

On the Subjective Making of a World

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The purpose of this chapter is to study the subjective aspect of the making of a World, and to give some idea of what actually takes place within the individual who sets out to make a World. Observation of both children and adults during this process suggests that there are differences between the inner experience of children and adults during the construction of a World. In children there is more excitement and less reflection. In adults, for the most part, the reflective element is stronger; yet in both, the same complete absorption in the process is observable. But since children cannot give a coherent account of what they are experiencing, it is to adults we must look for a verbal description of their experience.

But before we embark upon a study of this aspect we need to pause a moment and reflect upon the nature of language and the nature of the communication that can be conveyed by this means.

During the past quarter of a century, emphasis in philosophy has come increasingly to be laid upon the study of words and on their relationship to the facts or experience they purport to communicate. Only those words or statements for which there exists some means of verification of their generally accepted significance are accepted as valid evidence of the existence of that which the word sets out to signify.

In this examination, also, it is the usual or common use of the word which is taken for study. We will return to this aspect later. Apart from the question of the meaning of single words, it is, however, in their syntactical use that, for the main part, words either describe or communicate an experience. This being so, it is held in many quarters that, for language to function as communication, what actually takes place is a process of coding from the experience with the words used by the speaker or writer and of subsequent decoding by the hearer or reader, through which process approximate communication is established*. Since most of the languages with which we are familiar are grammatically constructed, both time and space are involved in the structure of this process, so that at one time and occupying one space in printed matter, only one thought, description or experience can be given. If, therefore, an event or an idea of any complexity is chosen as the subject of the communication, in order that it may appear in grammatical form, this subject, or the idea, must first be present as a whole in the mind of the communicator. It must then be divided into sections in that mind, these sections be arranged in a significant order and, finally, the material in each section set out in the type of grammatical form demanded by the structure of the language in which it is expressed. Time is essentially involved in the process at two points: during the period of sectioning arranging, and in the procedure of articulating the ultimate

* It is possible that a different situation may obtain in Chinese or in classical Egyptian.

sentences into which the original material is coded. If the language be written or printed, space is involved as well.

A communication of this kind from A to B, therefore, if satisfactorily accomplished, gives the appearance of a unity. This unity is, however, entirely illusory because, whatever the nature of the subject matter of the communication, or wherever and in what circumstances this 'coding' takes place, a number of other events will also be happening, traffic passing, changes of light or sound, interior sensations within the body of the communicator, associated ideas and so on, all of which have to be excluded by an effort of will, if the communication is to have a unity. If the communication, moreover, is to have a scientific validity, some general body of meaning for each word to be used must be previously agreed upon between A and B, the communicator and he who receives the communication.

For most general purposes, adequate agreement is usually present, so that a sentence such as 'he put the book on the table' would be understood by all hearers in exactly the way intended by the speaker and would correspond with an exactly definable action capable of being directly and exactly recorded by photography.

It is here we come upon the recent advances in observation and record of human behaviour by the use of photography in anthropology, of which the wholly admirable photographs by Dr. Margaret Mead, reproduced in 'Growth and Culture'* can be taken as an example. These photographs portray attitudes of hands and arms taken by Balinese adults in relation to children and the point about the photographs is that these portray something which differs, in a fundamental manner, from the attitudes which would be taken by Europeans in similar situations. Moreover, because of the nature of the situations photographed and their affective implications, out of these differences in objective posture certain direct deductions can be drawn concerning the interior feelings of Balinese and European parents, when in these situations; their likenesses and differences.

These intuitive inferences are possible because the situations involved are wholly familiar to us and have been familiar for many centuries and in an unlimited number of variations. We have, as it were, in our own experiences of ourselves and our own people, a standard against which unfamiliar variations can be compared. Such photographs, with such standards for comparison, are therefore more than objective records of human figures, they are records which, through the fact of our previous experience of similar situations of other human figures 'talk' to us on two levels and convey several layers of significance. Such double layers of communication are always possible when time enters into the record – when, that is, the immediate record is either of an individual of whom earlier similar records exist, and where therefore the one individual can be compared with himself at another date or in another situation, or where one example of a general species, other examples of which are already known, can be compared with those examples.

* Margaret Mead and Frances Cooke Macgregor, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1951.

These general propositions lie below the view that has recently been several times expressed that the proper record of World making would be for the cooperation of cine camera, tape recorder and shorthand observer either present or behind a one-way screen.

The validity of this type of record of the process of World making as a means of communication needs however to be carefully examined. To do this let us revert to our sentence 'he put the book upon the table'. This is a clear statement of limited meaning, and although a dozen individuals in carrying out an identical action might have been motivated in a dozen different ways or intend to achieve very different ends, yet the action in itself is unequivocal and unless the exact position of the book on the table had a secondary importance, known or unknown to actor or observer, the words used to describe the phenomenon observed do so economically and accurately.

