Introduction

In a 1924 publication Dr. Montessori addressed two questions regarding children’s social development. The first question was, “If children in a Montessori school work individually rather than collectively, how will they be able to prepare themselves for social life?” The second asked, if children choose their own activities, seeking out the most interesting and agreeable occupations, how will they be prepared to take their place in real life, where tasks are not always pleasant or interesting?¹

These are two good questions; they address the integration of individual character (intra-personal development) and social life (inter-personal development). It is both intrapersonal (within) and interpersonal (among) development that effects social development.

It is interesting that these two questions are still among the most widely asked today. As a society, we really don’t understand the nature of children’s social development or character any more now than we did in 1924. These questions reveal conventional prejudices about children and education; most people still think of social development as something that is externally impressed upon children.

The common definition of “impress” is to make a mark upon something, but there is another definition of “impress” – “to compel people to serve, (especially by arbitrary means.)” Conventional thinking believes that adults must compel children to act in a socially acceptable manner or they won’t. Adults must compel children to be good and honest, because naturally children are not. Adults tend to think that children’s character is dependent upon our teaching, and our correction of their defects.

A recent issue of a “cutting edge” American journal for educational supervision and curriculum development devoted an entire issue to “teaching social responsibility.” But we can no more teach the young child social responsibility than we could teach her to speak or walk. Just as we cannot instruct, punish, or model in order that the baby learns to walk, we cannot expect that instruction, punishment, or modeling will build character and teach social development.

¹ Montessori, (1924) “Two Questions Answered by Maria Montessori,” The Call of Education, Vol.1, No. 1
Reprinted in AMI Communications, No. 1, 1996.
And yet, we keep trying, because every generation looks at “young people today” as being weak in character, lacking in perseverance, disrespectful, and antisocial. Conventional teachers today comment just as much as they did in Montessori’s time that so many kids just don’t want to learn. They can’t concentrate; they’re bored; they don’t care.

When my elder son started high school, every single teacher began with a similar lecture- “We can’t make you learn and do the work, you have to do it yourself.” But at the high school level, that’s like saying, “Walk nicely!” to a person without legs.” (Montessori, The Absorbent Mind, p. 209). We can’t expect a student to concentrate, respect others, try his best, work hard, or be patient if he hasn’t developed those aspects of his character. We can encourage, model, cajole, or punish as much as we like, but it is like standing on the shore, shouting instructions on how to swim to a drowning man.

So we return to those two original questions, how do we help a child prepare for social life? What does help a child to develop the strength of character necessary to tackle the difficult or unpleasant tasks in life? To find the answers, we have to return to the first plane of development- the foundation for life- and examine the universal child through the lens of social development as well as individual development.

The Child and Society

We know human beings are social creatures. We live in society and we rely on each other to help us meet our needs- not only our physical needs, but also our emotional and spiritual needs. The idea of “culture” is based on the myriad of different ways that groups of humans have devised to meet these needs. Cultures and societies are comprised of individuals- individuals who have agreed on some level to cooperate and collaborate. The individual does not exist without the society.

We know that human beings have certain tendencies that propel them to act in particular ways. The human tendencies urge both the individual and the social group towards progress and a sense of fulfillment. Think of the tendencies that motivate individual development- order, orientation, exploration, communication, movement, work, repetition, exactness, abstraction, and self-perfection. Now think of how these human tendencies involve social aspects - communication, work, order, orientation, and exploration. Especially the human tendency for communication- right from the moment of birth, the infant begins communicating and connecting with his family- and there are individual developmental consequences (neural networking) as well as social bonding and attachment.

