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Newsletter for Parents of SAMA Member Schools

The Seven Deadly Sins

I read a very interesting chapter in *The Secret of Childhood*, written by Dr. Maria Montessori, the other day which was more written for the spiritual preparation of the Montessori Adult, but it made me think....

She said that the adult's environment is not a life-giving environment for the child. "Rather it is an accumulation of obstacles, leading him to creation of defence, to deforming efforts at adaptation, else leaving him the victim of suggestion. There is a hidden man, a hidden child, a buried living being, who must be liberated. The aim the adult should have is to discover the child and affect his liberation. In this, we may say, lies the problem of existence: simply to exist.

She went on by saying that we, the adult, must examine our self, to discover certain defects that may become obstacles in our relation with the child. We have in ourselves tendencies that are not good and which flourish like weeds in the field. These tendencies are many; they fall into seven groups, known of old as the Seven Deadly Sins. All the deadly sins tend to separate us from the child; for the child compare to us, is not only purer but has mysterious qualities, which we adults as a rule cannot perceive, but in which we must believe with faith.

The deadly sin that arises within us and prevents us from understanding the child is Anger. Anger summons and combines with a sin of more noble appearance and hence more diabolical, Pride. Our Pride is mitigated by other people's opinion of us; our Avarice by the circumstances in which we live; Anger by the reaction of the strong; Sloth by the necessity of working for a living; Lust by the customs of society; Greed by the limited possibilities of obtaining more than we need; Envy by the necessity of conserving an appearance of dignity. These external factors are a continual and very salutary in their warning.

By pausing on these reflections, we come to realise that we are more attached to our vices than we think. We hide subconsciously even from ourselves. It is a mask we are only too ready to put on, calling it "necessity", "duty", "the common good" and so on.

We as adults should examine our self, and purge us of tyranny, tear down that ancient complex of pride and anger that unconsciously encrusts the heart, and become humble. These are the spiritual preparation we must do, but first comes an act of humility, the rooting –out of a prejudice embedded in our hearts so that there is a radical change in our inner state, which prevents us as adults from understanding the child."¹

Reading this, I realised once again that the child's biggest enemy is the adult. Being a parent, you only want what is best for your child. We make certain that our children get the best education in choosing Montessori to give the foundation needed. We, as parents and adults should at all times try to set the example for our children. When a young child uses a crude word the first time, we are quick to judge, forgetting where the child heard it the first time. Let us look at our own lives first, before we try to correct the behaviour of the child. Do as I do, not as I say.

Good luck with your most important endeavour of being a parent, and remember: you are not alone. We as Montessori Adults (parents and directresses) should all work together to bring out the best in the child.

Charl du Toit
SAMA President

¹ Dr. M. Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood*, Orient Longman Ltd., Kamani Marg, Bombay: 1995
p107-p116

SAMA OFFICE: Cell no: 072 609 6979 Office: (041) 367 4936
Fax: 086 561 8774 e-mail: admin@samontessori.org.za
Website: www.samontessori.org.za