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Mastery is Not Play:

From One to Two Years

• He is peep-ohing from everywhere, under the coffee table, through the banisters, and round the corner. Each time we are supposed to light up with surprise and joy and cry "There he is!"

• She made a big face when she tasted my coffee. We all laughed. After that, whenever we have coffee, she makes a big face and expects us to laugh.

• They like to be thrown high into the air and caught again.

• He climbs on the kitchen table and mixes the butter in his hair and the coffee all over his face. He dips his fingers in the sugar. Whenever we hear a chair scraping along the kitchen floor, we know he is heading for that breakfast.

• She gives a big smile and says "Hi" whenever she sees you, all day long, a hundred times a day.

• He pushes his bottle into the Teddy's mouth and says "all gone."

• She climbs on her father's back and cries "Ride the horse."



babies begin to get a sense of who they are. They begin to realize that they can make decisions, and so they do not like to be bossed about quite as much. They often begin to show a stubborn unwillingness to do everything you expect. Having discovered that they can make choices, they often act as if only *they* can make a choice.

How you handle this negativism, how you make it possible for both of you to make choices, makes a big difference. When our eldest daughter was about thirteen months old, she discovered that if someone said "please" to her and then she did what they asked ("get the paper please," "please get out of the way"), everyone rewarded her tremendously and said how wonderful she was. As long as we said "please," she would do whatever we wanted. But it increasingly became a form of slavery for her. One day when she was about two years old, she finally revolted in the only way she knew how. "Don't say please!" she cried. She was winning her freedom to choose for herself, regardless of the sweetness of our request.

The major issues then between parent and child are mobility, language, and choice. In addition to these we can describe children during this year as follows. They begin by walking and end by running. They climb stairs and tables and everything else. They get into cupboards and under beds and into toilets. They love stuffing towels down toilets. They push chairs to tables and climb up and play with the remnants of breakfast. They are not able to distinguish a Ming vase from an old lamp stand and will grab hold of or push either with the same concern for action and unconcern for auction. They like to feed and dress themselves and do both with difficulty and mess. They begin to scribble.

They are also beginning to be thinkers and may by the end of this year know what you mean when you use some numbers (one and many), a color or two (red), a size (big and small), or some animals (dog, cat) and may like to organize

As infants' activities get more complex, we have to decide what is play and what is not. It was hard to make this distinction earlier, but now perhaps we can. First there are the games they play with us. We will call those play. Then toward the end of the second year they begin to pretend things. They start make-believe. Now everyone accepts that this is a type of play. Adults just do not go around pretending to play house, but children do, so that must be play. But when we get beyond that into all their other activities, it is often hard to know what they are. Later in this chapter we want to introduce a distinction between activities children carry out to learn or to master things and activities they carry out for play.

But first, before we get into games, there are a few important things to be said about what infants are like in this second year. Some authorities hold that it is between about ten months and eighteen months that babies are most affected by what you do to them. They argue that, until then, babies just are not social enough to be much influenced by you (unless you neglect them terribly).

But at this age period, because they can walk about and get into everything, you begin to show your approval and disapproval more clearly. You either let them have a lot of freedom to move about and get into everything or else you restrict them a great deal because of the nuisance they are or the danger they may get into, or you do something in between. But whatever you do, it begins to set the pattern for how much free behavior babies learn to take for granted.

Again at this age they are beginning to say their first few words. You either encourage this by talking with them a lot or you do not. So you have a talker on your hands or you have a quiet one. Finally, toward the end of the second year

their toys in different piles. They chatter at the table when you chatter. They have a number of words they use expressively, such as "Hi," "more," "doggie," and "Mama." From now on games with your baby are going to have more complexity.

GAMES AND OTHER THINGS TO DO

Chasing

The game of chasing keeps appearing on these pages. This is partly because it is in some senses the major game of mankind. There are more varieties of chasing than anything else. As soon as babies can walk with some skill, they can begin to chase you. Just as you had them chase the dog *with* you before, now they will strut after you as you hobble away on all fours. We assume that you will be down on the floor with them. There is not much sense to this game otherwise. You gallop behind the sofa or behind the chairs, and they come shrieking after you. Then when you turn and grab them, both of you roll on the floor with laughter.