We also know that around age three, the little child begins to seek the company of other little children and is ready to expand her environment. This is the time when she enters the Children’s House and continues her work in the company of new adults and children with whom she will form trusting relationships. The family continues to be of primary importance, but now her growth and experience will
occur within a larger social context. This period from 3-6 is of such significance that Montessori called it the “embryonic period for the formation of character and society.” During the prenatal period the physical organs developed- the physical embryo; during the period from birth to three the brain developed- the psychic embryo; and from three to six the character and sense of society develops- the social embryo. (Montessori, The Absorbent Mind, “Cohesion in the Social Unit,” p. 243, Kalakshetra)

We have identified adaptation as the process by which children become a person of their own particular place and time. Adaptation is an essential individual and social outcome of the first plane. In a relatively short period of time, children master the nuances of verbal and nonverbal communication. They absorb the complex web of social interactions, feelings, and prejudices of their particular culture. They learn to love their community, their people, their way of life. In this, we see that adaptation has the dual purpose of becoming and belonging. It is both an individual and a social process.

It would seem that parallel to individual development, nature has endowed the child with both the capacity and the motivation for social development from birth. With this being true, just as we see that when children can follow their, natural, normal path of individual development their deviations of character fall away and their true nature is revealed, so too must there be a natural, normal path of social development, where social deviations fall away and the true social nature of the child and society is revealed.

And in fact, this is what happened. It was the immense social significance of her discovery in San Lorenzo that inspired Dr. Montessori to leave her medical practice and dedicate herself solely to liberating the child’s spirit. The children’s social transformation was the “discovery of the child,” and the “secret of childhood,” that so inspired her. It was not that children learned to read and write at an early age- the academics- it was her discovery of a “new human face,” a new hope for healing a “diseased humanity,” and the potential for reconstructing society and the human spirit (O’Shaughnessy, 2004).
The Social Aspects of Normalization

As you recall, when we talked about normalization, Montessori discovered that when obstacles to development were removed and children could follow the normal, healthy path of natural development, their deviations fell away and were replaced by a consistent, predictable set of positive, new characteristics that were very much alike. A universal child emerged.

Individual Character

The children loved to work, and finished what they started without rewards or punishment. They wanted to be independent and chose their own activities. They could concentrate for long periods of time. They happily obeyed the teacher. They exhibited patience and perseverance. They were happy and satisfied. Montessori wrote, “The disorderly became orderly, the passive became active, and the troublesome disturbing child became a help in the classroom. This result made us understand their former defects had been acquired and were not innate.” (Montessori, The Absorbent Mind, “Character and it’s Defects,” p.199, Kalakshetra)

Left unchecked, deviated children grow up to become deviated adults and create a deviated society. We see and live evidence of that every day, “…but these defects are acquired and are not innate.” Normalized children exhibited both self-discipline and social discipline. Montessori observed dramatic individual transformations, and a social transformation as well! Once again, nature provides for both individual development and social development. With individual normalization comes social discipline- it develops along with normalization and is built into it.

Social Discipline

The social discipline that Montessori observed describes how children spontaneously interact with each other. Children show:

- Self-controlled and purposeful interactions with others
- Mutual spontaneous respect
- A willingness to help others
- Spontaneous responsiveness to the needs of others
- Evidence of feelings of benevolence and sympathy towards others in the group
- A non-competitive attitude

Where ordinary adults might sigh or scold a troublesome new student, the other children treat him with compassion and reassurance. A child might say, “It is true you are very naughty, but don’t worry about it. We were just as bad when we came!” The difficult child is treated as one who is ill and needs

sympathy, love, and patience. (Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, “Social Development,” p. 229, Kalakshetra) When something breaks or spills, the children run to help clean up. They encourage and support the newcomer and the child who is weaker or younger. Montessori saw this as a true “instinct for social progress,” and compared it to the leap in human evolution that came when “society began to help the weak and the poor, instead of oppressing and despising them.” (Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, “Social Development,” p. 230, Kalakshetra)

Not only that, but the children also showed a true admiration for each other’s accomplishments without feeling threatened by them. They seemed to feel that, “I can do well, and you can too!” The younger children admire and look up to the older children, and the older children care for and support the younger. There is an evident feeling of community, built on love, respect, and working together.

