

ORDER AND DISORDER

IN CHILDREN'S PLAY

One of the interesting aspects of the study of children's play is that it permits us to see clearly how an awareness of rules is built up in us against factors of wildness, and how this awareness of rules, little by little, pervades the child's behavior. Now, the child's experience can inform us about the experience of the species: if the processes of the acquisition of self-control cannot be exactly the same, as Stanley Hall thought, the very differences allow us to specify the importance and exact role of an environment which is not the same for the child and for early mankind. For example, the existence of a coherent, stable, adult group makes for the institutionalization and perpetuation in terms of an adult tradition of behavior which, in the child, cannot take on its full development for lack of that social, and so to speak, institutional co-efficient. Thus, all at once, childhood turbulence is transformed into adult techniques of ecstasy and intoxication, or playing according to rules, sloughs off in the adult as religion, art, or even philosophy.

Translated by Sidney Alexander.

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Typical of children's thinking which makes its appearance during the second year under the form of games of make-believe, there are born, at first very rapidly, phantasy-play on the one hand and games of command on the other. The particular characteristic of these games, a characteristic unknown to animal play, is that of being governed by a structure not at all dependent on the current situation; in other words, a representative structure. In one case we have to do with a structure borrowed from without, from an external model, but the role of this structure has been interiorized and thereby subjected to a thousand modifications. In the other case, we have to do with the structure of an entirely different kind since it is set into being by that complex of factors which create the need for order; one might say, in better terms, that in this case there is a general attitude governing particular structures like those of the line, the circle, etc... These diverse notions having been mastered little by little, first implicitly as gesture, then explicitly. Besides, in one aspect as in the other, the role and structure of order tends to congeal, harden. Play-rituals appear, and from these rituals are born rules in the strict sense of the word.

The term ritual, besides, is already rather incorrect when it is a question implying phantasy-play or games of command with blocks: here we face that intermediate realm between simple, animal and baby rituals, and the well-defined rules of traditional games. The simple ritual is played, the rest implicit; but a rule, in its proper sense, is really a verbal command. It is very clear that the earliest infantile games work a passage from one to the other.

The awareness of a rule however, appears clearly in certain kinds of playful behavior which must be emphasized, since these are hardly ever mentioned. I refer to behavior which obeys individual and arbitrary rules: even if one finds the same set of rules among several subjects, nevertheless it is always a case of individual invention. Let us for example think about that whimsical behavior which we have already alluded to, consisting of counting the steps of a staircase, three by three or five by five. But even more obvious than these arithmomanic forms of behavior, are those in which we force

ourselves to walk at the edge of the sidewalk or, in a hall paved in black and white, to step only on the white tiles. Odd conduct undoubtedly, but there is usually absolutely nothing pathological in it. Let the reader look into his own mind and even if he does not confess still practicing such games he will surely remember that they were not absent in his adolescence.

Certainly we are dealing here with adolescent and adult as well as children's games and that is why we have offered the clearest examples first of all. But there is a period of childhood—let us say between the ages of 4-5 and 7-8—when these games with arbitrary rules abound. They extend these games of command but turn them inward. For example, to go from one corner of the courtyard to the other by skirting the wall as closely as possible; to walk setting one shoe exactly in front of the other at every step; to spin about, repeating a stereotyped formula ("My father, my mother, my school," Annie, aged three, used to say); to walk holding one's ear or nose; to climb a staircase on all fours, or backwards or with one's feet crossed, or on one's backside and to come down the same way; to jump up the steps two at a time; to walk on a snowy day setting one's footsteps exactly in the footprints of a friend; to walk on top of a wall or on a fallen tree-trunk; to repeat a succession of sometimes meaningless sounds (like the "Agenda femina gauda" of a Baroque *comptine*, among many others). Whether arbitrary or individual, these games are innumerable. But also and for the same reason they remain very unstable, very often corresponding to a momentary discovery which will be quickly forgotten; they do not possess the permanence of the "great games" transmitted from generation to generation. That is why they are so often forgotten despite their importance and deep significance.

