

The miracle of play as language

Human intelligence builds on three remarkable capacities, constituting the basics of language, as well as of play:

- (1) to oscillate rapidly between *proximity/closeness* and *distance*: to be *here* and at the same time know something important of an object out *there*
- (2) to relate *similarity* and *dissimilarity/difference*: to compare similarity of objects
- (3) to be able to do this in two dimensions: *space* and *time*

To master these three at the same time in their relatedness is to build, and master, a universe of representations, a universe of discourse. Without them, there is no capacity to take in and handle *variety, abstract* and *generalizing* thought. Thus no human intelligence. To master the three also is to live in a *social world of relations*. None of them is inborn in the genes or DNA, although these are needed as prerequisites. They are born through *basic sociality*: to notice events at more than one place, to be present in two places (or more). This sociality prepares for *symbols*, which produce both *play* and *language*.

Play preparation during pregnancy:

The first signs of sociality in the fetus are the same signs as in role play: responsiveness to signals from the external world: Play with the pregnant stomach *rhythmically* as a drum, and the fetus will *respond*, thus relating two events in time. Read a *saga*, and sing a *song*, and the fetus will notice the *emotional* character of your voice. This is neurological preparatory work for the three capacities above. But it also *builds the brain*, and thus *cognitive* capacity. All this *relates play* to *incipient language*: the above points (1), (2), (3) govern and develop both – already in the uterus.

The nursing situation for the baby illustrates: Your *responsive babbling* with the baby is a further cultivation of the fetus' capacities to create play. It is the dawn of responsive language and of role play. Thus *play* and *language* develop human *responsive intelligence*: *Play* is a *prerequisite* for a *human constructive rational world*.

Play is never waste of time, it is the construction of a functioning universe.

(Lars-Erik Berg, IPA Sweden, professor emeritus in social psychology, University of Skovde Sweden)



Teddy bear helps us understand:

“Teddy” is a Trans-itional (= crossing borders) object: He is ...

(1) *close* and *distant* (from parent and me)

(2) *similar* and *different* (with/from human beings)

(3) in space & time (*space*: in my *bed*, I'm in the *kitchen*; *time*: I got hurt *yesterday* thus I give him a band aid *now*)

Life expands to a *coherent construction* by play. Without play, and play as language, reality gets fragmentary.