The remarkable thing about San Lorenzo was that this kind of social community formed completely spontaneously. There was no modeling, and no pre-designed program for social development. In fact, when the untrained teachers tried to use rewards and punishments to influence the children’s behavior, the children showed indifference to both! In the Secret of Childhood there is the story of the child who received an award for good behavior giving his “pompous decoration” to another child, sitting on a stool, being punished. Another story tells of the children refusing sweets given as prizes— they accepted the gifts but put the sweets in their pockets and didn’t eat them.³

**Social Cohesion**

This social sentiment came from within the children. It was not modeled or taught; it was not even expected. Montessori believed that this type of spontaneous social construction was a function of the absorbent mind. She described it as a “unity born among the children, produced by a spontaneous need, directed by an unconscious power, and vitalized by a social spirit.” (Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, “Cohesion in the Social Unit,” Kalakshetra, p. 232.) She called this phenomenon “society by cohesion,” or social cohesion.

In science, the word “cohesion” refers to the natural force of attraction by which molecules remain together. It is a force of nature. It appears when molecules can follow the laws of nature. Social cohesion cannot be taught or externally imposed— it is not a conscious product of the reasoning mind. Montessori tells us “neither character nor the social sentiment can be given by teachers. They are products of life.” (Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, “Cohesion in the Social Unit,” Kalakshetra, p. 234.) Social cohesion emerges naturally in children through the process of normal development in the first plane of development.

Social Development

Related to the observable characteristics of self-discipline and social discipline, there are also consistent, observable aspects to social cohesion. Social cohesion includes:

- reciprocal help – older children helping younger ones, and younger ones helping each other
- respect, interest, and admiration for each other’s work and accomplishments
- concern for the consequences of their own actions
- concern for the wellbeing of others; sympathy and understanding
- harmony and cooperation in working together
- altruism and a love of their community

The phenomenon of social cohesion was replicated all over the world, with children of every culture and socio-economic standing. Montessori observed it happening in the early Casas, and I observed it happening in my own classrooms. This kind of social development unfolds naturally alongside the children’s individual development.

Conditions That Support Social Cohesion

"It seems clear enough that nature lays down a plan for the construction both of personality and of social life, but this plan becomes realized only through the children’s activity when they are placed in circumstances favourable to its fulfillment." (Montessori, The Absorbent Mind, “Cohesion in the Social Unit,” p.233)

The key to both the realization of the individual personality and the social group is concentration. Concentration “lays the whole basis for (the child’s) character and social behaviour.” (Montessori, The Absorbent Mind, “Social Development,” p. 221, Kalakshetra) No one can concentrate for the child; he must do this himself. In a supportive home environment and in the Casa, children have the opportunity to concentrate all throughout the day for years. Remember, the ability to concentrate is present at birth, but concentration is like a mental muscle that must be exercised and developed or it will become weak from disuse. Continual opportunities for concentration integrate the mind and the body. The resulting harmony of spirit becomes the foundation of social harmony.

In addition to concentration, there are other key conditions in the environment that support social development. For this, we look to the equilateral triangle of the group of children, the materials and activities, and the adult.

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The Group of Children

Because human beings are social creatures, the process of social development relies on the “quality and quantity of opportunities for learning to live with other people” (Osterkorn, 1980). The development of character and “social sentiment” are “products of life,” and come from the community of little children living together (Montessori, The Absorbent Mind, “Cohesion in the Social Unit” p. 234, Kalekshetra, 1984).

Within the Casa, the mixed age group means that children have the opportunity to interact with both older and younger peers, all of who are at varying levels of individual development. The mixed age group provides daily opportunities to practice patience, tolerance, and receiving or offering assistance. Younger children look to the older children with admiration and for inspiration, and in turn, the older children help and teach the younger children. By spending three or sometimes four years in the same classroom, each child begins as one of the younger children and progresses through increasing levels of social experience. Each year she learns to relate to the others in a slightly different way, beginning as young new child and eventually becoming the older child whom she once looked up to and admired.