The camera and the observer in the second case now record that a World maker standing in front of an open drawer containing a number of representations of houses of different shapes and sizes records 'He took up a medium sized house and put it on the flat sand in the World tray' is making a record of an action of an entirely different nature. To the individual who has taken up the house it may represent 'a house', but it may also and with equal possibility represent nothing of the sort. It may be the nearest object he can find to stand to him for the idea of 'safety' of 'being under observation' of 'the restriction of urban life' of 'family' or simply a conveniently sized and shaped rectangular object he can use as a plinth later to put a horse-man on to form a statue. This situation arises because, although some unusual objects can be found in the drawers of a World Cabinet yet in comparison with the variety of experience any adult or child using the cabinet might wish to express, or with the number of words, in even an average vocabulary, it is only chance whether an object will be found in the cabinet which exactly expresses the 'meaning' desired by the maker and in all other cases an approximation has to be made to serve. Without knowledge either of previous constructions, made by the same individual, or of the customary use by individuals of his age and type of objects of that kind or at best from the description by the individual of processes going on in his own mind during the performance of that action, no comprehension of the action can be gained. It is here that with children, and particularly with children of a certain type, the tape recorder can give genuine assistance, but with adults it helps us but little.

Without a record, therefore, of the whole process as seen from inside by the maker and a graphic reproduction of the construction made, we have little material to study. Since small children are unable to introspect or to report their experience, for enlightenment we must turn to adults.

In this chapter therefore we present three excerpts from work by adults, one long and two short, as illustration of the process of World-making as seen from the standpoint of the adult who makes it.



Fig 1.

World made by K.

Fig. 1 is a drawing of a world made by an adult, K. during the course of training in child psychotherapy at the I.C.P. An account of the making of the World, the circumstances in which it came to be made and of the World itself is given in her own words.

K's Account

"During the period covered by a personal analysis, (vegeto-therapeutic character analysis in type) while training in Child Psychotherapy at the I.C.P., I experimented with the techniques which I was learning to use with the children* in order to see whether personal material arising in my analysis would appear in these or not. My object was twofold: a desire to experience subjectively what the making of a World felt like to the maker, and to test the validity of these techniques. On my own initiative therefore and apart from the process of training, from time to time when the urge to do so arose, I made a series of Worlds. These interested me but had no affective impact. Towards the end of the second year of analysis however I made a World which (illustrated in fig. 1) aroused powerful and unexpected effect at the time of making and set interior processes going which only reached their ultimate clarification and resolution about four years later. Of the previous Worlds I made records but did not consider further. It occurred in the following way: At the end of a day's work a fellow student and I went down to

* Mosaics and Worlds

the playrooms at I.C.P. to make Worlds, each taking a World tray and working silently side by side, as we had often done before.

The World

I started manipulating the sand with my hands, trying to find out what I wanted to make. There first arose some small hills spread over the tray, but these did not satisfy me. I destroyed them, scraped the heaps of sand into one big heap and then built quickly and without hesitation a long, strong wall of sand diagonally across the tray from the left nearer corner to the right further corner, stopped and looked at it, and then removed the parts of the sand that connected the wall with the corners of the tray. The wall was now free of the edge of the tray. From the drawers of the World Cabinet I selected six exactly similar pine trees, placed three at each corner at the end of the wall and some bushy vegetation on top of the wall. On the further part of the tray I placed big, dark forest trees in strict lines, like a wood, looking to me heavy and stern; I remember I searched carefully among the trees in the drawer in order to find the darkest ones. Using a small lid I made a circular hollow in the sand in the nearer part of the tray and filled it with flowers like a small sunken garden. Finally I selected from the drawers some wild animals, all fierce mammals, such as tigers, leopards, lions, bears, and stuck their heads firmly into either side of the wall of sand. The Kind or type of animal was important, not the number; (the number here represents those of that type that were available in the drawer).

Reaction

Till now I had worked quickly, allowing the World to develop of itself; I did not stop to think or to plan at all. But when I had finished, a strange emotion caught me; I sat down on a small chair at the table nearby, put my head on my arms while a violent sobbing shook my whole body. I was very perplexed, but gave way to the flow of emotion as long as it lasted. Afterwards I felt exhausted and bewildered as I had no plausible explanation of my reaction.

During the next two months, in the course of analysis, and starting with a re-living of the joyful feeling I had had when a child while playing that I was a horse, the factual element of a traumatic experience from early childhood, hitherto unknown to me, returned to memory as follows.

