

## Chapter 2

# Intersubjectivity in the Imagination and Feelings of the Infant: Implications for Education in the Early Years



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**Abstract** This chapter presents the child as a creature born with the spirit of an inquisitive and creative human being, seeking understanding of what to do with body and mind in a world of invented possibilities. He or she is intuitively sociable, seeking affectionate relations with companions who are willing to share the pleasure and adventure of doing and knowing with ‘human sense’. Recent research traces signs of the child’s impulses and feelings from before birth, and follows their efforts to master experience through stages of self-creating in enjoyable and hopeful companionship. Sensitive timing of rhythms in action and playful invention show age-related advances of creative vitality as the body and brain grow. Much of shared meaning is understood and played with before a child can benefit from school instruction in a prescribed curriculum of the proper ways to use elaborate symbolic conventions. We begin with the theory of James Mark Baldwin, who observed that infants and young children are instinctive experimenters, repeating experience by imitating their own as well as other’s actions, accommodating to the resources of the shared world and assimilating new experiences as learned ideas for action. We argue that the child’s contribution to cultural learning is a good guide for practice in early education and care of children in their families and communities and in artificially planned and technically structured modern worlds of bewildering diversity.

In the last 50 years, theory about how the mind of the child grows with the body and develops intelligence has changed. Psychobiological research has revealed that infants move with rhythms of prospective awareness from birth, show insight for learning what the world affords, and share their feelings of imaginative vitality in affectionate adventures with other persons. (Trevarthen and Bjørkvold 2016)

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In this chapter, with different experiences in the exploration of the movements of infants (Trevarthen 1979, 1984, 1992, 2001; Delafield-Butt and Gangopadhyay 2013), we use detailed evidence from recordings of how happy infants communicate to develop the idea that a child learns by being full of hopeful emotion and the will to live with loved parents and lively brothers and sisters (Delafield-Butt and Trevarthen 2013; Trevarthen and Delafield-Butt 2013). The behaviour of a young human being is not just for attracting protection and care, and not only cognitive or rational for learning about objective facts. It is adapted to come to life in, intimate and playful companionship, or 'intersubjective awareness'. Experienced teachers know, as loving parents do, that human life begins with an eagerness to share meaning in the pleasure of activity with friends.

Leaders of modern child psychology have seen that young children learn, not passively, but by active, intentional engagement of their bodies to see hear and touch objects that catch their interest. With James Mark Baldwin (1895), Jean Piaget (1953) and Lev Vygotsky (1978), we accept that knowledge is gained by moving with curiosity. New evidence shows that even newborn infants move to share their interest in objects and events with persons they know well in an intimate sympathy of actions. Their innocent bodies and minds require both self-sustaining, regulation of inner vitality for well-being, and imaginative control of movement by perception of the outside world for the successful completion of tasks, and they enjoy showing and sharing of intentions with other persons. From the beginning, conscious interaction with the world is a living process, not only a collection and retention of facts to be learned, but a story of experience to be created, and it seeks companionship in the pleasure of discovery. Knowledge is gained through 'participatory sense-making', with social others (De Jaegher and Di Paolo 2007; Trevarthen and Delafield-Butt 2013; Reddy 2008, 2015). A search for understanding of this vital inter-mental learning is leading infant pedagogy today to a re-appreciation of the child's contribution to transmission of knowledge and skills (Trevarthen et al. 2014; Trevarthen and Delafield-Butt 2015).

Of course, a newborn infant has limited powers of action and mobility. A 1-year-old cannot walk or talk, and they know little about the outside world. But this physical weakness and inexperience, which needs for a long period of parental care, does not prevent the baby from attending intelligently to people and what they are doing. The baby moves to join in actions of a helper who is picking up and carrying them (Fantasia et al. 2016), or one who is offering objects with admiration for the baby's actions, and for the mind that guides them. In a few weeks the baby is starting to use vocal sounds as signs for marking special experiences in a 'line mode' of consciousness that can be about non-present things or happenings 'someplace, sometime' (Donaldson 1992, p. 50). A lively mind is eager to share remembered meanings with others in imagination for moving. Narratives or stories are being created to represent projects of 'serially ordered actions' that become a 'common sense' world (Bruner 1990, 2003; Donaldson 1992; Trevarthen and Delafield-Butt 2013; Delafield-Butt and Trevarthen 2015).

Thinking about actions through time is what Karl Lashley (1951) identified as the foundation for the grammar of language before Chomsky (1965) presented his cognitive theory of a separate instinct for grammar. Lashley added the remarkable

suggestion that, “analysis of the nervous mechanisms underlying order in the more primitive acts may contribute ultimately to the solution even of the physiology of logic” (p. 121). Our special human abilities for accumulating complex skills for inventing institutions, making buildings and machines, celebrating the arts and recording and thinking about our culture in language, have their origins in what a young baby can do in the rhythm of playful movements with someone they love (Delafield-Butt and Trevarthen 2015).

A 9-month old is combining gestures and vocalizations in non-verbal messages of a ‘protolanguage’, which parents easily understand to mean ideas like “Isn’t that interesting”, “I want that one”, “What a terrible noise”, “Go away from me”. (Halliday 1975). Acts of ‘linguaging’ are made well before the child can ‘talk properly’ (Bruner 1977; Donaldson 1978; Trevarthen 1986; Maturana et al. 1995). We explore these ‘acts of meaning’, presenting our research and that of others to illustrate the richness of play of infants with their mothers, fathers or other intimate companions. And we consider their significance for the development of self-confident knowledge and skills of both children and teachers in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings today.

