

present not just in infants and young children but throughout development. Many would agree with his statement that "under the constant pressure of culture, magical and other anomalous beliefs are . . . banished to the domains of fairy tales, dreams, and fantasies." Especially in Western culture, magical and superstitious beliefs are expected to be relegated to the world of fiction. Yet Subbotsky claims that as the child develops, these beliefs "keep their potency and importance. . . . The unusual structures give way, but they do not disappear." The boundary between the two spheres of consciousness becomes more and more stable, but it never becomes impermeable. Hence, given the proper conditions, magical or superstitious beliefs can always be reactivated, even in adults.

Subbotsky's experimental findings also inspire him to attack another deep-seated assumption in psychology—that what we say reflects what we think. The fact that in his studies children would often initially deny possessing any magical beliefs but then go on to exhibit such beliefs through their behavior leads him to propose a dissociation between the "verbal level of behavior" and actual behavior. He argues that scientifically based concepts of causality, object permanence, space, and time appear first in verbal judgments and only later begin to dominate practical action. Psychologists who study cognitive development often conduct their research by asking children questions; their answers are taken to reflect their understanding. But according to Subbotsky, the information we can gain from verbal responses represents only half the story; simply questioning children "does not permit an assessment of whether the fundamental oppositional structures (nonpermanent object, magical causality, permeable solid object, reversible time) are able to control children's behavior in a practical situation."

This book may be met with skepticism by many readers. Certainly the ideas proposed are unorthodox. But it may be time to reexamine long-standing assumptions in developmental psychology and begin to give more serious consideration to the "unusual realities" of fantasy, imagination, and myth. Interestingly, in arguing for granting these unusual realities a legitimate place in our consciousness, Subbotsky grants research on these topics a more legitimate status. Despite some weaknesses in his theory (in particular, in his discussion of infancy), on the whole the book is provocative and stimulating, and the evidence from preschool and school-age children is most compelling. As Subbotsky points out, "Independent of age and level of cognitive development, all individuals in everyday practice have to answer certain questions:

What is true and what is false? What exists in reality and what appears only to us?" How children and adults formulate answers to these fundamental questions is what Subbotsky bravely seeks to address in this book. I imagine there are very few of us who study the human animal who, whether or not we agree with his answers, would not benefit from attending closely to his discussion of these issues.

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