-like authority and power in association with children.

## Self-Deception

*"We deceive ourselves if we imagine that we are always following life's highway towards perfection . . . we fail to realize our faults; we live in a state of illusion shut off from reality."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 246

With children, the adult tends to assume a self-deceptive role of a sort of "hero" in a complex underlying emotional drama which emerges in external form as struggle, control and manipulation. Under such a "guise of goodness", the traditional teacher assumes the identity of "personality", a role most closely associated with that of one's one parents. The children accordingly appear in the role of oneself as a little child. The adult's dramatic "playing" with children persists as a result of its camouflaged nature within the adult and the child's own inability to restrain or otherwise defend against such impositions in this regard.

## Playing with Children

*" . . . children . . . do not understand us, they cannot defend themselves from us, and they accept whatever we tell them. They not only accept abuse, but feel guilty whenever we blame them."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.151

Instinctively receptive to environmental influence, the young child's "absorbent mind" readily adopts whatever interpretation of being

given for it by the responsible adult. Accordingly, the child's superficial being arises as that of a "doll" to fit into the adult's particular "reality". An adult thus tends to "play" with children as a child plays with its doll—i.e., assuming the role of some powerful adult figure (like "mother") whereas the doll is represented as somehow weak and dependent. Despite the obvious camouflage of different name and superficial circumstances, a discerning observer can readily recognize the underlying reality of the doll as the child's own projected being.

Similarly, the adult "plays" with children by projecting one's own being into that of the child. Thereupon, the play proceeds to dramatize the weakness, dependency, blame, shame, badness, fear and other such aspects of one's own early childhood life. The reality of such projected being is hidden by many false assumptions about the entire nature of "fantasy". For example, adults generally interpret "fantasy" in children as somehow "creative imagination" worthy of an active encouragement, if not, convenient disregard.

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Look for the  
**March  
Observer**  
featuring  
**Pain**

## The Montessori Observer

published by  
INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY  
912 Thayer Ave.  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
(301) 589-1127  
Lee Haviv, Executive Director

The *Montessori Observer* is mailed six times each year to Society members throughout the world. The *Observer* is sent during the months of January, March, May, September, October and November. The purpose of this publication is to provide news and information about the development of Montessori education to extend awareness of Montessori principles and to 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 Society's purpose is to support the effective application of Montessori principles throughout the world.

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### SUBSCRIPTION

Subscription to this *Observer* publication may be obtained by requesting Society membership which is open to all individuals for a \$15 annual fee. Society members also receive a subscription to the *Montessori News*. Send request for membership benefits.

### ADVERTISING

Advertising space is available for services and products relating to Montessori education. Marketplace ads are \$7/line. Position and Placement ads are \$10 each and will set and edited by the Society to conform to space requirements. Write for the Society's advertising outline as to rates and other information about design advertising.

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**Creative Imagination**

*"Adults actually favor and encourage . . . fantasies, interpreting them as the creative tendencies of a child's mind."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 155

Interpreting "fantasy" in children as somehow constructively "creative", the adult fails to recognize the underlying painful struggle with which such fantasy in actually associated—i.e., to escape from a reality of weakness, dependency, shame, guilt and blame. Adult attention therefore tends to dwell only on the superficial story, plot or script so commonly patterned after television shows, the movies or common real-life scenarios. The adult likewise fails to recognize the fundamental sensory deprivation implicated by such an escape from reality.

**Sensory Deprivation**

*"... a child creates an illusion. . . but this is not a proof of imagination, it is a proof of an unsatisfied desire; . . . it is a manifestation of conscious sensitive poverty."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Spontaneous Activity in Educ.*, p. 257

Deprived of critical sensory experiences with its environment, the young child generally fails to form an integrated harmony with reality. Without such an essential basis in reality, the child cannot develop true creative imagination. Accordingly, whatever "imagination" to emerge in children under about six years of age is pure fantasy. Since some adults interpret such fantasy expression as the child's "choice", no effort is ordinarily made to resolve the matter and the child is therefore "abandoned" under the guise of offering "Individual Liberty".