## **Story-Telling from Birth: Making Sense of Experience in Non-verbal Narrative**

As we have been taught by the founder of a rich educational psychology, Jerome Bruner, who died in June 2016 at the age of 100, we are born ‘story-telling creatures’ (Bruner 2003). All our narratives, whatever they are ‘about’, are motor performances with serial organization through episodes of vitality (Stern 2010). We explore space and time in active experience, and build social understanding by sharing feelings and intentions in movement (Delafield-Butt and Trevarthen 2015). Narrative behaviour, “inherent in the praxis of social interaction [even] before it achieves linguistic expression” (Bruner 1990, p. 77) is a foundation of conversational meaning-making and culture (Read and Miller 1995; Copley 2014). In our stories we make sense of our experiences, evaluate our actions and understand our intentions with aesthetic and moral feelings about how they are performed (Kearney 2002; Cunliffe and Coupland 2012).

The creation of sequences of expressive behaviour – with the phases of ‘introduction’, ‘development’, ‘climax’ and ‘resolution’ enjoyed in the proto-conversations, action games and baby songs with infants – represent the ‘communicative musicality’ of relationships (Gratier and Trevarthen 2008; Gratier and Apter-Danon 2009; Malloch and Trevarthen 2009). As psychiatrist Daniel Stern taught us, ideas are expressed as ‘proto-narrative envelopes’ and ‘schemas of being-with’ in communication between a mother and infant (Stern 1995), and with universal human ‘vitality dynamics’ (Stern 2010). The emotions of these simple human stories inspire reflections with an artful sense of beauty (Delafield-Butt and Trevarthen 2013; Trevarthen and Malloch 2016).

Study of the initiatives of infants for learning in playful ways has important implications for a responsive pedagogy that aims to guide a child to a productive and self-confident adult life in family and community. New evidence from research on animal emotions for social cooperation confirms that a human life follows a creative imaginative path based on feelings shared as emotional intelligence or ‘affective consciousness’, which directs collaborative action to make a new and valued reality for the ‘cognitive consciousness’ of a community (Panksepp and Biven 2012). In concert with sociocultural theories (Vygotsky 1978; Rogoff 2003) we consider that such advances cannot be comprehended without consideration of their location within particular cultural practices and values (Negayama et al. 2015). The foundation for our knowledge is in our innate feelings for collaborative awareness in the experience of action (Delafield-Butt and Trevarthen 2015).

## **Philosophy of Meaning: A Phenomenological Approach to a Brain Science of Infant Intersubjectivity and Its Motor Intelligence**

The power of the brain to integrate its activities prospectively in coherent rhythmic patterns of moving is recognised in the philosophy of phenomenology, which admits that it is movements of the body that create and respond to consciousness by acting with the brain-generated ‘subjective’ time of intentional doing and thinking (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Goodrich 2010).

The pioneer of modern self-sensing neuroscience and discoverer of the *Integrative Action of the Nervous System*, Charles Sherrington, said, when summarizing his scientific philosophy at the age of 80, that the development of any individual person cannot be an act of ‘memory’, since each life is a new phenomenon – it must be considered an act of ‘imagination’ (Sherrington 1955, Chapter 4, “The Wisdom of the Body”, pp. 103–104). Indeed, all animal movement must anticipate consequences that affect continuation of life, which requires an imagined awareness of the environment to be encountered, including other intentional beings.

This awareness of life in action becomes appraised and evaluated from the beginning of life, giving rise to Jaak Panksepp’s ‘affective intelligence’ generated by core brainstem systems (Panksepp 2005; Porges and Furman 2011). We now recognize that basic perceptual and affective experience is generated, not by habits learned in the cerebral cortices, but by the impulses of the brainstem, forming a primary conscious intelligence from which abstract and reflective intelligence in later childhood and adulthood develops (Northoff and Panksepp 2008; Panksepp and Northoff 2009). Feelings in communities of animal beings shape the evolution and development of acquired knowledge and skills (Packard and Delafield-Butt 2014).

The core, primary Self of a human infant moves to explore the world and learns the contingencies of action, but it is limited in scope and power (Delafield-Butt and

Gangopadhyay 2013). Human consciousness of shared meaning develops in sophistication and power as the cortex matures, in a childhood of affective, embodied experiences in sympathetic company (Vandekerckhove and Panksepp 2011). Simple actions performed *in utero* and the first gestures in early life, tested in communication with a caring and sensitive caregiver, are brought together, or ‘chained’, to compose habits or projects of action that may reach far into the future (Pezzulo and Castelfranchi 2009).

We have to grasp the idea of a fundamental ‘motor intelligence’ for acting with awareness if we are to understand how consciousness develops with increasing efficiency. In the 1920s a young Russian neurophysiologist, Nikolai Bernstein (1967), used frame-by-frame examination of film taken at 40 frames per second to trace the regulation of forces in the moving body of a tool-user, a runner, or a child learning to walk. He proved that the vast array of motor components involved in any body action are assembled in advance by a *motor image* formed in the brain. The intended movement so conceived is highly efficient, wasting almost no energy. Furthermore, well-done movements are always rhythmic, smoothing out the irregular inertial forces they master through planned steps of time. David Lee (2005) has employed accurate mathematical analysis of how movements of an animal are guided precisely to reach a goal, and shown that there has evolved a special formulation for this control, which he calls a ‘tau’ function. It is common to a wide range of animal brains, and appears to be a biological universal (Delafield-Butt and Schögler 2007; Delafield-Butt et al. 2012). Even the sucking movements of a newborn baby obey this basic principle of prospective control (Craig and Lee 1999). Moving rhythmically in time also enables synchronization between individual actors in a dance of life that composes meaningful projects of cooperation.

