

The Value of Direct Objective Record of Children's Phantasies

Paris 25-31 July 1937

By Margaret Lowenfeld

The material of children's thought differs in certain important particulars from the material available for adult thought. It is subjective, limited, connected by affective links, where the adult's is objective, drawn from practical experience and connected by logical links.

A child cannot express his thoughts in words. His behaviour is a response to his thought and because of the peculiar nature of his thought appears irrational.

From this difficulty neurosis and delinquency arise.

To learn the nature of this part of the child's mind a means is necessary which will express his ideas.

To find these means is part of the work of the Institute of Child Psychology. One is called the "world". It consists of sand in a large blue-lined tray and miniature representations of the content of the ordinary world.

With this apparatus children produce ideas of extraordinary complexity and originality.

We find ideas of movement very important to children. Inhibition in outward movement is in many cases associated with intense mental preoccupation with violent movement and the inhibition occurs through the discrepancy between the imagined force and violence and the child's actual feebleness. Fear of the violence of his own thought immobilises his physical action.