

Dr. Hab. Danuta Waloszek
Prof. Akademii Pedagogicznej
Im. KEN w Krakowie

Amusement as an educational strategy and one of the main child's needs

Amusement is a part of „breath” upcoming from human's soul. Itself being the part of imagination or emotion is the reason of every other movement. It is an volatalizing phenomenon, unrepeatable just as unrepeatable are the “creations of our soul”. It cannot be evoked, organized, controlled, or planned. It just is or no (*Arystoteles*). Amusement by M. Kwintylian is a perfect method to form a child's soul. Owidiusz treat s it as a “holy inspiration” so freedom, liberty, affect and Platon compares it to poetry and gives it features like rhythm, harmony, secrecy, emotions and beauty. J. Dewey thinks, that amusement is external part of innate need for fun, so it is a state of soul/mind, not just a physical part of child's life. J. Huizinga going deeply into the meaning of amusement tries to find in it cultural sources and its symptoms. Many persons thinks amusement as a part of unconcerned children activity, other searches in it large number of personal or even work values (J. Dewey, Błoński, K. Uszyński).

Amusement is for a child a state of existence, or experiencing „the life” tools given by nature and on this base discovering itself in the world and the world in itself. Direct and concrete discovering. The other way of building the mind of adult doesn't exist.. The child in amusement discoveries the ways of using language, using objects, consequences of social contact, remaining laws, rules, values. It is some type of lens that assembles everything what is for life most important.

Amusement, despite of being assumed as an extraordinary and undeniable value for human's life and in human's life is incessantly disregarded and underestimated, especially in conversations about human's future in the beggining of his life.

What stands on our way to simply stop “interrupting” in human's independence and turn back the due place of entertainment in ontogenesis? Accordingly, there is no theory, philosopher or scientist who never said that amusement is a way of human existence in his very first years of life. No learning, which requires concentration or sensibility but fun, which

enables to develop the mind in experimental way, fun, because is developmentally available for childrens. Why we, adults, always underestimate her worth? Why playing child bother us more than child which studies hard on his desk and make homeworks? Why do we always assume thath amusement is a waste of time, and “learning” no? For this questions, I will try to answer in this elaboration, which I hope, will get to the people interested in amusement problem.

Generally we should assign the right to Immanuel Kant¹, who while searching the beggining of human’s history, he turned back attention on fear of future prototype based on “paradise lost” and expecting future, to which it was told to prepare properly, and which was shown to human as a some sort of monster, unpredictable and indefinite². But amusement is normal in life. We don’t need to prepare for her. This existential fear, how Martin Heidegger defined the state of looking forward to future, order adults “to learn” young ones when its still isn’t too late for them. Amusement as a such unconcerned activity don’t confer to some sort of serious activities in the face of young human. The history of development generated right, that the best place where human can prepare for future is school. No in fun. And so from many generations we’ve been taking away what is most important in childhood – Amusement. We think that we do it for the child, for its “better start”, but while ordering child to learn we are doing against its nature. We are interrupting its development so much that it results in his future life. We tolerate physical fun, but we underestimate mind amusement, which is documented by historical transfers and contemporary educational programs analysis.

From the very first paintings and literature, even from fifteenth century, we inquire that human plays because of too much physical energy. Bruegel, in his “Child’s fun” painting describes 95 ways to play with human’s body and french writer Rabelais describes a lot more – even 250.

Contemporary discussions, relating to the ancient transfers, are concentrating about personal and cultural creative meaning of amusement and they are running out of childhood. Does it mean that we got through amusement as a phenomenon in human’s life and development? I think that we have much more to do if we want to solve this problem. In this matter we are being convinced by discussions about the child, its education, rights and needs. We are still paying attention that the most important is education in school or work in the office, so these are sort of activities that belongs to adult or youth people. We also

¹ I. Kant, *Przypuszczalny początek historii ludzkiej*. Toruń 1995, s. 23;

² zob. Arystoteles, Empedokles, por. Bakke M., *Wyobrażone ciałem się staje*. W: *O wyobraźni*. Red. R. Liberkowski, W. Wilowski. Poznan 2003;

underestimate the need for amusement as a fundamental development stimulator. In the adults opinion disinterestedness fun is discredited in contradistinction to seriousness and self-interest which is represented by work and learning. A lot of adult people using eighteenth century rational ways of thinking regards amusement as a short-period thing which only makes life more curious, so we can live without her. These thoughts are not suitable, as well as “making better” career for young one by messing in his developmental system and getting rid of amusement in ordinary life. There are also lots of teachers thinking this way, they’re rebuilding educational programs and forgetting about general progress.

