

DRAMATIZATION AND REPRESENTATION OF THE BODY IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL AGE

VINCENZO BIANCALANA

Urbino - University “Carlo Bo”, ITALY

ABSTRACT

For many years iconic representation has been at the centre of studies and reflection on its meaning in the evidence of the relationship existing between a child’s drawings and personality. A child’s drawing, in fact, tells a story through a whole of signs consisting of images (Biancalana V. 1994) and represents a form of expression, perhaps unique, which can be placed between playing and language. It can be considered as a motor activity in all respects, which, in making itself explicit, gives a voice to one’s imagination and creativity, permitting the illustration of one’s internal impulses.

Key words: Dramatization, Draw, Development

Introduction

The first test created for this type of research, known as the little man’s test, makes reference to F. Goodenough, who elaborated it in the 1920’s and gave it an important interpretative value in psychology. Soon after, above all in the 1950’s and 60’s, other tests were spread, even if each one had different viewpoints, all agreed on interpreting drawings of humans as a representation of oneself or of one’s body in the environment. Obviously, all the interpretive theories are regardless of the knowledge of different phases that the child goes through in constructing his or her representational capacity. Children’s drawings, in fact, undergo an evolution through the subsequent and introductory phases with either. The first, called *casual realism*, arises around two years of age and has the peculiarity that the child attributes a particular meaning to a sign made, as with a holophrastic language in which a single word takes on the meaning of an entire phrase. This is followed by the *lacking realism* phase, from 2 1/2 years to 4-5 years of age, in which an adequate ability to synthesize is still missing and brings the child to represent the human figure joined with various elements, without taking into consideration their spatial relations. The third phase is that of *intellectual realism*, from about 5 to 8 years of age, in which the child, even in virtue of greater control of gestures, is able to much better represent what he or she intends. Instead, the last stage, called *visual realism*, is when the apparent attempt is to draw things as they effectively appear. Naturally, the described phases and their temporal differentiation in the graphic-iconic genesis are subordinate to the individual pace of one’s psychophysical growth.

THE EVOLUTION OF DRAWING

For M. Wallon, 1950, “At its origins the drawing is a simple consequence of gesture: it is the gesture that leaves a mark of its trajectory on a surface capable of recording it. But these relationships between gesture and its mark are verified on different levels. They must

not be unilateral. There cannot be the origin of the drawing if the mark or the marked do not become the reason for the gesture, when initially they had even been casual. There must be a reaction of the effect on its cause; the effect must become the cause in its turn”. The human figure test permits having an approximate idea, yet reliable enough, of psychophysical maturity and the level of graphical evolution reached by the child. Table 1 shows the stages of this evolution based on a study carried out by Ferrari- Ferraris:

3.6 years	4 years	5 years	6 years
			Finger
		Hands	Hands
		Nose	Nose
	Feet (nose)	Feet	Hair
	Hair	Hair	Feet
Legs (nose)	Legs	Legs	Legs
Hair	Arms	Mouth	Mouth
Eyes	Mouth	Arms	Arms
Mouth	Eyes	Eyes	Eyes
Trunk	Trunk	Trunk	Trunk
Face	Face	Face	Face
6.5	8.5	10	11

Table 1

From the data reported it can be noted how a total of 6.5 features at 3.6 years passes to 8.5 features at 4, a considerable increase if we consider the fact that we are dealing with only 6 months of maturity. Another interesting consideration concerns the distinctions between the two sexes in the percentage of features reproduced, which is in favour of females (table 2).

Age	3.6	4	4.6	5	5.6	6
Female features	6.7	8.5	9.1	9.8	10.2	10.8
Male features	6.3	7.4	9.4	9.4	0.9	10.6
Difference	0.4	1.1	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.2

Table 2 (O. Ferraris—R. Ferraris 2000)

Initial hypothesis and research phases

Up to 5-6 years of age we know that the child draws only what he or she knows, while after 6 years a child starts drawing what he or she sees. From this knowledge we can connect the drawing of the human figure to the awareness one has of oneself. Therefore, we will use the little man test (drawing of one's own body) to examine not so much the child's personality or intelligence, as the perception he or she has of his or her own body. The study was conducted on a group of 18 children attending the last year of nursery school. Two tests were proposed: one in October and the other at the end of the following February. Between the two tests, naturally, specific games and motor activities were proposed, in this case with theatre activities described in the following. In both tests the children were asked to draw themselves on a sheet of "A4" format paper and all representations were evaluated keeping in mind a series of indicators, such as age, sex, graphic space used, proportions, and, obviously, the number of features represented. The final purpose of the research was to be able to pick on changes through the drawing that could have a certain meaning in the structuring of the body in progress.

As a point of reference the indication related to the number of *features* drawn by children, and in particular the datum related to 5 / 6 years, was used, by O. Ferrari – R. Ferrari, 2000. (Table 3.)

Table 3

	Average Age	N° Features
Males	5.4	11.7
Females	5.4	12

Our starting data, related to the first drawing in October, confirm the previous table and highlight a substantial homogeneity between the two groups, male and female. Table 4 reports the specific percentages for each feature in detail. The quantity of features perceived is very high and although age varies even by nine months, the children showed good ability in graphically representing their own bodies. Consequently, since the drawings are very complete on the whole, it will be interesting to evaluate how much the drawings are enriched by details, apart from an increase in features used, in the second drawings.