We are, in effect, in the presence of pure rule. No social pressure has come from children nor adults. Nor has any necessity resulted from things which, when they do intervene, are only an occasion. It is simply a case of giving proofs of a certain constancy in arbitrary activity, of showing that one is capable of entirely commanding one's activity, of giving proof, let us say, of self-mastery. This arbitrary rule is very much a rule of the game,

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and accomplishing it gives us joy, but it is also a moral rule. It might undoubtedly seem daring to introduce ethics into this matter but it is indispensable if one wishes to understand how much importance the child ascribes to his playing. In fact, it is false to consider, as Piaget does, that "the pact with oneself undoubtedly derives from pacts with others." Undoubtedly there has already been a certain obligation which the baby has learned from adults, but this obligation is connected only with rituals coming from without; if the child finds nothing else in himself, he cannot issue outside of the domain of tightly closed moral precepts; all the more reason for education and moral training to be active in order to form something other than social automata. Now with these arbitrary rules we really see the appearance of free behavior.

Undoubtedly there is a great deal to be said about the origin of this need for order at the root of arbitrary rules. It would even be necessary to recognize how adult influence—from feeding rites to the shape given to tables and furniture—favors the constituent factors of this complex need. But if society protects and accelerates the appearance of a sense of order, it cannot suffice to create it. And when one arrives at arbitrary rule, it is necessary to recognize that here, undoubtedly, we have for the first time a discipline imposed from within, an agreement with oneself, as it were, whose value derives more than anything else precisely from the fact that it is an individual creation.

If one thinks of comparing these games of arbitrary rules with those ascetic games which we have stressed on previous occasions (playing not to budge, not to breathe, not to cry out, to conquer a sense of revulsion while eating toothpaste, to stick needles into the skin, to pull one's own hair, etc...), one sees immediately that in the final analysis the latter only constitute particular cases of the former: to hold one's breath as long as possible is not at all different than ordering oneself to hop on one foot. By such a comparison one understands better that the function of this arbitrary rule is to provide an obstacle over which to triumph. For our little child of four or five, climbing the staircase on all fours is already a sufficient obstacle, and his exploit is worth as much as that of the big girl who lets herself be tortured with the sugar tongs, as Simon de Beauvoir has recounted. Ascetic

games, flourishing especially at the beginning of adolescence, are the culmination of those games of arbitrary rules in earlier childhood, even if between the two there is a more social period wherein individual games are not approved.

The rule of the game therefore no longer appears to us as only a truly social conditioning of a disordered play activity. On the contrary, it is necessarily an integral part of the game. What previously gave pleasure to the baby piling up its blocks or playing "faire la poule" was that it was succeeding in directing its behavior along a certain line; and analagous considerations evidently apply for making-believe, that first of all human games. Mankind's play has always consisted of following a line and that is as true of adults as of children; however, one must confess that the line is sometimes tortuous as in wild games or games of chance; but we will come back to that.

When one speaks of the line or role, it is clear that the attitude remains the same; in play the child sets itself something to do, like a program of action, and playing consists, first of all, in following this program; the success of the game consists in realizing the program. That such conduct is the source of war as well as of art and religion, that play is the trunk from which culture puts forth its branches, as Schiller had already observed, and as Huizinga has stressed, one realizes more clearly when this particular aspect of human play is brought to light, this aspect which from its very beginning prefigures rational thought by its role and program. Those who think to find the essence of play in irrational forces refuse to take account of the cleavage between animality and humanity. If sometimes, in childhood play as well as in many games of primitive peoples, this aspect seems secondary, it is because rational thought is insufficient in itself; at first it must almost always follow upon previously traced paths and make use of materials scarcely suitable to it and which it will subsequently abandon.

Whence a conflict, very apparent on the level which interests us, between the factor of regulation of play and those antagonistic factors preceding it, wildness or outbursts, for example. Not that play regulation is suddenly born from nothing; we have seen that it finds support in factors of an animal order, for example in those rituals which Darwin pointed out. But when one speaks

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of sets of rules, one assumes that such regulation has bearing on elements formerly unregulated. Alongside of propitious factors, therefore, there are unfavorable factors, forces of disorder which the player must conquer. Lacking these obstacles to the discipline of the game, there would be no sense of success, no proof of self. Now human play is always a proof of self under some form (even when one tries one's *own* luck). To play is to be a hero, to vanquish monsters, to struggle.

Thus, between the rule and the struggle there is a very close correlation on the child level. Similarly, from the point of view of rules, the combative aspect of children's play has often been pointed out. Two types of games have even been contrasted in this regard. But if one does not resolve this contrast, it is scarcely possible any longer to give a sufficiently extensive definition to play. It must be realized that if the child envisages rules it is precisely in order to set up obstacles for himself, and that is what we find significant in those games which now interest us. To follow the edge of the sidewalk is to set oneself an obstacle, to combat; similarly, holding one's breath or not crying out under pain. Therefore, the rule is not a manifestation of a need to command the world, but a need to command oneself; let us even say, to give orders to oneself.

