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CHILDREN'S DRAWING AS ACT OF EXPRESSION AND ITS DEVELOPMENTAL MEANING

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ABSTRACT

Consciousness is an essential for the complete psychological understanding of the human mind. In this paper, I have suggested that treating consciousness not as a substance, but an attribution, facilitates dealing with the problem of human consciousness. Vygotsky's and James' works on consciousness are reviewed in a contemporary light, along with Merleau-Ponty's work on expressive behavior, which shares much in common with these earlier works. Children's drawings are used as an example of basic expressive action to examine the development of drawings and meaning of change.

Key Words: consciousness, time and movement on picture, expressive behavior, children's drawing

INTRODUCTION

Until recently, psychology has been dominated by the intellectualist theory that the activities of the human mind are of central importance in epistemologically grasping the outer world. However, this perspective has not directed sufficient attention to the role played by the particularly human characteristics of expressive behavior and action towards an object. In contrast to this psychological tradition, Vygotskian sociocultual approach has emphasized human action as a basic unit of the human mind and the outer world. Based on Marx's philosophy of action, particularly with regard to its critical view of the Feuerbach's thesis, Vygotsky emphasized collaborative activity as creating and revolutionizing our culture and environment.

A fundamental assumption of a sociocultural approach to the human mind is that the central phenomenon to be described and explained is human action. Wertsch (1991) has stated, "when action is given analytic priority, human beings are viewed as coming into contact with, and creating, their surroundings as well as themselves through the action in which they engage. Thus action, rather than human being or the environment considered in isolation, provides the entry point into the analysis. This contrasts on the one hand with approaches that treat the individual primarily as a passive recipient of information from the environment, and on the other with approaches that focus on the individual and treat the environment as secondary, serving merely as a device to trigger certain developmental processes" (p.8).

The Russian philosopher of language, Bakhtin, has also stressed that human action is the actual manifestation of our real lives. In his early book, "Toward a philosophy of

the act" (1920-24), he stated that our real world is one in which the acts of our activity are objectified and in which these acts actually proceed and are actually accomplished once and only once. However, there is a fundamental split between the content or sense of a given historical-cultural world and the world of actually lived and experienced life. "Two worlds confront each other, two worlds that have absolutely no communication with each other and are mutually impervious: the world of culture and the world of life, the only world in which we create, cognize, contemplate, live our lives and die. An act of our activity, of our actual experiencing, is like a two-faced Janus. It looks in two opposite directions: it looks at the objective unity of a domain of culture and at the never-repeatable uniqueness of actually lived and experienced life. But there is no unitary and unique plane where both faces would mutually determine each other in relation to a single unique unity" (p.2).

PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

William James and Vygotsky have figured centrally in a large amount of psychological research on consciousness. Both James and Vygotsky emphasized the indispensability of consciousness in grasping humans as a totality. Furthermore, both shared the position that consciousness emerges from the process of action.

Vygotsky's Thesis of Consciousness

Vygotsky's life research can be seen as dedicated to understanding and elucidating human consciousness. His 1933 essay, "The Problem of Consciousness," dating from the last years of his life, dealt with the origin of consciousness and how consciousness is produced. Vygotsky suggested that human consciousness can be understood as a system of the various functions of mental action. He described human action as words and thought, or "the sense-creating activity of meanings leads to a certain semantic structure of consciousness itself" (p.137).

According to Spinoza's definition, Vygotsky considered that consciousness is a function and not an essence or a substance. A mental phenomenon never exists by itself and is merely the internally necessary moment of a more complex psycho-physiological process. Vygotsky considered consciousness to be something activated by humans and demanded in the process of actualization. In Vygotsky's critical article about psychological thought and its methodology, "The historical meaning of the crisis in psychology" (1925), he described research on problems related to consciousness. He concluded that consciousness as a specific category, as a special type of being, is not found. It proves to be a very complex structure of behavior, in particular, the doubling of behavior (p.79).

Vygotsky's theory of consciousness is anti-substantialist and shares with James' work the assumptions that consciousness is an attribution of form and a process of actualization.

William James's Concept of Consciousness

James considered it impossible to explain the substance of consciousness and its mish-mash of elements. However, he maintained that consciousness emerges in the relationship between actions and the environment. In the article, "Does consciousness exist?"