There have been advances in applying such thinking about the time of movements in the mind to explain the inter-subjectivity of communication (Thelin 2014). In *The Laws of Emotion*, Frijda (2007) reviews what is known about the importance of the timing of emotional expressions, and of regulating their intensity and duration in immediate intimate encounters between persons. The topic of *Vitality Dynamics*, richly explored by psychiatrist Daniel Stern (2010), explains how a life time of ‘affective’ states of the self is made apparent in ‘affecting’ signals to others, with subtle regulations of ‘arousal’ in the vigor of actions. This is how affective signals communicate experience in ‘the present moment’ of life together (Stern 2004).

Like Goodrich, Stern (2010) perceives the advantages of a phenomenology which, he says:

provides an account of the subjective world experienced *as it is lived*, pre-theoretically, pre-reflectively. The subjective, phenomenal world is as whatever is passing across the “mental stage”, right now. It does not concern itself with how the scene got on the mental stage, nor why it got there, nor when, nor whether it is “real” in any objective sense. This current of philosophy ... provides a starting place to look for vitality dynamics or the feel of being alive. William James (1890), Edmond Husserl (1964), and Merleau-Ponty (1962) are the most influential thinkers for this present work. (p. 34)

Sharing the same inborn sense of time, we develop conventional doing and thinking, or meaning-making (Trevarthen 2015).

## **Genesis of Conventional Meaning Learned in Shared Experience with Infant**

### ***Communication of Interests and Feelings in Proto-Conversational Narratives at Two Months: Educating Motherese***

Early in the 1970s researchers working independently in Boston and New York to trace the development of motor activities aimed at objects and people reported evidence that the infants had elaborate motives for sharing interests, purposes and feelings.

An anthropologist and linguist Mary Catherine Bateson, who had studied universal gestural principles of human communication described by Ray Birdwhistell (1970), worked with Margaret Bullowa to understand the early acquisition of speech production and perception in the Speech and Communication Group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Bullowa 1979). Bateson, while expecting the birth of her daughter, made a detailed description of films of an infant 7–14 weeks of age in spontaneous interactions with the mother, as follows:

... the mother and infant were collaborating in a pattern of more or less alternating, non-overlapping vocalization, the mother speaking brief sentences and the infant responding with coos and murmurs, together producing a brief joint performance similar to conversation, which I called 'proto conversation' . . . . These interactions were characterized by a sort of *delighted, ritualized courtesy and more or less sustained attention and mutual gaze*. Many of the vocalizations were of types not described in the acoustic literature on infancy, since they were very brief and faint, and yet were crucial parts of the jointly sustained performances. (Bateson 1979, p. 65, emphasis added).

Bateson was convinced that the infant was participating in mutual consciousness with a subtle grammar of movements to communicate, neither of which requires the symbolic conventions of language.

In New York, Daniel Stern, also inspired by Birdwhistell's 'kinesics', found that three-and-a-half-month-old twins were actively guiding their mother in playful exchanges by precise engagement of expressive movements (Stern 1971). This work led Stern away from conventional ideas of child psychiatry and psychoanalysis to path-finding studies of *The Interpersonal World of the Infant* (Stern 2000), and to elucidation of the dynamic principles of *Forms of Vitality* in body movement (Stern 2010).

In 1968 Jerome Bruner, who had introduced in preceding decades a philosophy of education that recognized the initiative of the child for learning, and the importance of 'value and need' for perceiving meaning, reported on a transformation of the work of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Harvard to focus on infant

intelligence and learning, with inspiration from ethological work on non-human primates. He set up, with the support of the pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton, a richly equipped research facility for use of a variety of recording devices and high-speed film to observe motor patterns and selective attention in young infants. Discoveries were made by visiting researchers and doctoral students, including Hanuš Papoušek and Tom Bower, that brought to light very early awareness of objects in body-related space and well-timed and directed actions to make sensory contact with them (Bruner 1968).

With Brazelton's advice and Martin Richards, a zoologist interested in maternal behaviour of mammals, a private film studio was set up to record natural spontaneous communication between infant 2- to 3-months-olds and their mothers, and to observe actions that the infants directed to objects (Bruner 1968). Using a single camera, the behaviours of the infant were observed from directly in front, and the mother's behaviours were recorded from a large front-surface mirror placed beside the infant (Trevvarthen 1974, 1975, 1977, 1979). Two important findings were clearly established.

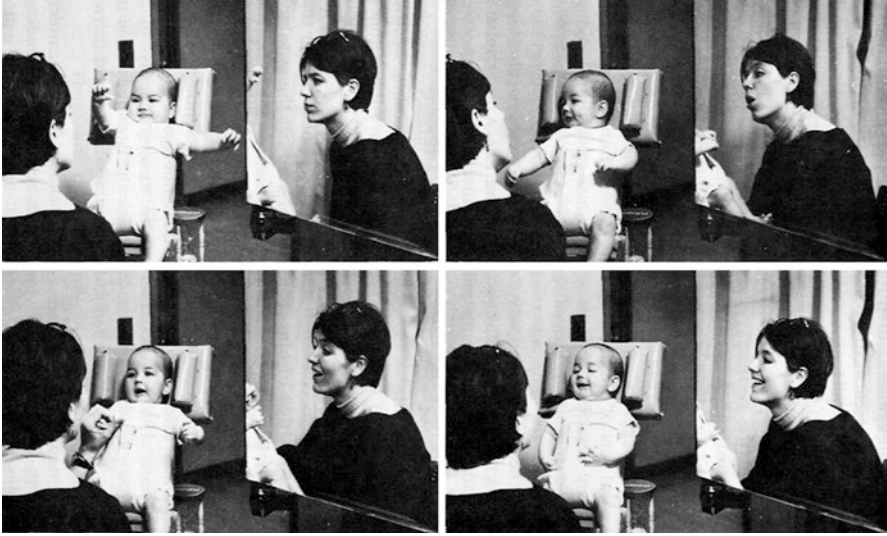
First, the behaviours that infants addressed to objects and those they aimed at their mother's attention were different. We called them 'doing' with things, and 'communicating' with a person. Secondly, in the communications that were supported by the mother's affectionate interest the babies took the initiative. For most of their 'conversations' the mothers were imitating the infant's expressions of vitality and their emotions of pleasure, displeasure, interest or disinterest. Rarely did the infant imitate the mother (Fig. 2.1).