What often fools us in this domain is that it would seem that we have no need for rules when the object itself offers us the obstacles; no need for rules to climb a tree because the disposition of the branches regulates our actions. But let us remember Sartre's famous reflections on the rock which is steep only for whoever wishes to climb it; the tree also determines our behavior only if we want to climb it. If I decide to climb that tree I have already formulated a plan and the uncertainty of that plan will not become specific if I do not imagine how I must place my hands and my feet with relation to those branches. Besides, the branches govern our actions less than it would seem, and if I am in difficulty it might be that the advice which my friends below waste on me would not be in accord with my own plans. Here it is the same as walking at the edge of the sidewalk: the essence of the object determines what I do only with regard to my way of moving toward that object. What is the governing factor is less the object than my manner of

picturing it to myself (which goes very far beyond simple immediate perception).

Certainly the fact remains that that which exists conditions the formulation of my program of play, but its role will vary according to the games and circumstances. In any case since play, and particularly children's play, is not an activity governed by vital needs but by an interior impulse, it cannot play the role which it does in instinctive behavior. Play is always more or less abstract, like the original making-believe; it follows therefore that arbitrary rule governs it more than the constraint of things. Undoubtedly, there are games dependent on external forces; one cannot make a kite without taking account of the nature of its constituent elements which must be light, nor of the nature of the wind; to play at fishing is in a sense to obey the fish. But because the essential of play is in the act and not in the effect (quite to the contrary of work), most children's games assign a rather limited role to external factors. The game is outside the circle of real work and that is why the rules are so important in it and always confer an intellectual aspect upon it.

From this point of view, one may distinguish three contiguous realms without sharp boundaries; games with things on the one hand, games with representations on the other, and between the two, games with the body—some of these pastimes not always being pure. Now, with the child, playing with things count for very little: one must wait for adolescence and especially adulthood to bring about that difficult return toward reality: the adolescent will be enchanted with struggles against mountain walls or rapids or the depths of the sea; the adult will play at politics, war, construction. Therefore, it seems that one might subsequently expect to see our children preferably exploring the opposite pole of the area of games: that is to say, the domain of games with pure representations. But this is hardly the case and we must search for the explanation.

Undoubtedly, one might find children's games of an intellectual type. Such is the game of blocks of our kindergartens. Such is the game of hopskotch, checkers, dominoes and even chess; such are certain word games. But we know that these are rather, games borrowed from adults, aside from some exceptions (hopskotch, knucklebones), and the importance of these games

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(except for blocks) remains rather slight in comparison with games of imitation or competition. This is hardly to be wondered at, even leaving aside the strictly intellectual difficulties against which a mind still in formation struggles. The fact remains that intellectual exercises are a source of fatigue rather than an attraction for those who are not well trained. The repugnance expressed by many primitives for intellectual activity is known; in our culture one must usually await the dawn of adolescence in order for intellectual games to become appealing.

Here it is opportune to examine a neighboring problem, namely, games of chance. It is remarkable that the child very seldom practices such games either in or out of school. We are at an age when the essence of energy is not expressed by intellect but by muscles. The decree of chance is too brutal, too instantaneous, while games of skill last long enough to infuse one with the joy of prowess. The reign of prowess must cease before the reign of the God Chance, can begin.

The essence of children's games is playing with the organism, not with things, or intellectual play. Of course in so involved a world a sharp cleavage cannot be made; undoubtedly it will also be necessary to take account of variations in sex and cultures. But considering children's games from a bird's eye view, the domination of rules over organic movements is an outstanding element.

DISORDERLY AND FRENZIED GAMES

Seemingly contradicting this statement are the existence of disorderly and frenzied games which on the child level prefigure those ecstatic states whose importance in certain adult cultures R. Caillois has correctly pointed out. Among the Mexican *voladores* and Siberian *shamans* the existence of unquestionably frenzied and euphoric behavior poses, in fact, a problem some of the elements of which must be found already on the child level.

It is true that the child cannot fall into an actual trance requiring institutions and techniques. But analagous and very significant behavior (which Alain alone has called attention to when he analyzed the importance of outbursts in children) already manifest themselves in childhood. Because the problem is difficult

let us begin by mentioning games or, rather, episodes of play which might serve us as examples.

