



The Montessori OBSERVER

Authority

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Proceedings of the Society's "Creating the New Education" conference held in Atlanta, Georgia on February 24-25, 1989.

Creating the New Education in Michigan, Indiana and Georgia

Warren, Michigan January 28-29, 1989

The Society's second Michigan Montessori conference "creating the new education" was held in Warren, Michigan on January 28-29, 1989. Montessori teachers and others from throughout the state attended, in addition to several persons from the nearby province of Ontario, Canada.

The Warren, Michigan conference discussion focused particular attention on the issue of how "materials" in the classroom fit into the normal development of children. Lee Havis, Society executive director, led the participants to reflect upon the extent to which "materials" are most frequently employed with children for prejudicial adult-controlled academic achievement and "teaching"—rather than as true free choice and exploration according to the child's own interests and spontaneous self-development of intellectual activity.

Havis emphasized that Montessori teaching is more a "hands-off" approach with children where the materials are concerned—more to "observe" rather than "teach." He stated that "a real lesson in Montessori teaching is any interaction between an adult and child—brief eye contact from across the room being among the best lessons of all. A Montessori teacher is less able to engage in these most favorable 'eye contact' lessons when there is an excessive and

undue involvement with teaching presentations of the materials."

Lafayette, Indiana February 18-19, 1989

The first Society Montessori conference in the state of Indiana was held in Lafayette, Indiana on February 18-19, 1989. Karen Countryman (Lafayette, Indiana) was instrumental in organizing participation in this conference from many diverse regions of the state, including Lafayette, Indianapolis, Ft. Wayne, Williamsport and Elkhart.

The Lafayette conference included a substantial discussion of "fantasy" and how this type of unnormalized behavior in children could be resolved by such active observation procedures as eye contact and questioning. Various "fantasy" scenarios were dramatized at the conference to show how their resolution could be successfully accomplished in actual practice through the approach of "control the environment, not the child." Havis indicated that "fantasy is a reflection of the adult personality as a detrimental influence in the child's environment. Asking a child 'why' it is engaged in some particular 'fantasy' behavior will help to move through the thinking process to uncover and resolve the deeper repressed feelings of pain and fear with which such fantasy is so intimately associated."

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Montessori Conferences

Creating the New Education

Tampa, Florida
April 15-16, 1989

New York, New York
April 29-30, 1989

Washington, D.C.
May 6-7, 1989

Reading, Pennsylvania
May 20-21, 1989

Meriden, Connecticut
June 3-4, 1989

West Bend, Wisconsin
August 6-7, 1989

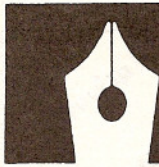
Columbia, South Carolina
August 12-13, 1989

Pre-paid registration for the full two-day conference is \$150 per person (\$120 for Society members). The payment due date is four (4) weeks before the scheduled date of the conference. A late fee of \$50 applies for registrations submitted after the payment due date.

Send registration fee to: International Montessori Society, 912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, Maryland 20910. Tel. (301) 589-1127.



Karen Countryman (left) and Louise Brannon (right) in discussion at Society conference in Lafayette, Indiana (February 18-19, 1989).



Authority

by Lee Haviv

"Instead of education remaining aloof and ignored by society, it must acquire the authority to rule over society."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 14

Dr. Montessori envisioned her "new education" in the world as a guide and direction for the evolution of humanity according to infinite and eternal laws of nature—to assert a true authority over society itself. By revealing the child's true nature of spontaneous self-discipline, attachment to reality and being in complete harmony with its environment, this "new education" reflects an authoritative purpose to transform society which is strikingly distinct from that of traditional education to merely transmit certain specified knowledge and information. This transcendent authority of Montessori education emanates essentially from its profound respect for specific cosmic laws of nature which guide the teacher's entire being and function with children.