None of the three above studies used psychological testing according to an experimental protocol. All relied on detailed recordings that were studied later to measure their rhythms and intentional or affective forms.

In his summary of the work at Harvard, Bruner emphasized that,

As the joint efforts within the Center have turned more toward infancy, there has occurred a gradual change toward the viewpoint of a naturalist exploring a new species, and away from an exclusive emphasis on the testing of specific hypotheses derived from a general theory of infant development. The objective of the research is much as it has been in the past: to elucidate the processes by which human beings achieve, retain, transform and communicate information. (Bruner 1968, p. ii).

In that study and in further work with infants of the same age in Edinburgh, both the subjective self-regulations of the infant, and the inter-subjective patterns that sustained the 'dialogues of movement' were recorded in photographs and drawings traced from films. They supported the theory that the young infant has strong abilities for sharing a primary intersubjective awareness with an attentive adult, and special actions of hand gesture, facial expression and 'prespeech' movements of tongue and lips were demonstrated (Trevvarthen 1974, 1977, 1979). In her work Bateson (1971) used refined acoustic analysis of illustrative examples of vocal engagement to represent this dialogic motivation.



**Fig. 2.1** Photographic samples show how a mother may adopt postures and expressions to closely mirror what her baby does. The intense mutuality or harmony of the behaviour comes initially from the infant responding to the mother's friendly behaviour in kind. Then the development is principally due to the mother accepting the expressions of the infant as models for her expression, or, rather, as indicative of an emotion which she may both share with her infant and express in like manner. (Trevarthen 1977, p. 241)

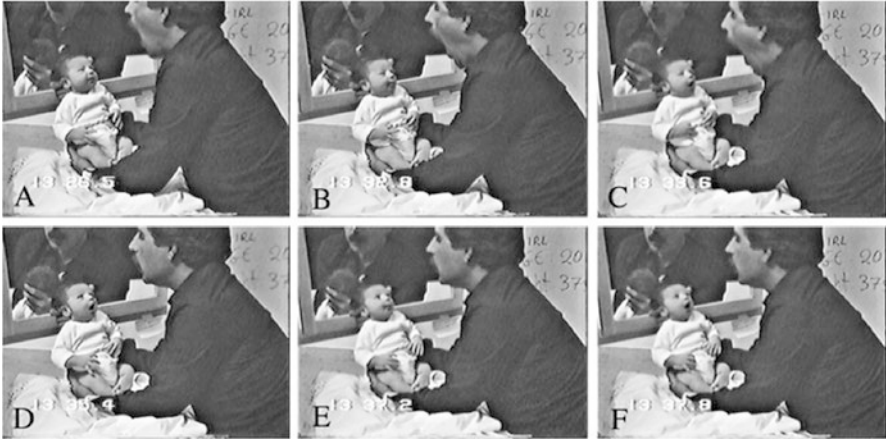
From a film made at the Center for Cognitive Studies, Harvard, in 1968. The infant is 3 months old. These pictures were first published in Trevarthen 1974

### *Exchanges in Dialogues of Imitation with Newborns*

After the revelations from film studies of communication with infants after the second month, proving their conversational abilities, detailed analysis of voluntary engagements of babies from the first hours after birth confirmed the innate foundations of the mutual awareness. Until then, the firmly held belief of doctors, psychologists and educators was that a newborn cannot imitate expressive movements. This was the view of Sigmund Freud and Jean Piaget. Disproof of this theory was anticipated by Henri Wallon in the 1940s, then clearly demonstrated by Olga Maratos in 1973 when she reported the findings of her PhD research to Piaget at the University of Geneva. Piaget conceded "indeed they imitate", but kept reservations about what it signified for their state of awareness. Despite intense controversy, with ardent defense of the learning theory, clear evidence accumulated that alert infants were ready immediately after birth to imitate a wide range of movements of another person's head, eyes, mouth, vocal sounds and hand gestures (Nagy 2011; Kugiumutzakis and Trevarthen 2015).

An important additional discovery was that the imitating infants wanted to participate in a reciprocal exchange, in a confirmation of mutual awareness. Emese Nagy changed the interpretation that the imitations were an automatic 'mirroring'





**Fig. 2.2** A cycle of imitations of Mouth Opening with a female infant 20 min after birth. Recorded a maternity hospital in Herakleion, Crete in 1983 by Giannis Kugiumutzakis for his PhD research at the University of Uppsala.

- (a) 0 s GK presents a wide open mouth for the first time to the attentive infant, I, who is focusing on his mouth, and with slightly closed eyes and pursed mouth.  
 (b) 6.3 s. GK opens his mouth for the fourth time. I continues to observe his mouth with evident interest. The right hand moves up.  
 (c) 7.1 s GK opens his mouth for the fifth time. I imitates him once, synchronously while watching his mouth. The right hand closes.  
 (d) 8.9 s I imitates a second time, looking up at the researcher's eyes as he waits.  
 (e) 10.7 s Both pause, waiting. The infant is still looking at his eyes.  
 (f) 11.3 s I makes a third large imitation while looking at the researcher's mouth, looking for a response.

GK Giannis Kugiumutzakis, I infant

by showing that a newborn could repeat an imitated act as a 'provocation' to invite a reciprocal imitation by the adult. The baby was accepting the expressive movement as an invitation to a creative dialogue of signs, or the affirmation of a convention of communication as an 'act of meaning' (Nagy and Molnár 2004; Nagy 2008).