Childhood experience (age 2¾)

I am with my mother at a party; it is at a bigish farm; the people there were close friends of my parents, the wife my godmother, it is summer, late afternoon; people are about in the garden. I am the only child present and am playing by myself; I am dressed in my best clothes, am happy and gay. I play to myself that I am a young unbridled horse galloping along from the house towards the farm buildings some way away from the house; the setting sun is on my left hand side. In the farm buildings there is a big barn door, with a piece of chain attached to it; I grip the chain; the wild horse has been chained and opposes violently; it kicks and pulls.

Dislodged by this movement the heavy barn door (which had become detached from its hinges and was only propped up) falls on me.

... I am stretched out on the ground, face down, with this heavy object on top of me, unable to move; I see a bit of light coming in from the top edge... – I hear running footsteps and several men lift up the barn door...

The next thing I know is that I find myself sitting on my mother's lap, leaning against her shoulder, stiff and motionless; I do not cry; my mother wears a black dress; she is sitting near the fire in the kitchen; grown-ups are standing round as, all looking very grave and stern and big – like a solid black wall; I am just sitting there; the grown-ups talk...

Check up of the event

Three years after the incident had come to light in analysis, I had an opportunity to check it up with my father. I brought up the subject with him and asked if he remembered its occurring and if so what he remembered of it. He was rather startled at my asking this and then said that what I described was true, and had really happened. I was 2¾ years old. He had not been at the party but had stayed at home; he remembered, as if it had happened yesterday, that he had been out in the backyard when he saw my mother standing on the steps leading down from the house. "I can still recall the spot where she was standing", he said; "I was surprised to see her back so early". She said to me, "You had better go in and see K, she has been put to bed; I nearly did not bring her back with me alive". My father said that I had been found with a small arm stretched out under the heavy barn door; nobody knew for how long I had been lying there.

My father admitted that the event had never been talked about in the family; he didn't know why. I was the elder of two, and my sister, four years younger, had never heard about the happening.

The Link

About three months after the making of the World, during an analytic session, this childhood incident, which considered as a fact had already been recalled to memory a month ago, but without any accompanying effect, came up once more and was worked over. I brought myself back to the moment when I was sitting on my mother's lap, stiff and motionless; then suddenly I turned on the couch and to my left side, huddled together in a bundle, and a violent sobbing broke out. When the outburst of emotion had passed I got up, saying, "The World! That was what it was about; I cried just like that after having finished it".

After that, all the repressed emotions connected with the actual experience were little by little released in analysis and worked through so that neither the incident itself nor the World any longer carried affect. Some weeks after this I put the World up again in order to study it as objectively as I was able to do.

Immediate associations

The stern dark wood at the further part of the tray I saw to be the crowd of dark serious-looking grown-ups looming high about me as I sat on my mother's lap; the rigid placing of the trees gave a picture of the rigidity I felt in those people: "what are they doing? why are they all looking at me?" The three stiff pine trees at each end of the wall I saw to be a picture of my father, my mother and me. We were alike, we belonged together, yet were isolated by our lack of ability to give way to strongly felt emotions. The frightful event that the fall of the barn door must have been for each of us was never released in a mutual sharing of the anxiety and of the joy that all was well and I was not killed. Each "forgot", and it was never talked about as far as anyone remembers.

The strong solid wall cutting across the tray I realised was a picture of the emotional blocking that this caused in me. It captured and arrested within me the drive of emotional energy, here presented by fierce wild animals with their heads firmly stuck into the wall. (I am aware that many other aspects and interpretations can be linked with just this choice of symbolic representation; these are omitted as they are irrelevant to the purpose of this account).

I grew up and became a shy, introverted girl, living my own inner life, presented here by the small sunken garden filled with flowers in the nearer part of the tray.

When I had worked out these associations I found that I had completed a description for myself of all the items in the tray. Having found the meaning of the objects I had chosen, their interrelationship, and that of the general lay-out of the World structure, I was aware, as a therapist, that this wall had to be broken down and the animals set free. But I could not see how this could be done. The only solutions which occurred to me were either to pull the animals out or push them through, or to break down the wall by external force; none of these could I do, so I left it as it was.

The answer to this problem appeared in a dream about 18 months later:

Dream I (about 1½ years after the making of the World)

The world I had made was spread out in front of me like a landscape; it had a certain quality of being alive; I saw a strong flood of water coming as from an underground current bursting through the surface in the nearer part of the ground near the middle of the wall, making its way through the wall towards the further part of the tray; more and more water welled up, turning into a real river; I watched the wall crumbling bit by bit as in a slow moving film, till there was an opening through the wall connecting the two parts of the tray ... and still more water welled up ...