That individual transports have already taken place in childhood is not to be doubted but it is remarkable that this rarely constitutes a game. The solitary child might very well cry as loudly as possible or run breathlessly, but such manifestations truly take on scope only within the group. With the individual the outburst is found rather in emotional behavior, babyish "caprices," mad laughter, bursts of sobbing, etc.

There are little girls, who between the ages of six and nine, play at sitting one on top of the other in a line on the grass; then the leader of the game "drags" each of the players in turn out of the line; several little girls have been "dragged" out of the line, they join the leader who pulls at a player who resists and whom the line is solidly defending. Shrieking, everyone tumbles and soon with the aid of some older girls who have come to the rescue they are playing only at building edifices which tumble; the little girls roll about, jostle each other, and shout. Now here are children, boys this time, gathered in a corner of the courtyard on a stormy day; scuffling begins, everyone pushes every one in the corner, some of them feign to scratch, screaming and shouting threats. Now here are some children dancing the *Capucine*; the circle accelerates in movement, one of the children crouches and lets himself be dragged along, the circle is broken and there are falls. There are many other games which take analagous form; in particular games of soldiers and war, and various kinds of parades, but such scenes can even occur in certain traditional games with fixed rules.

What is remarkable about these wild games is that they don't seem to take the form of traditional playing. Even when a traditional game like *Nicholas* or *The wolf* or *Executions* degenerates rather easily, the essence of the game is not in that. Collective frenzy appears rather as a somehow quasi-play behavior; it is not absolutely foreign to the domain of play, but it is not at its center. It is a rather frequent degeneration but this slipping out of control appears as a perversion, and most of the time the leaders attempt to reestablish order. However, one cannot deny that this "degeneration" is appreciated for itself; that it constitutes, as it were, a special game, though marginal. One may discern in

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this how ecstatic conduct arises in adults. What our children lack in order that veritable frenzied games should be set up is simply the institutionalizing of this type of playing. Now this is never the case; no games of frenzy exist in themselves or possess their own names. Even when wildness has a tendency to take a rather important role in the game, it is never an indispensable element, and certain days one may witness perfectly calm, regulated games. But collective manifestations of frenzy are not however totally disordered and for that reason they clearly foreshadow adult euphoric play. In fact, one finds in these manifestations a will toward disorder but a certain kind of disorder; if yelling is never lacking—that is a constant emotional element—it happens that the frenzy inevitably develops into jostling or running, or cries: when little ones play in the corner of the courtyard they push each other about, run in a line, yelling *Nicholas*. Therefore, there is already, as it were, a beginning of institutionalization. Undoubtedly, the rule is very elementary, consisting of carrying a certain type of behavior to its extreme and that is all it is. But isn't going beyond the rules already a rule, just as Nietzsche's ethics was to go beyond ethics? Our children therefore are primarily lacking those precise collective techniques which appear in adult euphoric play. Their wildness remains only wildness because they don't know how to carry it further. Among peoples of a Dionysian culture the trance made its appearance as a result of behavior which followed a "precise liturgy," and the delirium of the subject "scarcely permits him any phantasy or initiative; he conducts himself as he is expected to conduct himself, as he knows he must." (Caillois, *Les jeux et les hommes*, pp. 147 and 148). It is precisely this aspect which our children lack.

This is as it were, like the continuous stories which on the child level prefigure the myths of adult cultures. These continuous stories, generally works of a limited family group, may sometimes be very highly developed; they may be carried on by the group over the years. Thus, the Folsom children lived for five years in an extraordinary world of imaginary monsters (*Le réel et l'imaginaire dans le jeu enfantin*, pp. 128-9, note); but these stories disappear with the group when the children take their place in an adult world where such stories have no more value. In the same way, frenzied games requiring much more precise

techniques than the continuous stories—by very reason of their very lack of serenity—cannot in our western cultures acquire the necessary stability, or continue for a long time and consequently develop. Frenzied behavior cannot become euphoric in this little world. Dionysian mentality only reveals itself but always yields very swiftly to Apollonian mentality.

Is this limited to our western culture? Studies which have been made on games in other cultures (Griaule, Leboeuf, M. Mead, etc.) lead us to surmise that such is not the case. Undoubtedly one may find, for example, among the young Abyssinians studied by Griaule, much more Dionysian behavior than among young French people, such manifestations, furthermore, being copies of adult behavior. But, childhood transports rarely go as far as adult transports. Our children have trouble enough controlling their play even when they are in little danger of being carried away. All the more reason, therefore, for them to be incapable of disciplining the great waves which bear them, within the confines of precise techniques in order to broaden them still further. There is a psychic complication here which goes very far beyond childhood.