Respect For Cosmic Laws

"...the problems of education must be solved on the basis of the laws of the cosmic order. . . . Respect for these cosmic laws is fundamental. Only when we hold to these as basic can we judge and modify the multitude of human laws which deal with the passing moments of external social construction."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p. 14

Montessori teaching with children asserts a natural authority with children which arises from one's own being as a complete commitment to three specific cosmic laws; i.e., (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". Guided by such Montessori principles, the teacher creates the uniquely nurturing psychic environment around children which ultimately allows their true "normalized" nature to spontaneously emerge. Lacking such a commitment to the three Montessori principles, traditional teaching tends to reflect the restrictive authority of ordinary adult society with its various forms of mutual agreement to control, limit and otherwise repress the full expression of the human spirit in the world.

Agreement

"The embryo can teach us the absurdity of our social mechanism, where one group claims to dominate another merely by authority, without agreement. . . . humanity too is an organic unity that is yet being born."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *To Ed. the Hum. Potential*, p. 113

Many hidden forms of agreement are built into the ordinary authority of adult society to

variously inhibit and restrain complete normal development and spontaneous creative thought and action with others. Such misconceived authority is played out in each one's life as a recreation of the drama of unresolved struggle and subjugation with parents and teachers during the period for personality development prior to the age of about six. The subtle tyranny and repression of one's own parents and teachers is accordingly continued unconsciously in adult society through various forms of recognized authority to which all seem compelled to necessarily conform and submit.

Recognized Authority

"Tyranny surrounds the individual with the impenetrable walls of recognized authority."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 152

Through a system of recognized authority, leaders in adult society tend to act according to their various defined positions of tyrannical control and domination over others. Cloaked under the guise of the "common good" and "law and order", such recognized authority is ordinarily unquestioned and accepted as necessary for the well-being of all. The underlying tyranny associated with this authoritative imposition over human expression is often further camouflaged by the pretense of collective "choice" through various forms of voting and elections in the nature of democracy.

Democracy

"Democracy. . . what irony! To choose one's rulers! but those who rule cannot free anybody from the chains which bind all. . . ."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p. 16-17

Despite its outer appearance of "free choice", democracy in practice is generally limited to the imposition of the majority will on all—to crush out opposing minority opinion and complete free choice according to the prevailing prejudices of the *status quo*. Within such an authoritative system of prejudicial majority rule, new and useful creative activity for the ultimate benefit of all is significantly restricted and repressed. By contrast, true authority functions not so much by "elections", but rather through a total group consensus wherein the skills and abilities of each individual are respected and dignified in their contribution to the common good and interests of all. The task of ruling others is likewise recognized not merely as a matter of the majority will, but rather as a distinct skill, interest and ability for which one is naturally suited and uniquely prepared.

Ruling Others

"To rule is the most difficult task of all . . . and requires a higher specialization than any. So here there is no question of election, but of being trained and suited to the work. Whoever directs others must be transformed himself."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 45

Ruling others is a specialized function of authority which emanates essentially from the inner process of one's transformational "adaptation" to such a specified task in the group situation. This delicate authoritative function over others arises naturally not by conventional "elections", but rather according to a transcendent cosmic plan of harmony which is adapted to the total interrelated functioning of the entire group. With respect to the care and well-being of children, nature assigns this delicate role of authority primarily to parents.

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Look for the

March Observer

featuring

Maturity

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Lee Haviv, Executive Director

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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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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 be 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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Moment of Peril

Everybody Hates Me

from *Observer*, January/1989
by Lee Havis

The discouragement of seven-year old Nathan (*Observer*, January/1989) reflects a primary detrimental influence of the "adult personality"—with the "other children" as the secondary detrimental influence in the environment. (The "physical objects" are not significantly at issue in this scenario) Nathan's misbehavior is essentially a projection of the adult's own hidden "personality" drama of repressed feelings and alienation from others.

To remove the "adult personality" as a detrimental influence in the environment at this "moment of peril," the procedure of "questioning" is most favorably applied in a manner to follow the child's own interests in the matter at hand. Since the child does not know "why" everybody seems to hate him, one's questioning can help direct Nathan to make an inquiry with the other children in the circumstances of a class meeting.