Kugiumutzakis, in 1983, had recorded how an infant girl, filmed with him at 20 min after her birth, participated in a cooperative exchange of mouth opening movements, shifting attention from his mouth when attending to his gesture, to his eyes when watching for his response (Fig. 2.2).

Nagy (2011) recorded a more rapid exchange of finger movements with a newborn infant which similarly demonstrates the two phases of the infant's interest, observing the proffered expressive movement, an index finger extension and imitating, then watching for and accepting a return imitation (Fig. 2.3).



**Fig. 2.3** A short exchange of intentions with interest recorded by Emese Nagy, of a sign she offered to the infant by extending the index finger of one hand, which the infant first imitates, then seeks an imitative response from the adult elicited by what Nagy described as an act of ‘provocation’

(a) 0 s The infant is watching her own hand move

(b) 2 s Emese Nagy holds up her left hand with index finger extended. The infant looks at the hand

(c) 4 s Emese’s hand is lowered, and the infant waits, looking at it

(d) 10 s After a long pause the infant suddenly raises her right hand and watches as she makes an extension of the index finger

(e) 12 s The infant looks back to Emese with her hand up and the finger extended, mouth open, as if questioning

(f) 15 s Emese responds with an index finger extension, and the infant watches intently with an ‘attentive’ mouth

### ***Development of Narrative Rituals in Play, and Playful Sharing of Objects in Unexpected Ways***

After the discovery of proto-conversational exchanges of the early months, in which the infant took a leading role, study of how individual baby-mother pairs changed their behaviour through the first year brought to light ‘age-related changes’ in the infants’ interests and actions, which led the mother to adopt different strategies to share interests, feelings and actions (Trevarthen 1988, 1992, 2001). Infants develop their abilities through measures of time with new powers of movement with awareness.

A rich record of these motivated changes, which are found to be similar in babies who are growing up in all kinds of family and culture, is presented with hundreds of beautifully presented photographs in Lynne Murray’s book *The Psychology of Babies* (Murray 2014). We have related the key changes to developments in the human brain that regulate both movements and perception, (Trevarthen 1984;

von Hofsten 1989) and changes in feelings and their emotional expression (Trevvarthen and Aitken 2003). In the second edition of *The Interpersonal World of the Infant* (Stern 2000) Daniel Stern presents a lucid overview of how innate motivations of infants are retained as a foundation for the later stages.

With advances in their visual awareness after 3 months, and as support of the head, tracking movements of the eyes and control of arm and hand extensions develop, babies become more curious about their surroundings. They make efforts to examine nearby objects and look out to more distant places. In response, their mothers become more playfully seductive, to draw their attention. This generates what we called the Period of Games, first by exchanging expressions of curiosity and joy with teasing, or Person-Person games, then after 6 months Person-Person-Object games with ‘toys’ as the infants become more determined to explore anything they might get their hands on, enjoying the sights and sounds of actions with attractive things (Trevvarthen 1977; Trevvarthen and Hubley 1978).

Vasudevi Reddy has given attention to the use of ‘joking, teasing and mucking about’ to bring joy to these engagements of play, and she has charted the parallel development of self-consciousness or awareness of the Self in the appreciation of an Other (Reddy 2003, 2005, 2008; Reddy and Trevvarthen 2004). This may be described as a maturation of two kinds of feeling for experiences, an ‘aesthetic’ appreciation of what may be done by engagement with ‘things’, and a ‘moral’ engagement with the feelings of a ‘person’ as partner in communication (Trevvarthen and Reddy 2016).

The changes in the infants’ motives and their communication with affectionate company reflect transformations of the ‘vitality dynamics’ elucidated by Daniel Stern (Stern 2010), who demonstrates that each phase in the development of increasingly elaborate expressions of ‘how to move’ acts as a foundation that persists through the later attainments.

These transformations of the young human being, affecting their exploration of the material world and their relationships with companions and hence their learning of meaning for life in a particular family and community are an essential part of human nature, adapted, from infancy, for education in the ways of a community with its culture (Trevvarthen and Delafield-Butt 2013, 2015).

### ***Sympathetic Rhythms of Communicative Musicality in Proto-Conversations, Action Games and Nursery Songs***

From the beginning, the new descriptive research of the natural spontaneous actions of infants has drawn researchers’ attention to the timing, especially the infant’s creation and coordination of rhythms in all kinds of movement – looking with head and eyes, reaching out to point to or grasp objects, making vocalisations and gestures that express feelings, and their sensitivity for the rhythms of other persons’ actions and especially the vocal sounds they make in speech or song. This discovery has been supported by research on the prospective control of all animal movements,

including the unique human powers of bipedal locomotion, the manipulation of objects as tools or toys, and the elaboration of narratives by creative patterns of voice and gesture (Bernstein 1967; Lee 2005).

Scientific research on the rhythms of life and their sharing in early childhood has benefitted greatly from the use of musical acoustics (Malloch 1999) to reveal fine details of motor expression and their regulation by an Intrinsic Motive Pulse (IMP). “Musicality in human motives, the psycho-biological source of music, is described as a talent inherent in the unique way human beings move, and hence experience their world, their bodies and one another.” (Trevarthen 1999, p. 155).

With Stephen Malloch, we have studied the rhythms of action games with infants and baby songs in many different cultures and found universal principles of timing, expression and narrative form (Malloch 1999; Malloch and Trevarthen 2009). The infants are not compliant imitators in these celebrations of joy in relationships with familiar people, they are active and stimulating performers. One amazing film shows how a 5-month-old baby born totally blind conducts with her left hand her Swedish mother’s singing of a baby song that is known all over Scandinavia. The baby moves with the delicate gestures of a professional conductor, and anticipates important moments in the drama by a fraction of a second, moving just before her mother’s note changes. She describes the melody with the feelings of her body (Trevarthen 1999, p. 185).

