

The Carter–Jenkins Center

presents



Daniel Benveniste, Ph.D.

**Clinical Psychologist, Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist,
'Profesor Titular' Universidad Central de Venezuela
Caracas, Venezuela**



Recognizing Defenses in the Drawings and Play of Children in Therapy

Presentation of the previously published article
Recognizing Defenses in the Drawings and Play of Children in Therapy.
Psychoanalytic Psychology. Volume 22, Number 3, Summer 2005
Daniel Benveniste, Ph.D.

- In the early days, psychoanalysis was a psychology of the id and was expected to “... confine its investigations exclusively to infantile fantasies carried on into adult life, imaginary gratifications, and the punishments apprehended in retribution for these.”
- (Anna Freud (1936, 1966) The Ego and The Mechanisms of Defense p. 4)

- The analyst's first task is to recognize the defense mechanism. "His next task is to undo what has been done by the defense, i.e., to find out and restore to its place that which has been omitted through repression, to rectify displacements, and to bring that which has been isolated back into its true context. When he has re-established the severed connections, he turns his attention once more from the analysis of the ego to that of the id."
- (Anna Freud (1936, 1966) The Ego and The Mechanisms of Defense p. 15)

Defenses help us to manage:

- The strength of the instincts
- Objective anxiety
- Superego anxiety

- Defenses available to the ego in its conflicts with the instinctual representatives and their affects:
Regression, Repression, Reaction formation, Isolation, Undoing, Projection, Introjection, Turning against the self, Reversal and Sublimation.
- Defenses available to the ego in its conflicts with objective unpleasure and objective danger:
Denial in fantasy, Denial in word and act and Restriction of the ego.
- Defenses available to the ego in its conflicts with superego anxiety:
Identification with the aggressor and A form of altruism.

- BASIC (FIRST ORDER) DEFENSIVE ACTIVITIES: Acting out, Affectualization, Avoidance, Blocking, Control through thinking, Denial (1. Denial by exaggeration 2. Denial through fantasy), Desexualization, Detachment, Displacement, Intellectualization, Introjection, Isolation (1. Compartmentalization 2. Splitting off), Magical thinking, Projection, Rationalization, Reaction formation, Regression, Repression, Restriction of ego function, Somatization, Sublimation, Turning against the self, Undoing, Withdrawal.
- COMPLEX (SECOND ORDER) DEFENSIVE ACTIVITIES: Aestheticism, Altruistic surrender, Asceticism, Clinging to object, Clowning, mocking and scoffing, Compliance, Controlling, Counterphobia, Depersonalization, Eating and drinking (a form of acting out), Falling ill, Identification (1. With the loved object, 2. With the lost object, 3. With the aggressor, 4. Out of guilt), Ritualization, Formalization, Sexualization (libidinization), Whistling in the dark.
(Bibring, et al (1961) A Study of the Psychological Processes in Pregnancy and of the Earliest Mother-Child Relationship)

- Robert Wallerstein "...drew a distinction between defense mechanisms, as constructs that denote a way of functioning of the mind, invoked to explain how behaviors, affects and ideas serve to avert or modulate unwanted impulse discharge, and defenses as the actual behaviors, affects and ideas which serve defensive purposes."

(Wallerstein (1983) Defenses, Defense Mechanisms and the Structure of the Mind, p.205)