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2

New Fee Structure for Montessori Schools

On September 1, 1989, the Society will institute a new fee structure for recognition of Montessori schools—to encourage their more active and substantial participation with the Society in accordance with pertinent membership criteria. After September 1, 1989, new or renewing Montessori school members will be assessed an annual fee which is based on the number of children enrolled at their school—with a reduced rate allowed to the school according to its active participation with various Society support services during the prior 12-month period.

The new rate schedule will establish a base rate of membership for each Montessori school as \$10 per enrolled child, up to a maximum amount of \$700. From this amount, the annual fee will be reduced by the amount of payments made to the Society over the past 12 months for its participation in Society conferences, consultation, group membership and teacher education. A minimum annual fee of \$45 will be required. This new fee structure will apply to both new and renewed Montessori school members.

The new enrollment-based fee schedule is intended to encourage Montessori schools to actively participate in a closer working, continuing association with the Society—without imposing an excessive or unfair burden on schools with a relatively small number of children enrolled. The Society believes that such an adjusted membership fee structure will help Montessori schools to more substantially comply with membership criteria concerning such issues as staff development and communication with parents.

Authority

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Authority of Parents

"...the authority of parents does not come from a dignity standing on its own feet, but it comes from the help they are able to give their children."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 16

The authority of parents to care for their children emerges by nature from the biological function and responsibility with which the parental role is so intimately associated from the moment of conception. Beyond birth, this parental authority is ordinarily expressed through the many important decisions and actions which are taken throughout the child's critical formative period of early childhood development. By assignment and delegation, teachers and schools assume their own similar corresponding adult roles and function of authority with children. Whether parent or teacher, this adult authority must properly limit its application to function only in the realm of the child's "environment"; i.e., not directly over the "child" itself.

Different Realms

"The adult is master in one area, but the child is master in the other. . . . Both child and adult are kings, but they are rulers of different realms."

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

Guided by the three Montessori principles, the adult's realm of true authority with children is bound by the laws of nature to the activity of creating a "normalizing" environment around the individual child. Within such a Montessori environment, the child itself retains complete authority for self-directed development according to its own "teacher within". The adult's role to "control the environment, not the child" therefore requires a most delicate balance of adult activity wherein the child is gradually led to achieve complete independence from various forms of adult control and approval.

Approval of Authority

"The child, in fact, once he feels sure of himself, will no longer seek the approval of authority after every step."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 274

Effective adult authority with children creates a "normalizing" environment which gradually leads the child to its own free and independent functioning with others. Adult approval and direct authoritative involvement is therefore gradually withdrawn from children over time. Following mysterious inner instincts for constructive self-development, the child is thereby allowed to unfold its own plan of development to outwardly reveal such "normalized" qualities as profound concentration, spontaneous self-discipline and personal responsibility for a full range of harmonious social activities with others. To create such a

Montessori Observer, March/1989

condition for the child's true "normalization", the Montessori teacher must function primarily as a good manager of the child's environment.

A Good Manager

"A good manager does not have to be assertive in manner, but he must have a deep sense of responsibility."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 262

The effective teacher as a good manager of the child's environment must carefully ensure that one's being is consistently a complete commitment to the three Montessori principles. More a matter of "observation" rather than "teaching", such good management necessarily includes a continual exercise of judgment with respect to various forms of active intervention or inhibition with children—acting on decisions which must be continually made to meet the ever-changing needs and requirements of the present moment situation. Authority in such a delicate "observation" task is reflected most significantly by a profound sense of responsibility for one's own personal and immediate actions with children.

Responsibility

"Woe to us when we believe ourselves responsible for matters that do not concern us, and delude ourselves with the idea that we are perfecting things that will perfect themselves quite independently of us! . . . and the profound question arises: What, then, is our true mission, our true responsibility?"

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act*, in Ed., p. 6

In Montessori education, true authority arises essentially as a personal responsibility which is limited to a patient process of growing awareness associated with one's intimate collaboration with infinite and eternal laws of nature. Such responsibility requires a constant reflection and reference back to the three Montessori principles—to correct errors and guide one's being in a life-long process of inner spiritual growth and expanding awareness of detrimental influences in the child's environment. Beyond the classroom, responsibility in Montessori education assumes a larger leadership role for others as various tasks are undertaken in the process of creating the "new education" in society—to help others as a matter of one's higher vision of being to ultimately encompass all humanity.

