

CENTER FOR COGNITIVE SCIENCE

University at Buffalo, State University of New York

Wednesday, October 17, 2001

280 Park Hall
North Campus
2:00 pm –4:00 pm

“Philosophical Implications of Research on Childhood Pretense”

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Recent empirical research concerning children's games of pretense seems to show that they are marked by the presence of two central features, which I call 'quarantining' and 'fertility'. Quarantining is manifest to the extent that causes within the pretense-episode are taken to have effects only within the pretense-episode (so, for example, the child does not expect the table really to be wet if the child "spills the tea"). Fertility is manifest to the extent that features of the imaginary situation that have not been explicitly stipulated are derivable via features of their real-world analogues (so, for example, the child does expect the table to be wet in the pretence if she up-ends the teapot above its surface). At the same time, from the same early age, it seems that both quarantining and fertility are constrained in crucial ways. Quarantining gives way to 'contagion' in cases of affect-laden imagination (so, for example, a child who imagines a bear on the staircase may be reluctant to go upstairs alone). And fertility gives way to 'unproductivity' as a result of the fundamental incompleteness of the imaginary (so, for example, there may be no fact of the matter (in the pretence) just how much "tea" there is left in the teapot). Exactly when and how these constraints relate to the principles to which they are exceptions raises complicated and interesting questions.

In my talk, I will present these distinctions in light of recent empirical research, and discuss some of their implications for a number of issues of current philosophical discussion in epistemology, aesthetics and the philosophy of mind.

**Refreshments will be available
Everyone is welcome to attend!**

For information please call the Cognitive Science Office at (716) 645-3794 or check
<http://wings.buffalo.edu/cogsci>