Freedom as the First Period
Quotes from Montessori’s Works

**Direction – Montessori Philosophy**

- “The external material is then offered, and left freely to the natural individual energies of the children. They choose the objects they prefer; and such preference is dictated by the internal needs of “psychical growth.” — *Spontaneous Activity in Education*, p. 68

- “If we watch a child of this age, we shall see that he is trying to do something definite. What he tries to do may seem absurd to us, but this does not matter. He has to finish it... So, whatever intelligent activity we chance to witness in a child—even if it seems absurd to us, or contrary to our wishes (provided, of course, that it does him no harm)—we must not interfere; for the child must always be able to finish the cycle of activity on which his heart is set.” — *The Absorbent Mind*, p. 160

- “So difficult is it to find adults who will not interfere with infantile activities, that all psychologists agree in asking for places to be set aside for children to work in, where they can be free from interruption. For this purpose, day nurseries and infant schools are very important, especially for tiny tots of one and a half upwards.” — *The Absorbent Mind*, p. 161

- “The instinct to move about, to pass from one discovery to another, is a part of their nature, and it must also form a part of their education.” — *The Absorbent Mind*, p. 163

**Perspective – Child Development, Observation**

- “We should help the child...because he is endowed with great creative energies... When we understand that the energies belong to an unconscious mind, which has to become conscious through work and through an experience of life gained in the world, we realize that the mind of the child in infancy is different from ours, that we cannot reach it by verbal instruction, nor intervene directly in the process of its passing from the unconscious to the conscious—the process of making human faculty—then the whole concept of education changes. It becomes a matter of giving help to the child’s life, to the psychological development of man. No longer is it just an enforced task of retaining our words and ideas.” — *The Absorbent Mind*, p. 28

- “How does he achieve this independence? He does it by means of a continuous activity. How does he become free? By means of constant effort. The one thing life can never do is to stand still. Independence is not a static condition; it is a continuous conquest, and in order to reach not only freedom, but also strength, and the perfecting of one’s powers, it is necessary to follow this path of unremitting toil.” — *The Absorbent Mind*, p. 90

- “Before such attention and concentration have been attained, the teacher must learn to control herself so that the child’s spirit shall be free to expand and show its powers; the essence of her duty is not to interrupt the child in his efforts. This is a moment in which the delicacy of the teacher’s moral sensitiveness, acquired during her training, comes into play. She must learn that it is not easy to help, nor even, perhaps, to stand still and watch. Even when helping and serving the children, she must not cease to observe them, because the birth of concentration in a child is as delicate a phenomenon as the bursting of a bud into bloom. But she will not be watching with the aim of making her presence felt, or of helping the weaker ones by her own strength. She observes in order to recognize the child who has attained the power to concentrate and to admire the glorious rebirth of his spirit.” — *The Absorbent Mind*, Clio Press, p. 248

**Sources**

Examining our Practice: Tools and Strategies

- Creating an Environment for Exploring

- Pedagogy: “A Lightness of Touch”

- Guiding and Assisting When Necessary

- Supporting Exploration is not just a question of whether or when to intervene, but how to intervene if we must do so.

Moving On: Beyond the First Period

- The Second Period
  - Where is...
  - Point to...
  - Take...to the rug

- This level represents the majority of our instruction time. We continue to give the child the answer until they come up with it independently.

- This includes modeling the reconstruction of materials which the child cannot independently reassemble.

- The Third Period
  - What is...
  - What do we say...
  - Is that how we...

  - If the child could demonstrate this level of knowledge spontaneously, they would!
  - If they cannot, we must begin again.

- Consider whether you are asking the child to demonstrate a Third Period level of understanding without having allowed a First Period of exploration or enough Second Period instruction or modeling.

Additional Sources of Interest