I woke up the following morning with a feeling of inner reassurance, the dream having made me aware that the liberating forces would come from within myself; the wall in my World could not, and was not to be broken by external force. In this dream I was unaware of the animals.

During a subsequent stay of eight months in my home country a second relevant dream occurred which made use of the symbols of the World, this time of the animals.

Dream II (about two years after the making of the World)

I was in a house and some big wild animal cubs were playing about it; I made friends with the cubs as one does with cats, let them into the house at night for shelter; I was especially fond of a young camel. An older one (a leopard?) appeared; it had an evil look in its right eye; I was afraid it would attack the others, so a shadowy person (myself) lets them out at the other side of the house (the front) while I let this one in at the back, hoping it would not discover the others. At night it wanted to get out too, and I dared not prevent it, so I opened the back door and it disappeared in the dark while I stood in the door waiting in anxiety to hear a cry that would tell me the leopard has attacked one of my friends, the wild cubs; but it did not occur.

The symbols of the World were still the media used in this dream to present to myself the changes that had taken place in me during analysis. The wall had been broken down, the wild animals had become free and friendly, except for one which is hostile to the others, a fact that filled me with anxiety.

The meaning of this 'hostile' animal with an 'evil eye' came to light in a dream later and was found to refer to an actual event which took place shortly after the making of the World. This even presented a sudden, completely unexpected and severe threat to the continuance of a project to which I was then committed. I responded to this shock as I had to the barn door incident with a 'sham dead' reaction, sitting motionless for hours as frozen. In this dream the animals did not appear.

The animals appeared some time later in the final dream relating to this world:

Dream III *

I am walking towards the village in my own country on the road along the stream and have just passed the old bridge; am going to visit the people to whom I have let my cottage; with me is one of the grown 'wild' animals on a lead like a large dog; he is walking at my right hand side; I am very fond of him and a bit worried as I know the people I am going to see have a big dog and the two of them might fight; I decide to leave my 'wild animal' in my neighbour's field while I pay my call, hoping they will not get at each other.

Maker's Comments

This has been an attempt to show how the Lowenfeld World Technique fits in with other kinds of analysis, producing as in my case a possibility of externalising a not yet realised, heavily charged experience in early childhood in symbolic form. The World described does not picture

* Dream III is inserted after the writing of this chapter and is therefore not commented on in the General Discussion that follows. But its conclusive evidence is obvious as it solved the final question: making friends with the grown wild animal in the World.

the actual event in any way; the only resemblance one may find is that the animals caught in the wall unable to get free may represent the feeling I had myself while trapped under the barn door.

The vegeto-therapeutic analysis I was undergoing at the time released the muscular tensions caused by repressed emotions connected with an event far back in early childhood. And it was the opening up of this flood of emotion that gave the clue to the meaning of the World and made it possible for me to give the symbolic representation its real content and context, to "read the language" of the World.

Next the dream activity took over. What was not possible for the cognitive mind to imagine or accept at the time when I rebuilt the World, namely the way of breaking down the wall (a process taking place during my analysis), was brought into consciousness through a dream and the procedure shown as on a cinema screen in a slow moving picture. This was followed by other dreams taking up the theme of the wild animals being accepted into my house, first as cubs, then as grown-up walking with me towards home, friendly and accepted.

The choice of symbols is never a chance happening, even if it may seem so at the moment. They carry the personal, individual meaning as well as the universally accepted meaning in every case. As for my choice in 1952 of wild animals I should like to quote from E.W. Smith's "African Symbolism" (p.19.i)

"Wild animals roaming the surface of the land symbolize at once the mystical 'livingness' of the earth and the mystical force of the ancestors, their efficacy in the lives of their descendants.."

The wild animals in the World were for me not only a picture of arrested "E", but carried too the deeper meaning of presenting a challenge to my willingness and ability to accept "the mystical livingness of the earth" and the inheritance from my ancestors way back and back in the culture to which I belong. This I conclude from the fact that dream II occurred when I had established a "home of my own" in my home country in a small village on a site inhabited in pre-historic times. Also the final dream III about a wild animal related to that particular place.

The symbols used in the World have not recurred in any sequent dreams. It might, however, be of interest to add that, parallel with the dreams related here, a series of dreams occurred with a horse as the main symbol, the first of three dating about half a year before the making of the World. In reality, and without ever to be able to account for the discrepancy, I had always had a panic fear of horses at the same time as an intense desire to learn to ride. This fear of horses, till now unaccounted for, disappeared gradually as the affects resulting from the traumatic barn-door experience were worked through and released. Through the help of an understanding riding master it now became possible to take up riding and to enjoy the experience keenly.

