

# CHILD PSYCHOLOGY

III

The Kindergarten Child

Thought, Imagination and Feeling ;  
Will and Morale

BY

VILHELM RASMUSSEN

GYLDENDAL

11 BURLEIGH STREET, COVENT GARDEN  
LONDON, W.C. 2

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CHRISTIANIA

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CHILD PSYCHOLOGY—III

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## CHAPTER I

### CASUAL OBSERVATIONS OF THOUGHT

When in constant intercourse with children in their everyday life we are in a position to obtain a far better insight into their thought-processes and their general psychological condition than can be arrived at by means of tests; for both when the child is occupied playing with its toys and in general conversation we very often find remarkable instances of thought-activity, extending even to the criticism of others. In *Child Psychology*, I. p. 117 ff., I have quoted a number of examples of early criticism and doubt; and being as I am of the opinion that the critical sense is of extremely high value, and should therefore be carefully cultivated in education, I have been particularly on the alert to remark any evidence of the same in the case of R. or S.

When R. was four years and three months old she saw four portraits in a book and said: "There are three." I corrected her, saying: "No, there are four;" whereupon R. continued: "But when one was gone there were three." She could in other words subtract one from four.

The following day when out on one of our walks I scratched with my walking-stick some lines in the snow, but the grooves were not very deep, R. asked: "Why are the lines so small?" and upon my replying: "Because the snow is hard," she objected: "No, it's not; it's because there's so little snow (and the hard earth is therefore just beneath)." Nevertheless, at this age the child's logic is generally very faulty. For example, a few days later R. said: "When I am big, right up to the ceiling, little sister shall have my toys." She has evidently expected development in herself, but has in this respect been quite lacking in a rational standard of measurement. In the same period the grossest forms of analogy easily satisfied her. Thus she had often seen in the street a poster advertising "The Emperor's New Clothes," in which an "emperor" clad only in a shirt, is extending one of his bare legs; and when one day S. stuck one of her bare legs up from the cradle, R. exclaimed: "Look, see Tiny's emperor-leg."

The four-year-old child has already a distinct capacity to grasp phenomena. R., four years and three months old, lay one day in bed with a lock, singing "Jutland between two seas. . . ."<sup>[1]</sup> Suddenly she said: "Now we put it (the padlock) there . . . the Runic stone is laid. . . . How is a Runic stone laid? How do you lay a Runic stone? . . . What is it that is majestic? . . . Isn't it the eagle?" (Danish, *ørnen*.) R.'s mother explained that it is the mirage of the desert (Danish, *ørken*) and adds: "The eagle is a bird, but the desert is a waste

where there is nothing but sand.” “Yes,” says R., “and no trees and no leaves.” M.: “And no water.” R. then asks: “How big is it? Is it a room?” M.: “No.” R.: “Is it a piece of land?” M.: “Yes.” R.: “How big is it? Is it as big as *Frederiksberg Gardens*?”

In this conversation we find an interesting transition from satisfaction over an imaginative conception (the lock as a Runic stone) to the desire for an actual truthful conception; and it is interesting also to observe with what perseverance the child seeks to make the unknown clear by comparison with the known: the room, *Frederiksberg Gardens*.

I remarked an instance of limited understanding of *relativity* when R. was four years and two months old. She drew a man; and, observing that his head was too large, she said: “That’s a big head. Then he must have big eyes too.” He got them; also a powerful neck to carry the big head. But, nevertheless, she made the body and limbs very slender, especially the body. Her grasp of proportion, in other words, did not extend farther than from the head to eyes and neck.

A quite good line of *argument* can be followed by a child even at the beginning of its fifth year. When R. was four years and four months old her mother said to her: “Will you look after S.?” But R. was not very enthusiastic, and answered: “Won’t you rather, for you do it better?” This was without doubt correct; but I cannot regard her remark otherwise than as prompted by cunning and indolence. Her high-minded motive was scarcely genuine.

On the other hand, she was probably quite in earnest on the day after, when her mother said to her: “You may go down into the street, but you must not go near the tramway lines.” R. answered: “Then I’d rather stop up here, for I might forget.” Small children not only *doubt*; they are even self-critical on occasions. They should therefore by no means be regarded and treated as senseless little mannikins fit only to be commanded and drilled. Drill is only polish; but by helping a child to develop its thinking powers we place it in a position to overcome difficulties.

R.’s *critical powers* were plainly in evidence in the following passage of arms. Her little sister pulled her hair and R. screamed. Her mother said excusingly: “She doesn’t understand,” but R. objected: “Then she could pull her own hair; but she doesn’t do that.” The child’s line of thought was evidently that S. had noticed that it hurt when she pulled her own hair, and therefore preferred pulling R.’s hair. For this reason she declined to accept her mother’s apology for S.

This guarded attitude was again in evidence two days later. R. would not eat her food, and to entice her to do so her mother said: “Very well; now it is my birthday, and you are a strange lady who is paying a call. And so I ask you: “Won’t you have a cup of cocoa?” R. interrupted hurriedly: “No thank you; I

have just had lunch at home.”

A real foundation of logic underlies the child's thought-processes at this stage of development. When R. was four years and five months old she played with great zest with her top, and was especially pleased at being herself able to make it spin. But when the top fell she used to say: “That was because it hit (the floor);” and when sometimes, upon her placing it in position, it would not spin, she would say: “That was because I didn't pull hard enough (when I turn it round with my fingers).”

This evidence shows, among other things, that the child's play assists in developing the child's brain. Had not R., however, “thought aloud” it would not have been shown how she thought at her “work” and learnt from it. In play the child practises its physical and psychical instruments of work, is developed and prepared for the future. But regarding this branch of the subject I must refer to *Child Psychology*, I. p. 96 ff.

The child can be *conscious* of its thought-activity. When R. was four years and six months old she said to her mother: “I think best at night; I don't think in the day.” M.: “I thought you slept at night.” R.: “No, not when it's light, and before you go to bed.” M.: “What do you think about?” R.: “I think about hoops and things like that.” Suddenly she added: “Yes, but I'm thinking now, too.”

Not without danger is the child's capacity for reflection when allowed to flow unchecked, for such indulgence often rouses exaggerated expectations. Thus one day when R.'s grandmother had helped the child in some task R. said: “You always do whatever I like, but I only do what I like.” It is unfortunately one of the sorrowful duties of education to be continually clipping the child's wings, at the risk of cutting them so short that the child when it grows up finds itself unable to fly.

Romance also was criticised sternly by R. at an early period. Her mother was reading *Tommelise* for her. When R. heard that a large toad came in through the window and picked up a walnut-shell in which Tommelise lay, and disappeared with her, she said; “But that's only a story; for a toad couldn't do that really, could it?”

The child is not without understanding of changes caused by growth and development. When R. was four years and six months old she saw some dark-blue columbines with pale buds in a vase, and said: “They (the buds) will be dark blue when they are big.”

The child is even able to expose an actual error of logic. R. one day saw a picture, the name of which was “The Soup.” I explained to her: “They are eating soup,” and thought that all was well; but R. remarked: “They can just as well be eating something else.” She was right. The title had acted upon me suggestively, but not upon her.



A child at the tender age of four and a half years may even practise deception, for the sake of self-preservation. One day, to wit, R. was naughty and answered her grandmother rudely. Grandmother thereupon looked angry. But R., sensing the approaching storm, said: "Oh, you never understand anything, not even when it's funny." The little angel had only been trying to be funny!

An extraordinarily conscious recognition of causation was expressed by R. when four years and seven months. She plucked a *devil's bit* (Danish, *Blaahat*—blue hat) and asked its name. When I told her, R. remarked after a pause: "It's called that because it's blue and it's like a hat."

Of course the child's critical powers may also find vent in hair-splitting. When R. was four years and seven months old our housemaid said to her: "You mustn't go in and out like that without wiping your feet. You bring in too much sand." R. retorted: "I can go *out* if I like without wiping." The same day R. and I went for a walk in Tisvilde Wood, where she brought a fir-cone to me and asked: "What's this?" I did not look carefully at the cone and said: "A spruce-cone," but R., stepping aside and picking up a spruce-cone, said: "No, *this* is a spruce-cone; that one there is a fir-cone." It is not easy to work out the exact thought-process that took place on this occasion. Probably R. has been a little doubtful of the cone's name and therefore asked me; and when I gave her an incorrect answer she fetched a spruce-cone to compare it and make sure that the other was a fir-cone. But in any case the incident shows that a child which is accustomed to look about, and rely on itself, does not bow even to such a powerful suggestion as its father's explanation.

An extraordinarily logically exact retort was made by R. later on the same day. Her mother said to her: "If you are ill then you must go to bed, but you mustn't keep screaming like that; I am quite ill through listening to it." The child answered to wit: "Yes, but then it's *you* who must go to bed when it's you who are ill."

One day R. came and told M.: "I've seen the little kitten." M. said: "I have seen its father and mother;" but R., who evidently assumed that the two had not appeared simultaneously, asked: "How could you tell it was not the same (cat each time)?" Fortunately M. was in a position to explain that they were of different colours.

R. was even a little impertinent in her criticism one day when her hair was being combed. She was about five years old. It hurt her and she screamed. M. said: "Now, upon my word, *that* can't hurt;" but R. retorted: "It's not your hair (and so *you* don't feel the pain)."

About a month later R. inquired in connection with a picture in "The Great Bastian"<sup>[2]</sup>: "Why didn't the fire burn the red shoes too; for it couldn't see them? . . . And when it burns, it burns everything right up."

R., aged five years and six months, asked me: "Are there angels in Germany?" I answered evasively: "I didn't see any when I was there;" but finding this explanation insufficient, she said: "Yes, but you didn't go everywhere." This, however, must not of course be taken as indicating that R. has been *aware* of the logical necessity of examining every place; but she has evidently understood that an entirely negative answer did not suffice.

A month later she displayed similar logic. Her sister was rubbing her eyes, whereupon R. said: "When she does that she's shy, isn't she?" M. answered: "Not always." But to this R. remarked: "But for all that *perhaps* she is (shy)."

Also the comparatively difficult task of putting oneself in another person's place and understanding that person's point of view can be accomplished by a child in its sixth year. In the Zoological Gardens R., five years and six months old, said: "How lucky father's not a keeper, it's so boring looking after animals; it's much better to go out and walk or do something else." The day after she added: "I think, too, it's boring—of course—for that man (the keeper)."

Such a reflective child is naturally not easy to deceive; and the attempt was a failure on the following occasion. R., five years and six months old, knocked herself against the corner of the kitchen cupboard, and when her mother, wishing to divert her attention from the pain, said: "What was that; a piece of the cupboard fell off," R. saw that there was indeed a piece missing, but said nevertheless: "Indeed! That didn't fall off just now. But where's the blue piece gone (which you say has just fallen off)?"

Even a well-concealed verbal trap may be avoided by the child. R., when five years and six months old, asked her mother: "How long will you keep that pock-mark?" M. answered: "I shall keep it till I die." R. said playfully: "Does it go away *then*?" She has thus detected the involuntary catch underlying the word "till," and realises that the scar must be there even after death; but at the same time she is obviously quite aware that it will not then be so annoying.

An almost Jesuitical logic was evinced by R., five years and eight months old, one day when she was asked: "Are you going into the water?" She replied: "Yes, I shall." Miss X.: "*Shall* you; don't you want to?" R.: "I shall *now*." R. thus corrected the expression "Are you going?" which was not sufficiently exact for her taste, as she was not actually on the way to the water.

Some days later R. and I were picking raspberries; and upon her finding a branch with some dried-up fruit on it, I said: "They are dry." R., however, corrected me and said: "You mean *too* dry; for all raspberries are dry when it hasn't been raining." The fact that she has thought only of external moisture, and not taken into consideration the fruit's internal juice, does not affect the stringent accuracy of her criticism.

Her imaginative powers found occasional expression during this period.

She saw a butterfly with the back half of its body missing, and asked how that had come about. I said that a bird had perhaps eaten it, to which R. remarked: "That was nasty for the butterfly—but not for the bird."

Some days later, seeing an old specimen of *red toadstool* without white spots and two young toadstools covered with spots, she said: "That one *has* had spots when it was young; I can see that because the others have spots." I for my part had not said a word about the marking; nor had we seen any toadstools previously that year—and it cannot be supposed for a moment that a little child could remember such a conclusion from the previous year. Besides, the fact that she had understood the relationship between the young and the old toadstools transpired indirectly about a month later. R. plucked on this occasion both an old flower having mauve upper petals and a young but unfolded flower which was almost pure white and yet had a faint tinge of mauve in the upper petals. Concerning the latter she said: "It's a *little* blue; it will be like the other when it's old, *for it grows on the same stalk.*" This last phrase shows that she is not simply repeating her line of thought with regard to the toadstools; for in the case of the pansy she forms her conclusion from the fact of both flowers growing on the same plant; and *therefore* she expects the young one to become like the old.