At this time babies are still only chasers. They have not learned to run away yet. This is an important point. It seems to show that when we learn to behave socially, we first learn just one side of the relationship. Later we learn the other side. Then still later we put them both together. So here children learn the social relationship of chasing and escaping, first by chasing, next by escaping, then with both together.

By eighteen months the babies who have chased you on all your fours the last six months will now seek to have you chase them. You will chase them around the sofa or up the stairs. They favor being chased up the stairs, preceded by peeping through the banisters. Here the old game, the chase,

is applied to the new motor difficulty, getting up the stairs quickly. Chasing by babies is now more interesting also. It can cover several rooms and be accompanied by cries and signals from you. Note that in neither of these do we yet have role switching in the same game. You either chase or are chased—one game at a time.

These games of chasing go on almost universally, and although many other things have changed, children today still play this game almost as frequently as they used to. In addition, it seems to be related to a very basic human conflict over how we feel about other people, whether to *approach* them or to *avoid* them. We have seen that in the first year of life babies learned to tell the difference between their close caretakers and other people and then began to show either some apprehension or relative indifference toward others.

Many psychologists have written about this fear of strangers, which seems to peak at the end of the first year. Its extent appears to depend partly on how many elders looked after the baby in the first place. Babies brought up in a rather solitary way by one person seem more likely to show this fear than do babies who have had many people care for them. One of our babies showed this apprehension only by smiling more at us (than she usually did) when strangers were around! Anyway, the apprehension is there. One never knows for sure what the stranger will do. Does he bring reward or punishment?

Hide the Thimble

Another thing babies know by about ten months is that out of sight is not out of mind. Up until then babies have not generally known how to search for things that have disappeared. At this time they begin to show preliminary search

capacities, so that if you show them a bright toy and then hide it under your hand, they will pull your hand away. Hide the toy, or doll, or book, or slipper, or in the old days the thimble is based on that interest.

When you sit with the baby on your lap or beside you, there are innumerable ways you can show an object and then cover it. The younger the baby, the more of the object he must be able to see. As children move into the second year, however, they will learn to look all over, rather than just under the obvious place where they have seen you hide it, although at this age they are pretty much limited to that. Once again cries of excitement as the object is revealed are in order.

Peeping

We make much of peep-oh these days in psychology because it tells us that children still remember objects when they cannot see them, a knowledge that dawns about the end of the first year. Before that time, if they cannot see an object, they forget it. Even putting their bottles out of sight decreases their hunger a little. Peeping is like chasing in being one of the major games of mankind. There are many games in which peeping or spying is combined with chasing, such as hide and seek.

Babies now begin to play peeping from anywhere. They peep out at you from under the table, from under chairs, from under the blankets on the bed. Sometimes it is casual. Sometimes it is a waiting game, in which their heads suddenly pop out. They often burst into laughter before they can even say "peep-oh." There is an interesting reversal here, insofar as you are now the one who is "peeped" at, just as the baby was during the previous six months. We quite often react to peeping by chasing the peeper, so that the two play activities easily get linked together.

Audience Games

The one-sidedness of the previous behavior takes us naturally to all those times that, as a parent, your main function seems to be to provide the enjoying audience. For example, one form of peeping is for the baby to come running out from behind the door and for you to pretend to look all surprised. This is, in a way, an early form of coming "on stage." We might call it a game of entrances (perhaps chasing is a game of exits). Babies are often "on stage" during this year. In fact, almost any time you laugh or enjoy anything, it is likely to be repeated. The baby who is given a little coffee and makes a grimace that draws laughter will, the next time she sees the coffee, put on the same face and then look for the laughter.