General Discussion

The world described above and the three dreams that follow, together with the maker's comments, have been selected for presentation because of the way in which the intimate relation between reality and affect, the process of World making and its symbols, and the process of dreaming are shown in it, and their eventual working out related to present day circumstances and feelings.

This World, the factual incident from which it all arose, and the mode in which its effects upon the personality of the child to whom it occurred are revealed in World and dreams, throw considerable light upon the nature of the process of World making and the mode in which violent events register themselves in the minds of small children. To consider for a moment what exactly is involved and what comes to light in these four symbolic presentations, we have three facts to consider.

- a) An accident which happened to a child of 2¾ years.
- b) The making of a World in middle life which did, in fact embody the subjective aspects of this experience though these were not known to the maker at the time.
- c) Two dreams employing the same symbols as appeared in the World, and a third dream four years after the making of the World which exhausted its meaning and brought the affectual aspect of the situation up to present day date.

a) The factual incident

This was an external assault upon the child of 2¾ which was not caused by anyone and in itself had neither meaning nor factual consequences; it was unique in the child's experience either as happening to herself or to other people. Since there was nothing to which it could be compared there was no mode by which it could be cognised and so none by which it could be assimilated to the fabric of experience. The incident itself therefore became encapsulated and shut off, inaccessible to the ordinary processes of assimilation.

In order that such an experience, thus encapsulated, become integrated again with the personality it must first be 'remembered'. The question then arises How and in what form could an incident of this kind be 'remembered' by a small child? The answer appears to be that, (1) as an actual incident, it could only be remembered if it had been described to the child by the adults who took part in it, or if she could have heard discussion of it at some time and in some form that she could have understood. (2) It would have been possible for this experience, in different circumstances, to have reappeared in the form of a nightmare or a somatic symptom; that is to say, while at 2¾ years the development of the child is too immature for exact cognition and recollection of an experience of this kind to be possible, yet the general content of bewilderment, horror, and shock, etc. could have made themselves apparent in the shapelessness of a child's nightmare. The fact that they did not do so is therefore significant.

The incident, as an incident, therefore was neither realised and understood at the time, nor was it interpreted or explained to the child then or later. We have to ask ourselves therefore, from the child's point of view what then was the essence of this experience? It would appear from what we now know that this was an abrupt arrest during a play situation of the whole course of being: that is a wholly spontaneous and natural outburst of joy and gaiety expressed in absorption in the physical playing out of identification of the self with a rebellious unbridled horse was cut short suddenly by an outside force of overwhelming power, wholly blotting out consciousness. This arrest was further reinforced by waking to see the ring of stern and frozen faces.

Finally there was the complete absence of any expression of emotion on the part of the grown-ups concerned or of any explanation to the child of what had happened.

This was a real experience and as it could not be cognised by the child there came about an inevitable dissociation between consciousness and a crucial real experience really experienced.

In this way the reality-sense of the child became pitted against its emotional spontaneity, so that an intra-personal conflict of the most profound type developed, the spontaneity and play impulse of the child meeting head on, as it were, the adult pattern of immobility. Moreover this experience, buried as it is in the unconscious of the child forms also a basic pattern for expectation of future experience.

We have therefore a set of subjective experiences referring to an event shared by adults, which for a child would have been totally incomprehensible, since no reaction was shown by these adults. This lack of reaction established for the child a pattern of behaviour in which the normal, and therefore expected and right, concomitant of experience was absence of movement and of emotional expression. *

To continue, the effect of such a total experience upon the development of any child will depend upon the relation between the experience and the general atmosphere of the family. Its impact could have been neutralised had warmth and freedom of emotional expression existed in other parts of the child's experience. But if, as in this case, this attitude was a permanent pattern in the family, then the impact could not fail to be very powerful, reinforced as it was by absence of any proper treatment for shock or warm comforting on the part of the mother.

It seems inevitable that in such a situation there must arise a fixed attitude regarding feelings of all kinds that these are dangerous and taboo and must under no circumstances be allowed to appear.

As, however, the intrinsic nature of a child is the spontaneity, the violence and volatility of its feelings, such an interior and unconscious attitude must bring about a condition resembling

* cf. the biological 'sham-dead' reaction.

the endogenic depression of adults. The heartbroken sobbing therefore which appeared on relaxation of the physical tensions induced by this long term arrest was both the appearance for the first time in actual expression of misery felt so long ago but never expressed, and also the weeping of the adult for the child self. What therefore is crucial about this situation is not the incident in itself, but the effect the total circumstances and surroundings of this incident had upon the intrapersonal development of the child.

b) The World

Taken as it stands, or as it would be recorded by the camera, this World is meaningless and the actions which might have been photographed or recorded of K during its making would yield no clue to its meaning. The outburst of sobbing which followed its completion would be totally irrational.