A *deliberate* ruse may also be employed by a child of this age. R., when five years and ten months old, had been asked by a lady about something or other, and in recording the incident said: "So I laughed; I always do that when I don't know what to answer." Naturally it would have been more satisfactory if she had openly acknowledged her ignorance—but that is another matter. Far less engaging, however, was a trap which she laid for her mother a fortnight later. R. asked: "Can you remember that gate down at Mrs. H.'s?" M.: "Yes, I can." R.: "Can you also remember that gate up on the hill near the steps at K.'s?" M.: "Yes, I can." R.: "No, you can't; for there isn't one;" and she laughed exultantly.

Psychological summing-up of other people as well as of themselves may express itself in young children: R., five years and eleven months old, said to her mother, after I had been dancing the polka with her: "Father can't dance the polka properly," and she raised her shoulders contemptuously, or perhaps indulgently, and added: "He thinks he can." Afterwards, however, she became less cocksure and said: "But perhaps it's me who can't."

Self-observation was proved one day, when her mother had been reading aloud a poem, the subject of which was that if one were true to the best in oneself one would always be happy. R., who had heard it, asked: "What does that mean?" and received the answer: "That if you always do what is right you are always happy." But to this R. remarked: "Yes——; I'm always happy; but it is not because I do what is right." M.: "Why is it, then?" R.: "Because I'm

happy in any case.” She displays not only correct self-analysis but the child’s natural *joie de vivre*.

The excellence of the childish reasoning faculty is also shown by the following incident. We had a charwoman, who asked: “Can the writing-table be moved?” As it is very heavy, she received the answer: “No;” but R. objected: “Yes, it *can* be moved, but it’s too heavy. If it couldn’t be moved, we couldn’t have brought it here with us when we came here.”

Far more subtle logic, however, was displayed by R. some days later. S. did something wrong and R. said: “No, S., I wouldn’t do that if I were you . . . but if I *were* you, then I would have done it.” This can scarcely be interpreted otherwise than that R. has understood that if she had really been S. she would have acted as S. did, while on the contrary S. would presumably have behaved beautifully if she had been R. A cruder form of criticism, however, was shown by R., six years old, one day when I was reading “The Princess and the Pea”<sup>[3]</sup> to her. When we came to the place where the pea is mentioned she said: “It must have been a big pea” (implying: otherwise she could not have felt it through the mattress). She quite destroyed the romance of the story by her ruthless critique.

R., six years and two months old, displayed a very intelligent comprehension of the essential, when she asked her mother to set the following copy for her: Mother and I are good friends. R. wrote, but omitted the word “good,” and M. pointed out the error. But R. asked: “What does it mean to be friends?” And upon receiving the answer: “It means that one is fond of the other,” she remarked: “Very well, then, that is enough (with ‘friends’).” The same capacity for understanding was expressed when she was six years and four months old. Her grandmother had once written to R. that she sent her a thousand kisses. The letter was referred to later, and the child remarked: “It was a joke your sending me a thousand kisses; but it wasn’t a joke that you loved me.”

A very interesting progress of thought, even if a trifle irrelevant, is found in the following. R., six years and five months old, said: “I’m thinking that when we die we shall live differently.” M.: “What do you mean by that?” R.: “I don’t mean, when *we* die, but when the people who are now alive on the earth are dead; then perhaps the chairs will stand with their *legs* in the air and we shall sleep *underneath* the beds.” She exaggerates of course mankind’s tendency to change, but the basic thought is correct, and it is an extraordinary flight of fancy for a six-year-old child.

The day after, she displayed a kindred mental process. To her mother she said: “Why don’t boys become ladies, and girls become men.” M. answered: “That never happens.” R.: “No, but if it did, it *would* be funny, as things are now.” For then it would have the charm of the surprising and the unexpected.

Towards her little sister R., when six years and seven months old, was deliberately dishonest in order to please her. They were playing with *Nipsenaal*,<sup>[4]</sup> and R. allowed S. to win, and praised her incessantly to the great joy of the little one. But to her mother R. whispered: "One of us (S.) is playing seriously and the other (R.) in fun; you can't do that really" (*i.e.* it is not the real game). R., six years and eight months old, displayed extremely mature reasoning one day when we were gathering mushrooms. She said of a mushroom which she found: "First of all I took it for a stone, but then I saw that it ended in air" (*i.e.* that the head of the mushroom was raised off the ground).

Another day, six years and ten months old, she appeared in the rôle of exposé of her little sister's hypocrisy. S. and R. were going up the servants' staircase, and the former alleged that she could not remember where they lived. R. then pretended that she also did not know, and began shouting: "Where do we live; where do we live?" and went a story too high up. But S. stopped at the right door; and thereby showed that she was not so ignorant as she had pretended.

Linguistic "howlers" are also comprehended by the child; and R. has on several occasions displayed her knowledge in a neat manner. I said one day to my wife: "I use a little many<sup>[5]</sup> (rather many) handkerchiefs in these days." R., overhearing the incorrect expression, was down on me at once with the remark: "You said: *A little many* . . . I get so *often never* anything." About a fortnight later I said to R., upon her forgetting to shut the door after her: "Who shuts the door . . . not?" I added "not" lest she should fail to understand my ironical correction. R., however, answered: "Yes, who shuts the door, not?" She had therefore remarked the irregular placing of the negative.

When R. was seven years and three months old her mother told her the story of Helge Rode's drama *The Great Shipwreck*. Upon M. relating how the director said to Emil: "Why must you capture me, for then I shall be ruined?" R. said: "Very likely, but it serves him right anyhow." And upon M. telling her that Hedevig fainted when her husband committed perjury in the court, R. said: "Well, that was because she was so fond of him." She had no difficulty in understanding that. Similarly, about a month later, she understood the decisive point in a scene of *The Wild Duck*. M. told her of the studio with chickens and pigeons and the wild duck, and of Hedevig wanting to shoot this wild duck which her father did not like, but which was the most precious thing she possessed. By this means she would make her father happy. Then said R.: "Well, then, she was nicer to her father than to the wild duck, which she liked so much."

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Does not this long list of citations prove that a child in the period under

discussion, between four and seven years of age, reasons more and much better than is generally assumed? The objection can of course be raised that the evidence concerns one child only, and that it is not necessarily applicable to others. But when we compare the casual observations with the above-mentioned intelligence-tests, we are forced to another conclusion. The intelligence-tests prove, namely, that R. is not superior to other well-endowed children of the same age. Therefore we may be allowed to conclude that her standard of reasoning is to be found also in the group of similar-aged children with whom she is equal in other respects. But if this is really the fact, it shows, *inter alia*, how extraordinarily careful in their speech parents and other adults should be in the presence of small children; for the latter understand far better than is generally supposed. Besides, it is evident from the observations what an objectionable practice in education it is to ignore the child's thinking-powers and treat it as a small, insignificant being lacking comprehension. We should on the contrary humour the child's need for understanding and set it on the right road to good and sound reasoning. Finally, the above recorded observations of the child's doubt and criticism show especially of what signal importance it is for educators to avoid weakening or undermining the child's trust in themselves by stifling the child's sense of criticism and, when it is roused, by crushing it down without explanation with a trite remark that children must not criticise their elders, or whatever other means of avoiding the issue comes most easily to mind.

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[1] A Danish song, "Jylland mellem tvende Have," which compares Jutland with a Runic wand.

[2] A children's poem in which a naughty girl who plays with matches catches fire and is burnt up except for her shoes.

[3] One of Hans Andersen's stories in which the princess is so aristocratic and sensitive that she cannot sleep because of a pea which lies *underneath* the mattress.—TRANS. NOTE.

[4] See note, vol. ii. p. 94.

[5] Danish, *lidt mange*.

## CHAPTER II

### GROWTH OF THE POWERS OF OBSERVATION

The thinking-powers of the child cannot of course, any more than those of the adult, begin to work without there being material for them to work upon. But what is the best means of providing the child with this material, and of what kind shall it preferably be? Shall it be problems on life, death, creation, etc., which are fully discussed in Chap. III. in respect to the child's spontaneous ideas; or is there some more intimate and more profitable nourishment for the infantile thought-processes? And shall the material be given the child in narrative form, or is there a more advantageous and more natural manner in which it can be made to swallow nourishment for forwarding its mental development?

The answers to these questions must depend to a great extent upon whether the child can itself observe, and in such case, in what it is temporarily interested, and whether it, by further thought, is capable of adapting its observations to assist its progress.

But, of course, one must not demand of it a *scientific* observation: *i.e.* a deliberate and continuous inspection with a definite aim in view. Such methodical observation is new even in science; to it the scientist links also the casual observation, the inspired glance, which has so often been the starting-point for great discoveries. It is therefore already a great step if it can be shown that the kindergarten-child is an interested and intelligent *casual observer*, a snap-shot collector, especially if in addition it possesses to some extent the power of adapting and arranging its observations.

In *Child Psychology* (I. p. 103) I have reported my observations on the evolution of the infantile powers of observation in the first period of its life. But after a while, as the years pass, the child's powers of observation grow, partly perhaps because of the exercise of the organs of sense, but more especially, and maybe entirely, because of the child's increasing thoughtfulness accompanying the process of observation itself. This fact results in the received influences being appreciated more and more effectively as time goes on. But in addition the faculty of attention grows also, and through it the thoroughness with which the child observes.

In this treatise, however, I shall confine myself chiefly to the investigation of observation by means of *sight*; for I have not been in a position to secure evidence of any importance concerning the evolution of the remaining senses.

One can with some justice protest that everything told to the child acts

upon its sense of hearing, and that therefore the comprehension shown by it is evidence of its faculty of hearing; but this meaning can scarcely be included in the term: development of the faculty of hearing. If, however, it must be so, one must in justice confine oneself to what the child picks up from what people say in its environment. In the meanwhile I will content myself with endeavouring mainly to elucidate the development of the sense of sight, the faculty of observation on a diminished scale.

For the purpose of education it is of the utmost importance to ascertain whether the child evinces any enthusiasm in its capacity as observer, or whether it on the whole remains passive towards the surrounding world's countless phenomena. In the event of it being evident that the child is an enthusiastic observer, it is again of great value to form a reliable estimate of the extent and strength of its powers of observation. For in good education one must build on the child's natural tendencies, in the event of the latter being of value in the struggle for existence—and not merely tolerate them—in order to help the child forward in its evolution. For this reason, among others, it is of such great interest to watch over the child's progress in its capacity as observer.

“Childish” things of course are those which naturally attract the child's attention and which are observed by it. When R. was four years and two weeks old, we went for a walk to see the Christmas shops. She was absorbed in all the windows wherein there were displayed dolls, marzipan and chocolate sweets, children's coloured pictures, toys, etc. On the other hand, bright colours or gleaming splendour do *not* attract her attention when the colours or the splendour is found in objects which possess no intrinsic interest for the child. For example, she walked obliviously past the flower-shops with their beautiful blooms, and past a window crowded with bright multi-coloured lamp-shades. On one occasion she inquired the name of smoked eel; but otherwise completely ignored fish, meat, bread, cakes, and food on the whole. Small things, however, to which adults usually pay no attention, frequently rouse the child's eager interest. When R. was four years and two and three-quarter months old, she was given two 2-Øre pieces and told to buy a piece of chalk with one of them. She then noticed that one of the coins, a Swedish 2-Øre, had a line round it, which the other lacked; and with the former the chalk should be purchased.

When four years and four months old R. made quite a subtle observation. A newspaper was being held over a red eiderdown upon which the sun was shining, and R. asked: “Why's the newspaper red?” She had noticed the reflection from the red silk.

When R. was four years and five months old she was allowed, for the first time in her life, to ride on the top of a tram, and sat looking down on the street.



She immediately said: “The ladies have become girls.” She had noticed that they appeared somewhat smaller. A couple of days afterwards she saw an insect on a window and inquired its name. I answered: “It’s a wasp.” Then said R.: “It has two humps like an ant;” *i.e.* that its body consisted of two clumps, the fore-part and the hinder-part. Later in the day when out walking R. saw an ant and said: “Can you see the ant has two humps?” She was verifying her previous observation.