Leadership

"It is the responsibility that a leader should feel, not the authority of his position. After seven the children will seek such a leader; before that age they have social cohesion."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. for a New World*, p. 84

From infancy, the qualities of leadership develop spontaneously as a natural social cohesion with others—to gradually evolve into a more conscious form of responsible participation in the group situation. With older children

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Creating the New Education

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Atlanta, Georgia February 25-26, 1989

The Atlanta, Georgia conference was the third such conference in that state since 1986 and included the participation of Montessori teachers, parents and school administrators from throughout the states of Georgia, Florida and South Carolina. Since many of the participants had attended prior Society conferences, the level of discussion was primarily directed to the more refined and subtle aspects of "being" as an expansion of one's "adult personality."

Lee Havis directed the participants to consider how important is supportive adult communication between Society conferences to encourage each other to help work through and resolve the many unexpected situations which otherwise tend to emerge as a persistent detrimental influence of one's "personality" with children. He stated that "by helping others, we are ourselves corrected and improved in our own behavior in many unconscious ways. As 'personality,' we are all in some respect a reflection of each other."

After the Atlanta conference, Havis conducted a two-day consultation at the nearby Hammond school—one of the local Montessori schools whose staff participated in the Atlanta conference. Havis stated that "this consultation confirms the value and importance of conference attendance to assure a greater practical teaching skill and ability in the actual Montessori classroom environment."

The Society's "creating the new education" conference is scheduled wherever a sufficient interest is expressed from the local community. Contact the Society for more information about attending a conference or to help plan such a conference in one's own local area.



Three participants from Toronto, Canada discuss "managing misbehavior" at Society conference in Warren, Michigan, January 28-29, 1989. Pictured (left to right) are: Madelyne Richburg, Teresita Villamayor and Thea Norton.

Moments of Peril

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Older children like Nathan respond particularly well to the abstract process of questioning and verbal inquiry with others—and this can be most successfully managed in a total class meeting where all the children are gathered together for a general discussion of issues that affect the functioning of their harmonious being together. At such a class meeting, the adult may present Nathan's basic problem ("everybody hates me") and invite the other children to engage in a clarifying discussion of the matter. Nathan would thereby come to recognize more keenly his own responsibility for the reactions and hostile attitudes of the other children to enable his own independent remedy of the problem in the future through more careful actions in greater harmony with the interests of the total group experience.

Running Out the Door

The teacher controls an object which five year old Gary had been abusing in a flight of fantasy. Gary then runs out the door and down the hall screaming in wild defiance at the top of his lungs. Several smaller children follow Gary out the door. What to do?

Answer in Observer, May/1989

Positions & Placements

Montessori Teacher: Enthusiastic, energetic. Opening April 1st through June and/or September, 1989 for a full-time period (8:30-3:30). Founded in 1972, and presently enrolls 180 children in six classrooms. Four acre location is one half hour south of Boston. Call: (617) 934-7101 or write to Munch-Kin Montessori, 145 Loring Rd., Duxbury, MA 02332.

Montessori Teacher: (3-6; 6-9) Full time for 1989-90 school year program expansion. Urban school serving Black community. Salary negotiable. Send resume to: Christ the King Catholic School, Attn.: Sr. Deanna Randall, BVM 1217 Hattiesburg St., Jackson, MS 39209.

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and adults, specific leadership roles arise as one's practical skills, interest and ability are identified and applied to the immediate task at hand. Montessori teachers naturally exercise a leadership role on behalf of the "normalized" child as this reality is translated into various responsible actions with others in society. Directed by an inner "commitment to Montessori principles", such an expanding responsibility for the emergence of the "normalized" child in the world reflects the quality of true authority which ultimately guides and directs the entire future and destiny of mankind itself.