Clearly we can say that while in the first year we taught the baby the elements of theater, the drama of anticipation and crescendo, this year we are teaching exits, entrances, and on-stage performances. Oddly enough, audience behavior gets mimicked too. By midyear babies can build a small tower of a few blocks. They build it. They knock it down. We clap. They clap. They may not have distinguished yet who claps for whom, but they do know to clap when others are clapping. It is Russian clapping!

Losing People

Losing people is a pretend game in that someone who is sitting right next to you is lost. You and the baby go about saying "Where's Mommy?" and look everywhere, behind her, underneath, and so forth, and then finally yell with great surprise, "Oh, here she is!" The baby usually cannot abide the delay and beats you to the punch, crying "Here she is!"

Hugging

With great éclat you and the baby hug each other in turns. A hugging exhibition also may be a pretense meeting: "Oh hullo, I haven't seen you for years." Note that this principle of alternating responses, or taking turns, which you have been using since the earliest games, will become the major piece of equipment for the child in later social play.

Horseplay

Horseplay activities have enlarged in scope. Children who have been built up for it since babies are now swung high in the air by their parents, thrown up and caught (preferably above the bed). They can be swung around by the ankles or by the wrists. These games, as well as tricycle pushing (which they demand) and riding on various contraptions at a country fair, all come under the heading of *vertigo*, the power one gets from feeling safe when in fact one no longer has body control. Given that so much of these early years are devoted to the gaining of such body control, these enjoyments seem natural enough.

Emptying

You put the toys back in the box, they throw them out. It is a hilarious race to see who can achieve the end of emptying or filling first. It seems to work better as emptying than as filling, although the latter has a better moral principle going for it.

Catching

A simple game of catching is not easily maintained, but if the baby sits against a wall, legs apart, and you roll the ball, that can help; or you can throw something like a comb to each other at opposite ends of the sofa. The distinction between catching and throwing is not too clear in this game, but the idea of an alternating exchange is present.

Hard Heads and Other Hard Parts

For those who can take it, banging heads together gently is a game that some enjoy. There are innumerable games to be invented with bodies. There are parent hand spiders that tickle and crawl up the baby's legs until he sits on them. There are legs that keep falling on top of the baby, who struggles out from under. Likewise, you can lie on the floor and allow yourself to be walked on or jumped on. This is usually part of being ridden as a horse or ridden as a rocking boat. (Can the baby stay on while you rock? Can *all* your children stay on as you rock and roll your body-boat on the floor? It is a very hard game after dinner!)

Games of Retrieval

This is the game you play with your dog, known as "Fido Fetch the Bone." Children are at about that play level at this age and will find great excitement in the back and forward fetching of something. The game can be varied by having them take the object (ball, doll, etc.) to other, named people in the room. Although they may not be able to say the names of their brothers or sisters or relatives, they can often recognize them when they are named and bring them the object.

Mock Disapproval

Mock disapproval involves pretended outrage at an offense, as when the baby knocks down a tower of blocks you have built. Then you seize her and pretend to scold her. But she knocks them down again, and you get angry again, and so forth. The mock scolding means seizing and roughing up (gently) and yelling and spanking, all with fiery zeal and with a crazily distorted face and voice. Here, as elsewhere, the manner of the theatrics and the clowning provides the guarantee that this is a play frame, not a real one.

Phony Birthdays

Wrap up his toys in paper and tie them lightly with string. "Here's a present." But he should see the whole process, since this is a game of unwrapping, not an economical way of getting through Christmas. Mock exaggeration of gift giving is in order, as is the singing of "Happy Birthday" with pretended surprise and pleasure at the gift.

Tug-of-War

Tie two pieces of string to a pull toy or to a strong cart. Then both of you pull at it from different directions. Alternate pulling hard with easing up. Remember, you are not supposed to win, just to provide the tension of mild contest.

"Here Is a Beehive"

"Here Is a Beehive" is a finger game in which the hand is held as a fist and the fingers are released one at a time. Some say the following ditty:

Here is a beehive. Where are the bees?
Hidden away where nobody sees.
Soon they come, creeping out of the hive,
One, two, three, four, five.