It remains no less a fact that, although he loves rules a child doesn't at all dislike certain states in which he feels himself drawn, as it were, outside of himself. Whether in the giddiness of swinging, or the frenzy of racing and screaming, there is a similar going beyond oneself. But in a sense this is also a going outside oneself, entering a realm very similar to the realm of catastrophes about which Golstein has spoken with regard to mental illness. In order to penetrate into this dangerous domain, much more hardiness is required than our little children possess. Just as a baby somewhat dreads the non-familiar, so the older child fears an expansion of self beyond or alongside ordinary limits. That is why frenzied games are of some importance only during a certain period, especially at the end of babyhood and at the beginning of primary school, let us say from the ages of six to ten, more or less. Before that, frenzy is not a game; playing is an entirely different thing than letting oneself go by having "caprices." Later on, during that period which according to Rousseau constitutes the maturity of childhood, the organization of games is very well established and fits and outbursts only very

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rarely play any part in these games. One must wait for the end of adolescence in order to see the sometimes full emergence of this Dionysian tendency, if the culture lends itself to it; at that stage, it is as common among certain of our "fans" or "blousons noirs" as among young Abyssinians. But without institutionalized techniques, the euphoria will still remain limited.

Usually, wild games are evidence of aggression in a child just as disorderly games are. They testify rather to a bending of rules rather than their orientation toward a Dionysian realization. This is clear in those examples of frenzy which we have cited; and among French children we have never found anything else (this would undoubtedly not at all be the case in other cultures). One must say the same thing with regard to disorderly playing, games of destruction which are not prefigurations of euphoria but only of a very much weaker sense of control. For example, if the child who destroys his work sometimes displays a certain wildness, it is not generally the same kind of frenzy as when he brutally cuts off the tallest flowers in the meadow with a stick. But such a game remains elementary; it really allows for very little achievement, unless one makes of it proof of one's dexterity (which is generally the case). Thus such games must be contrasted with games of construction although they appear just as early: while the latter bear witness to the need for synthesis, a control of actions; games of destruction, on the other hand, come from a simple desire for easy success, for change, for let us say, turbulence.

Wildness, turbulence, instability these are the main obstacles to the development of real control. And far from finding the sources of play in these states, one should rather interpret them as antagonistic factors, at least on the childhood level which interests us. If later on, the directiveness of a more evolved psyche should manage to integrate them, at the moment these remain obstacles to a less complex integration. Furthermore, one cannot understand childhood play and its discipline without studying the way in which it triumphs over these obstacles.

Indeed, there are several factors here which do not always converge. Under the term turbulence, for example, are hidden several different ideas: those of a turning movement, of twirling (which corresponds to the old Indo-European root, *twer*) those

of haste, disorder and of madness. At the source, therefore, a movement, an explosion of energy, as it were, so clearly manifested in those lively exuberant movements by which an extreme impulse releases itself. But this need for activity is not yet channelized, it spurts into all of the openings ahead of it; it is agitation rather than act. Hence these circulatory movements and as it were this gesticulative whirling, always coming back to the same act, like a child spinning a top. These circulatory reactions which have been so well analyzed by modern psychologists (Piaget in particular, following Baldwin) help us understand how primitive activity, for lack of a sufficient number of assimilated motive structures, has a tendency to recommence interminably the same gesticulative sequence: like a bear in a cage. Mad laughter, sobbing, these are always recurrences and analagous cycles. And such circulatory stereotypes are legion among idiots.

But it would be erroneous to rest content with this for we have as yet only a very elementary structure, and what we call today wildness usually goes beyond this level in two ways. First of all, by the quantity of energy set in action: a wild child is, more than anything else, a child with energy to burn, which shows itself in his very vivacity if it is not sufficiently regulated, and in nervous movement. This is a sign of strength and an indication of potential achievements. On the other hand, the quality of the energy might perhaps be on a higher level. If the wild child (perhaps of poor background), is given to untirable stereotypes (and it is in this sense that psychiatrists usually understand the word), he might also be a ceaselessly enterprising child, who begins without finishing, a child who is always innovating, but whose talent is still incapable of self-control. There is, therefore, a disorder, but one resulting from richness, and it is useful to ask oneself whence comes this rich impulse which suffuses this activity with disorder. Here again the meaning of the term might be clarified by one of its original ideas, that of the crowd, for a group very often acts as a resonator: it amplifies, it magnifies wildness, as we have seen with regard to getting out of hand. But that cannot suffice for there we have only the amplification of the disorder; the germ is elsewhere.

