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The miracle of play as language

Abstract

Play as a symbolic activity among infants can be regarded as language before verbal language. Moreover, they correspond to each other as activities indispensable to each other and to psychic development. The symbol has three dimensions of cognition: capacity to allow the simultaneous perception and overbridging of *proximity* and *distance*, *similarity* and *dissimilarity*, and to manage these perceptions in both *space* and *time*. Play, especially role play, creates for the child these capacities, as well as spoken language does.

This process is prepared long before birth in the neurological capacity to perceive rhythm and melody. The fetus´ reaction to rhythmic (and/or melodic) stimuli indicates that it can connect two stimuli to each other as belonging together, which is a first sign of neurological well-functioning and a prerequisite for later development. This is the first tendency to the later acquisition of language with its gradual consummation of the three dimensions named above. The first play activities constitute an intermediate phase and accompanies language.

The first explicit predecessor for role play is the echolalia and imitational activities at the nursing table: visual, verbal, rhythmic and melodic. These social activities constitute not only joyful contact and attachment, but also a necessary training for learning to come later. The important point, however, is that modern neuroscience shows us that without the stimulation from other, the brain will not develop adequately, producing mastering of the three dimensions mentioned of the symbolic functioning. This signals that the process of socialization, with its concentration on play and language, enters the field as basic and essential for intellectual growth, after decades of biological reductionism and domination. Playful and verbal socialization produces a brain which can produce creativity.