Which Hand?

In this game you hide an object in one hand or the other, and the child has to find out which one. These games begin with fairly obvious indications by you of the hand that holds the coin or block. But as the year proceeds, increasing amounts of deceptive hanky-panky can be added. The child always gets it on the second guess anyway. The same game can be played hiding the object under inverted cups.

There are many finger and hand games that babies love at this age. Some we perform on them; for example,

Knock at the door, [knock on their forehead]
Ring the bell, [tug gently at their hair]
Peep in, [open their eye]
Lift the latch, [tweak their nose up]
And *walk in!* [pop your finger in their mouth]

Also, gently tap each of their finger tips, beginning with the little one, and say

Hey Johnny, Johnny, Johnny, Johnny,
Whoops [slide your finger down the slide of their
forefinger and land on their thumb] Johnny,
whoops [slide back up again]
Johnny, [and tap all the fingers again] Johnny,
Johnny, Johnny. [or "Emmy, Emmy, Emmy"]

Other such games babies watch you perform, such as "Here's the Church, and Here's the Steeple" or "Eency Weency Spider." You can also take all the jump-rope rhymes or counting-out rhymes that you remember and "count out" the buttons on their sweaters or their ears, eyes, noses, etc. The simple, funny-sounding ones work best:

Inky, pinky, ponky, Daddy bought a donkey,
Donkey died, Daddy cried, Inky, pinky, ponky.

A Commentary on These Games with Parents

One has to be impressed that these games are more complex than anything else these children can do socially at this age. Where else will we see chasing and being chased, searching for toys you have hidden, peeping and running, throwing and retrieving, making on-stage entrances, making faces for an audience, making exits (running from the room), clapping as an audience does, and pretending to lose someone, to greet someone, to offend and to be scolded, and to unwrap gifts.

Babies do not carry out social performances that are this complex outside of the games they play. Of course, it is your support that helps them to play a part in these games. But perhaps even more important than that, a game can deal with social relations like this because it does not have to deal with anything else. Thus, you can play chasing and being chased easily, because you do not also have to worry about being mother and baby or getting the dinner or whether the infant will be hurt or will fall over. You have chosen a safe place. You have the time to do it. Both you and the baby know that it is for fun, which also means that nothing will happen that you have not expected to happen. Everything is manageable. You both have control of the situation, and although there is

to be the excitement of the chase, there is nothing else (barring accidents) that you have to worry about.

All play has these characteristics. You have to be relaxed and let your excitements occur only in ways that allow you to continue to feel safe about them. There is always this background feeling of being at your ease. You have to feel that you are in control of events, rather than events' controlling you. You can do this because the play or the game is not the total complexity of life. It is just a selected part of life, like chasing—which is to say that it is an *abstract* or a blueprint of one part of reality. This then is our definition of what both play and games have in common. They occur in certain conditions of player relaxation, player control, and abstraction from the world around.

Perhaps this is the truth of that old statement that play and games prepare you for life. They are not a preparation for life as it is lived in all its complexity, but they are a preparation in a simplified way. It is like learning the alphabet, which does not mean you can read, but it helps; or learning numbers, which does not mean you can do arithmetic, but it helps. Playing chasing does not mean you know how to avoid dangers, but it helps. Coming on stage and making exits do not help you to be graceful or diplomatic socially, but they make a contribution. Games give us such an alphabet of human society. They select out one piece of social behavior at a time for us to learn and to practice. In ordinary life we have to learn all these things all mixed together, and it is much more difficult. Games give us a head start on our social engagements.

THE CHILD'S OWN PLAY

But social games are just a small part of children's free activity. Most of their time goes into their own actions. Al-

though we are giving less space to these, that does not mean they are less important to the children. It is just that they are so innumerable that we have space only to alert you to their existence. These lists, however, suggest a basis for other games you might invent. We list the activities rather than describe them.