On the other hand the very fact of this affective storm makes it clear that the arrangement of the sand and the objects on it either stated something or described something with real significance to the maker. The essential – and to some extent the puzzling aspect of World Making, (especially when it is a World of the type described above) – is that conscious planning plays no part. The process of making this World arose spontaneously, each step leading to the next, but without deliberate design on the part of the maker.

Four elements are to be distinguished.

1. The symmetrical arrangement of both the moulded sand and the objects used taken in relation to each other and to the space of the tray.
2. Plastic use of the sand.
3. The use of objects such as trees, flowers and bushes which occur in any ordinary landscape and their grouping in a normal way.
4. The selection and use of animals familiar from films and books, but which to the maker essentially represented living creatures who roamed in unrestricted space, and which are commonly used as symbols of violent feeling.

These four elements appear in the World with great precision, and when the meaning of the World is known it is clear that each is suited exactly to what it used to present. What then does the World express?

The answer is curious and unexpected. It appears to be the conclusions of a mind, looking backward and within upon itself concerning the effect upon itself of a violent and totally uncomprehended experience which occurred to itself at the age of 2¾ but of which the maker of the World was totally unaware. To arrive at representation of this effect a number of different 'modes' are used:

1. Patterning

The use of patterned arrangements of colour and line in formalised statements of magical or emotional significance occurs in many cultures. The impulse to shape expressions of emotion

into formalised pattern seems to be deep and widespread in many human societies. Here the arrangement of the component parts of the scene determines at least half of their significance. For example: the high ridge of sand runs obliquely across the tray. It has therefore the direction of a line drawn crossing out something, since the deliberate detachment by the maker of the ends of the wall from the corners of the tray precludes the idea of the line indicating merely a diagonal. Here then we have a barrier which does not entirely block one side of the scene from the other, but which has the effect of stating that something which might be imagined to take place in the centre of the tray is crossed out. The passage of time is part of this statement, expressed as is so often the case by arrangement of objects in space, the tray in this case appearing as what one might call emotional space.

2. Plastic use of sand

Without the presence in the tray of mouldable sand, this World could not have been made, since no other way exists on a flat surface which would express what is conveyed here by this moulded ridge. In moist sand, used in this way, there are latent potentialities of sculpture, especially of sculpture seen from a modern view point. Several instances of this use occur in the illustrations to this book.

3. The symbolic use of conventional objects

The care and exactitude shown in the selection of objects to form this World is a commonplace of World making, and it is that very exactitude both in election and in placing which conveys the meaning of the World. For this reason it is worthwhile considering these in some detail.

The use of trees to express aspects of human relations goes back very far, and the contrasting shapes of the two types of trees selected here carries out well the difference in affect and atmosphere represented by these two elements in the personal background of the child. It is the tallness and darkness of the big trees which renders them suitable for the presentation of 'grown-ups'.

The duplicated group of three trees at each end of the obstacle, and between the end of the obstacle and the edge of the tray, on the other hand, uses the conventional pattern of 3 to present the relation of parents and child as this relationship was really experienced. That is to say, this was a stable family with a reliable interior structure, responsible and dependable, but without intimacy; the barriers to expression of affect or affection between the members of the family never breaking down.

The bushes on the ridge were inserted as camouflage to disguise its presence.

The isolated circumscribed little garden on the nearer side of the tray, diagonally opposite to the forbidding trees with a barrier between them which would shut out all communication, expresses directly the experience of this child, as a child towards older people in her family, from contact with whom later her own withdrawal shut her out.

4. The symbolic use of animals

The choice of wild animals and the negation of their freedom through fixation of their heads in the ridge, present another aspect of the same statement. Here conventional symbols of instinctual energy have been chosen to present the emotional forces of the maker, and these are presented as blinded by and caught in the barrier, across the tray. That which is symbolised in this World is states of being – the arrest of force and violent movement (the oblique ridge and the wild animals caught in it) the impact of awe and terror of towering immobile adults (the dark trees), the general emotional situation of the child/mother/father (the pine trees), and finally the little garden, which represents a sense of separate identity in the child herself, not blending with or in real relation with other people but nevertheless with the potentiality of growth and flowering and an implication of interest in the self and willingness to give time and trouble to the tending of the self.

To the maker of this World a disaster had happened which had powerfully affected emotional development but the fact of its occurrence was unknown to her. Through the loosening and reassuring effect of analysis, the adult who had grown from this child came into a position where a facing of the fact of this disaster and its results became a possibility. The world expressed this in symbolic pattern, demonstrating that, notwithstanding the distortion of affect-development that the incident brought about, we are here dealing with a personality in whom such an incident, although producing a profound effect, has not given rise to a hysterical or schizophrenic distortion.