Dancing celebrations and songs are attractive to infants as their bodies gain strength in the middle of the first year and key components like the pulse and rhyming vowels are learned and repeated. They are becoming ways of sharing rituals of unspoken common sense, leading to the special traditional ways of a particular culture (Bråten and Trevarthen 2007). The baby is beginning to make sounds that have the recognisable ‘accent’ of speech in their family. This is the time when they show they have a disposition to master a language.

### ***Secondary Intersubjectivity Leading to Speech***

Language is ‘about’ actions, events, and desirable or interesting objects in a shared world, which by use of symbolic representation, does not have to be present. Speech is the key that opens the door to a great expansion of the world which becomes known with good companions, first in remembered times and places, then in an ideal world of meanings anywhere or anytime (Donaldson 1992, on ‘modes of mind’). Studies of communication before proto-language have discovered an important step in the infant’s awareness of other person’s purposes and interests at 9 months, a transformation in the initiative of the child for learning, one which changes the way adults behave as teacher-companions.

Penelope Hubley documented development of one infant girl through her first year by comparing film showing how she shared the fun of games with her mother’s expressions of intentions and feelings, for example in the sharing of rhythms and melodies in action games and baby songs like “Rock-a-bye baby”, “Round and

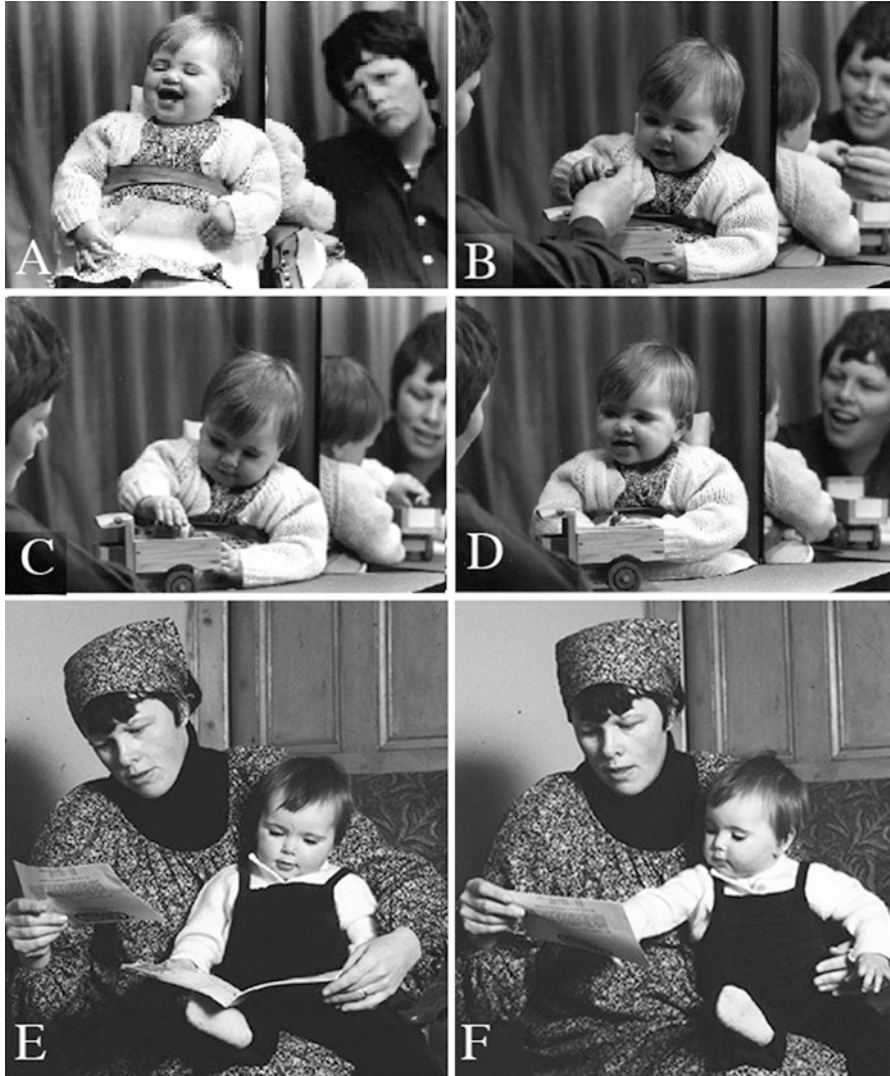
round the garden” and “Clappa-clappa-handies”. Hubley found that the infant’s interest in sharing of objects as toys in play also changed, and that this affected the way the mother communicated with her:

In the development of fundamental human skills, a regulated pattern of change is clear in the first year of life. A large step towards confidence in “self” and confiding in others is expressed at about 9 months. It is significant that the word *confidence* means both skill in making acts as an independent self, and a sense of being in a trusting relationship to another self (Trevarthen and Hubley 1978, p. 226).

Within a couple of weeks, an infant gained a more serious interest in doing things together with her mother, taking particular interest in a companion’s ideas about what to do with a selected object or to combine objects in a particular way, and to communicate ‘about’ them. We called the new kind of sociability ‘secondary intersubjectivity’ or ‘cooperative awareness’ (Trevarthen and Hubley 1978; Hubley and Trevarthen 1979), wishing to relate it to – but also differentiate it from – the primary direct person-to-person engagement that motivates the ‘primary intersubjectivity’ of proto-conversation with a 2-month-old (Bateson 1979; Trevarthen 1979). Piaget, in his study of the development of an individual’s ‘thinking’ (Piaget 1962) identified this change at 9 months as the beginning of the infant’s ‘concept of the object’. He allows the infant no special awareness of persons who share intentions and feelings and may cooperate in the generation of meaning, which has been given special importance by researchers attentive to the development of language.