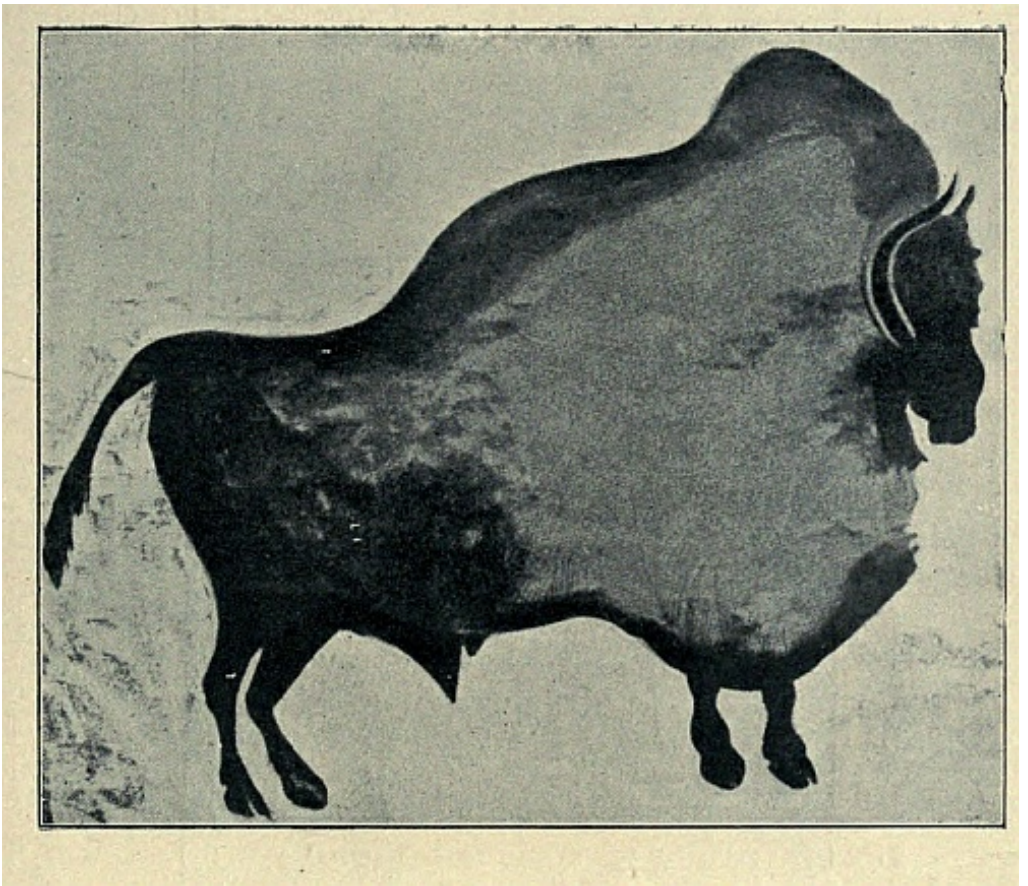
When four years and six months old, R., having seen some crows in the Zoological Gardens, related: “The crow shook its head and some water came on me.” I: “Then it must have had some water in its beak.” R.: “Yes, *I saw, too, its beak was shiny.*”

At the age of four years and eleven months she said: “First of all I think a little, and then I say it. Yes——; first I think and then I speak.” M. asked: “Has anyone told you to do that?” R.: “No, but I can’t help doing it.” R. was in this instance actually self-critical, at first unconsciously, but afterwards more deliberately, as she learnt to know herself.

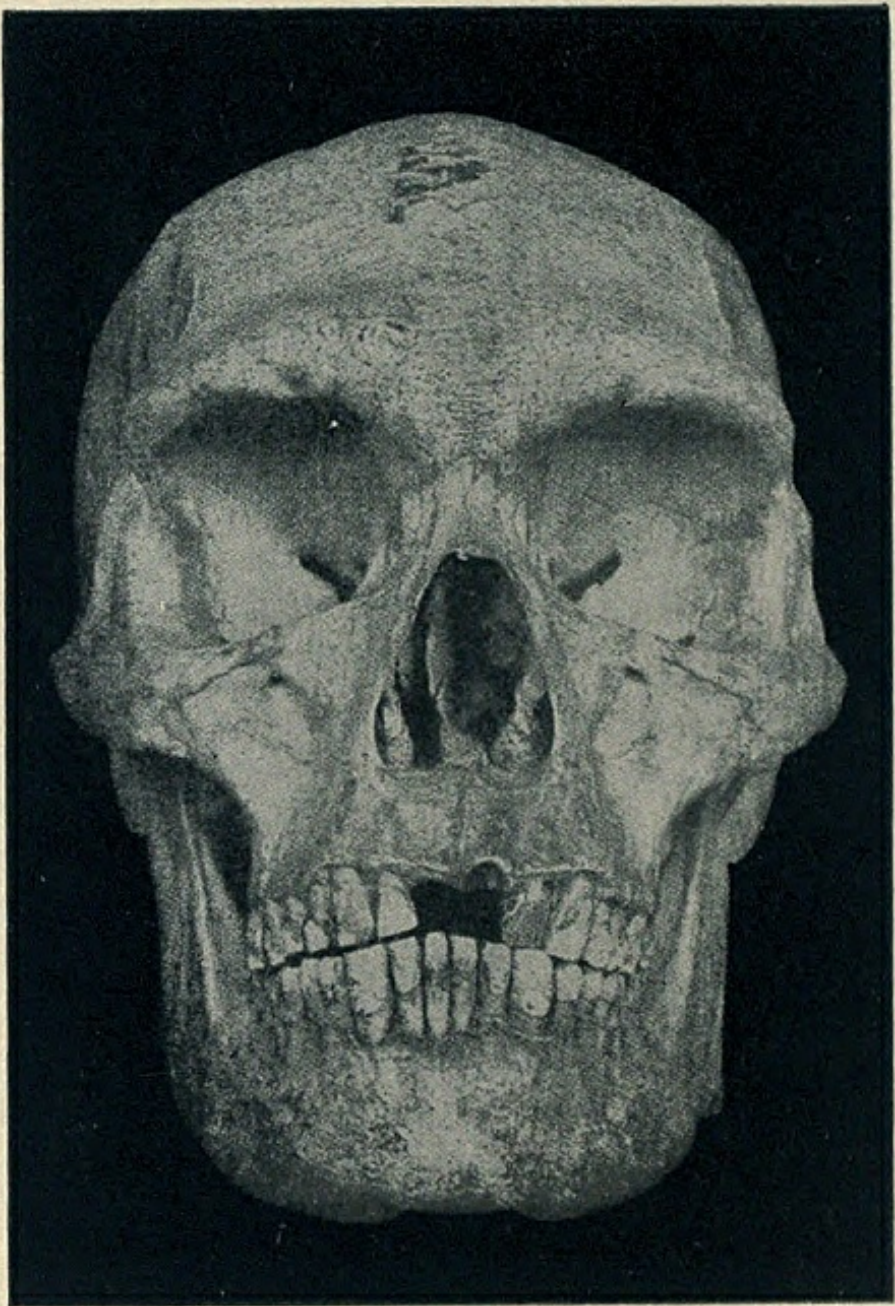
When five years and one month old R. saw a gentleman who was walking past trip and fall down. He explained that he had been walking along thinking of something else, and so had neglected to look where he was going. R. heard this and later on said to me: “How can you fall down through walking along thinking of something else? I very often walk along thinking of something else and yet I always look out that I don’t fall. But perhaps I’m different.” She here expressed not only self-observation but also, in her concluding remark, the suspicion that her condition was perhaps not quite the same as the gentleman’s in question.

When R. was five years and seven months old we went for a walk in *Tisvilde Wood*, and finding there some galls of the gall-gnat on a beech-leaf, and some plant-louse holes in a pine-tree, she asked what they were.

When five years and eleven months old she was looking at the pictures in my book *Human Evolution*.<sup>[1]</sup> With regard to the drawing of a bison facing this page she said, very rightly: “It’s not quite like the one in the Zoo, for it (the latter) hasn’t a hump like that on its head,” and of the picture of an Australian’s skull she said: “Oh! He is ugly. He’s lost a front tooth; no, he’s lost two, for there’s a little point there (of the root).” This is a really excellent observation, and shows an intelligent comprehension of something quite foreign to the experience of a five-year-old child.



[To face p. 38—vol. iii.]



[To face p. 39—vol. iii.]

When R. was six years and four months old I showed her the moon, which was three days old at the time. She said: "Yes, it's pretty, and you can see plainly a little of the whole moon" (*i.e.* also the earth-lighted, dimly-shining part of the moon, of which she naturally knew nothing). The following day she drew attention to a linguistic phenomenon; for she said: "You can't see from the words how the sound is" (*i.e.* where the stress shall be laid).

Three weeks later R. and I were collecting vineyard-snails; and finding some empty shells as well as some containing living snails, she said: "When there's a leaf hanging to it, I know it's for Father" (*i.e.* that there is a living animal in the shell). It is very clear that she is using her powers of observation.

Even if it cannot be called an exact observation, I consider it nevertheless of interest that R., six years and eight months old, hearing X. read Hans Andersen's *Fairy Tales* aloud, said: "He reads it very conceitedly (*i.e.* that he shows off, or something of the sort) . . . I can understand it better when Father reads, but I think it's funnier when he (X.) reads; but if I hadn't heard them (the tales) before, I wouldn't be able to understand it at all."

R., six years and ten months old, and I were visiting the Zoological Gardens one day when she saw some crested-pigeons and said: "You can see that they are father and mother, for one has some funny feathers on its head." This observation is so acute that I at all events am convinced that very few children indeed have made it. R., however, was not quite correct, for the pigeons were of two different breeds, the one having fan-like ends to its head-feathers, while the other's feathers were pointed.

It has been of special interest to me to ascertain at what stage the child of the age under discussion begins of its own accord to use *method* in its observation, either in its actual process of observing or afterwards when endeavouring to convince itself of the accuracy of the observation; for I have learnt from experience that observations which have the character of a "discovery" may very well be previously known to the child. And just as I have succeeded in ascertaining the existence of great powers of observation in the child, which offer to the educator a natural basis for further development, so have I also found indications of methodical proceedings which I regard as a sign that the child already in the kindergarten age displays an aptitude for exact, methodical verification—one may almost say "scientific" observation. Unless this tendency were so neglected, nay, even in many ways hindered and partly stultified in its development both at school and to a certain extent in the home, the faculty of accurate and thorough observation would scarcely be so seldom encountered as it is now.

I have already given, in the case of the ant on p. 37, one example of an observation being verified. When R. was four years and five months old she evinced perhaps even greater deliberation in this respect. She asked her mother



what the thick lump at the base of a narcissus is called, and received the answer that it is called the ovary and that there are eggs in it. Some days later she picked up a narcissus and said: "I'm going to pull it to pieces, for I want to see the eggs." She then tore it asunder, and finding the eggs, asked: "Is it those there?"

One day R., four years and six months old, accompanied one of my classes on a botanical excursion and listened to an explanation of the difference between wild chervil and gout-weed. On the following day she saw some wild chervil in Frederiksberg Gardens and asked: "What's that?" I: "Wild chervil." R.: "Can you see; it's like those (we saw yesterday) on the road, leaves, stalks, flowers, and everything."

It was also a verification which R. made when she, five years and two months old, said to a lady who had drawn her portrait: "Don't like that at all; I've seen myself so often in the looking-glass."

Closely related to the verification is the *experimental method* of procedure, wherein one examines the phenomenon by means of experiment for the purpose of ascertaining whether observation is in keeping with expectation. R. again has at an early stage discovered how to gain experience with the assistance of experiment. When five years and four months old she was jumping up and down on a sofa, on the high back of which stood a little vase filled with flowers. I said to her: "Mind the vase doesn't fall down," and she replied: "I push it further in (towards the wall) and then I watch to see if it comes further out." Thus there clearly exists an innate, automatic experimental faculty, a power of observation, with far-reaching pedagogic consequences. Nor was R.'s experiment with the vase a purely fortuitous and unique occurrence. When five years and six months old she was eating some rhubarb soup, and having finished her piece of toast, asked for more. There being no more, she received the advice to put some small pieces of bread in the soup, for "it tastes nice." But R. contented herself with putting *one* piece only in the soup, tasted it and said: "Yes, it tastes nice." Truly a typical experiment.

I discovered another form of deliberate methodical observation in her when she was about five years and ten months old. I showed her a photograph of about fifty men, among whom was myself, and asked: "Can you find me?" R. took a pencil and pointed it first at one portrait and thereafter systematically followed the faces row by row to find me. The fact that she did not succeed in recognising me at once is another matter, and does not lower the value of her methodical investigation, for which she received due praise. About a month afterwards, when five years and eleven months old, she was playing with her *Nipsenaal* and lost one on the floor. She then said to her mother: "Look how I find *Nipsenaal*;" and then examined the floor-boards separately, one by one, until she found her toy. She probably recollected that she had been praised for

her systematic search for me in the picture; and thus had been fully conscious of her method.