Here three factors are essential it seems to us: ignorance, instability and lack of control.

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Ignorance is least important, and its role rather minimal. Indeed, one might easily believe that a child expresses his energy in simple wildness when he doesn't know how to play. That is perfectly true certainly, but such wildness occurs more often when the child *cannot* play than when he does not *know* how to play; a normal child confined too much becomes wild. But we know of curious peoples whose children have no place to play and are taught no games by the adults: such children are amorphous and without energy. It is as a result of such an education, deprived of games, that one may understand the sweetness and lack of aggressivity among the Arapesh studied by M. Mead. It is when a deprivation of play makes itself felt that wildness might arise; furthermore, it is necessary that this deprivation be conscious, therefore that the subject should previously have had the habit of playing. If today the problem is sometimes posed by playgrounds which are too small to permit games, that is an altogether different problem than that which interests us.

Childhood instability is much more important than ignorance of playing structures. A normal child in our culture will invent, if need be, games with very simple rules, but he cannot free himself of his natural instability. Let us note that getting out of hand, if it augments this instability, does not create it in any way; for instability shows itself to the highest degree in the calm games of little children in the kindergarten. Specific studies have established that the average time spent by the child in a game varied from ten minutes toward the age of three to four, to twenty-six minutes at the age of six. That is not much, but it must be added that there are many distractions in the course of play: Charles Bühler calculates these as at 12.4 in the course of a single game at the ages of three to four and at 6.4 between the ages of five and six. In an interval of five minutes one day I observed three games: squatting, a *comptine*, and finally *Puce*, but it must be added that these games are poorly distinguished, one passes from one to the other without any break; therefore, everything happens as if the child were scarcely paying any attention to his playing. Undoubtedly, this is not always the case. It frequently happens that a child so ardently concentrates on his blocks or on his painting that he refuses to play in the playground

and remains at his table. But as a general rule, our children's attention hardly remains steady.

But this is not yet wildness properly speaking; it is only a major element in it. However, it suffices in itself to hinder the development of a type of game which is followed through and very well controlled. Furthermore, let us note that it is very difficult for a collective game to be set up so long as attention is so unstable: the rule of the game in that case cannot be but individual, and in effect it is at this unstable kindergarten period when games of arbitrary rules begin to become established: in an experiment, already in part cited, made on a child of five years, ten months, we have been able in twenty minutes to note up to sixteen games of this kind, staircase games, eccentric walking and vocal games.

Another obstacle sometimes advanced after Piaget's observations, resides in the egocentricity whose connection with instability is obvious. Like instability, egocentricity tends to lead the player back to himself, to prevent real cooperation. And it is rather clear that instability favors egocentricity, since it impedes contact with others. Inversely, egocentricity renders it difficult to yield oneself to the external and social rule which would contribute toward determining one's interests and lending stability to behavior. But no more than instability, egocentricity does not suffice in explaining wildness: these two factors only constitute a favorable ground. It is on this terrain that wildness can develop, as well as its intimate component: getting out of hand.

Getting out of hand is distinguished from wildness in that it manifests itself in a single outburst, while wildness presupposes a general instability of behavior. But because it violates the rules of behavior to the point of exasperation, the outburst makes the set of rules followed to disappear, causes breaks; it puts an end to that very pattern of conduct which it exaggerates, as one sees very well among small children who burst out in a parade, running. Thus, lack of control pushes toward new initiatives and easily becomes wildness. The wild child is unstable because he is carried away, because he cannot limit himself to piling up his blocks well or drawing neatly. Thus, getting out of hand remains the essential thing in wildness even if it manifests itself in an attenuated form.

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What, therefore, is this getting out of hand, or outburst, if not an incapacity to behave oneself, to not allow oneself to be carried away by anger, by joy, by brutal actions which emotion has stirred up in us? In a sense, the outburst is that "thumos" of which Plato speaks in the *Republic*, that anarchic ardor residing within the breast. Like love in the *Symposium*, its clearest manifestation, it is richness and poverty at the same time. It is good that play reveals a vivacity and even an excess of vitality in the child, students of character find it difficult to believe that an amorphous child will have as hopeful a future and will achieve as rich a personality as any other. Here, popular tradition is not mistaken, that popular tradition which loves a child to be "lively." For liveliness reveals power still poorly employed, a vigorous spontaneity which must constitute the basis of a free full personality. And the first avatars of this power, or rather impulse, is shown in children's play; just as its diverse realizations diversify cultures.