Difficulties in talking about amusement sticks, I think, in certain definitions its being for all alone child. Since long time ago, there has been discussions and disputes about amusement as a part of true existence and where is border between that point of view and another, considering amusement as an imaginal construction. So there is a main dispute about reality and imagination, about copying and creation. Its really hard to settle, how the child copies the world and how much does it imagine. L. S. Wygotski tried to settle down this argues and disputes using the word “Pseudoproblem”, he collected all dilemmas in this word, because it’s impossible to solve things which are still evolving³. For the child, how proves John Dewey, objects and activities made by them or on them are integral part of its natural environment and are stimulants on which it reacts. This process is repeatable in every generation – Achievements of one child are stimulants directing other. This is how we understand copying is one, but it isn’t the only thing which develop the children’s mind. We can also assume that the young human who wants to play tries to search for ideas which can lead him to certain activities and he pays attention to persons, their movements, tools or objects used by them just to see if these items are necessary for him or no. Because the child receive it by his eyes and ears, external resemblance of taken activity to one really made is so visible that we got used to qualificate the child’s activity as a copying. Meanwhile, John Dewey proves that child has made an extremely complicated mind activity, beginning from observation, including choosing, experimenting and ending on comparing to original. So copying isn’t no simply as it seems⁴. As we see every activity copied apparent so easy is truly complicated. Imagination is their base – It allows for cutting the world into pieces and build them into the context invented by the child. Environment is a “deliverer” of content and roles, which are, how Jean-Paul Sartre said “Are waiting everywhere for human”⁵. Considering the sense of copying in amusement we could quote helpful theory created by Cinzio and

³ L.S. Wygotski, Wybrane prace psychologiczne. Warszawa 1972; tenze: Narzędzie i znak. Warszawa 1974;

⁴ J. Dewey, Jak myślimy? Warszawa 1988, s. 1998;

⁵ J.P., Sartre, Wyobrażenie. Warszawa 1970

Ricci as “Similar elaboration of different subject, and similar subject of different elaboration”. Suggesting this inspiration we could say, that child “Goes after adult” just like “Vergilius after Homer”, but subject of one of them was Uliesses and of another – Eneas. Tullius combat Antonius with the same weapon which Demostenes used against Philip(pe), the Macedonian⁶.

In every moment, when child meets the pattern, how we think watching his behaviour, creates real content, assembled to pattern, and imaginative content, assembled to child, using the other words – This is some kind of interpretation of this pattern, when the child makes external to perceived features and behaviour in certain way, the way which is known for the child. And this would be enough for confirming unusual worth of amusement in child’s life, the variety of patterns, examples and stability with the pattern it has chosen. This is what is adult responsible for. He is the carrier and he chooses informations which are allowed to get to the child. There are lot of doubts in this responsibility. Not just in the parents, but frequently in the teachers too.

There is contention lasting about the developmental meaning of daily used objects, which are most known for the child, and as well daily activities done in front of them or where they can take part of events. There are lot of scientist who assign them negative part in development, such as Arystoteles (?) – The object which limits the imagination are simple – The car, dolly or muppet, these things are so simple that don’t need to be interpreted in other way. There has been the thesis, that when the certain object is less useful for intended purpose the stronger it evokes mind to use imagination. This thesis was confirmed by Frideric Frobel in suggestion called “Gifts for kids”, which by their own abstractional form were forcing children to compare, discover and combining them. As we know from research, they didn’t exactly match the author’s vision of this experiment⁷. Other researcgers (Dewey, Agazzi, Trentowski) considers, that these objects being a part of experience of child’s reality makes easy to understand the categorization of the world.

In contemporary discussions we try to match both opinions giving the imagination special part in making real ideas, making wide the horizon of things which are real, true and supplement them. So we have here to deal with imagination working effective for *copyied conten⁸t*. Utilitary activities, made by common housemates or teacher with the child present, are showing him unknown world, they are so magic like tales about faires, dwarves and brave heroes. They’re showing him the world which must be deeply known, recognized, the

⁶ Poetyka Renesansu. Wybór i opracowanie J. Makowski, E. Tarnowska- Temeriusz. Wrocław –Łódź 1982. Zakład im Ossolińskich;

⁷ zob. J. Piaget, S. Szuman, E. Hurlock, i inni;

⁸ por. J. bronowski, Potęga wyobraźni. Warszawa 1986;

mysterious world full of secrets, full of threaten and very complicated. It is the world full of social meanings, alien, the child gets used to it probably using its imagination. So it can handle with the micro-car on the same level as with the pot or plate in the kitchen. The child don't care about world divided by adults. Whatever attracts them, attracts by itself. In the child world there is no difference in activities made for happiness and for the important reason. *The state of mind, not the thing performed, decides what is utilitar and what isn't forcible and educational*"⁹. This is the most important argument for stopping objective treating amusement in child's life, an argument for necessity to treat it serious and place in education as a part of strategy of learning the world, itself and realtions between children on the level of kindergarten or early years of school.