R. was also fully self-conscious when at the age of six years she sat painting and made a little discovery in connection with colour-mixing. She cried out suddenly: "Look, look; it turned mauve. I took red first and then blue, and then they turned mauve."

The following is another example of deliberate method. R., six years and four months old, seeing the leaves of a pilewort, said: "That's a violet"; and upon my answering: "No, but I will show you violet leaves," she remarked: "We can hold them side by side, then we can see. I didn't know (the difference between) monkeys' hands and men's hands before I saw them (together) in a picture."

Still clearer in respect to conscious demonstration was R.'s reply one day when she, six years and seven months old, showed me a finger of her right hand and said: "It's much too thick here (in front of the second joint)." I assured her: "No, it's as it should be;" to which R. offered the objection: "No, it isn't; feel this finger (the corresponding one on the left hand), it's thinner. The other one's thick because I've been sucking my fingers." No doubt her explanation is of doubtful value; but it is clear enough that she attempts to prove her statement by direct comparison of the two corresponding fingers.

Some time afterwards, the date not being recorded, R. was walking along with a birch-leaf in her hand when she said to her mother: "Please tell me when we come to a beech-tree, for I want to pick a beech-leaf to see the difference." She did so and found beech-leaves to be smooth-edged and "round" (oval), but birch-leaves to be toothed and of another shape. Then she added: "I always do this. I pick something from each tree to see the difference." It is possible that R. on this occasion desired to show off to her mother and has therefore exaggerated the frequency of her comparisons; but in any case there is no doubt at all that she has mastered the principle of comparison.

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[1] *Menneskets Udvikling.*

### CHAPTER III

## ATTENTION AND RECOLLECTION

The attention exerted by a child when it observes and, on the whole, senses, is one of the essential foundations of its power to recollect; but attention and recollection are by no means identical, or so interdependent as to allow one to assume that there are necessarily great powers of recollection where there exist great powers of attention; or the converse. On the other hand, in one and the same person, the ability to recollect is as a rule proportionately stronger the more thoroughly the person's attention has been fixed on the thing observed. This rule, however, is not without exceptions; for there is found in many persons a specially strong power of recollection in certain respects, even when they do not exert a high degree of attention; while, contrariwise, in other respects they remember badly in spite of close attention. I have had abundant opportunities in my own family to observe both adults and children in this matter. I myself remember very imperfectly both what I read or hear, even when exerting my whole attention; but on the contrary, whatever I have *seen* sticks fast, although the observation may have been quite casual and concerning a mere bagatelle. If it is asked, for example, where a pair of scissors is lying, it is seldom indeed that I cannot remember where I have seen them, although it cannot be claimed that I am consumed with interest for the family scissors; and S. has exactly the same peculiarity. Her oral memory has not hitherto been particularly strong; but she invariably knows exactly where her things are, and can often enlighten other members of the family as to where their belongings are to be found. My wife on the contrary has an excellent memory for all that she has heard or read, but recollects very inaccurately the whereabouts of particular objects, even when she herself has deposited them, and R.'s memory is of exactly the same character. In the following pages it will be shown how well R. recollects in many respects, although she seldom remembers the position of articles other than her own belongings, and does not possess in the least degree S.'s ability to give information as to the whereabouts of casually observed articles.

As a general rule, however, it holds good that the accelerating evolution in the psychical sphere of action is accompanied by increasing powers of attention and recollection. Nor is a high intellectual development attainable without these latter "faculties." He who is not able to concentrate his attention on a single task cannot observe, or to speak more generally, sense, with any degree of success; and he who lacks a fairly well-developed memory cannot

acquire the sum of experiences which is essential, or at all events useful, for the purpose of succeeding in life. It is therefore well worth while to study the growth of attention in the child, and the evidence of its developing memory.

R. at an early stage has established the fact that she has a good memory: this may be seen from numerous examples in *Child Psychology*, I.,<sup>[1]</sup> and she has maintained steady development in this respect. When but very little more than four years old she saw from the top of an omnibus a coloured picture of *Mona Lisa* in the window of a book-shop and pointing said: "Lady we saw in *Politiken*." She had succeeded in recognising the picture, although one was coloured while the other was merely a black and white newspaper print. When she was four years and one month old we entered a doorway in Vesterbrogade where a gentlemen's outfitter was displaying some dummy "Gentlemen" and R. said: "We were here the day before yesterday." In reality it had been a fortnight ago. She displayed, however, much more striking powers of recollection when on the same day she saw a picture of a man with a scythe and said: "That's what they reap grass with;" although she had seen nothing of the sort since harvest-time, four months previously.

Children are especially good at remembering things connected with their play. One day R. poked my stick against some asphalt and said: "It's hard *here*. You thought (incorrectly) it was hard by the town-hall (in the children's sand-playground)." But the explanation in this case is obvious, as games interest the child intensely, for which reason it concentrates such close attention on its play. Unfortunately the practice of education is seldom based on this premise, namely, that the child shall preferably gather its experiences with the same interest and attention as is the case in its games, in order to impress them firmly upon its memory. By interest I mean: to enter into something, bury oneself, lose oneself so that one temporarily forgets oneself and all else for the one thing in which one is absorbed; and experience acquired under this stress of strong interest clings fast to the brain, is remembered. It is therefore that it is so overwhelmingly important to arrange all educational activity in such a manner that it may interest the pupil in the highest possible degree. As regards play, the success is probably greatest when the child is left to its own devices. Nevertheless the play *can* very well be prepared and arranged by parents, teachers, or others.

Unusual events, however, also naturally make a deep impression, and are therefore remembered for a long time. R., four years and one month old, preparing to go to a Sunday school to see some magic-lantern pictures, was greatly interested, remarking that it was there she had seen the magic lantern on a previous occasion. "Saw a little boy with a bird," she said, referring to a picture of the deposed Chinese child-emperor and a screen with birds on it. She had seen the picture at least three months previously.



Another unusual event which made a deep impression upon R. was a meeting with an intoxicated old man. When four years and two months old she said one day: "Do you remember that old man we saw out at *Damhus Lake*? He was so old and spoke so funnily; he said he lived in Copenhagen and . . . I can't remember." We had seen the man eight and a half months previously. At the same period R. was able to remember what to buy when sent on an errand into the town for her mother.

Many children's games tend to exercise the attention automatically; for instance, play with a skipping-rope. When R. was four years and four months old her mother and aunt turned the skipping-rope, and R. succeeded for the first time in "jumping in" at the right moment, making six jumps before failing. She tried again several times, and was much attracted by the game.

Even towards phenomena with which it has no immediate connection, the child can display great attention and therefore remember well. When R. was four years and nine months old I showed her a nettle-butterfly sitting on a flower and said: "We saw one like that at *Tisvilde* (a month before)." R. replied: "Yes, and it's like 'the old fox' (*i.e.* 'The big fox,' a picture)."

When four years and eleven months old, R. one day early in November said to her mother: "Do you remember Father made a wreath of earth once when we were out in the country? What was the place called?" The incident took place at the churchyard in the spring of 1912, about two and a half years, or perhaps one and a half years, previously. Although it is a little doubtful which of these above two occasions was referred to, there is no doubt in the following case that R.'s recollection extended over a period of one year with regard to an incident which took place in the Sunday school. She said to me: "Do you remember you had a little song-book at the Sunday school, and you stood by the piano and sang?" It had all happened about a year before; and I am quite positive that the incident had not been discussed later.

One January, when R. was five years and one month old, we were walking past an old dead tree in Frederiksberg Gardens. R. said: "That's where the goose lay in the tree" (on its nest). It had happened the previous April. That was, however, but a brief recollection compared with the following. R., five years and three months old, and her mother met a lady who had been staying at the same boarding-house as we in the summer of 1911, *i.e.* a good three and a half years previously. The lady asked R.: "Can you remember me? Can you remember that I gave you a picture?" R. replied: "No." But when the lady had gone R. said to her mother: "Yes, I can remember; it was that time the plate was broken." And she was right; a plate actually had been broken by R. that autumn.

The examples of recollection hitherto recorded refer exclusively to visual-memory. But R. could also remember well by means of her other senses. When

she was five to six years old her mother gave her a tulip-leaf and asked: "What does it smell like?" R. replied: "A pea-pod," which was quite true. But she had had no opportunity of smelling a pea-pod since the summer, almost a year previously.

It is also evidence of her good memory that one day as we were collecting fungus R., five years and seven months old, said to me: "We must look and see if they are white (inside). Do you remember last summer we looked at the white?" (inside a puff-ball, to distinguish it from a toadstool).

When R. was four years and seven months old she asked me: "Can you remember once I was going to change "Dollies" with S. because we found that the one (I had) squeaked when we squeezed its stomach?" This "discovery" was made towards the end of October 1914, *i.e.* about two years and five and a half months before, the dolls having long ago come to grief and been thrown away.

After R. began attending school, where she hears so many things told and read, there have been numerous opportunities to observe her memory in these respects; but it exceeds the bounds of the kindergarten age, so that the examples will be recorded elsewhere.

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[1] P. 59 ff.

## CHAPTER IV IMAGINATION

The ideas acquired by the child serve among other things as material for its flights of imagination; and the smaller the child, the more fantastic its imagination, there being no sense of proportion at all between its imaginative pictures and reality. But at a certain point in the child's development, a process of unconscious verification commences, which shows a decided tendency to approach nearer and nearer to reality. This does not necessarily imply that the child's imagination diminishes in scope and power. It merely changes its character and becomes more and more held in check by the recognition of reality; and simultaneously the child grows more and more aware of what are merely imaginative pictures lacking the stamp of reality, and what are efforts of imagination founded on reality. For every fresh adaptation of previous experiences demands imagination; or to be more exact is an outcome of imagination.

Among children's imaginative creations their animistic conceptions are of special interest. These also possess the advantage of being comparatively easy to follow in their formation and decay. In *Child Psychology*, I.,<sup>[1]</sup> which deals with children in their first four years, I have discussed in detail the strong tendency of the child to imbue inanimate objects with life. But in the course of time this tendency disappears, surrendering to the child's growing knowledge that it is inconsistent with reality. Thus R., when four years and two months old, said of her doll, with which S. was playing: "It's not alive; but when you play with it, then it's alive" (*i.e.* you pretend it's alive). With the help of imagination therefore, the doll can be brought to life, although the child is at the same time perfectly aware of its being inanimate. When R. was four years and one week old she sat one day playing with her dolls, to which she was giving "milk" out of tiny cups. Having completed the circle she said to her mother: "*Live* people can drink properly;" *i.e.* the dolls are not alive, and therefore cannot drink properly.

She, however, still lacked complete enlightenment on the subject. On the very next day after the foregoing incident with the dolls she asked: "Why can't you see the legs move in a picture?" This question can only mean that she still retains the belief that pictures of human beings are something living, which should therefore move.

Objects such as motor-cars and trains, the motive power of which is not understood by the child, are still regarded as living even in its fifth year. R.,

four years and one month old, seeing a motor-car slow down and stop said: "Now it's tired." Even concerning things already regarded as dead, the child can readily change its mind and express a belief of there perhaps being hope of their coming to life again. Thus R., four years and one month old, upon my saying of something in a shop-window "That is for Dolly," received the statement graciously and remarked: "Yes, when she comes to life."

The child's animism is, however, something more than a mere bringing to life or animating. It is an anthropomorphosis. The child recreates things *in its own image*; therefore the results are beings of human, or at least human-like, nature. I witnessed an example of this one day when R., four years and one month old, saw some geese in Frederiksberg Gardens and remarked: "Now the geese are going to bed. *They just take off their clothes.*" She has probably imagined something of this kind: that the geese have no special nightdress or bed, but simply take off their clothes (feathers?) and then lie down to sleep.

Presumably an outcome of the same unconscious analogising caused R., four years and one and a half months, to say on her sister's birthday: "It's my little girl's (the doll's) birthday, too." Her doll must not be eclipsed by S.

The actual process of creation presented a problem for R. a week later. She asked: "Why can't dolls eat?" Upon my replying: "Because they are not alive," she demanded: "How can dolls be made alive?" She is thus at the stage of believing that by some means or other dead dolls can be imbued with life. This attitude of mind causes no confusion provided the stage of development be sufficiently childish. One can very well understand therefore that the ancient Babylonians and Hebrews found no difficulty in believing that their creators fashioned a couple of figures out of clay or dust, and then breathed life into them.