Elizabeth Bates (1979) found 9 months to be the age when a child brings awareness of a person nearby into the consciousness of what the immediate world affords. Both the object of interest and the person who is present are alive in the imagination, and intentional communication about it begins, for example turning to ask for help to reach a wanted object, or looking back to the other to see if they are following an arm that is pointing to an attractive object or event. Scaife and Bruner (1975) had observed a change in readiness to follow another’s direction of regard around 9 months. Tomasello (2008) identifies seeking for ‘joint attention’ as *The Origin of Human Communication*. Again, it needs to be recognized that this change is not just a cognitive or practical appreciation of a context for action. The key change is a combining of attentions to objects with sympathy for the vocal and gestural expressions of companions (Reddy et al. 1997). The invitation to join comes from a new kind of social curiosity in the child (Esteve-Gilbert et al. 2016).

A very important indication of the child’s investment of purpose in a shared task, like the special form of delight shown in participation of a 6-month-old in a favourite game, is the expression of shared satisfaction or ‘pride’ that is addressed to others for their admiration. This leads us to recognize that for a young child it is especially important and rewarding to share knowledge and skills with moral feelings of personal joy or distress (Trevarthen 2005).



**Fig. 2.4** A one-year-old shows her talents

(a) In the recording room, Basilie enjoys the comedy when her mother pretends to be sad  
(b), (c) and (d) Mastering a task. She takes the wooden figure offered by her mother, with a request "Put the doll in the truck". Basilie carefully puts it in the truck (c): then (d) looks with a self-satisfied expression at her mother who says, "What a clever girl!"  
(e) At home Basilie and her mother read. Basilie is studying her book, the mother is intently occupied with a document, perhaps a telephone bill  
(f) Basilie drops her book and points to the mother's paper, with a critical vocal comment, 'jargon' without words, but with intense prosody communicating criticism. This appears to be a response to the concerned expression of her mother

## Infants and Toddlers as Personalities: Pride and Shame in Presentation of an Imaginative Self to Others

Draghi-Lorenz et al. (2001) insist on ‘re-thinking the development of ‘non-basic’ emotions’, rejecting the theory that infants come with only a set of mindless reflex emotional responses to stimuli that cause bodily pleasure and pain, with social signaling of automatic reactions of distress or anger. Reddy (2008) has elaborated the richer approach demonstrating the developmental importance of complex ‘moral’ feelings of self-conscious shyness, pride and shame, which are sensitive to appreciation of the attentions and feelings of others (Fig. 2.4d). These are the ‘relational affects’ identified by Stern (2000), regulating emotions of spiritual awareness that communicate the values of relationships (Hay 2006). Emotions of the spirit are powerful in early childhood (Hay and Nye 2006), and they are critically involved in the process of engagement in education from infancy (Trevarthen 2005). Children learn with pride, and shame restricts understanding and learning.

Our personality and our personal history depend on the recognition by others, including our parents and our teachers. Their attitude towards us is something we depend on as a source of affection and self-confidence. As Bruner says, in his celebration of our ‘story-telling’ imagination, our narrative of life gives us our identity, and helps us learn.

Why are we so intellectually dismissive towards narrative? ... Storytelling performs the dual cultural functions of making the strange familiar and ourselves private and distinctive. If pupils are encouraged to think about the different outcomes that could have resulted from a set of circumstances, they are demonstrating usability of knowledge about a subject. Rather than just retaining knowledge and facts, they ... use their imaginations to think about other outcomes. ... This helps them to think about facing the future, and it stimulates the teacher too. (Bruner 1996, pp. 39–40).

## Reforming Educational Practice for Early Years with the Evidence from Infancy

“The roots of all sciences and arts in every instance arise as early as in the tender age, and that on these foundations it is neither impossible nor difficult for the whole superstructure to be laid; provided always that we act reasonably as with a reasonable creature.” (John Amos Komensky (1592–1671), known as Comenius, in *The School of Infancy*. Quoted by Quick, 1984, pp. 144–145).

Understanding that infants can communicate their intentions and feelings and want to share experiences confirms what experienced teachers of early years and affectionate parents know, that convivial play is the generator of learning from birth. Before a child is ready to accept formal instruction in language, literacy and numeracy they need to enjoy a free life in a safe and interesting environment shared with affectionate companions (Trevarthen 2012).

This, of course, is not a new discovery. Comenius, the Moravian philosopher, pedagogue and theologian who wrote *The School of the Mother's Breast* (1628), *School by Play* (1630) and *The Gate of Languages Unlocked* (1631), and who is known as a creator of schools and as a teacher who elucidated the best principles for educating children from birth to the age of six, appreciated the infant's playful creativity and its contribution to human learning. In the nineteenth century Robert Herbert Quick (1894) described "a growing science of education" intended to help teachers welcome the initiatives of all children to share discoveries in imaginative ways. He recorded the insights of the Jesuits of the sixteenth century, who criticized the restriction of teaching to book learning and said young children must exercise their bodies, and Rabelais who ridiculed the absurd idea of 'pouring in' formulated knowledge. Following them, Pestalozzi and Froebel worked as teachers to reduce the misfortunes of young children obliged to work too soon at prescribed tasks, instead promoting their freedom to enjoy sociable learning at play in nature.

At the end of the nineteenth century James Mark Baldwin proposed that all life actively tests its awareness with 'circular reactions' in which an initiative for action repeats itself to test stimulation, retaining the vitally good and pleasurable relations with the environment and suppressing bad and unpleasant stimulation. He inspired Piaget's theory of active learning and Vygotsky's explanation of the social development of thought and language with the child as playful agent, and he opened the way to understanding how 'self-imitation' leads to reciprocal imitation with others as the key motive of communication (Nadel 2014). But Baldwin's understanding was rejected by the reductive psychology of behaviourism, and it gained recognition in his time only in the writings of philosophers, including Bergson, James, and Dewey.