About developmental meaning of amusement decides, how I think, properties like: Brightness, beauty, true, power and sublimity, they change so simple activity like fun into something unusual.

- **Brightness** (*Claritas, energieia i evidentia*). Amusement is clear because its words and deeds are comparised in the way which there is no doubts that the child shows, and, just like the old armor cleaned from the rust, shines with this comparison. It is more bright when there are less others thoughts, instructions, orders, too much evolutioned suggests and when it doesn't includes deeds and unproper words.
- **Beauty**. It has many definitions and every one of them we can match with amusement. Aristoteles defines beauty as *"something being good gives us pleasure"*. Amusement is good and pleasure. Amusement is *"what attracts only if its shown, it depends from exact proportions and bright"* – Its beautiful according to Saint Thomas, it is *"what don't attracts by impression or idea, it attracts with subjective necessity, using the common, direct and totally disinterestedness ways"* (I. Kant). It contents a lot of conformity of events, activities and sentences, which are creating it. There is lot of harmony, rhythm, symmetry, form, colors, it's some kind of compensations – things, if child sees "ugly" human it is automatically erased from the field of amusement. Beauty is a copy of nature – Amusement as well. Beauty is a work of genius – Playing child is a genius. It astonishes and touches.
- **Expression** – Speed, rush and hurry, making the amusement alive. The child gets elements from the outside which certainly complicates observations and keeping pace with it, but allows the amusement to roll. Child looks like rushing, chasing something. It changes conventions, plans, solutions easily. It presents hard, with no doubts in

⁹ J. Dewey, Jak...op. Cit., s. 207;

movements and words. It's essential what makes, that there are no doubts when the child plays. According to that, it depends of subject of fun in the dictionary of child actually playing there are lot of expressive words, even vulgar. Every observation made for partner is so obvious that it communicates true intentions. Amusement never stops, and if it does it is only symptom of being tired or out of ideas.

- **Sublimacy**, or getting out from ordinary life, old patterns, averageness in words and acts. Child which copies something it gives another dimension for copied object/activity. Amusement is a part of natural feature what is called creation. *Children are so powerful that they can change everything they want* how arguments – Poetry writer – J. Cocteau. Child always creates “first time”, it “hovers” above ordinariness, it creates the parallel world, the world where is a place for noble – It forgives and agrees.
- **Authenticity**. Amusement makes that child's words and acts isn't imagined (Even if it truly is), but according to what it is – It's true and sincere because amusements is located in emotional part of mind. Authenticity is documented by objects, features and deeds taken over from the real world, available for the child. Because the child discoveries the world always “from beggining”, until the image will be created in its mind, every activity is always new, it is first activity and thats why it is true.
- **Might**. J. Huizinga locates it in the area between seriousness and disseriousness, what points that there is a possibility easy changing the joke into seriousness, but amusement is always serious. It's proud and mighty, how said M. Kwintylian. Strenght and energy surely match and belongs to amusement. Its nautre makes that it is a powerful part of education, in which community collected all human needs (*K. Uszyński, J. Huizinga*). Amusement loses its seriousness when it stops to be free activity of young human, it loses it when the child is being amused without its permission. It becomes caricature of itself. Amusement is a powerful for a child when its getting used to environment, getting into its interication.

They're making childhood the most important part of our lives. The quality of work and learning in school depends on amusement in early part of life. This is amusement which decides if we will be gentle, open-minded and autentic in our life. Fun similar to work and learning – It's a human right and simultaneously duty in the face of our life and social life. For child it is a part of existence, the child uses nature data to experience to know and recognize itself in the world and the world in itself.

Educational values comes out from the being of amusement and they can be collected in four ranges of indirect influence on developing child: a) semantical, b) interpersonal, c) task range and d) cultural range.9/14/2004

Semantism in amusement

Most every kind of fun is based on word, or wider on a language. There are sentences heard, emitted, interpreted, sentences connected directly to the meaning of subject and sentences which are indirect, sentences “before, while and after its standing”. It contains sentences to his mate, to objects and adult realized in other ways: When child speaks to the “doggie” it tries to make it in other way than he speaks to his toys or than it speaks to adults. From this point of view amusement is experimental are for language structures, for building the sentences and efficacy them, using descriptions or announcements. Amusement tolerates “wrongs”, and because, how the chinese prvoerb says – “*Accustoming the language its one hundred times harder than leashing a tiger*” the amusement is a good way to learn everything. Fun allows to practice grammar and creativity in its borders.