The recognition that a doll is not alive does not, however, result in the child treating it as dead. Even when regarded as dead it shall, nevertheless, be permitted to enjoy the child's own experiences. For instance, when R. was about four years and two months old she placed Lise (her doll) in a window so that it could look out and said: "Lise is allowed to look out of the window,—for she can't fall down (and be killed as R.), for she's not alive." R. herself is not allowed to look out of the window on account of the danger, but the pleasure is great; and as the doll cannot be killed, there is no reason to deny it the treat.

This process of analogy-forming showed itself in a particularly noticeable manner when R., four years and two months old, accidentally knocked out one of Lise's eyes. The bad eye, or rather the hole, had to be sprinkled with collodion, just as R.'s eye had once been treated when she had torn the skin; but Lise had to wait until it was her bedtime, because R. could not buy the collodion before the doll's bedtime—in every detail exactly as it happened to

R. some days previously.

The strength of its analogies and the tendency displayed by the child at this period to identify everything with itself is also shown in R.'s remark when, aged four years and four months, she saw her mother wearing a short cloak instead of the customary long one. She said: "Why, that's only a bodice; it's not half as pretty as the other (cloak). How surprised little sister (then aged one year and three months) will be when she wakes up and sees it." R. had evidently no idea that her little sister was as yet incapable of drawing any such comparisons.

The difference between the child and other living beings is, however, gradually realised. R., four years and four months old, seeing a dog with its tongue hanging out of its mouth said: "Why's the dog allowed to walk along with its tongue out of its mouth and me not?" But she at once supplied an answer: "Oh, of course, it can't understand what you say to it, and so can't help what it does." But despite her realisation of the dog's inability to understand, R. assumes nevertheless that the dog is *forbidden* to walk with its tongue out; thus far at all events there is analogy.

Towards her little sister, on the contrary, R.'s analogising continues most crude. When R. was four years and eleven months old she hid behind a door, and said to her mother: "Tell S. (who was one and a half year old) that I have gone down to the yard." *Lise's* lease of life, on the contrary, has run out. R., four years and eleven months old, having eaten dinner, picked up *Lise* and said: "Have a rissolle?" and thereupon turned to me: "I'll give her a piece of rye bread and then eat it myself afterwards." R. would not waste the valuable rissolle, but, instead, offered her doll a piece of bread, representing a rissolle, and even that she herself ate afterwards. Realism and common sense loom large in the foreground of imagination.

But it is not so easy for children to understand phenomena which may seem to indicate life. When about five years and nine months old R. came a bad cropper. Some one went down the stairs, and shortly afterwards the lights on the staircase as usual went out automatically. This was quite beyond R.'s mental horizon; for she said: "How can the light know when the man reaches the bottom (of the staircase)?"

I have observed no evidence of animistic conceptions of this nature—apart from religious ideas—at a later age than the above, from which of course it does not necessarily follow that they die away completely. A kind of counter-verification, however, can be made by observing how the child reacts towards the pseudo-animism of fairy tales. For example, when Hans Andersen makes the ball and the top talk, it is in principle exactly the same thing as that which the child does when it imagines its dolls and other things to be alive and possessed of human attributes. The child upon hearing the fairy tale must

therefore in the early stages of its development regard it as reality; but how long does this belief continue? As far as R. was concerned it was noticed that she reacted strongly when four years and five months old. Her mother read *Tommelise* to her, and upon R. hearing how the toad came in by the window and took a walnut-shell in which Tommelise lay, and hopped out through the window with it, she said: "But that's only a story, for a toad couldn't do that, could it?" No one else had questioned the story's authenticity. R. had evidently arrived at a stage where doubt was the normal state; for when she was four years and six months old, and I was reading "The Flint and Steel" fairy tale to her, she said: "I wouldn't have crawled down into a tree, for there are *only* small animals there" (knowledge acquired from rambles in the wood with the school children).

One day when R. was six years old we were looking at pictures in Andersen's *Fairy Tales* and she asked: "Why has a little mermaid a tail?" Upon my explaining that mermaids swam about in the sea she said: "Oh, it's only a fairy tale." Then we came to the transformed mermaid and the prince; and upon my telling her that the mermaid had been given a medicine by an old witch, and that it had transformed her, R. said drily: "That's a fairy tale, too."

When, however, R. was about six years and three months old, and saw "Snow-White" acted by children with dancing and tableaux, her criticism took quite a different form, for when the curtain went up she said: "It's like a picture." She thus did not find the landscape a complete illusion. Later also, when the princess lay dreaming that she saw a dance, while a number of children danced round her, R. said: "But she can't dream it before she has shut her eyes, so she can't see it." R.'s logic is not quite clear, but presumably she has reasoned something after this manner: that if the princess is really dreaming it, there ought not to be children there; and that as there are so many children dancing round her there must be something fishy with the explanation that she is dreaming it, for the princess does not see it all, as the audience does; how therefore does she learn that the children are there? One must indeed be a little lenient when interpreting the children's dance as the dream of the princess.

The realisation that fairy tales are not true does not, of course, prevent R. from listening to them with pleasure; and there is no reason why the child should be deprived of this valuable source of spiritual development. Children, however, must not be allowed to remain clinging fast to their world of fantasy.

Animistic conceptions are naturally not the only form of mental pictures indulged in by the child. Among other things its games are often regarded as miniature theatrical plays. When R., four years and three months old, was drinking chocolate, she hit on the idea of playing that it was my birthday.<sup>[2]</sup> She went out into the passage, stood by my side, marked time noisily with her feet

as if climbing the stairs, rang an imaginary bell and said: "It's your birthday. A strange lady has come to drink chocolate with you." After drinking a little, R. came again, stamped, "rang," and said: "Thank you. Good-bye." She evidently felt constrained to come out to the staircase to thank me although she drank the chocolate in my room. It can be seen what free play she gives to her imagination; and she repeated this game time after time without discovering her mistake. But each time she represented a fresh visitor.

When four years and one month old R. "sold" me various things; *inter alia*, she tried to make me a muff from newspapers. But upon her rolling the paper together it assumed the form of a cornet. Immediately she said: "It's a cornet. It's for you." So easily was she induced by the accidental folding of the paper to abandon her original plan. It proves how haphazard and chaotic the child's efforts of imagination are, or at any rate can be.

One morning some days later, R. suddenly conceived the whole room to be full of girls, with whom she played. She rushed over to a bookcase and said: "Oh, here's some one I must get hold of. . . . Will you play with us? . . . What's your name? . . . Only people with nice names are allowed to play. . . . Your name is Trive, is it?" She then ran into the other room and asked the imaginary girls there: "May she play with us?" and thereupon back to Trive, to whom she announced: "Yes, you may play, come along." A little later she began to dance all by herself in the middle of the dining-room, and to her mother's question: "Are there many girls here?" answered: "Yes, and a lot more are coming."

Later in the day R. called to mind a motor drive she had had some days before, and now went for a "motor drive" on a chair. She then left it and went and sat in a corner, remarking: "What a lot of ladies there are here!" (exactly as it has happened when accompanying her mother on a call).

An inkling of the intensity of the working of the child's imagination is gathered when one unintentionally happens to disturb the process. R., when about four years and two months old, imagined herself preparing for a walk. She "put hat and coat and gloves on;" but as she was walking past her mother the latter stroked R.'s hair. This was, however, quite a wrong thing to do; for R. became very cross and said: "There, Mother, now you've knocked my hat off." Of such small import was a caress in comparison with the world of fantasy. A similar incident took place on another occasion, when she was playing "shop" with her mother. R. was the errand-boy, and came in with some goods; but when her mother kissed her she said: "No, no, I'm the errand-boy." The secret in this connection no doubt consists in the fact that imagination exaggerates what happens to such a degree that the child can no longer distinguish fact from fancy. It is this fantasy-enlargement which gives things their real value in the child's mind. When four years and two months old R.

was one day presented with a top and whip, but in the shop the top was called a “flying-top,” a fact which interested R. intensely. On the way home she said to her mother: “What was it the lady called the top?” M.: “I don’t know. She called it a top, I suppose.” R.: “No, she didn’t.” M.: “A flying-top, then?” R.: “Yes, that was it, a *flying-top*; because it could fly round the yard.”

In the midst of this world of imagination, however, realism is none the less real. R., when four years and seven months old, was playing “school” with her grandmother. A crowd of invisible children, boys and girls, were present. It was time for them to come up out of the water where they were bathing, and grandmother had called to them, but they would not come. R. then said: “I expect I’d better call to them; then they’ll obey better, for you’re so old.” The children then sat down to eat, and R. put a raspberry before each of them all the way round the table. But when she came back and saw that all the raspberries were untouched, she exclaimed: “Children, what are you about? You have not eaten your food”—and then devoured all the raspberries herself.

Although sometimes R. operates exclusively with her imagination, she can at other times feel the need of some object or other, which she then creates according to necessity. When four years and eight months old, and preparing to start for the beach with her mother, she said: “Haven’t we something which can be children? Yes, here are two fir-cones.” She chose a big one and a little one; but when her mother thereupon remarked: “It’s a mother with her child,” R. objected: “No, they’re both children.” Just as they were on the point of returning home from the beach, she said suddenly: “Yes, but—where are the little girls?”

Quite an insignificant detail may serve as a spring-board for the child’s imagination. R., when about four years and eleven months old, was given a boy-doll dressed in grey clothes, while S. received a girl-doll with white cloak and red dress. These colours probably attracted R.’s eye, for she looked very dissatisfied and desired to exchange with S. But later on she discovered that the boy could squeak when his stomach was pressed, while the girl could not; and after that she preferred the boy. For *he* could “talk.”

When six years and one month old R. was dancing with her mother, who at the same time hummed a melody. But suddenly R. said: “Do stop singing, Mother; there’s some one playing.” But only in her own imagination.

When R. was six years and six months old she one day began dancing and kicking her legs about with great abandon. She was at an imaginary ball, and was seeking a fiancé. (Our housemaid had recently become engaged.) R. danced towards an invisible gentleman and sang: “Will you be engaged to me?” The gentleman was made to answer: “But I am married.” R.: “Oh, then you’re no good; I must find some one else.” She then asked another phantom who replied: “Yes, with pleasure;” and R. danced round the room with him.



Suddenly she sang: "Now he's dead," threw herself down on the floor and bowed her head in despair. Then she stood up and began to sing a mournful song in a voice deep down in the throat, at the same time stretching out her hand theatrically: "I see his white coffin." But soon afterwards she sang: "Now I must go and find another," and began her wild dance all over again.

Such lively outbursts, however, are very uncommon with R. If her behaviour may be regarded as a trustworthy measure of her "fantastic" state of mind, it may be taken for granted that the latter has grown more and more subdued during the evolution-period under discussion.

Imagination, however, does not confine itself alone to the more "poetic" form of expression. It is therefore worthy of investigation to ascertain whether other forms are to be found in the childish mentality at this period of its life. For imagination is also a characteristic of the scientist and the inventor, as well as the creative man of affairs, and the merchant finding new methods of trading or hitherto unexplored markets. The difference between the free, "poetic" imagination, and the imagination of the scientist, consists only in the fact that the former transcends the bounds of reality and enters the realm of dreams, whilst the latter is constantly being brought to earth and verified, *i.e.* tested as regards its conformity with reality. It is therefore far from true that this form of imagination requires less cultivation than the free fantasy. Quite the reverse. The poet's fantasy is in fact most akin to the infantile. The poet is the inspired child, imagining in potential form, but like the child essentially free and untrammelled. In the case of the scientific imagination, and the thereto related forms, the critical faculty constantly maintains a tight hold of the reins, without the team being necessarily less mettled.

As might be expected, imagination combined with verification is found in children far less precociously and less frequently than the "free" fantasy. Traces of it, however, may be detected. R., for instance, when four years and two months old, was listening to a story of a little girl whose mother gave her a box perforated with small holes to enable her to see what was inside, but she was forbidden to take off the lid. Nevertheless when the mother went away the little girl removed the lid and out flew a bird. At the same moment the mother came back and told her that she had intended to give her the bird, but that now, as she had been disobedient, it should go back to the bird-dealer. As soon as R. had heard the story, she put a little picture of a child in a cardboard box, pricked a number of small holes in the lid and asked: "Was it like this the holes were in the box?" She was verifying her impression of the box; the bird on the contrary needed no confirming, and could therefore quite well be replaced by the picture of a child.