We have divided the child's own actions into two groups: exploration and testing.

In *exploration* children want to understand the *relationships between things*. First they want to know what is there. What is under the table? What is in the cupboard? What is behind the back fence? Second they want to know what affects what. If you slam the cupboard door, will the pots fall over? If you get under the table, will you find your ball? Will you find your older brother behind the back fence?

In trying to understand the relationships between things and what causes what, children are like miniature scientists. Their explorations are the first forms of scientific activity. In later years we will find that there continue to be children who prefer this sort of analytic exploratory play, just as in adulthood there continue to be people who prefer to understand the world in scientific terms.

In *testing* children are concerned with *testing out what they can do*. It is not always easy to tell in the first year whether children are exploring the way things are or finding out what they can do with them. But as the years go by the difference becomes obvious. Climbing trees, riding bicycles, balancing on planks, pushing another child off the step are all ways of testing oneself out. You test out your body, what it can do and what it cannot do. You take a "dare" and prove you can do more than the others said you could. You test out your social skills by arguing, fighting, or being cunning. In later life you jump out of airplanes, you climb mountains,

you explore the bottom of the sea, all of which require courage.

This is a form of mastery that requires you to assert yourself to predict what you can do and then to follow it up to see if you can. If you can do what you have said, then you have proven your mastery and your understanding. All the great adventurers, sailors, and "explorers" have followed this route to knowledge. And as all parents who have very active little boys or girls know, this seems to be a favored way of knowing for some children, usually for those who get the most injuries. This is the form of education that has been called "learning through doing," although the advocates of this type of learning did not always have in mind the reckless forms that some children engage in.

Exploration and Testing: Activities and Materials

The following examples of exploratory and testing activities also outline the type of toys and apparatus it is useful to have at this time for the child's growth, not that we suggest you need *all* of these.

EXAMPLES OF EXPLORATORY ACTIVITY	
Activity	Objects with Which the Baby Is Often Concerned
Hammering, pounding, beating	Wooden peg board, drum, clay
Touching, fingering	Textures, shapes, edges, piano keys
Turning	Book pages
Looking, inspecting	Books, pictures

EXAMPLES OF EXPLORATORY ACTIVITY (continued)

Objects with Which the Baby Is Often Concerned

Activity	Objects with Which the Baby Is Often Concerned
Emptying, filling	Sand, buckets, boxes, blocks, containers, pots
Threading	Beads, empty spools for thread
Opening, shutting	Doors, drawers
Stacking, knocking down	Blocks
Picking up	Counters
Twisting	Knobs, switches
Bouncing, rolling, retrieving	Balls, beds, armchairs
Crayoning	Newspaper, paper bags, paper
Creeping, crawling through	Boxes, barrels
Dropping	Spoons, cereal bowls

For exploration to proceed at its best the materials used need some attention. *Blocks*, for example, ought to be large and small, round, square, triangular, wide and narrow, high and low, deep and shallow, steep and level, sloping and flat, thick and thin. There should be different *weights*: wooden boxes, cardboard boxes, heavy and light objects. There should be toys with *divisible properties*, such as wood and clay. Others should have *porous properties*, such as water, paper, clothes, paper towels, sand, soil. Still others should have *compressible properties*, such as rubber balls, inflatable plastic animals, footprints in sand, pillows. Finally there should be some with *elastic properties*, such as balls and rubber bands.

In testing we distinguish *self-testing* from *social testing*. Some activities are trials for the self against nature, and some are trials for the self against other people.

