



## The Role of the Imaginary Registry in Playing

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Any practitioner of Psychoanalysis that has, at some point, met with a kid, has noticed that the analytical procedure is not precisely the same one as usual. That practitioner must have seen, even marvel, that when facing the encounter he is indeed looking at the very processes that we know as subjective constitution. Also, and not without some horror, might that practitioner find that his

interventions must not be the same and that which is given for him to see is not necessarily which is given to hear. If our practitioner remembers Freud<sup>(1907)</sup>, when he said that daydreaming in adults is equivalent to children's playing plus a pinch of shame, then he is on the way of something.

Playing functionality has been widely studied in Psychoanalysis. Following Freud's teachings, children's Psychoanalysts have found their way reading children's playing like they would read adult's talk. Talking is easily placed in the symbolic order. But what about playing?

Winnicott<sup>(1982)</sup> established that in children's playing there are rules that make for a symbolic presence, but not everything about children's playing is of symbolic nature. We are saying that playing indeed is primarily composed of imaginary elements, and it is these elements the one that children manipulate in a symbolic manner thru playing.

Let's start from the idea that "children act, repeat the relationship with their unconscious fantasy" (Hartmann, 2009). The moment when this happens is when they play. Is this the same as Freudian *agir*? Are we saying the same thing when we say people act that which they cannot say?

Anyway "that which cannot be said" must first be able to be said. Meaning that, and following Freud's teachings, the connection between representation-object and representation-word must have already been made. This implies a second moment in which the relationship with the object has evolved into what Winnicott named possibility of usage. This is a certain degree of separation.

If we can see various symptomatic manifestations in children, which as of now must be understood as defence against the desire of the Other (mother), doesn't happen the same thing when thinking about the unconscious fantasy.

It has been said from different perspectives, that the end of a Psychoanalysis for children is the point where the unconscious fantasy takes full shape (Laurent, 1991). This fantasy, when thinking about children, in no other that the unconscious fantasy of the adult. How will the kid place himself opposing his mothers fantasy? This is a guiding question that must be made every time someone takes a child in therapy.

If the unconscious fantasy has any place in the psychic structure, this place is where he fixates the object, puts it "in game", inbound, gives it a certain place. This is highly sophisticated in the case of adults, but not in the case of children. In "two notes about the child", Lacan <sup>(1969)</sup> states that there is basically two places for children. As symptom of the parents and as object in the unconscious fantasy of the mother. The later can be verified in almost every case of psychosis.

If we take playing as the repetition of that child's relation to his unconscious fantasy <sup>(Hartmann, 2009)</sup> we must state that that fantasy is a response to the mother's unconscious fantasy in opposition. What appears plainly in child's play is exactly the object relation. In fact, what we see is that the relationship we're talking about is no other than the relation to that primal object: das Ding, presented thru the mother's body. Little Dick's case is pretty self explanatory on this issue. Dick actually plays with his mother's body. That Little train that he is entering that tunnel-mother, is a realization of that which Lacan <sup>(1959)</sup> points out as primal desire. The desire for incest. It is obvious that Dick still cannot count that element that will allow him to put some distance, fixate a position for him separated from the Other. This element is no other than the signifier, which seemingly Klein introduces in a manoeuvre as criticized as well as praised in the whole psychoanalytical community. Klein basically names those objects. She places a bridge between the representation-object and the representation-word. With her intervening as a third party she allows Dick a passage from pure object to symbol.

One of the things that Little Dick's case shows is that even in lack of symbolization of the objects with which Dick plays, there still is playing. Let's risk saying that even in the lack of symbolic order there still is playing. The symbolic order gives consistency to playing, but not necessarily inaugurates playing. What we do can verify in the origins of playing is the manipulation of elements that are present in the imaginary registry. Popular lore states that "children play with anything"; we might add: anything that projects an image. Klein <sup>(1930)</sup> states that the playing technique is not limited to child analysis, details can also be taken from inhibitions and perks surrounding playing.

We might ask: What are the characteristics of playing as such? Can we say that this general behavior of the child ¿can it not be taken as playing in the whole?

If neurotic adults have their symptoms in transference marked by their unconscious fantasy, can it be that the unconscious fantasy is in operation at some time and not in another? In clinical practice we usually take that the elements present in the psychic structure are in constant operation. That is precisely why we are ready for details. If the unconscious fantasy, in the case of neurosis, is operating all the time, ¿why should playtime be taken from a separate perspective from the time when child are not playing?, as if the structure went into shutdown. We state that every behaviour prior to full constitution of the unconscious fantasy in children can be taken as having the same quality as playing. Playing indeed is the way in which the child builds step by step their unconscious fantasy.

Lacan <sup>(1938)</sup> pointed the imaginary function as constitutive for subject in his work about the state of the mirror. In that work he states that shape mesmerizes;

human being, captured between pre maturation of the body, and an advanced perceptive capacity, gets mesmerized by seeing its full image in the mirror. The state of the mirror shows a way of identification, Lacan calls it: "the transformation produced in the subject when he assumes an image". The imaginary Gestalt presented to the subject is defining according to Lacan, it organizes the limits in the real world.

The state of the mirror is presented as: "a particular case of the functioning of the imago, which is to establish a relationship between the organism and its reality..." (Lacan, 1953). We are looking at a development from a specular ego to a social ego, development in which we can point those symbolization processes that Klein wrote about. We can say that the imaginary registry anticipates the same prime matter on which the symbolic registry will instate its marks, limits, markings and mapping. The imaginary components are, as imago, that which is frankly handy to the developing child, the means thru which that organism creates connections to reality. From here on its easy to understand why any object is useful for children to play.

Manipulation of the imagos that reality offers to the child is what play is about. The body itself, as an imago, has the characteristic of being able to be taken as a play tool. The first of many.

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