R., when four years and four months old, endeavoured to explain thunder to herself, and although the result was wrong she exerted considerable

imagination in her verification. She asked her mother: "What is it? How does it thunder?" Receiving the reply: "You cannot understand it yet; besides, nobody knows exactly what it is," she said: "No, you don't know what it is yourself." But shortly afterwards she said: "When the thunder hears a cart rumble, it will thunder again I expect." She displayed here a similar line of thought to that of the old Norsemen, who believed that the thunder came when Thor drove past with his goats. But R. probably conceives it to be something living which hears the rumbling of the cart and answers back by rolling and rumbling, too. This theory, however, has not satisfied her completely; for a little later she said: "Where does it thunder?" And receiving the reply: "Up in the air," she said: "Is it flying-machines or something like that?" By a fluke she has really approached very closely to the truth without understanding it. But she has thought among the known facts of her experience to explain the unknown phenomenon. Which, after all, is in principle the same method as that employed in analogous cases by the scientific visionary.

One form of imagination which is true to life, or rather feels the need to be in harmony with reality, is *foresight*. The savage's habit of living in the moment without thought of the future, is an outcome of lack of imagination. Conversely, it is a sign of growth of imagination when a child begins to display interest in the future. R., four years and four months old, did so on one occasion when S. had torn one of her pictures to pieces. She began crying, but her mother comforted her with a promise to buy a new picture for her. "All right," said R., "but you'd better give me two, so I shall have another if one gets torn." And when a couple of days later she was promised a handkerchief by her grandmother she said: "It would be nice to have two; some one else can give me another one, and then when I can't find one, I shall have the other." When four years and ten months old she was given a 2-Øre and said: "Mother, do you know what I'm going to do with all the 2-Øres I get? I shall keep them in a box and then buy a big doll with them when I'm grown up." At the age of five years and one month foresight again neatly expresses itself in her remark: "I'm very happy, for I have two red pencils. That's so nice, for now if I lose one I have the other."

*Inventiveness* is another phase of imaginative activity, one form of it being the adaptation of a familiar object for a new purpose. R., when five years and five months old, one day borrowed my drawing-triangle for use as a ruler. But after a while she drew a circle by running the pencil round the hole pierced in the triangle and said: "I can use it to draw heads with," and thereupon drew a man with a circular head.

Probably something of the same kind occurs when the child acquires a *principle*, although such an acquirement I feel sure is rare; in any case it is seldom observed. I have, however, remarked one in R. when she was five

years and four months old. She had been discussing the subject of *difficulty* with her mother and said: "I always do the most difficult thing first, for when it comes last it's so tiring." Of course it is difficult to judge how much of her sentiment is improvised on the spur of the moment; but the whole speech suggests that her remark is the result of previous experience.

To put oneself in another person's position is also an outcome of imagination. It is therefore of interest that R., upon finding a *boletus edulis*, said to me: "S. needn't have a piece of it, for she's so little she doesn't know how nice it tastes." R.'s egotism blinded her to the possibility that S. might enjoy the new experience.

In similar manner R. thought out for herself another idea when I was talking about Egypt, and told her that the Nile is 800 (Danish) miles<sup>[3]</sup> long. She remarked: "Oh! And it's one mile from Tisvilde to Helsingø." She evidently pictured to herself the length of the Nile by thinking of it as 800 times the distance from Tisvilde to Helsingø.

Thus the kindergarten child's imagination may not only be of the unbridled, fantastic kind, but may also be of the more realistic, verifying type; and both these forms of mental activity should be allowed free play and plentiful nourishment during adolescence. Should the child evince an excessive tendency to imaginative flights the latter may be subdued by diligent intercourse with reality. But it would be a grievous mistake to seek by unnatural means to dwarf the child's lively imagination, for example by ridiculing its ideas. The adult shall endeavour always to be childish when in the presence of children, and leave to reality the task of correcting the errors of imagination, or at all events of teaching the difference between fiction and reality.

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[1] P. 125 ff.

[2] In Denmark it is the general custom to drink chocolate on birthdays.

[3] One Danish mile is equivalent to about four English miles.

## CHAPTER V

### SENSATION AND WILL-POWER

The general state of mind in the healthy normal child is a well-defined feeling of happiness. The child is glad, cheerful, delighted, boisterous, noisy according to circumstances; bad temper is always temporary and evanescent.

And provided it be healthy and of normal intelligence there are no reasonable grounds for the child not to feel glad for existence. For it has no responsibilities to darken the present, and no threatening future to face; and, as long as a person is able to live in the moment and ignore the future, low spirits can only gain ascendancy through bad bodily health or depression of mind. Happiness, therefore, is the normal state of children, and is one of the basic reasons for the fascination they possess for adults.

On the other hand, this optimistic condition may be darkened by sentiments of dislike, or there can co-exist other impulsive feelings simultaneously with the normal, cheerful state of mind. *Jealousy* is one of the most frequently observed of the latter. When R. was four years old we were standing by the side of S.'s cradle, and I remarked of her rattle: "What a pretty rattle;" but R. immediately picked up a box having a picture on its lid and said: "This is prettier." She would not be put in the shade by her little sister. A couple of days later the housemaid said: "Look, S. has curls." R. standing at her side began suddenly to fumble with her fringe, but said nothing; she obviously could not succeed in making her fine, smooth hair curl, and it annoyed her. Again, upon my wife one day exclaiming: "How sweet S. is," R., four years and one month old, said: "I'm just as sweet."

Although very easy to excite jealousy in a child, it is still easier to make it feel flattered and preferred. One day when R., four years old, was walking in Frederiksberg Gardens with me, an elderly gentleman smiled at her, and in play made as if to run down a hill after her. It is more than probable that his behaviour flattered her; for, although I made no comment, she repeated several times: "He is so pleased with me." But it is useless to attempt to shield one's children against flattery, although one would imagine it an easy task to expose the falsity of it. Children are so extraordinarily apt to become too much self-centred, because by the very nature of their psychical composition they are the central point of existence. If others therefore happen at any time to have shown them attention, they quickly learn to expect as a matter of course to be the centre of discussion. When R. was four years and one month old, and heard that there had been visitors the previous evening, she asked: "Did they ask

where I was?" M.: "No, you were in bed and asleep." R.: "Yes, but didn't you tell them where I was?" Some days later R. asked: "Mother, do you know what a boy has (done)?" M.: "No, what has he?" R.: "He has seen me from right back in the summer." Presumably a boy has told her that he remembered her from her stay in Tisvilde in the summer.

Even when there is no direct occasion to taste the joys of flattery, the child seizes the least hint of an opportunity; as, for example, R. at the age of four years and two months. Her mother was occupied with S., and said to her in fun: "You are the naughtiest girl I know;" R. interpolated coyly: "Yes, the other one you know is nicer." It is thus very easy to flatter unawares. When R. was four years and four months old I said to her in some connection or other: "That was sensible." "Yes," said R., "that was what the lady said: that it was sensible to tie the spade to the (toy) bucket." The lady's remark had made such a deep impression on R. that she related the story each time the word "sensible" was used—in spite of the fact that it was not even R. herself who had thought of this means of prolonging the life of the spade. But it was *her* toy, and she felt flattered when the lady praised the arrangement.

*Fear* and the instinctive tendency to flee from danger is much less prevalent in the kindergarten child than in the earlier ages. In any case, R. has not once been afraid of the dark, apart from the previously mentioned evening when she desired the room lighted for the doll's sake. When about four years and one month old she asked: "Why does S. cry so much of an evening?" M. answered: "Because the room is in darkness;" to which R. remarked: "That doesn't matter. I like lying in the dark." M.: "Why, then, have we to turn on the light in the passage (sometimes)?" R.: "Because otherwise it's *too* dark."

Totally strange experiences, the further, possibly unpleasant, consequences of which are beyond the child's knowledge, may of course arouse fear. It so occurred when R., four years and three months old, had the misfortune to step into a water-conduit, the water immersing her ankles. She screamed violently with terror; but, as soon as she once more came up on dry land, she calmed down again very quickly. At the age of four years and six months, when riding on a merry-go-round, she said of a little boy who screamed: "He's afraid." Soon afterwards, however, her own courage evaporated, although she camouflaged it as follows: "I'm not much afraid." But she has obviously felt *some* anxiety. And once when we were out in Tisvilde Wood, and I told her of a viper in the heather, she became filled with a very real but useful anxiety. One day, for example, when sitting on the ground singing, she suddenly stopped and asked: "Do vipers come when you sing?"

*Vanity* revealed itself unashamed one day when R., four years and seven months old, was bathing in company with myself and one of my pupils who had come on a visit. R., who as usual was about to run out into the water with

me, said to-wit: "Let me stand so that the strange boy can see me." She is impelled by her desire to show off into exhibiting great courage in bathing. She walks out until the water reaches right up to her armpits, but takes good care that the deed is observed. When the others fail to admire her courage sufficiently she shouts with "joy," apparently quite naturally. In the most flagrant cases she calls out loudly: "Look! Father." Again, she made strenuous efforts to attract the attention of an artist in whom she was deeply interested. She said to her mother: "I shall turn somersaults for the painter." M.: "He won't take any notice." R.: "Yes, he does; he nods to me. I like it so much when he nods to me."

*Modesty* is, on the contrary, a feeling which at this stage is completely foreign to the child's nature. R., four years and eight months old, when out with me desired to "press," as our children call it; and I therefore proposed we should retire among some fir-trees at the side of the path. But R. asked: "Why?" She had not the slightest inkling that there was anything to conceal. On the contrary, when she had finished she said in a whisper, although we were quite alone: "You can take my knickers right off" (until after we had had our bathe). As a result of this incident an atmosphere of secrecy now surrounded the whole proceeding. Possibly also it was a consequence of the above-mentioned incident that R., when we were bathing, asked: "Why do ladies wear bathing-dresses?" I replied: "Because they are so big," but this failed to satisfy her completely, for she raised the objection: "Yes, but why then do little girls wear bathing-dresses?" Here, again, she displayed her absence of modesty; she, however, accepted my explanation as satisfactory when I replied: "Their parents wish it."

The child, which so often gives the impression of being apathetic towards the sufferings of others, probably in most cases through lack of understanding, may, however, display extraordinary sympathy in the form of tact. Thus R., four years and nine months old, said to her mother: "Why are your hands always so clean and white? Mrs. X.'s are not." . . . Thereafter she added in a whisper: "that's because she's rather old. . . . She can't hear it down there (in the flat beneath) when I whisper, can she?" R. loved Mrs. X. dearly. But the child's love is not excited by the ethical valuation of the object; it is prompted by pure egotism; R., four years and eleven months old, showed her point of view very clearly by her remark: "Uncle K. is nice because he gives me so many bricks." S., however, aged five years and six months said to her mother: "I love you so much, but I don't know why." This rather seems to indicate that the motive for the love was not exclusively the mother's kindness towards S.

Extraordinary *vanity* was displayed by R., four years and eleven months old, when she one evening asked to borrow a mirror, "to see how I look when I am eating." Probably also it is an outcome of vanity that the child becomes so

annoyed upon suspecting that it is being ridiculed. S., four years and two months old, exclaims frequently: "You mustn't laugh (at me)," and R., five years old, said to her mother: "You mustn't tell any one, for they'll only laugh." She fails to realise that the mirth is caused by the humour in the story, but assumes that she herself is the object of ridicule. Vanity also prompted her rejoinder to her mother's remark: "I think S.'s hair will be darker than R.'s," for R. replied: "Ye-s, the fairest (girls) are the prettiest."

The child is capable of being deliberately, dishonest when it is a question of retrieving its "honour." R., five years and four months old, was skipping, and did not succeed in accomplishing so many successful jumps as on the preceding attempt, whereupon her grandmother asked: "How did that happen?" "Oh," said R., "I expect the rope is too small; and now I've grown bigger, for I've learnt to knit." She must have known quite well that she was talking nonsense, if only for the reason that she had "learnt" to knit in the interval between the two skipping bouts. At the age of five years and eleven months she had not improved in this respect. She had some silk ribbons bound round her hair, and as she was about to go down to play said: "I won't have a hat on; it's too hot." It being late in October, her mother felt anxious and asked: "R., what do you mean; why won't you have your hat on?" and the child then blurted out the truth: "Because I have ribbons round my hair."

On account of the child's overweening interest in itself, flattery, even when not intended as such, falls on fertile ground. R., five years and eight months old, one day when we were out walking, said: "I'm so sweet." I: "Indeed?" R.: "Yes, every one says I'm so sweet." With the intention of lowering her self-esteem a trifle I said: "Oh, well, people tell *all* little children that they are sweet." But R. retorted: "Ye-s, but some of them are naughty."

Self-esteem and the tendency to assert her personality were expressed by R. when she was five years and ten months old. She said to her mother: "Are you glad that it's you who decide what children shall do?" M.: "No, but some one must do it, because children themselves don't know what to do. Would you be glad if it were you who decided?" R.: "Yes, rather." A month later she recurred to the matter and said: "I look forward to growing up, for then I shall decide for myself."