Amusement, because its emotional and affective its peculiar in exercising the child intonation of these emotions – Serious, ironic, calm, arrogant, brave, happy, sad, and other.

Analysis of language phenomenons we can see, that amusement gives the child possibility to be a “Language scientist” not just its user. “The scientist” of ways how the language influences the whole world and what is its position in connections between people.

Interpersonalism of fun

Amusement is this sort of activity, which shows slowly social reactions for human being in the companion of other people, for his behaviour realting to them and before everything – It shows the power of judging.

Main dimensions of interactions eralized in this sort of fun are: Rivalization and hostility – Cooperation and friendship; equality and partnership; Emotional angagement – Emotional neutrality; Domination – Obeying, etc.

Amusement, how corroborate Stanislaw Karpowicz, is the most important social experiencing dimension of life, it teaches how to keep laws, rules it shows the meaning of renouncement. It teaches gentleness, firmness solidarity, and. How K. Uszyński would add – It manifest and builds the humans character¹⁰.

Amusement in context of tasks

Observation of activities done by children’s in fun, convince that they will continue these and other activities for using them in later amusement. These activites makes fun bright

¹⁰ K. Uszyński, Problemy wychowania. Wrocław 1958, Zakład im. Ossolińskich, s. 550;

and expressive. This activity modifies the amusement situations, it shows it proper directions and ways of developmental strategies. Antitetical amusement or simple acting roles are realized through the whole number of tasks disposed to children before they can start playing. These disposal is made by children's: The roles must be disposed well, because the fun must be curious – This is how the children says¹¹.

Youth realizes in amusement tasks based on a) cooperation, using the “real” tools, acting just like adults; b) Trade, negotiations, selling and buying and of course – Bargaining; c) on learning, control, rules and commanding; d) Entertainment, games and their own rules; e) Making rules and getting used to them.

This is the best first moment where in young human can be created the role of learning and work. The teacher must be moderating, inspiring and regulator.

Cultural context of amusement

Playing children is “drown” in cultural community by repeated in every generation kinds of fun, objects of fun offered by certain community (parents) and most of all – Language. Child using amusement goes through lots of language announcements, movemental, moral and estetic realized in different cultural codes. It is necessary, because without them life is surely complicated. Amusement also absorbs every differences, we can find in it unrepeatable minds, persons and properties. Every difference makes it content more interesting. This is the base to search the common code of playing people, so it works for understanding of both sides by other ways.

How proves K. Uszyński “*The reason of their vitality it's the same what is the reason of vitality people's song or Homer's poetry; These happy plays – Invented by, God knows which child, corrected and filled by thousands of other – In the best way were (and are – My suggestion) satisfying the general children's needs*¹²”

Conclusion

Whatever we think and about what we think, **amusement is the most important thing to child, its the sense of existence for this child and its life.** It fullfills the whole universe for a child creating the best development environment.”*In amusement – The child is a task for itself*”. It is possible because, that there are all of life contexts: Semantic,

¹¹D. Waloszek, Rola zadań w edukacji dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym. Zielona Góra 1996; tejsz: Zabawa – Edukacja. Zielona Góra 1997;

¹²M. Heidegger, Bycie i czas. Warszawa 1997, s. 67;

interpersonal, task context and cultural context. Going through them the child discovers similarities of individual expectations to social and on this base it builds in itself its own image on background of other people which are composed of:

1. **Autoindicators** – Or structures of informations about WHO the child IS in the web of social connections. In it the child learns how to read the borders of its own movements and strenght in individual and common actions. It learns how to stand an aim and how to achieve it. It feels when it wins and when it loses.
2. **Autoevaluations** – Or structures of estimations, descriptions and opinions about itself and activities or on the other people who are into the amusement. These structures allows the child to fullfill with the content its image called HOW AM I? So allows to answet the questions about its own ingeniousness, originality, competence, bravery, advantages and disadvantages, expectings, etc. Amusement allows confrontating these searchings with the realities of social life, it allows to show the child itself on the background of scoial group and its acceptance.
3. **Autoresponsibility** – Which contains relations to values, norms and tasks composed the child for answer of WHERE AM I? Question, as a person, as a part of community, between what people, what are my possibilities of being active by myself and what are my restrictions; Who is the most important in the group and why, what means to another, what decides of success and what disturbs my life; which tasks and why it can realize at the moment and which must wait for its turn.

Everything goes together, without a stop, it rolls in certain, bright, sublime, beautiful and with seriousness. In amusement.