Within a three-year age span, the energies of the children are more or less of the same intensity, allowing for social interactions that are fairly even. If an adult must approach a child to intervene in every situation, Montessori compares it to a “lion or hippopotamus” charging up to the little child, but if “another child disturbs him, he is just a comrade, a companion who has come around.” (Montessori, Creative Development in the Child, Vol. 2, p. 33) Since their individual energies are more evenly matched, the children may very well work out the situation themselves.

Montessori was also clear that the number of children in the group was significant. Regarding the total number of children in the class, Montessori says, “In its best condition the class should have between thirty and forty children.” There may be more, depending on the capacity of the teacher. She continues, “When there are fewer than twenty-five the standards become lower, and in a class of eight children it is difficult to obtain good results.” She tells us that the best results come with greater numbers - “twenty-five is sufficient, and forty is the best number that has been found.” (Montessori, The Child, Society, and the World, “Montessori’s Alternative Comprehensive School, p. 64-65, Clio 1989) The larger group of children offers more opportunity for variety in individual personalities and in social dynamics.

The Materials and Activities

The deliberate, limited number of materials in the Casa means that only one child at a time can work with a material. Far from being unkind or detrimental to the children, this has very profound social significance. If someone is using a material, the other children must learn to wait until that material is
available, practicing patience and delayed gratification while respecting the work of others. Since there is only one of each activity, if a child breaks or damages a material, it is removed from the environment until it can be repaired or replaced. All of the children experience the consequences. This is not punitive, but the real and true effects of caring for the community’s resources.

Within the cycle of work, each child is free to choose an activity, work with it as long as he wishes, and is responsible for returning that material to its place, ready for the next person. Since these rules are the same for everyone, each child finds security in knowing that when he has chosen an activity, no one will take it from him or insist that he share it with another. Likewise, he learns that if someone else is working with a material, he must respect that child’s work and wait, secure in the knowledge that sometime soon it will be available to him, in good condition, waiting in its proper place.

Over and over, every day, the children practice these skills of making choices, acting on their choices, and taking responsibility for their choices. This daily undercurrent of respect and patience builds trust, security, and self-control among the children. The children experience that “each person in the world has his own place and that we must respect the places of others.” (Montessori, Creative Development in the Child, Vol. 2, p. 34.) We cannot teach this understanding by lecturing the children; it must be developed through personal experience. Each time a child chooses an activity he experiences the dual purposes of individual development and social experience.

Activities of Practical Life

The exercises in Practical Life are of particular importance to social development. The Preliminary Activities, such as walking around rugs, carrying water without spilling, or moving furniture are designed to give children the opportunity to practice moving their bodies and using materials in such a way as to protect the physical and psychological safety of everyone in the environment. These activities help create a standard of behavior based in mutual care and respect, and an experience of the limits of one’s own liberty. As such, they contribute to the social harmony of the classroom.

Lessons in Social Relations, or “Grace and Courtesy,” present a structure and format for appropriate social interactions. Children delight in practicing the social norms for their culture, and benefit as well from the independence that comes from knowing how to take care of one’s own personal needs and interact peaceably with others.

The activities in Control and Coordination of Movement—Walking on the Line and the Silence Game—offer opportunities for the entire group to work together towards a common goal. Walking on the Line gives practice in controlling the movements of one’s own body while accommodating all of the other
children on the line, and The Silence Game relies on the willful self-control of every member of the
group.

With all of the exercises in Practical Life, the child initially chooses an activity for the unconscious
purpose of self-development. But as the children mature and their awareness of the needs of the
community grow and develop, we begin to see a second psychological stage of work. Here, the child
has the opportunity to respond to a perceived need; she may notice a shelf is dusty and take a cloth to
clean it, or she may see that a younger child's nose needs attention and so give a lesson on using a tissue.
The older child will use all of the skills and knowledge she has gained to help the group, contributing to
the social life of her community.