We have already seen how rarely this impulse slips into ecstasy in children's play. But this tendency is already suggested, and therein is an indication that this vivacity might also be dangerous. The impulse might take multiple paths but a number of the routes it takes appear at certain moments to be too narrow for it. There is also, as it were, gullies of behavior in which the current of movement rises and swirls: this happens in extreme gaiety as in weeping; it also occurs when subordinate factors—such as stormy weather—swell the available energy or narrow the banks between which it must flow. The old comparison which we made use of here keeps all of its value: a river well channelized is play—conduct well stabilized by solid rules. The playing tension might increase, as may be observed in certain collective games, without the development of the game necessarily being troubled by it; as, for example, among adults in those games of eloquence in which anger at most lends a somewhat new tonality to the speechmaking. But if the playing structure is lax, if it is not strengthened by habit and by the group, any increase of tension will lead toward an outburst of frenzy, and flow beyond the limits if these have not been considerably distended. Hence, it follows that certain very simple games whose domain remains very broad, will hardly suffice for

a wildness which completely breaks the rules of more complex games. There is, for example, a natural frenzy in the way children run. We don't like to see a ten year old child subjecting himself to a long distance race; for him every race is like the final strides of a hundred meters for the adult. But if racing absorbs and even implies frenzy, a game like that of *Toton* which consists of spinning on oneself, can only lead naturally to disorder and inevitably ends in a fall.

There is something about a childhood organism like a machine that can turn rapidly only if it is very solidly constructed, just as the number of rotations per minute of an automobile engine may be increased only by progressively improving the engine. In a similar manner, our childrens' games between the ages of five and eight are always in danger: earlier, there was insufficient energy, except in extreme cases when emotional anarchy made its appearance. Later, social rules will intervene. But, during this transitional period, every round dance tends to get out of control and every song tends to be transformed into a shriek. Only very simple forms of play therefore can subsist. As we have already mentioned, this is particularly noticeable in those games in which the children must force themselves to remain exactly one behind the other. Kindergarten children cannot maintain a row without the intervention of adults, and primary school children very rarely succeed in doing the same thing. Calm games like so much solitary imitation-play are also possible—but let the group once intervene and tension mounts and conduct is unbalanced.

This very word "unbalanced" leads us toward another path which is not without interest. For, in fact, there is a question here of a double imbalance. With regard to the imbalance within the group, if there is a group: the players can no longer keep their respective places, or play their respective roles. But especially of an imbalance of functions, for frenzy unduly distends a determined function, for example, spinning in the game of *Toton*, at the expense of other functions, in particular postural functions: whence, the so many cases of falling when the game gets out of hand. All regulated behavior is in effect a balance: the most complex function can operate only on a foundation, articulate itself on wider functions: this movement of the

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fingers presupposes certain movements of the wrist, the latter involves gestures of the shoulders and so on. When Roger, 7 years, 4 months, finds amusement in rotating one of his hands around the other he gets carried away and finally ends up grimacing and blushing; when a player of the game of *Capucine* lets himself go and begins to lay hands on his friends his blows lead him to the game of kicking and a tumble is threatened. When singing gets out of control it becomes a scream and the words disappear.

Therefore, there is a period in children's play when disequilibrium threatens, that period in the neighborhood of six to seven years when, in addition, clumsiness becomes accentuated. The degree to which this period is one of transition has not always been sufficiently stressed, or, if it has, it has been done so by commencing with psychoanalytical considerations which pose different problems. In fact, at this period as later, at the beginning of adolescence, there is produced, together with a stature-poise change, an intellectual and social change: the appearance of the first intellectual operations makes possible primary education, but at the same time, it is at the root of the comparisons which the child makes between others and himself. A growing awareness of self and of his smallness thus leads to a most vain affirmation of the Ego. Frenzied behavior, if of physiological origin, also issues in large part out of this brutal affirmation of self. That is why it does not only appear as a lack, or a disorder, but also as a positive element of the personality. Undoubtedly, as we have already pointed out, the so-called Dionysian element truly becomes effective only at the beginning of adolescence; but games like racing or *Toton* permit us already to grasp on the wing the prefiguration of this euphoric feeling which ethnologists have studied in adult play. The final tumble of the child spinning on himself is not so unexpected; it is almost part of the game; similarly the frenzy during a race; or the dizziness while swinging.