(1913) James has stated: "I mean only to deny that the word stands for an entity, but to insist most emphatically that it does stand for a function. There is, I mean, no aboriginal stuff or quality of being, contrasted with that of which material objects are made, out of which our thoughts of them are made; but there is a function in experience which thoughts perform, and for the performance of which this quality of being is invoked. That function is ***knowing***" (pp.3-4). Therefore, in this article, he explained that consciousness connotes an external relation of sorts, and does not denote a special stuff or way or being (p.25).

James considered the consciousness of humans and highly evolved animals to be directed by actions and their related wishes, interests, and purposes. Thus, consciousness can be called embodied action related to the environment. In 1911, in his well-known book; "Psychology," he has explained, "whenever I try to become sensible of my thinking activity as such what I catch is some bodily fact, an impression coming from my brow, or head, or nose" (p.400). And in the last phrase of the former article, "Does consciousness exist?" he concluded, "Breath, which was ever the original of 'spirit', breath moving outwards, between the glottis and the nostrils, is, I am persuaded, the essence out of which philosophers have constructed the entity known to them as consciousness" (p.37).

Both James and Vygotsky considered consciousness a behavior or an action related to the will and purposes people direct towards the outer world. In other words, consciousness emerges in the process of producing expressive actions and words. Thus, it is essential to direct scholarly attention towards the act of expression produced by words or the body.

Mind-Body Connection as the Principle of the Human Mind: Merleau-Ponty's Thesis

Merleau-Ponty argued in "Phenomenology of Perception" (1945) and "The Structure of Behavior" (1942) that consciousness and the mind are produced in the act of expression and through embodied activity. The body gives concrete form to human action, will, and emotions and is the tangible unit of expression of the processes and actions of the human mind. In "Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language" (1949-52), he argued that expressive actions produce human consciousness and will. Human consciousness does not exist in itself, but rather in the act of expression. Like James and Vygotsky, Merleau-Ponty holds an anti-substantialist view of consciousness. In "Phenomenology of perception," he has stated that we can only construct our own thoughts through our expression. "I have only one means of representing it (my linguistic world), which is uttering it, just as the artist has only one means of representing the work on which he engaged: by doing it" (p.180). So, it can be said that without external embodiment an experience remains incomplete.

Merleau-Ponty in "The Structure of Behavior" (1942) argued that the gestalt of perceived experiences of reality lies at the basis of how we grasp the outside world. Concepts and words supporting abstract thought are essential for human development. Humans possess the possibility of using abstractions to overcome the limits of particular concrete circumstances, as well as individual physical experiences, to become a part of the broader world. However, the origin of this possibility lies in a particular concrete

encounter and a pre-conceptual, physical, feeling, or perception of motion, as well as the resulting image produced by its repetition. Merleau-Ponty termed this a gestalt.

Thus, particularly human expressions and orderings of the world are produced in addition to using words to grasp expressions of the world and the order of the world. Therefore, it is not solely through language, but also through physical and perceptive experiences that people are able to express things to another. This is essential for producing will, consciousness, and, finally, the self. In such ways mutual understanding and intersubjective understanding become possible.

Physical responses lie at the basis of mutual understanding. Gestures express emotive meanings, and others immediately understand the same meaning. Merleau-Ponty (1945) has stated, "The gesture presents itself to me as a question, bringing certain perceptible bits of the world to my notice, and inviting my concurrence in them. Communication is achieved when my conduct identifies this path with its own. There is mutual confirmation between myself and others...It is through my body that I understand other people, just as it is through my body that I perceive 'things'" (pp.185-186).

CHILDREN'S DRAWING AS AN ACT OF EXPRESSION

This paper focuses on children's drawings of events they have experienced as a child's act of expression. Particular attention is paid to how children express the time of an event, their manner of expression, and its development. There is a great deal of research on children's drawings, but most do not take into account how children express the temporal processes of events through drawing. However, expressing motion and change over time on a single piece of flat paper is an unavoidable problem. Furthermore, cultural conventions regulate how things are expressed naturally. Therefore, this paper focuses on the cultural frameworks that children use, how they receive them, and how they apply them.