The Adult
The adult too plays an important role in the social development of the individual and of the community.
As with all aspects of development, our responses to the child can either support or thwart this
development. We are the link between the child and the environment. We facilitate and protect the
liberty of movement and free choice of activity necessary to enable each child to follow his own
interests and sensitive periods. To support development, “The essential thing is for the task to arouse
such an interest that it engages the child's whole personality.” (Montessori, The Absorbent Mind,
“The Child's Contribution to Society,” p.206, Kalakshetra) We support and protect concentration, for it
is this deep engagement that integrates the child's mind and body.

Montessori called this integration the “moment of healing,” and she regarded it as the point of departure
at which consistent freely chosen activity consolidates and develops the child's personality, or character.

Remember that only “normalized children, aided by their environment, show in their subsequent
development those wonderful powers that we describe: spontaneous discipline, continuous and
happy work, social sentiments of help and sympathy for others.” (Montessori, The Absorbent Mind,
“The Child’s Contribution to Society,” p.206, Kalakshetra) Again we see why Montessori called
normalization “the most important single result of our whole work.”

The challenge is that many adults are approaching these ideas of natural social development from a
flawed perspective themselves. This is where we can thwart development. If our early character
development was shaped by guilt, punishment, or feelings of inadequacy or insecurity, this will come out
in our work with children. If we do not have genuine empathy, altruism, or cooperation as an
unconscious foundation for our personalities, we must make a conscious, reasoned effort to bring or
keep these qualities in the foreground. If we do not make that effort, or perversely use our deviations to
sublimate children, we pull children away from their innate tendency towards progress. A powerful yet deviated adult can turn social cohesion into social coercion. We see the devastating results of this in religious cults, and in the charismatic dictators and fascists throughout history.

Even the best-intentioned, well-meaning, yet flawed adult can become an obstacle. We can actually lower the children’s level with our needless instruction and arbitrary limits. Constant reminders to “put on your coat” or “don’t forget” can undermine the child’s own competency. In fact, much of the conventional school system is based on setting limits that are well below what children are capable of. When my son entered public school after ten years of Montessori education, he observed, “They give us deadlines because they don’t think we will finish our work without them, and they give us grades because they think we won’t do our best without them.”

Montessori calls this “an education based on man’s lower powers, not on his higher ones.” She tells us we supply “men with crutches when they could run on swift feet.” (Montessori, The Absorbent Mind, “Character Building is the Child’s Own Achievement,” p.213, Kalakshetra) Instead of bringing children down to our level, if we allow them the conditions necessary for their characters to develop the way they were intended, then education becomes a completely different endeavor. As the children grow and develop into truly socially responsible young people, they are capable of pulling society up along with them to a higher moral level. They can create an adult society that is grounded in the social cohesion that became a part of their souls when they were small. This is why Montessori considered the education of the littlest ones as paramount to a peaceful world. “The new education is a revolution, but without the violence. It is the non-violent revolution. After that, if it triumphs, violent revolution will have become forever impossible.” (Montessori, The Absorbent Mind, “Character Building is the Child’s Own Achievement,” p. 214, Kalakshetra)

Phases of Social Development
Montessori observed that there were “phases through which social life must pass in the course of its natural unfolding.” (Montessori, The Absorbent Mind, “Cohesion in the Social Unit,” Kalakshetra, p. 233.)

5 Montessori describes the differences that arise from the origins of character, and the difficulties when those of weaker character try to lead or those of stronger character. Figure 12 “Circles of Attraction” Absorbent Mind, “Character Building is the Child’s Own Achievement, pp. 209-214. This would make an interesting reading seminar.
Birth to three
During the first three years of life, the baby develops trust and security in the world and his family, which creates a positive foundation for later relationships.

“When we let the infant develop, and see him construct from the invisible roots of creation that which is to become the grown man, then we can learn the secrets on which depend our individual and social strength.” (Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, “Cohesion in the Social Unit,” Kalakshetra, p. 238.)