EXAMPLES OF SELF-TESTING ACTIVITY

Places or Things That Help This Activity

Activity	Places or Things That Help This Activity
Running	Clear open spaces, hand balls and footballs, wagons, planks raised from ground at one end to give running start
Throwing	Bean bags, hoops or boxes to throw balls into
Jumping	Bouncing board, jumping pit, low objects to step off
Climbing into, under, over	Stairs, jungle gym, rubber tires
Pedaling	Kiddy cars, tricycles
Pushing, pulling	Blocks, wagons
Hitting, punching	Punch bag
Kicking	Punch bag on string at slight height
Backing (down from or off)	Stairs, sofa
Supporting weight	Low horizontal bar
Swimming, splashing	Wading pool, bath
Balancing	Two-by-four beams on ground
Dancing	Floor space or carpet near record player

This is an exhaustive year of discovery and, even if earlier makeshift toys might do, this is a year for a new range of toys for babies to play with. The basic understanding of size, color, shape, texture, sound, movement, and position probably occurs very much as a result of the children's actions with available objects. Often the best toys are the available pots, pans, jars, cereal boxes, old towels, thread spools, waste-

paper, and bath water. The filling and emptying of many containers with smaller objects is all-engrossing. It is the great age of filling and emptying.

We know also that the more toys children had in their first year, the more curious they will be in this one. There is a definite relationship between the variety of available objects in that year and the level of inquiry in this. There must be some limit on this relationship, but clearly some toys are better than none, even though most of us still hope that too many are not better than some. Being knee-deep in toys was never much fun for the parents.

Sometimes in this year there begins the long romance with recorded music and recorded marching. This may be done with your own stereo or with a child's own player. But marching and singing and dancing in time to music is everyone's right. There is a place also for repeating the commercials that are often heard on TV. Musical children pick these up and love them. They are not only sung, but also illustrated for them. It is amusing to see babies come rushing from one room as soon as they hear the strains of their favorite jingles. They stand there rigidly watching:

Yum, yum Bumble-bee, Bumble-bee tuna,
I love Bumble-bee, Bumble-bee tuna.

or

You're the Bold one,
You're the one for Bold,

Any commercial that has children in it really turns them on. Regardless of their content, the melody and rhythm of these commercials are as near as most of us will get to the repetitive rhythm of a tribal village or a folkway of life.

Most of the other types of toys have been listed under the activities of exploration and testing above, but we should again mention blocks and puzzles. We are talking here about

the simple two- or three-part puzzles. We should remember that the purpose of a puzzle is not simply mastery but also play. After successfully putting the pieces together, most children at this age like to see what else they can do with them: stacking, twisting around, and laughing. Here is a very clearcut case where the additional time with the puzzle probably increases the child's understanding of its possibilities well beyond those intended by its maker.

During the first year babies' blankets and other accouterments have not been very noticeable. But some time in this or the next year a preference often develops for a *soft stuffed toy* or a *cuddly blanket*, rag, or diaper, which they like to have with them while feeding or going to bed. There has been quite a lot of psychological speculation about these items. They seem to carry some of the contact pleasures, smell pleasures, and sucking pleasures of early infancy, so they retain a continuity for children with that earlier period. At the same time they allow babies to reproduce these for themselves. They permit a transition from their passive earlier style to their more active way of life. With the "comforter" children can produce their own pleasures.

During the second year the teddy bear or soft toy seems to be a way of ensuring both dependence and independence. Babies can preserve independence of others by being alone with teddy. Soft toys continue to be used throughout childhood, and in recent years up through young adulthood. Their ambiguity allows them to be used for multiple purposes. They can be brought together as collections. They can be conversation pieces, a link between couples, a way of putting into make-believe sentiments that might be hard to express more directly, a target for aggression.

We now come to examples of social-testing activity. Games with adults, supported as they are by the adults' concern, exist in a special haven of life, which is itself not quite game and not quite nurturing alone. Games with other children at

this age do not have this support. Two little children occasionally run (or chase, throw, or retrieve) more or less together or to and from each other. But these moments are partial and are not sustained unless an older child is really able to act with indulgence, as a parent would.

More typically, these one-year-olds will examine each other and test out what will happen. According to background and their own treatment they are as likely to hug the other as to hit the other, or they may react to the other's behavior by running, crying, or simply sitting and ignoring. More often than not they just watch each other. We might think of this as a form of *social testing*. It is behavior that will grow more important as children develop.