The creation of this World therefore crystallised and shaped cognitive and non-cognitive thought about the various aspects of the maker's situation, enabling the energy of meditation to be focussed upon it and used to arrive gradually at understanding and resolution.

c. The Dreams

This World has largely been selected to illustrate the nature of the World process because of the clarity with which it expresses the relation between certain aspects of World formation and certain aspects of dreams.

Dream 1

This is an important dream for the understanding of Worlds because it embodies something about the World which is vividly present to children but often very difficult for the onlooker to grasp. To the child who makes a significant World the often incongruous collection of objects placed about and in moulded sand in a tray is alive as dolls and furry toy animals are alive. The vivid vitality of the World carries through to the dream. The dreaming mind wrestles with a problem which is central to the personality – How is the barrier of the sand ridge to be broken down? How were the heads of the animals to be released?

Thinking in terms of the presentation, two possibilities were presented by the maker to herself – i.e. either the action of a powerful influence coming from outside, (such as might for

example be exercised by a powerful personality impinging upon the maker, a change of work and of external atmosphere, or the sudden occurrence of new and very demanding challenges from the outside world), or an attempt forcibly to pull the heads of the animals out of the obstacle, (by, e.g. such courses as going out to seek emotional experience hitherto avoided). Both were regarded by the maker as unsuitable and also probably ineffective. A certain amount of depression was present at this time owing to the apparent fixity of certain personal characteristics. In this dream the part of the personality which is aware of what is happening takes up the symbolism of the World of the previous year and adds to it a living a feature which cannot be presented in a World but which is the peculiar characteristic of dreams. By this device a means was found to present the removal of the barrier in terms which are consonant both with the idiom of the World and with universal practical experience. A natural spring arises breaking down the barrier so effectively that the river comes to flow in the opposite diagonal across the World tray. To the dreamer the fact of this river and of its source in a spring comes as an assurance of safety; not only has the barrier been broken down but it cannot build itself again because at the point where it was, a counter-force now runs.

The force of this dream, in the context we are considering is its use of the same technique of presentation as had been employed in the World, and the completion of the pattern in the World by an opposite diagonal.

The unawareness of the dreamer, at this point, of the animals in the world is a very interesting fact; since in the World, owing to the fixing of their heads in the barrier, it became possible for the symbolism of the two to become separated, and so the way to be made clear, in due time, for the second dream.

It is this possibility of simultaneity of aspects or trends in the presentation made by a World which is one of its richest qualities. After such a presentation it is a commonplace that subsequent Worlds (or in this case dreams) take up first one and then another element in the composite World for further elaboration and development.

Dream 2

It was felt by the dreamer as of guiding significance that this dream occurred after she had established a home in the countryside of her own country. This time the only element of the World which appears is a metamorphosis of the arrested wild animals. In the World they were caught, blind and immovable; but had they been free, were of a type potentially dangerous. The animals in Dream 2 are different: they are faithful and friendly; they are young and playful; they are free to move and are approachable. Towards them the dreamer feels protective. They are to be admitted into the feeling part of the personality (house at night), to be given 'house-room', and to be trusted.

One element however of the old situation remains. This is a leopard which is regarded as dangerous to the practical side of the feeling life (the right eye); and the danger is towards the other feeling aspects. The dreamer takes trouble to separate these from one another. But

what is remarkable – and which shows how thoroughly the problems expressed in the World have been surmounted – is that this separation of element from element takes place not by the erection of a barrier between them, but by an attempt to delimit their spheres, the delimitation being expressed in symbolic terms of front and back.

Relation to reality

The kernel of the original incident was the child's identification of herself with an unbridled horse. Such identifications in childhood are often powerful psychic events and continue in something the way that totem animals function for primitive peoples to 'carry' the 'picture' of the self for the self. It is therefore in line with all we know of symbols of this nature that it should have appeared in the real life personality of the dreamer as a mutually contradictory attitude to real life horses. These embodied for her both an intense fear and an equally intense urge towards learning to ride. As she carried this out it became clear that the effort was towards a real life master of the symbols.

This world and these dreams illustrate the subjective experience of the making of a World during a course not only of analysis but also of training in the psychotherapy of children. This is in a sense a special use.