**Abandonment**

*"The principle of liberty is not therefore a principle of abandonment, but rather one which, by leading us from illusion to reality, will guide us to the most positive and efficacious 'care of the child'."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Spontaneous Activity in Educ.*, p.9-10

Children are "abandoned" by adults when they are simply left to their own self-deceptive fantasies. True "Individual Liberty" offers the child reality; i.e., opportunities for goal-directed environmental experience (i.e., "work") with real objects. The effective application of such "Individual Liberty" as a Montessori principle necessarily entails a "being" with children which transcends the illusion of "truth" given by popular opinion or one's own "personality". True Montessori teaching is being a "commitment to Montessori principles"; i.e. that which is perhaps most closely associated with the role of "author" or "observer" of the drama arising in one's association with children. In such drama, the child arises as an "unknown entity".

**Unknown Entity**

*"... 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

As a "commitment to Montessori principles", one is indeed the creator of the entire reality of the "normalized" child. Such creation recognizes the child as the "unknown entity" from which will eventually spring the child's true nature as a spontaneous expression of itself. Faced with a child's "fantasy" expression, a Montessori teacher is therefore compelled to insightfully "observe" beyond that which is superficially present and, if necessary, to confront and interrupt a child's disruptive "fantasy" behavior to apply the principle of "Individual Liberty".

**Interruption**

*"If . . . there is some child who persistently annoys the others, the most practical thing to do is to interrupt him . . . to break the flow of disturbing activity. The interruption may take the form of any kind of exclamation, or in showing a special and affectionate interest in the troublesome child."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 278-279

The Montessori teacher's "interruption" of fantasy expression in children intends to arouse interest in reality, to "awaken" an unconscious spirit to the opportunity to work in the present moment. Although such "interruption" may well meet with considerable initial resistance from the child, one proceeds nonetheless with a directed non-judgmental inquiry, observation or conversation to penetrate the child's inner wall of separation from reality.

**The Inner Wall**

*"An inner wall is built up which closes the spirit and conceals it as a defense against the world. Behind these multiple barriers a hidden drama is unfolded."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 160

Children interrupted in their fantasy expression often initially reveal an "inner wall" whose essential message is "go away". Adults must nonetheless proceed forward with their inquiry. Similarly, the adult's communication in this regard can become confused and frustrated as the superficial roles and circumstances of a particular drama suddenly change without apparent reason.

## Positions & Placements

**Placement desired:** Montessori teacher seeks employment opportunity. Graduate of "Good Shepherd Maria Montessori Training Center" (Colombo, Sri Lanka). fluent English. Educational emphasis is speech and drama. Interests include sewing and ballet. Contact: Samantha Mudalige, 20/14 Fife Road, Colombo 5, Sri Lanka.

**Montessori Directress:** (2-6), well established school in suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. Position available immediately. Salary negotiable. Can call collect (216) 248-3100, or (216) 475-6464.

**Confusion**

*"Children . . . start something only to leave it unfinished . . . A child's imagination can give a symbolic meaning to any object whatever. . ."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 155-157

A child's sudden shift in the external drama way well confuse and thereby discourage an adult's further communication and inquiry into some fantasy scenario. Confusion emerges when, for example, children who are one minute pretending to build a "space ship" become a "family of racoons" in the next. The discerning adult disregards such superficial changes, attending instead to the underlying reality of repressed feelings which is being played out as the true content and "script" of the drama. Confusion may also arise when children identify themselves as non-human entities.

**Non-Human Entities**

*"The wandering mind that breaks away from reality, breaks away also . . . from healthy normality."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 266

Children who have assumed a "non-human" identity are wandering far from reality to significantly deter effective adult communication. Verbal expression from "non-human" entities is generally limited to some sort of "bark", "grunt" or other such meaningless noise. With patience, one may nonetheless find opportunities to penetrate this particular barrier to reality. Sometimes, verbal dialogue itself becomes an obstacle when the adult oneself becomes entangled in the child's fantasy. Accordingly, the adult must carefully notice one's own speech to avoid the child's subtle manipulation in this regard.