R. expressed sympathy in a charming manner one day when her little sister was crying through having been scolded. R. went to her, put her arm round her and said: "Don't cry, S.; but you mustn't scribble on the wall-paper. Can you remember that now?"

When six years and five months old R. showed that she could quite consciously feel the sentiment expressed in songs. Her mother had been singing: "Mother, I am tired; I will sleep now," when R. said: "It's sad; I can hear that it's sad. I like it being sad." When six years and eleven months old

she said to her mother: "Please sing me a funeral song." M. hummed: "Think of the time when the mist shall have vanished," and asked her: "Do you like that?" R.: "Yes, it *shall* be (sung) like that. It couldn't be like this: 'And the fox he ran to the farmer's house' " (a cheerful song).

Comprehension of the opposite emotion was clearly displayed on her seventh birthday: for she said: "To-day has been so awfully jolly. Sometimes things can be so very, very sad."

As regards *will-power* there is presumably no need to publish other than a few scattered reminiscences of special interest; for the child's everyday life and the whole of its activity are in reality expressions of "will." But the enormous energy displayed by the child in this connection is well worthy of note. It "will" always, it "can do it" itself, and strongly objects to help it considers superfluous. Both R. and S. at the age of four years could put on their own stockings, take off their knickers and shoes, lace boots—but not tie the laces in a bow—put on cloak and hat, etc., etc., and any offers of assistance invariably met with determined opposition. Similarly, they could undress and wash their hands. But *will-power* nevertheless has its limitations, a fact of which the child is sometimes well aware. At the time when she was four years old R. used to bite her nails, and being strongly urged to desist said: "It's no good my saying that I won't bite my nails, for I'm sure not to remember." On the other hand, only two months later she could concentrate her attention so well that she was able to remember what to buy in the town when sent out for single articles.

When R. was four years and ten months old I observed in her for the first time a conscious exertion of *energy*. We were out walking; she began to feel tired, and to her mother's inquiry: "Won't you have a ride now, just for a little way?" R. replied: "No, I *will* not ride, for I *will* be strong," and she walked all the way home. It is also quite possible that she had been "willing" in secret quite as consciously before her mother's question.

In its play the child exerts its will to a high degree. This fact, however, is far too often ignored, especially by pedagogues. At all events the latter speak and act as if believing that the greatest amount of *will-power* is exerted when work is done despite lack of interest. That pupil is considered specially energetic who labours strenuously, even when finding the work tedious. But this is wrong. There may be so many motives having nothing at all to do with *will-power*, which tend to make such a pupil industrious. And although it is naturally of great value for a person, and a child, too, to be able to "pull itself together" and labour regardless of disinclination, the truth of the old adage must nevertheless not be forgotten, that it is *desire* which drives the machine. The will therefore is strongest when the subject does not "will" at all, but labours unconsciously, absorbed, filled with interest, exactly as the playing



child; and thence follows that the child should as far as is practicable acquire its capacities, knowledge, ability, under the illusory or true belief that it is “playing.” By arranging work so that the child believes it to be play one trains it in the best possible manner for its work of the future. R. was therefore especially strong-willed one day when she, five years and eight months old, was digging on the beach, for when it was time to go home she said: “Oh, it has been splendid. I haven’t even had time to paddle, it has been so splendid.” What more could be desired? Play, dancing, sport and such-like are therefore the natural mode of expression of a child’s will. Every winter R. dances by herself, and practises of her own accord for hours at home. Desire drives the machine. But of course other motives than intellectual interest or unconscious desire for exercise can be the motive power. When R., six years and seven months old, was picking mushrooms with me, she said: “Now, please look over on the other side (of the path),” thinking that there were more there, and not realising that I was the better judge of where to find mushrooms. On this occasion as on all others she was extremely “diligent” in searching for mushrooms from motives of ambition.

It is in the form of “play” that R., and, later on, S., have learnt to read, write, and calculate. That they have acquired these accomplishments so soon, before even going to school, is quite opposed to my theories; but it has wholly come about owing to their own persistent desire. Owing to their games being, as a rule, imitations of what they see happen round them, they have naturally “played” at writing and reading through seeing their parents thus employed every day; as for calculation, *i.e.* counting, elder playfellows have influenced R. to learn it, and later on she has taught it to S. When R. was four years and one month old she had some hair-pins and could count with certainty to 4. She herself discovered how to add and subtract, saying for example: “When I take 2 away (from 4) there are 2 left.” Eight days later she amused herself by counting to 10, she and I pushing S. to and fro between us; but she had not then learnt to count with certainty beyond 4. A month later she could count with certainty to 5, but made an occasional mistake when that number was exceeded; at four years and three months old she could count accurately to 10, and already, when four years and four months old, offered one day to count up to 100, and almost succeeded in doing so with a little assistance at the tens. It was all accomplished through the help of bigger girl-friends.

At the same period R. began to “draw” letters, a feat which S. has not as yet, four years and five months old, attempted. R. “draws” letters from the headings in the newspapers, and has observed of her own accord that *P* has one “hump,” *B* two humps, and *D* one big hump over its whole length. *O* is a round bun, and *C* the half of an *O*. That this practice was incorporated in her games I saw for instance when she, four years and four months old, after “baking

cakes” of shingle, counted the cakes; and then she drew the same capital letter several times and counted the total.

As she showed such interest in drawing letters I helped her a little, systematically. I drew for her, four years and five months old, outlines of various animals, *e.g.* Mouse, Cat, etc., writing their names in large capitals underneath. But she could not as yet understand the sound-value of the letters. I wrote, for example, *Mother*, but she read *Agnes*, which stood next after mother. Later on, having again read mother, I then pointed to *Cock* which stood under a picture of a cock, but she read *Agnes*. It came also before the picture after mother. But she learnt by her mistakes to keep her eyes open.

With the assistance of this letter-drawing and counting, and by employing matches and pieces of matches as capitals, R. quickly learnt to recognise all the letters and numbers; and after that she often played “school” and *wrote*. By the time she was five years old she could write all the ciphers, and both the large and the small letters. At five years and four months old she wrote down all the numbers to 100. S. has been less precocious, but when five years and six months old she could write out all the ciphers and count to 100, and could also write single words such as *Sonja, Mother, Father, Ruth*, etc. etc.

As I do not consider it beneficial for the child to learn to read at such an early age, nothing at all has been done to encourage R. and S. in this direction; but when R. herself began to insist on learning, she was given at the age of six years and two months an ABC. And although I am of the conviction that Otto Jespersen’s system and ABC is the rational one, I chose for R. *The Children’s Danish Reader and ABC*, because I expected that the school would use this particular book, an anticipation that proved correct. On the whole it was found that R. learnt extraordinarily easily to pick up the phonetic values of the letters, and she very quickly succeeded of her own accord in spelling, or rather reading, words without assistance. It is not difficult for a normally endowed child to learn the elementary principles of the art of reading, when the phonetic method is employed; but it would undoubtedly be still easier if spelling were not so utterly illogical. When R. writes, as she often does quite on her own accord, the few mistakes she makes are caused almost exclusively through her guiding herself by the pronunciation of the words. As she is unable to read properly, and in consequence has seen very few words spelt, her orthography is naturally not a copy of what she has seen, but, on the contrary, in a certain sense, is the reproduction of the original verbal sound. I therefore quote the following piece from the time when she was seven years and two months old: “*Pas paa Kan du læse. Ole saa en Abe i et Bur. En Tiger løb efter Mai. Mor og Sonja Komr.*” (Correct version: “*Pas paa, kan du læse. Ole saa en Abe i et Bur. En Tiger løb efter mig. Mor og Sonja kommer.*” In English: “*Look out, can you read. Ole saw a monkey in a cage. A tiger ran after me. Mother and*

*Sonja are coming.”)*

## CHAPTER VI

### MORALS

Unfortunately scholars disagree to an extraordinary degree as to the *exact* meaning of morals and ethics. It is only necessary to examine what our own contemporary philosophers have said on the subject, to realise the deplorable state of affairs.

It being the aim of education to inculcate, among other things, correct behaviour, conduct of one's life or will, it might therefore be supposed that all educators might just as well discontinue their efforts forthwith. Fortunately, however, matters are not so bad as they seem; for on certain vital rules of morality there exists agreement not only among the authorities but also among all normal persons in a civilised community. Granted that it is doubtful whether morals in the first instance have their source in the "soul" of the individual, or in society's claims on the individual, this does not obviate the fact that the practical rules of morality, viewed broadly, are the same everywhere, just as little as that in the practice of education one has to take into consideration both the demands made by the public, whether of a small or a large community, and the claims of the individual itself. But it would be quite erroneous to assume that the child as regards moral disposition and moral behaviour is identical with the adult. Apart from individual differences the child passes through an easily proved course of development, until it reaches a similar standard to that of the adult members of its environment.

As has been stated in *Child Psychology*, I.,<sup>[1]</sup> the baby is utterly without morals, an unbounded egoist, and makes very little progress in its first four years as regards its state of mind in this respect. In the kindergarten age a child which neither attends school nor hears moral precepts in its home, as for example "the Ten Commandments," acquires its moral development by means of experience, through force of example or casually given advice, praise, blame, or punishment, as in the case of R. and S.

R., when four years old, went with me to the hospital to visit her little sister, and was permitted to play with wooden bricks. On the way home she said to me: "When I'm with little sister I play with bricks. I can take them when no one's looking." Evidently she understood quite well that the bricks were not hers or something she was allowed to take; but at the same time she was so little developed that it was the fear of being seen that alone prevented her from stealing the bricks. It is the remorseless authority "public opinion" to which she bows, and not the moral conception that thieving even when

undetected is wrong.

In other words, she was not *moral* in disposition, but behaved in a conventionally correct manner from a sense of fear.

R., four years and two months old, again displayed fear of authority when she accidentally displaced one of her doll Lise's eyes. She stuffed some cotton-wool in the cavity and said: "The cotton-wool must stop there, for Father mustn't see that the eye is gone; and don't let us say who has pushed (the eye in) for then he'll be sorry, and that would be a pity." But later on she changed her defence and said tearfully: "We won't tell Father, for then he'll be angry with me, because I've broken my doll." Her mental attitude was exactly analogous a month later when she was lying in bed biting her nails. Her mother said to her: "You mustn't bite your nails," and shortly afterwards R. inquired: "Aren't you going into the other room?" M.: "Why? Will you then start biting your nails again?" R.: "Yes." It was true she bowed to authority, but only because it was on the spot.

On the other hand R. was ashamed, and understood quite well the wrongness of her behaviour when, four years and three months old, she was playing *Nipsenaal* with her mother. The latter's attention was distracted for a moment from the game, and upon looking back again she caught R. in the act of displacing one of the pins. Seeing herself detected, the child looked thoroughly ashamed. A month later, her age being then four years and four months, she showed remorse for having behaved naughtily to her grandmother, disguising it, however, as far as lay in her power. Grandma had given R. two small presents, but R. asked her to buy a third. The request was not unnaturally refused, whereupon R. became angry and struck her grandmother. This resulted in the latter exclaiming: "What, hit your Grandma! You will have to beg pardon before we can be good friends again." This had the desired effect upon R., but to create a diversion she rang up (on an imaginary telephone) to Dr. H. and said: "Hallo—Yes, I have hit Grandma. She gave me two presents and I asked her to give me another, but she wouldn't, so I hit her in the chest and kicked her." Having finished, R. became extremely amiable towards her grandmother, but made no attempt to beg her pardon. Soon afterwards her grandmother took her hand and said: "There, now we're friends again and you are a good girl once more." "Yes," said R. joyfully, surprised at having escaped so easily, "and so we won't say anything to Father and Mother when they come home; I have *only* been good."

Some days later, R. displayed a more conscious understanding of having behaved wrongly when out with her mother in Frederiksberg Gardens. She asked if she might be allowed to run round alone, but her mother being afraid of her becoming preoccupied and losing her way, said: "No." In spite of this the child succeeded in slipping away and making a circuit of the grounds,

afterwards shouting out from the park: "I've run round after all," presumably in delight at having been able to find the way. But her mother called to her; and R. came slowly up to her and said: "I know, you'll only tell me that I mustn't do it another time; and I won't either." But it was fear for "authority" which conquered the desire to run round. Similarly, on another occasion when R. wanted to put both stockings on, M. said: "No, let me do one, then we shall finish more quickly." "Very well," said R., "for when you say you want to do something and I say you mustn't, then it's so unpleasant." M.: "Yes, and then mother's angry." R.: "Yes, and I don't like that."