From the moment of birth, the child begins communication and connecting with his people and environment. A baby’s survival depends on his social bonding, and so he is primed from birth to make these connections. His vision is developed just enough to see the face of the person holding him. He can recognize the sound of his mother’s voice, and her own comforting smell. Babies are uniquely fine-tuned to discriminate emotional displays and can unconsciously imitate facial expressions of those around them (Eliot, p.300). This unconscious imitation - experiencing the feelings of others - is the basis for developing empathy. “Well before they master language, babies communicate through emotional expression, and it is through these interactions that they develop the security, confidence, and motivation to master their more obvious motor, verbal, and cognitive achievements” (Eliot, p. 290).

Three to Six
When the child enters the Casa, she continues her exploration and development of ‘motor, verbal, and cognitive achievements’ in the company of other young children. The child is given the liberty to follow her individual path of development while respecting the paths of others. The product of living in this community is the phenomenon of social cohesion. Social cohesion is an unconscious creation of the absorbent mind, and as such, when the absorbent mind fades as the child approaches the second plane, she must reconstruct her understanding of society and her relation to it from a conscious, reasoned perspective.

Under conditions that support positive development, the first plane child spontaneously and unconsciously creates and lives a proto-version of human society as it was intended to be. This makes an indelible mark on her soul. If her continued development is supported, the experience of social cohesion becomes the foundation for social organization, social responsibility, and social action. *It is as if the child spends the entirety of the next three planes of development re-creating the elements of social cohesion she experienced in the Casa, on a conscious, reasoning level.*
Six to twelve
At the second plane, the children begin exploring social organization. They are just as absorbed in the process by which we select leaders, establish rules, and the morals of following rules, as they were in the first plane with lessons of grace and courtesy. While the first plane child explored the social effects of movement and language, in the second plane, the social emphasis shifts towards the awakening of the conscience and moral relationships. Where it was once important not to bump into someone, now it is important not to offend someone. (Montessori, *From Childhood to Adolescence*, “The Moral Characteristics of the Child from Seven to Twelve Years,” pp. 17-18, Schocken)

In the first plane, the children lived socially on a concrete, sensorial level. With the passage into the second plane comes the passage into the abstract and moral exploration of how society and individual roles interrelate. Characteristics of the children ages 6-12 include a strong sensitivity towards justice, fairness, morality, and the understanding of the relationships between one's actions and the needs of others. What happens when one person wants to sing while she works, but other children don't want to listen to her singing? Whose rights are more important? How does this get resolved? There is a saying that elementary children spend more time deciding what game and debating about the rules than actually playing the game. Understanding the process of social organization is more important to them than playing together.

Twelve to Eighteen
During adolescence, the third plane, young people begin to explore social responsibility and social/emotional independence. This is individual, personal work, similar to the first plane, but instead of feeling good about “what I did all by myself,” as in the first plane, now the teenager's self-worth is reflected back to him from his peers. “I did this, and they liked it!” Practicing social responsibility is not motivated for the good of the group, but because of how it affects the individual. At the Farm School, the students want to make dinner for the group not because everyone needs to eat, but because it feels good to be the person who made a good dinner for the group. They get up on stage and perform a song, not for the entertainment of others, but because it feels good to have everyone clap for the song that they wrote. The community shows they value the lettuce the students grew in their garden by buying the lettuce and paying them for their efforts. At a very practical level, the adolescents must have social experiences in order to “valorize” their personality. By seeing themselves reflected back from society they begin to discover, “Who am I?”

Although valorization is essential for the adolescent's positive social development, it cannot remain at that level- the world is not all about them! But just as the second plane extends what created in the first plane, so too does the fourth plane “finish” what was begun in the third plane.
Eighteen to Twenty-four

During the years of childhood, and early childhood, from birth to age 12, we see individual normalization leading to individual responsibility. During the years of adolescence and young adulthood we see the social parallels that are built upon these individual foundations. Through the valorization of the personality, the young person experiences the individual benefits of social responsibility, then, in the fourth plane, we have a young adult that has reached a level of economic and social independence necessary to practice the social benefits of social responsibility.