**Manipulation**

*"Even though child and adult seem to have a deep understanding and affection for one another, they are ensnared in the same net . . . an adult with his useless assistance and hypnotic influence has substituted himself for a child and impeded his psychic growth."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 162

A child's verbal dialogue with an adult during some fantasy scenario can readily capture the adult in the same web of illusion with which the child itself is ensnared; e.g., "Will you be the mommy?"; "Tell Mary that she can't play with us". The most effective adult response to such manipulative dialogue is to insightfully re-direct the conversation; e.g., "Who is the 'mommy' now?"; "What is Mary doing to disturb your activity?". Indeed, complete silence may be most appropriate in the face of such manipulative expression. In any case, fantasy will ultimately resolve itself as the child realizes some important interest or purpose it has in reality—to work constructively on behalf of its own self-development.

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## Fantasy

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### Resolving Fantasy

"... a child always has something important at hand, he is not particularly interested in playing."

Maria Montessori  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 220

The child's disengagement from fantasy may emerge quite suddenly with no particular adult consciousness as to the nature of its underlying reality of repressed feelings and emotional drama. Without apparent reason, the child may simply leave its fantasy scenario and accordingly begin to engage in deep concentration with some piece of real work in the environment. Although children may occasionally return to fantasy expression from time to time, its attachment in the child will gradually weaken as the adult patiently engages each occurrence according to Montessori principles. Ultimately, all fantasy is resolved in the phenomenon known as "normalization".

### Normalization

"Normalization causes the disappearance of many childhood traits . . . which are generally thought to be virtues . . . the so-called 'creative imagination', delight in stories, attachment to individuals, play, submissiveness. . ."

Maria Montessori  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 154

"Normalization"—the child's return to a normal state of being in complete harmony with its environment—implicates likewise a complete resolution of fantasy behavior. Accordingly, the child reveals its true nature of intimate attachment to reality and self-constructive work with real objects. The adult's creation of the reality of "commitment to Montessori principles" thus distinguishes the normal child as intimately attached to reality—not the child which otherwise ordinarily emerges in society as so superficially consumed by idle occupation, play and "fantasy".



Children working with "Broad Stairs" at the Forest Hills Montessori School (Forest Hills, New York)

### Forest Hills School

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 2

five years, has been participating in the Society's course since her enrollment in June, 1985.

Located in a cosmopolitan area, the Forest Hills school has children from all over the world. Therefore, various "international" days are held whereby parents are invited to come and share with their child's class their special holidays, customs and various foods of their countries. Ms. Tejpaul reports that these special "international" days help the children incorporate the various curriculum areas of practical life, sensorial exercises and Social Studies all into one lesson.

The Forest Hills school also features French as a foreign language, music, art, field trips and a summer Montessori program. In addition, a gymnastics program is offered for children 3-6 who go to a local YMCA once a week to work under the guidance of gymnastic specialists.

For further information, contact: Sunila Tejpaul, Forest Hills Montessori School, 104-40 Queens Blvd., Forest Hills, New York 11375, Tel. (718) 275-0173.

## Marketplace

For Sale/Lease: Montessori school, 2½ yrs. to 8th grade. Fully enrolled, well-equipped. 38,250 sq. ft. building, 12 acres, wooded. Contact Mr./Mrs. Piriard, (313) 751-2758.

### New Phonetic Practice Readers

#### MCP Primary Readers: Series B

The popular *MCP Primary Readers*—available for several years from the Society—are now being expanded to include a new similar 40-book series entitled "Series B".

The new *MCP Primary Readers, Series B*, afford an excellent additional resource for Montessori teachers and others concerned with assisting children in the vital skill of learning to read. The Society now offers this new *Series B* of phonetic readers along with the current *Series A* as before. Send orders prepaid only. Price is \$9.72 per set, \$38.88 for the entire 4-set series (40 books). (Be sure to specify "Series B") Add postage of \$1.50 for a single set, \$3.50 for the 4-set series. The entire 80-book set of both *Series A* and *Series B* is \$77.76 (Plus \$4.75 postage). *Society members receive a 20% discount from the prices indicated.*

### Society's Law Suit

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

The Society is seeking support for its petition in the form of *amicus curiae* briefs for submittal to the Supreme Court by interested parties throughout the United States. All involved in private education have an important interest in the transcendent issues of freedom from censorship and equal treatment in government "regulation" which are raised by the Society's suit. To receive a copy of the Society's petition or for further information, contact: International Montessori Society, 912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.