Time and Movement in Pictures

Deleuze (1985) described time as the succession of concrete events and actions in daily life and asserted that time is the living activities, movements, perception, and thoughts developed in life. Furthermore, in movies, a form of art, time is expressed as concrete events and actions in moving images. Therefore, as Deleuze claims, the image of time is expressed as moving images in movies. In movies, it is possible to express movement itself. However, drawings are still images. This raises the question, how motion is dealt with in pictures.

For example, Theodore Gericault's "The Horse Race" (Figure 1) produces in the viewer the moving image of a sprinting horse in the middle of a single painting. It ingeniously expresses in the viewer, the impression of a galloping horse. Therefore, it is sometimes said that actual galloping horses do not move like the one in the picture. However, this painting raises the problem of how it is possible to depict the image of movement in a non-moving picture. As a result, like Giacomo Balla's "Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash" (Figure 2), the desire emerges to use a mode of expression different from the standard assumptions of Western painting in which one asks how many dog's legs to depict. Balla and Umberto Boccioni were pioneers of Italian futurism at the begin-

ning of the 2oth century in which celebrated motion and the simultaneity of unrelated events, and have influenced to the later the modernism movements in art (Brettell, 1999).

Figure 1 The Horse Race (Theodore Gericault, 1821)

Figure 2 Dynamism of a dog on a Leash (Giacomo Balla, 1912)

In paintings, time must be expressed in the space defined by the canvas and the frame. Furthermore, the feeling of rhythm within a painting is usually considered important. For example, John Dewey in "Art as Experience" (1934) stated that rhythm is indispensable to the production and reception of art. He pointed out that, "The first characteristic of the environing world that makes possible the existence of artistic form is rhythm. There is rhythm in nature before poetry; painting, architecture and music exist. ...Rhythm is a universal scheme of existence, underlying all realization of order in change, it pervades all the arts" (pp.147-150). Dewey offered Henri Matisse's "Joie de Vivre (The Joy of Life)" (Figure 3) as an example that splendidly produces rhythm through spatial arrangement and expressive colors. When Dewey saw this piece, he first felt the motion moving from the bottom to top, and then felt the horizontal rhythm produced from the groupings moving from left to right. Dewey understood this piece as example of a successful organization of rhythm in a painting.

Figure 3 Le bonheur de vivre (The Joy of Life) (Henri Matisse, 1905-06)

Time and Movement in the Pictures by Paul Klee

Paul Klee was closely concerned with the problem of expressing movement in pictures. As an artist who initially wanted to be a musician, he is often described as using painting as an analogy for music. In 1914 he wrote in his diary that the essence of artistic works is the generation of the motion of form. Klee considered motion, that is, time, to be the origin of things. Therefore, it may be possible to claim that Klee was con-

cerned with the expression of this originating force in his pictures. Klee believed the perspective-projective method that freezes the point of view, traditionally used in Western expressive painting, could not express motion. He attempted to express motion and time (Figure 4) as well as movement itself (Figure 5) in his paintings though repetitive rhythm. Thus Klee was attempting to express time and motion with a means other than the fixed perspective- projective method. This suggests that when children draw events and developments over time, they do not necessarily have to use only fixed viewpoints.

Figure 4 Kamel (in rhythm. Baumlandschaft) (P. Klee, 1920)

Figure 5 Landschaft im Drehpunkt (P. Klee, 1928)

Some Examples of Children's Drawings

In general children's drawings become increasingly realistic, as they get older. Luquet divides the development of children's drawing ability into a movement from an "intellectual realism" stage to a "visual realism" stage (from Thomas & Silk,1990). That is, at the stage of "intellectual realism," much of children's drawings seem to be described as caricature in which salient features are overemphasized at the expense of visual realism. Or, as you see in child's drawings in the intellectual realism stage, children draw multiple events on a single picture. Luquet calls this style of picture "epinale"-style, referring to the expression of events on a piece of paper as narration with graphics. Yet even if the "epinale"-style is based on traditional expressions of Western paintings, it is not classified as an expression of visual realism. According to Luquet, children's drawings appear to progress, becoming more visually realistic (according to conventional Western standards) as the child grows older. Luquet has stated that children around the ages of 7 or 8 draw simply what they perceive. As they come to place importance of visually realistic expressions, they become concerned with accurate expression using a single, fixed viewpoint, as called for by the perspective-projective method. For example, the following two pictures were drawn by two five-year-olds on a trip (Figure 6 and 7). These pictures take the form of a narration with graphics of their own experiences of the trip. However, it is important to note the line drawn down the middle of one picture (Figure 7) that the child uses as a device to temporally divide the event. This final picture (Figure 8) is drawn in a visually real style and depicts in the middle of the picture the time of having reached the top of the mountain during the trip. The way of drawing is