Table 4

Features	%	Males	Females
Face	100	9	9
Eyes	100	9	9
Pupil	50.0	5	4
Eyelashes	5.5	-	1
Eyebrows	22.2	1	3
Nose	100	9	9
Nostrils	5.5	-	1
Mouth	100	9	9
Teeth	-	-	-
Hair	94.4	8	9
Ears	61.1	8	3
Neck	83.3	8	7
Body	100	9	9
Arms	94.4	8	9

Elbow	-	-	-
Hand	88.8	7	9
Finger	5.5	1	-
Nails	-	-	-
Legs	100	9	9
Feet	100	9	9

The experience of theatre activities

The obvious need to be brief limits us to presenting a general outline of the activities, therefore omitting the entire descriptive part of the games and how they were carried out. The project included 22 different types of activities, each one with a particular psychomotor objective, which range from fine coordination to gross motor coordination, from balance to lateralization, and so on. The theatre activities were proposed through the viewing of a fantasy story, "The adventures of Joe" presented on videocassette. In this story the protagonist, an animated puppet named Joe, becomes smaller and smaller and goes to discover the world of ants. Accompanied by two friends, Bin and Ben, he discovers the life inside the anthill in a series of more or less dangerous situations the children can identify with. The story becomes the leitmotiv of numerous school activities, in which the various fields of experience can be found. The first is "the body and movement". The children, in fact, after each viewing of the film or a part of it, are stimulated to relive the adventures of Joe and his friends, through the body using imagination and representational strength. The value of this activity is not only identifying themselves with the characters; the element of "pretending", in fact, permits also taking advantage of the projective channel and enables each child, in his or her own way, to interpret the different emotional experiences, even from an emotional point of view. This experience was proposed one day a week and lasted for about 100 minutes.

Conclusions

Comparing the drawings of the 18 children from the month of October with those from February shows significant progress, which can be quantified in a half percentage point for the males and a point and a half for the females. (tab5)

Table.5

	First test	Second test	Difference
Males	12.1	12.6	0.5
Females	12	13.3	1.3
Difference	0.1	0.7	

The greater perception of some features is tied in particular to experiences that are more typical of girls than boys; in fact, the most common features are female characteristics such as eyelashes and eyebrows. Overall, the children had already gained a satisfactory graphical perception of their bodies in October and, after five months, greater perception is noted in the physical characteristics of each child: from hair, which, unlike before, is now loose, tied, long, short, different colours, to hands and arms, which are represented in 100% of the cases. Apart from this, an enrichment of

elements outside the body is clear, but they also are part of the representation of oneself, such as tops, buttons, etc. Furthermore, an increase in “external” features was found, which highlight another aspect related to the body, that is its contextualization in the environment. The body, in fact, is by definition the mental representation of one’s body *also* with regard to space and time. The inclusion of elements concerning the space one’s body is contextualized in indicates precisely this. Table 6 reports the elements in addition to the body.

Table 6

	Test I	M	F	Test II	M	F
Only oneself *	14	7	7	5	3	2
Apart from oneself	2	1	1	13	6	7
Sun, sky, ground	3	1	2	14	6	8

* children who did not include things or animals (only is considered under the category: things.)

In conclusion, Table 7 below reports the features in distinct percentages for the two tests in October and February.

Table 7

Features	October %	February %
Face	100	100
Eyes	100	100
Pupil	50.0	72.2
Eyelashes	5.5	27.7
Eyebrows	22.2	33.3
Nose	100	100
Nostrils	5.5	11.1
Mouth	100	100
Teeth	-	-
Hair	94.4	100
Ears	61.1	44.4
Neck	83.3	94.4
Body	100	100
Arms	94.4	100
Elbow	-	-
Hand	88.8	100
Finger	5.5	11.1
Nails	-	-
Legs	100	100
Foot	100	100
Line for round	5.5	72.2
Line for sky	16.6	50.0

The body, in conclusion, is therefore as basic as the expression of our personality, so movement education takes on the meaning and importance of a complete preparation for the whole person. Movement has a fundamental importance starting from intrauterine life. Furthermore, as Wallon writes, “in the ontogenesis functions are outlined with the development of

corresponding tissues and organs, before being able to justify them through use”. Therefore, a large part of an individual’s psychological functions develop from his or her biological functions, and, in particular, as Piaget asserts, “verbal and cognitive intelligence is based on practical or motor intelligence. Therefore, a certain continuity exists between intelligence and the purely biological process of morphogenesis and adaptation to the environment”. The body acts as an intermediary between itself and the external world and as defined by D. Winnicott, 1974, the first self “is a self made at the origin of bodily experiences” or a bodily self that is formed mainly on the basis of sensation and perceptions (bodily phenomena, but outside the body).

Bibliography

- BIANCALANA V, 1994**, *La pratica natatoria. Nell’ansia nell’adulto*. Nella personalità del bambino” Battelli Edit. Urbino.
- FERRARI OLIVEIRO A., 1996**, *Il significato del disegno infantile*, Bollati Boringhieri, 1996, Turin.
- FERRARI A., FERRARI R., 2000**, *Il linguaggio grafico del bambino*, Edit. La scuola Brescia.
- WALLON M., 1967**, *Les origines de la pensée chez l’enfant* La nuova Italia, Florence.
- WINNICOTT D.**, “Playing and reality”, Armando, Bologna, 1974