In the 1920s Alfred North Whitehead, argued for appreciation of the first 'romantic' stage of the educational experience, and retention of its creative energy through to study at the University. He observed that in school childish imagination is transformed into the stage of 'precision' which concerns 'exactness of formulation'. In resistance to this limitation, Whitehead helped Susan Langer develop a philosophy of art in movement, presented as *Philosophy in a New Key* (Langer 1942).

Jean Piaget (1951, 1962) described the infant mind as 'egocentric'. He failed to notice that attractive expressions by eyes, face, voice and hands show more than "pleasure in mastery" of a practical task, and did not appreciate that 'circular reactions' are, as Baldwin showed, readily shared with teachers, if they are not too preoccupied with reason and unreceptive to playful invention.

Jerome Bruner, who already in the 1940s insisted on the importance of a child's purposes and feelings for learning, expanded his philosophy of education in a new way by leading work in the Center for Cognitive Studies at Harvard to study the convivial enjoyment of intentions and problem solving by infants (Bruner 1968). Margaret Donaldson (1963, 1978), also showed that three and 4-year-old children appreciate other persons' points of view to experience a world shared purposefully and with emotional evaluation. They enjoy playing with differences of belief, as long as they do not receive imperative correction.



The foundations of education, in every culture, are in the development from birth of human motives to test and expand active experience, and to share it with companions, ‘story-telling’ for fun (Bruner 1996; Trevarthen et al. 2014), with emotions of ‘human sense’ (Donaldson 1978). To understand how we can best support the growth of this curiosity and sociability in infants and toddlers, we can learn from researchers in the arts, especially music. This is the belief of Loris Malaguzzi of Reggio Emilia in Italy, who insists on giving the “hundred languages” of childhood in play with all sorts of media the freedom to discover how they may be used in skills of everyday life. “The program is based on the principles of respect, responsibility, and community through exploration and discovery in a supportive and enriching environment based on the interests of the children through a self-guided curriculum.” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ReggioEmiliaapproach>). That is how childish enthusiasm motivates the learning of conventional practices and beliefs to supporting the traditions and inventions of a culture (Rogoff 2003).

The views of Pestalozzi and Froebel inspired in turn the views and practices of Maria Montessori (1897–1952) and Jerome Bruner (b. 1915, and still teaching), which follow Comenius in their efforts to reduce misfortunes of young children and promote their enjoyment of learning (Trevarthen and Bjørkqvold 2016).

These different approaches have led to an acceptance by developmental psychology of the rich imaginative consciousness or ‘spirit for life in movement’ of a newborn, and appreciation of their special human abilities for communicating ‘consciousness’ as intentions to know with feelings of curiosity and enjoyment, both defined differently from verbal thoughts or rational explanations that may be developed later to describe ‘cognition’ of a material causal world. There have been great pioneers of this sense of being a human being with a human mind that lacks words and cognitions abstracted from active motor use. Their advice must guide educators in modern Western cultures.

### ***Modern Prescriptions for Accepting Natural Impulses for Learning***

Early childhood is “...a period of momentous significance for all people growing up in [our] culture... By the time this period is over, children will have formed conceptions of themselves as social beings, as thinkers, and as language users, and they will have reached certain important decisions about their own abilities and their own worth.” (Donaldson, Grieve and Pratt, 1983, p. 1. Quoted to introduce New Zealand’s early childhood curriculum *Te Whariki*, 1996)

This quotation from Donaldson et al. (1983) supports the understanding of the role of childhood in transmission of culture that has guided the New Zealand formulation of *Te Whāriki* an inspiring bicultural ECEC curriculum that is inclusive of under 3-year-olds (Te Whāriki 1996).

Indigenous views concerning the natural talents of the very young child (Nuttall 2013; White and Mika 2013) demonstrate respect for what Margaret Donaldson

(1978) calls ‘human sense’, common to all cultures, and her recognition that the normal development to a meaningful life for a self-consciousness personality needs oral and practical transmission of culture-specific ‘common sense’ in intersubjective encounters. Donaldson insists that a balance is required between acceptance of the natural eagerness of the child to learn in companionship, and the need for guidance in disciplined methods of learning by instruction from teachers in a planned education (Donaldson 1992, pp. 245–266).

In Scotland, we are fortunate to have these principles adopted into the *Curriculum for Excellence* (Education Scotland 2009) as principles of education that celebrate the child’s agency and well-being made in intersubjective engagement with teachers and professional caregivers as a priority for professional practice. This commitment is evidenced in child-centred pedagogies that attend to the affective nature of the child to work with his or her intentions in creative, imaginative projects that can be achieved, developing confidence in a secure and responsible companionship (Trevarthen 2012). The non-verbal nature of intersubjective relations, building narratives of meaning with patterned autonomic arousal and shared affect become cornerstones of a sensitive pedagogy that can capture the imagination and interest of children, even those with so-called behavioural difficulties, to help them to discover and find interest in learning (Delafield-Butt and Adie 2015, 2016). Such pedagogies, seek to support every child’s interests and capacities to nurture and bring out the best in that child, and have sensitivity for whatever social or emotional difficulties they may have (Gunn and Delafield-Butt 2016).

Every child’s learning is by nature affective and purposeful, never just cognitive – and it is adapted to come to life in intimate and playful companionship. This is a fundamental principle for an effective educational pedagogy, and is no less true for the education of infants, who are beginning to be inquisitive about arbitrary knowledge and skills.

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