This is why the fourth plane is the time of social action. Young adults are filled with idealism that leads them to serve their country in the military, join the Peace Corps, or build homes for those who have none. They are finally able to answer that question that began to formulate when they were children: “What is my contribution to society?”

At every level, social development builds on what created before. If the foundation is strong, the building will be safe, stable, and secure. If the foundation is weak or damaged, the structure will be insecure, unstable, or dangerous. Deviated children create a deviated society. If we do not begin with individuals of strong character, all we do is “form a society of delinquents and organize delinquency” (Montessori, unpublished London lecture #31, December 9th, 1946).

The Analogy of the Loom

Montessori uses the analogy of weaving cloth to illustrate social development. The following is a paraphrase of her story.

6 To weave a piece of cotton cloth, we begin with the tufts of white fibers from the cotton plant. The cotton is cleaned and combed, and all the seeds and impurities are removed. This is the individual child who comes to the Casa. Through the opportunity to concentrate, to develop straight and true, the individual character is cleansed of any deviations.

Next, the individual fibers of cotton are spun into thread. We can compare this to the construction of the personality that comes through working and living in a community of little children. The quality of the finished cloth depends on the quality of the individual threads. If the threads are strong and well-spun, then the cloth itself will be strong and useful. If the thread is weak, then the cloth will also be weak—‘a fabric made of weak threads is useless.’

6 The analogy is fully described in The Absorbent Mind, “Cohesion in the Social Unit.”
The next step is to wrap the threads onto the weaving frame. It is individual activity that places the thread on the loom. The threads are secured on the frame, parallel to one another, held by hooks or pegs. They form the “warp” of the fabric, but they are not the finished cloth. The warp is the foundation for the cloth. Without the warp, there could be no weaving, and if the threads of the warp break or come loose, the shuttle will have nothing to pass between. The individual threads placed together on the loom, parallel but not touching, form the warp, representing social cohesion. The frame is the limited society of the Casa, where each individual is aligned in the same direction, following the individual yet universal laws of development.

The actual cloth begins to form when the shuttle passes between the threads and joins them together. It is the weft that fixes the individual strands together. The weft relates to the structure of organized society, or the social organization of the second plane. The elementary adult is the shuttle, passing among the threads, providing the means for social organization. At this stage, the structure of the frame, or the structures of the prepared environment, limits, and responsibilities are essential for the weaving to take place. If the cloth is removed from the frame too soon, the fabric falls apart. If the child is deprived of social organization and responsibility, then regardless of the strength of the individual threads, we do not have a finished piece of cloth, or a strong society. Both depend upon each other.

A strong system of social organization or government cannot be strong without strong individuals, and a group of strong individuals, without leadership and guidance to direct their energies, cannot make a strong, cohesive society. We cannot have society without individuals, and the quality of both affect the quality of the outcome.

Two Questions – Answered
So now we return to the two questions we began with:

1. If children work individually rather than collectively, how will they be prepared for social life?
2. If children choose their own activities, seeking out the most interesting and agreeable occupations, how will they be prepared to take their place in real life, where tasks are not always pleasant or interesting?

The answers should be clear to you. Human beings are social by nature, and the natural, normal path of human development is interpersonal and intrapersonal development, occurring side-by-side. Society is founded upon the individual. If the individual is able to work and concentrate, in time, he will develop the strength of character necessary to contribute meaningfully to society.
We do not prepare the tadpole for life as a frog by yanking him out of the water because one day he will need to breathe air with lungs instead of gills. We do not fling the caterpillar up into the sky because one day he will need to fly. Only by fully realizing the specific needs at each stage of life do we prepare for the harmonious entry into the next. Think of human society as an orchestra. An orchestra is composed of many individuals, each of whom devoted the individual time and effort necessary to master their own musical instrument. Each of the musicians enters the auditorium with their own unique gifts and talents, each takes their own place, and when the time is right, create something wonderful together that none of them could do alone.  

Social Development

References

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