If you have played a lot with your babies, you will have given them the ingredients to allow them to participate in social play. A great deal of children's social life in the years to come will be the setting up of pecking orders. To the extent that they can play games together, however, they will have discovered ways of changing raw power struggles into rule-controlled activities.

Differences between Mastery and Play

Mastery is not play. We have been using the words "mastery" and "play" differently in our descriptions above. It is time to explain what we mean. Earlier we described games and play as involving a special state of being at ease, in control, and abstracted from the surrounding world. But there are many things that children do with their time that are not play, and we wish now to discuss these.

Play is not urgent behavior. Even in the first months of life we can see that babies act urgently, even frantically, during feeding. They snort through their noses and vigorously move their hands and legs. Then, as they get their first mouthfuls

of food, they quiet down, although they continue to suck vigorously. Here babies respond to the urgent demands of their bodies and do whatever is necessary to meet these needs. This is also true for other urgent needs like trying to get warm, remove pain, or avoid noise.

In general, those who are suffering such urgencies cannot play. They must get rid of discomfort before they can play. There are occasionally exceptions; for example, when children become so preoccupied with their play that they forget to relieve themselves, when they put up with scratches and bruises because they are so involved in the game, or when they do not want to come in to dinner because they are having too much fun. These instances, however, usually occur at a later age, when the excitement that children can get from their play has already been well learned. In the first year that kind of exception does not come up. Babies play when the other urgencies are done with.

Play is not mastery. The difference between play and mastery is not generally understood. It is one of the most important distinctions that we will make in this book. Mastery means the same thing as *work*, and to say that play is not mastery is to say that play is not work, which is obvious. Yet such has been our Western civilization's neglect of "childish" things over the centuries, such has been our feeling that anything children do is trivial, that we have tended to call everything children do "play." Because their actions did not contribute to the moneymaking of the world, it was not work. Not being work, it must be play.

But this does not follow. You work at something whenever your present actions are carried out primarily in order to lead to some end result. The results in our adult cases are salaries, promotions, products, fame, prestige, inventions, creations, etc. Most of children's free activity is of this sort. They spend most of their time trying to find out how to get results by their own activity. After feeding, for example, they spend

much time examining the nipple with their mouths and their fingers. They push it this way and that way. They want to find out what produces what results. What must they do to get it under their tongues? What must they do to get it under their lips? They want results. This is work; but because it does not produce a salary, fame, or prestige, we use another name for it, and that name is mastery. There is also an important distinction between the results children have in mind and the results adults are pursuing. Children carry out their work to understand; adults carry out theirs to survive.

Mastery is work. Most of children's free activity is concerned with mastering things or people. This highly serious activity results in children's adjusting to their surroundings. They work at it night and day. They explore all the objects they can find. They explore their homes and their back yards. They attempt to manipulate other children into playing with them in their own way. They do their best to get their parents to do what they want. They do their best to act as their parents do. The greater part of childhood is passed in learning the art of mastery.

In the first several years of life it is not very easy to tell the difference between mastery activities and play because we cannot always see what results children have in mind. Without knowing what they have in mind, we cannot always make these distinctions. For this reason the two are mixed together in the early chapters of this book. We make no excuses for this. Until we have much better records (videotape and film) of young children's behavior, we will not be able to tell these differences easily.

In the past those educators who advocated the "playway" of schooling were generally talking about mastery, not about play. They wanted the schools to be places where children would be free to discover and to learn from the materials that they provided; but it was work freely pursued, or mastery, that they had in mind, not play.

6

On the Importance of Only Pretending: From Two to Three Years

"Daddy, will you play ball with me?"
"No, I'm busy. . . . All right, you can go outside." [It was snowing.]

"I'm not yours.
I'm not your child.
You can't wear my new white shirt.
This house doesn't belong to you."

"Who is that in the mirror?"
"Mary." [Age two and one-half.]
"Will she be there when you go?"
"Yes."
"Why?"

"Cause she can't get out. She would break the mirror."