Certainly these are after all secondary elements at this age, although they do not escape the observer; and that is why we have purposely neglected them in our previous analyses. We have here a manifestation of the fact, visible in all aspects of play that various constituents appear little by little, and mix so

closely that all sharp analysis—and how can it be otherwise—is unfaithful. Physiology is endlessly tinged by many psychological complexes. The individual is already social (let us think of imaginary companions), and even one game does not sharply distinguish itself from another game. In the realm of play there is only movement and fluidity; even the conservatism which shows itself so strikingly in children; even stereotypes are subject to incessant metamorphoses. We are very far indeed from those precise adult games requiring trust, of which roulette and bridge are typical.

The very mixture of types of play grows in large part out of this childhood exuberance. We have studied elsewhere the way in which our children create games, most often by corruptions of other games. But if this corruption is often deliberate among older people, in children for the most part it is the result of their wildness and consequent failure to stick to the rules. The best example is in *comptines*. When the adult collects and publishes a collection of children's *comptines*, he goes about it as an adult: he sharply distinguishes "Am stram, gram" and "Agenda femina gauda..." or "The green mouse..." and "The chicken on the wall..." On the contrary, our children, despite their conservatism, frequently confound things and mix them up; real *comptines* are very often made up of scattered bits put together in a Baroque fashion. There are even sequels which are casually joined to the list of *comptines*, like "O gué, tu es sauvée" (Cf. *Le réel et l'imaginaire...* pp. 106-7). There is not a little buffoonery in our children's games.

This is not, however, the impression given by the great games at the end of childhood, and particularly those veritable ceremonies with rules which little girls practice, and in which Alain discerns, as it were, the childhood Mass. Indeed there is much development between the play of six to seven year olds and those of eleven to twelve. In that period of time, our children have learned to follow strict rules. It is this apprenticeship that we must now study.

It is scarcely possible for us in a limited article to analyse in sufficient detail the way in which this apprenticeship is carried out.¹ But from what has already been said, the main aspect of

¹ Besides we have studied this problem at length in our work on *Le jeu de l'enfant après trois ans*.

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this apprenticeship has already emerged: namely, the influence of the children's group. What the child's simple arbitrary rule cannot cope with, that is to say self-control, the collective group rule will make possible. The problem of controlling frenzy in play is therefore also essentially the problem of the child's progressive integration into the traditional child society. If family education and the school contribute to it, it is by a kind of indirect transference: the self-control acquired in the family or at school is also more or less found in play. But the inverse is equally true, and the progress and mastery of self which the child achieves in the child group to which he integrates himself is equally progress which has meaning in the family and in the classroom: that is why a psychiatrist like Schneersohn could maintain that children's personality problems and even childhood neuroses must be looked after by controlling the child's play. An example like that of kindergarten rhythmic, a kind of playing regulated by adults and at the same time an education in controlling movements, similarly sets forth the importance of this interaction.

To explain the child's integration in the group, it seems to us that two fundamental ideas must be brought to bear. One is that of the appeal of the Eldest, in this case particularly the big child. When after about seven years of age the adult model seems too far removed—whence arises what psychoanalysts have called the period of latency—the model of the big child takes its place for several years, up to about the beginning of adolescence when the big child will yield in its turn to a complex of the ideal and the adult. This is not only a case—and this is important—of successive specifications of that impulse which is also at the source of arbitrary rules. The successive avatars of these structures in which the impulse is channelized warn us very much that it would be a grave error to try to see in it only that identification of which the psychoanalysts speak.

The second notion is that of the child society such as it is found in school groups during this period from ten to thirteen years of age which Rousseau properly calls "the maturity of childhood." Alain had previously observed very clearly that we have here a veritable society with its rites of play, its traditions, its own mystique so apparent in the ceremonies of big girls

and the real hierarchy represented by the leader and her lieutenants. It is the existence of this very conservative and almost religious society which explains the astonishing preservation from age to age of rules of games and *comptines* which sometimes date back many centuries: the game of hopscotch outlasts all empires and all religions. It is the existence of this inflexible structure which favors control of movements and institutionalizes the child's arbitrary rules.

But here we have an entire genetic sociology that should be constructed. Let us limit ourselves, therefore, to indicate the roads, still so poorly known, which future researchers will have to explore in detail if they want to understand how the wild child finally becomes a man who is master of his destiny.