Figure 6 Example of drawing with "intellectual realism"

Figure 7 Example of drawing with "intellectual realism" (dividing episodes by inserted line)

Figure 8 Example of drawing with "visual realism"

different from that of other children of the same age. How are we supposed to understand the different methods of expression?

Picture Drawings in Japanese Picture Scrolls

The mode of expression in Japanese picture scrolls differs from that of Western paintings. Picture scrolls represent events as they unfold in time and take the form of narration with graphics. Thus, they share an affinity with the "epinale"-style. However, the two are not the same as picture scrolls are a much more refined method of expression. Yet picture scrolls present the possibility of a splendid expression of the temporal process of events and motion, which Klee worked so hard to achieve. The most representative picture scrolls are Chou-Jyu-Giga-Zu (Comic picture of birds and beasts playing) in Kozan-Temple in Kyoto and Shigisan-Engi-Emaki (The picture scroll of the history of the Shigisan). For example, in Chou-Jyu-Giga-Zu (Figure 9), the sequence of happenings is depicted as the space moves horizontally from right to left, and a single series of events is narrated in the drawing. Thus, in contrast to Western forms, there is a characteristically Japanese spatial representation and mode of temporal expression. Anime artist Takahata (1999) stated that the original models for Japanese animation movies were the twelfth and thirteenth century Japanese picture scrolls.

We have come to think that only the Western perspective-projective method and geometrical perspective are the best, most perfect methods of visual express. However, we should also recognize that a similarly excellent method of representing time and space is also found in Japanese painting. Japanese picture scrolls use a superb mode of

Figure 9 Comic picture of birds and beasts playing (Chou-Jyu-Giga-Zu) at Kozan-Temple

expressing real time and events, and present a fundamental and original method of understanding.

CONCLUSION

When five or six year-old children express their own experiences in drawings, many express the flow of time just as they experienced it in the picture. This method of drawing in which one draws simply as one wants, which Luquet dubbed the "epinale"-style, may be considered inferior to the perspective-projective method and geometrical perspective conventional in Western European art. If one applies Luquet's classifications to children's drawings, this manner of drawing is a stage prior to the visual realism stage that eight year-olds use in drawing. However, such developmental stages are based solely on Western European geometrical perspective. Thus, the difficult problem of the expression of time and motion always haunt the pictures, as it does the Western European paintings with fixed viewpoints that use the perspective-projective method and do not reflect motion and the movement of space. Japanese pictures schools, as a "temporal visual art," represent temporal processes and events as they are. As such, they are a characteristically Japanese method for representing space, quite different to Western European methods.

In "The Prose of the World" (1969), Merleau-Ponty wrote that Western geometric perspective does not correspond to the "perceived world," but is simply one "arbitrary interpretation" of the perceived world. Therefore it is necessary to seek out the "expression brute" of the world as it is perceived. Geometric perspective should not be considered the best and final method of painting.

Children express in drawings events and temporal processes just as they experienced them. They do not use Western geometric perspective in their method of expression, and one can consider their mode of representing temporal processes of their own experiences as excellent. Children contrive ways of cleverly expressing their own experiences. Their results are drawings in the "epinale"-style.

There are many children who draw in the style Luquet termed "visual realism." Such children have probably been socialized into a given socio-cultural frame through visual information they have gained and through contact with picture books based on the Western European conventional representation techniques. Luquet himself stated that as children develop from "intellectual realism" to "visual realism," they inevitably come closer to a means of representation used by adults, and in the process lose something important, namely, an affection for "intellectual realism." Thus Luquet opposed art education based uniformly on "visual realism."

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