At this age example is the decisive factor; and the thing which comes first, or is most frequently observed by the child, has the greatest influence, unless special sympathy or some other factor, *e.g.* the authority of the parents, comes into operation. In exceptional cases the child may in addition mould itself after a model which pushes others, usually acknowledged, into the background.

The importance of the *first* example is made evident in the following dialogue: R., four years and seven months old, said: "Sorry!" to the housemaid, who replied: "Not at all;" but to this R. objected: "You shan't say that. When I said 'Sorry' to Nora, she said: 'No offence.'"

The significance, however, of *sympathy* in the creation of a prototype, came to light on the occasion when R., five years and five months old, became the possessor of a new hat, a grey canvas one. On the next day she asked: "Oughtn't there to be some flowers on it? I think it's like a boy's hat. The children in the courtyard call it a navvy's hat." But upon R.'s friend saying: "It's an awfully nice hat," the child decided that all was as it should be, and became very pleased with her new headgear.

The child's egoism, although toning down as time passes, is nevertheless still predominant in the years under discussion. Thus when R., four years and eight months old, had some sweets, she said to the maid: "Won't you have one? Then there will be eight (left); that's enough for me." This egoism may, of course, be only a peculiarity of certain children, and not a common state of affairs; but in the above case, at all events, it was no more than one would expect in every child of the same age. S., who is more close-fisted and reserved than her sister, said, when five years and six months old, one day to me: "If I had more sweets (than six), Father could have had one." Not one, however, could be sacrificed from six.

Untruthfulness, as is well known, is prevalent in all children, but from widely differing reasons. They frequently tell lies quite unconsciously, through confusing their mind-pictures with reality, or through incorrect recollection; but they are also known to prevaricate for the sake of showing off, or of avoiding a difficulty. On the contrary, it is seldom they tell untruths deliberately from motives of politeness. The latter doubtful but indispensable

accomplishment is not acquired until later, besides which it is not generally regarded as immoral. R., however, when five years and one month old, told an untruth from such motives on the occasion of a visit to her grandmother. She related on the following day: "Grandma gave an orange. It was rather sour, but I said no when Grandma asked if it was sour. It's allowed to deceive sometimes." Similarly R., five years and two months, assumed the society veneer without, however, possessing the corresponding disposition when, having been given two pieces of chocolate, she said: "Dine (her friend) shall have the largest, because it's the prettiest." The explanatory phrase would scarcely have been added had her real motive for the gift of the larger piece been sheer generosity.

R. evinced *genuine contrition* at the age of five years and two months old. Her little sister was standing with a pointed pair of scissors in her hand, and M. said to R.: "You mustn't let S. have the pointed scissors, she will poke her eyes out." R., who obviously assumed that in such a case S. would die, replied: "That'd be a good job, then at last we should be alone." But seeing her mother's eyes fixed upon her, she turned very red in the face and, bursting into tears, kissed first her mother and then her sister. In this case it was neither the influence of education nor the fear of authority that affected her, but an entirely spontaneous understanding that she had behaved wrongly. Something similar occurred no doubt when R., five years and three months old, said to her little sister: "You lout . . . as Ellen says." Her mother immediately reproved her, saying that she must never use such an expression. Later on in the afternoon R., who had been pondering over the matter remarked: "I didn't say *lout*; for I said afterwards: *as Ellen says*." Her guilty conscience has whispered to her directly upon her employing the undesirable epithet; and she has thereupon hastened to change it to a quotation—in the hope of smoothing things over.

In the acquisition of satisfactory moral habits, not only are good prototypes, or in the event of these failing, theoretic instruction, necessary, but it is also of great importance for the child to be able to adapt the present to life's general scheme. In this connection it is of interest to ascertain when the child first begins to control the impulse of the moment with thoughts of futurity. In R.'s case I observed this tendency first on the occasion when, at the age of five years and four months, she and her little sister were given Easter eggs. The younger child ate hers at once, but R. said: "I shall keep it till Grandma comes (so that she can see it)," and refrained from eating it; but she evinced great impatience for the arrival of her grandmother.

The fear of doing the wrong thing has gradually grown very pronounced in R. When five years and four months old she went to a friend's home with a message, and in this connection knocked loudly several times on the door before obtaining an answer. At last the friend's brother came and said angrily:

“What’s all this noise about?” an occurrence which R. took much to heart, and “lay awake thinking about it” the same evening. Some days later she had the misfortune to tear an arm off the doll of one of her play-fellows. She became very upset and said: “I’ve pulled the arm off Ella’s doll . . . I am so sorry . . . I am so sorry.”

Besides prevaricating out of politeness, as recounted above, R., when five years and six months old, told an untruth to escape unpleasantness. She had placed a cup in a dangerous place, with the result that it fell and broke; but she put the blame on the housemaid. Her mother, however, suspecting the truth said to R.: “You are telling a story,” without, however, eliciting a confession. Shortly afterwards R., having trodden on her sister’s ball and broken it, showed it to me with signs of deep regret. I said: “Never mind, you couldn’t help it; we will buy S. a new one. But who was it put the cup in a wrong place?” R. then replied without hesitation: “I did,” and having obtained her mother’s forgiveness, went out quite willingly to tell the housemaid that she was the guilty person. Possibly the cause of R.’s *volte-face* and confession was her exemption from punishment in connection with the ball.

The not uncommon ruse of masking egoism behind apparent nobility was already one of R.’s accomplishments at the age of five years and eight months. I asked her whether she would walk with me to the post office. She obviously preferred to continue her game, but of this she said nothing, on the contrary, asking me: “Which would *you* rather (have me do)?” She wished to appear obedient, and felt sure that it was a matter of indifference to me either way. On the other hand, a month later, R. displayed clear signs of remorse one day when she had been unfortunate enough to smash a sugarbowl. She has probably assumed that the very ordinary bowl was “valuable.” She said immediately: “What a pity;” and upon her mother coming in to sweep up the pieces, sat down on the bed with ostentatious haste and volunteered the information: “Yes, I sat down here because I thought it was the most sensible (thing to do).” Later in the day, having been reproved for disobedience by her mother, who said: “You must not do that,” R. replied: “Then I’ll stop (doing it).” Her obedience was growing quite strong and rational.

Untruthfulness so torments R. that she is unable to bear it for any considerable time. When she was five years and ten months old some water had been upset from a flower-vase, and her mother inquired: “Who has done this,” whereupon R. said: “It wasn’t me.” M. feeling sure, nevertheless, that she was the culprit said: “Yes, it was;” but R. cried and denied the accusation. A little later she even persuaded S. to go out into the kitchen and say that S. had spilt the water; but her little sister mistook her instructions and reported that it was R. Finally her mother pretended to believe that S. was the guilty one; but a few minutes later R. came out into the kitchen to her mother and



said: "Mother! I want to tell you something . . . I . . . I was the one who did it."

On one occasion only has R. been detected in an untruth based on braggadocio. She was six years and two months old and attending a dancing academy at the time, being greatly interested in the art and exerting herself to the utmost to excel in it. One day she told her mother that she had been selected to show the other children how a particular dance was to be performed. M., who knew this to be impossible, said: "It can't be true," and the child then confessed immediately: "No, it isn't either." She had evidently *wished* to be one of those selected to be an example for the other pupils; hence her lying boast, which, however, she was honourable enough to confess immediately. Again, a month later, R. having for several days been on very bad terms with the housemaid, was reproved by her mother: "You have not been nice towards O. lately," to which R. replied: "Yes, that's quite true." Finally, when her mother said to her that the children in her class had been very noisy, R., six years and ten months old, was equally straightforward, replying: "Yes, they talked and they shouted, I must admit, although I am a child too (and had helped to make the noise)."

One day R., seven years and one month old, betrayed very clearly that her disposition did not always correspond to her deeds. Her sister had dropped a cup which rolled under the bed, and R. said: "I'll pick it up, for then I am good (and so deserve praise)." But she quickly added: "No, that's not the reason," and upon my inquiring: "What is it then?" she said: "Because it (the cup) mustn't lie underneath the bed." It was thus in reality the matter itself which had actuated the little paragon of virtue.

Neither is influence from environment always of the most desirable kind. R., seven years and two months old, when accompanying the housemaid to the royal dockyard to visit her "young man," was instructed to say that they were the fiancé's big and little sister, in the event of any one asking them who they were. R., in describing the incident, added: "Luckily no one asked."

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Before R.'s entry into school, the motive power in her moral machinery was, as the above-quoted examples show, first and foremost authority. But in addition there may well have been other motives, such as sympathy and fellow-feeling. The latter, however, are not easy to observe; for the moral disposition, the moral ego, as a rule, only shows itself when morality is outraged, or in moments of hesitation between right and wrong. In reality the child, just as the adult, every moment of the day is doing something which is either moral or immoral. But as long as the child's disposition is in harmony with the demands of its surroundings its conduct is accepted as correct without further criticism; inasmuch as the large majority of people unconsciously carry their moral standard in themselves. That thing which is least irksome for the

educator will, owing to love of comfort, be extremely liable to be accepted as good; besides which it will frequently fall in with the educator's own everyday disposition. Deeper consideration of what deserves to be regarded as moral or immoral, is rare; and as the adult, as a rule, does not dwell to any appreciable extent on moral problems, still less can it be expected that the child shall be conscious to any appreciable degree of the morality of its acts. It imitates and is approved of. It neglects to imitate and is corrected or punished. In both ways permanent habits are formed, the child being disciplined into a self-satisfied feeling of pleasure when it has done what its elders wish; and experiencing a self-reproachful feeling of displeasure when it has opposed the wishes or will of the authorities. From the unconsciously individualistic standard of the age of babyhood it glides more and more into a more comprehensive morality, which, however, in the majority of cases, scarcely surpasses what one may call *family morality*. The family is the child's world. The family's requirements, mainly decided by the parents' wishes and will, are in essentials the child's conception of what is of importance. It pays little heed to the well-being of other people, unless they are relatives or otherwise members of the household. Of larger entities, such as the community or the nation, not to mention mankind, the child has not the least conception. Theoretic moralising therefore, in connection with children of the kindergarten age, is in the majority of cases both illogical and unnecessary. They must acquire their moral education by means of example and authoritative training in habits of good and correct behaviour. Only in extremely rare cases can they by reasoning be made to understand how an action is moral or immoral. In order to achieve a higher standard they must first and foremost have their sphere of experience enlarged, for example, by associating with a larger "society" than the home. This comes about partly through friends, partly through imagination occupying itself with the greater society of which the child hears and reads.

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This moral conduct, with its accompanying moral theory, gradually acquired by children, is apparent, for example, when they pose as educators either of younger children or of their dolls; and they are as a rule very strict in their demands. Indeed children's assistance on the whole as regards education should by no means be undervalued. Even at an early age children are to a great extent co-operators in the education of their smaller brothers and sisters. R. has been a very stout guardian of her little sister's "morale" with a keen eye for any failures to obey its behests. For instance, when R. was four years and seven months old, she said: "S. mustn't touch the palm. I have smacked her fingers." Another day she drilled her sister in polite deportment. She kept giving S. something, repeating each time the words: "If you please," and then said, turning to her grandmother: "She shall learn to say *thank you*." About a

month later she displayed anxiety for her sister's digestion. She presented S. with some bread and said: "Chew it well, little sister," and a little later: "Open your mouth, little sister (so that I can see whether you have chewed it all up)." Occasionally a child may even display exceptional understanding in the educating of younger relatives. R., for example, when four years and eleven months old, said to S., who was shifting some toys: "No, little sister, you mustn't do that. You are very good in other ways, but you mustn't do that." Actual knowledge may also be dispensed in this manner, as when R., four years and eleven months old, standing before a shop window, pointed to a cat and said: "Look, there's a little black cat. Can you see there's a white one on the other side?" and when, five years and three months old, she sat in bed pronouncing one difficult word after the other, which S. repeated to the best of her ability.

One day S. had received a smacking for picking unripe raspberries in disregard of strict injunctions to the contrary. R., five years old, seeing her crying, went to her and said kindly: "Don't cry, S.; but remember next time only to pick the red ones." Four months later R. again spread her wings over S. when she said: "Yes, little S., when you have a cold, you must keep your legs under the blanket." Soon afterwards R. began to teach her sister the alphabet, although S. was only two years and three months old.

One day S., having scribbled on the wall-paper, received a scolding and began crying. R., five years and eleven months old, went up to her sister, put one arm round her waist and said: "Don't cry, S.; but you mustn't write on the wall-paper. Now don't forget."

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[\[1\]](#) P. 157.

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Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *Child Psychology III: The Kindergarten Child: Thought, Imagination and Feeling; Will and Morale* by Vilhelm Rasmussen]