World and dream are therefore aspects of a language of communication between the creative part of the self and the self's actual experience. Supposing, however, a World were to be made by an adult not 'in analysis'. Here follows an account of the making of a World by an adult interested in the idea of a World but unconnected with psychology or psychotherapy. He was an Englishman whose work was concerned with the designing and supervising of film sets. Becoming interested in the author's work he decided to try out the possibilities of representation offered by so fixed and technically limited a set of apparatus as the World tray and sand cabinet and he reports as follows:

"I approached making a "World" with a certain scepticism. To avoid making a conscious design, I deliberately worked at random, risking that the result might be quite meaningless. I shaped the sand into a rough landscape of land and sea, which was absolutely suggested by its formation in the tray. Then I went through the drawers of toys one by one without looking to see what was in the next ones, and selected objects, on impulse, putting them straight on to the sand, and consciously resolving not to change their positions. On looking through the toys, I found that I was either indifferent to them or else I reacted. I was aware that the reaction was emotional and that I invested the objects with feelings and meanings, but did not wait to enquire what they were. As I placed them on the tray, I felt it was necessary to rearrange the landscape, to scoop out channels or erect mounds to stand things on. As the "World" progressed, I became aware that sections of it had an intention and I began to hunt for symbols to make that intention clear. I knew which figure was myself, I knew that one area represented something in the past, and I knew that a "secret pool" was beautiful and

desirable. In the end I was urgently looking for jewels, shells and flowers with which to embellish it.

It was like a dream in which one knows one is dreaming and which one wishes to go on with. But I had no idea of the relations of the parts to one another. Eventually I knew it was finished. The process took a grip on me, as when one struggles to remember a forgotten tune; or as if I had previously been trying to describe colours in words and had now, for the first time, been handed brushes and paints.

I drew a record and studied it over several days and was irritated by inconsistencies and meaningless patches. I attempted to translate it into ideas about myself or the World. I did not know if it referred to my present situation or to the World in general. Then I began to see it as having two layers: first a basic structure or landscape consisting of hills, rivers, bridges, islands and figures which expressed my egocentric view of life (and which revealed my contradictory state of mind: for instance the past seemed to lie between the present and the future); and secondly a superimposed arrangement of figures and objects which represented the present situation, enacted as it were upon the basic landscape as on a stage. If the "World" had coherence, this was the only way in which it could be described. I conclude that the "World" is a natural means of expression for the level of awareness upon which metaphors are made, such as "The World is divided into two camps", "the World (or life) is an uphill struggle", or "life is a pleasant garden". In the same way, one's personal situation is depicted upon this subjective stage.

The "World" is not a work of art, since it bypasses aesthetic manipulation of a medium for its own sake, such as words or paint. It is, like a dream, the direct expression in symbols and images of experience, which is the raw material of art. Therefore its intention is not primarily to communicate, and it is ego-centric and ambiguous. The handling of a physical means of expression allows images to be released from the depths of the mind or memory. What is being represented is a situation, and as the symbols by which the situation is depicted are ready made, the "dreamer" does not require the artistic ability to manipulate words or to draw or model.

This example illustrates a way in which World making can appear to an adult who is without any previous knowledge of psychology.

We conclude with an extract illustrating the relation of the making of a World to an analysis of a different type. N was an adult also in training for child psychotherapy, and simultaneously in the process of a psycho-analytic personal analysis. Much of N's childhood had been spent in mountainous country, and in the course of analysis she described to her analyst how she had treated the mountains as if they were a friend, singing on them when happy, kicking them when angry or frustrated etc. This feeling of devotion to and personification of mountains were interpreted to N. by her analyst as expression of an intense wish to explore her mother's

body. The interpretation was rejected by N. who felt both that this interpretation was not correct but also that mountains had some deep significance for her.

In thinking about this subject, N. decided to experiment on a World tray with a presentation in World terms of her favourite mountains, and set to work on a World, letting it develop spontaneously under her hands. When the World was complete and she could contemplate it, she was started to note that what she had actually made were two mounds, undeniably breast-like in shape, from between which a stream ran downwards. Studying this World she saw that it was obvious that the mountains did indeed stand for 'mother' and it suddenly dawned on her that the mountains had taken the place of the mother she had rejected.

In this example as in the World of the wild animals two facets of World making appear: the power of the World technique to amplify and intensify the material brought to light by analysis and to relate it to personal experience, and the need for great exactitude in finding out exactly what the symbols used by the maker in a World mean to the maker.

The subjective experience therefore of an individual making a World is of meeting a slice of reality; almost as if unexpectedly meeting oneself in a mirror. It has the effect in well balanced subjects of enlarging the boundaries of one's comprehension of oneself, and in patients of giving them a tool of expression which can represent to their therapists and themselves aspects and subtleties of feeling and thought which both speech and gestures fail to present. As one adult has expressed it in a letter to the author "it is only now that I have experienced the truly astounding mental and emotional clarifying of your techniques of non-verbal languages that I have begun to overcome my own prejudices".