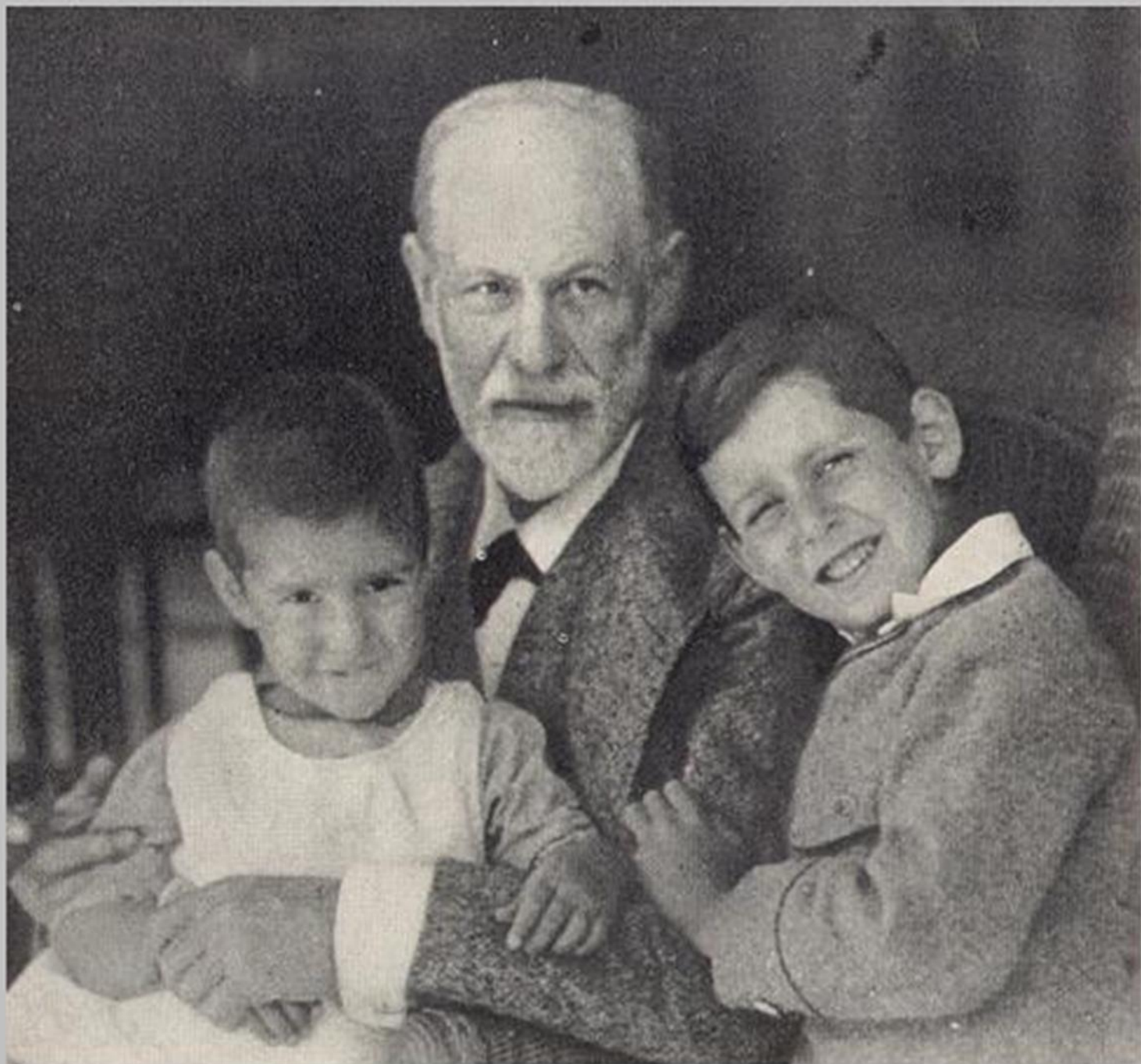
- Paulina Kernberg (1994) identified 31 defense mechanisms, which she subdivided into Normal, Neurotic, Borderline and Psychotic groupings.
(Mechanisms of Defense: Development and Research Perspectives)

- Anna Freud cautioned against the lop-sided approaches of, on the one hand, simply dealing with free-associations, latent dream thoughts, symbols, and the contents of the transference or, on the other hand, simply dealing with the resistances, dream censorship, and various transferred modes of defense.
(Freud, A. (1936, 1966) The Ego and The Mechanisms of Defense)

- Merton Gill (1963) said, “Any behavior simultaneously has impulse and defense aspects...” and that “defensive behavior will provide some discharge of what is being defended against...”
(Topography and Systems in Psychoanalytic Theory)
- Roy Schafer (1968) said “defenses must be viewed as expressing the unity of the ego and the id and not just the division and enmity of the two.” (The Mechanisms of Defense)
- Anna Freud recognized that “various measures of defense are not entirely the work of the ego” but are partially formed by the properties of the instincts.
(Freud, A. (1936, 1966) The Ego and The Mechanisms of Defense p. 175)

Paulina Kernberg's summary of the British School's contributions to the concept of mechanisms of defense:

- They propose that impulses, feelings and modes of defense are experienced as fantasies;
- They made the observation that defense mechanisms defend, “promote the gratification of instincts and serve growth and development”;
- They recognized the complex relationship of instinct to fantasy and defense mechanisms.
- (Kernberg, P. (1994) Mechanisms of Defense: Development and Research Perspectives, p. 60-62)



- Anna Freud wrote, "...if we analyze the interruption to play, we discover that it represents a defensive measure on the part of the ego, comparable to resistance in free association." (Freud, A. (1936, 1966) The Ego and The Mechanisms of Defense, p. 38)
- Erik Erikson later defined 'play disruption' as "...the sudden and complete or diffused and slowly spreading inability to play." (Erikson (1940, 1987) Studies in the interpretation of play: Clinical observations of play disruption in young children, p. 143)

Lili Peller's description of the development of play:

- The Infant's Solitary Body Play
- Play with Toys or the Body in Relation to Mother
- Creative and Imaginative Play with Toys in Parallel with Peers
- Creative and Imaginative Play with Toys Together with Peers
- Games
- (Libidinal Phases, Ego Development and Play, 1954)

- Peek-A-Boo, and Hide-and-Seek
- Catch and Chase
- Tag - You're IT; Cops and Robbers; Kooties
- Contests, Trials of strength and King of the Mountain
- Dress-up
- Simon Says and Follow the Leader
- Running, Playing cars and Chasing
- Building sandcastles, Painting, and Playing with modeling clay
- Playing House and Playing Doctor
- Collections (stamps, baseball cards, sea shells, butterflies, thimbles, etc.),
- Playing magic

Recognizing Defenses in Children's Drawings

Defenses are those strategies that are used to defend against the instincts, objective anxiety, and superego anxiety.

- “His father luckily made a note of many things which turned out later on to be of unexpected value.
- ‘I drew a giraffe for Hans, who has been to Schönbrunn several times lately. He said to me: “Draw its widdler (penis) too.” “Draw it yourself,” I answered; whereupon he added this line to my picture (See Fig. 1) He began by drawing a short stroke, and then added a bit on to it, remarking: Its widdler’s longer.’”

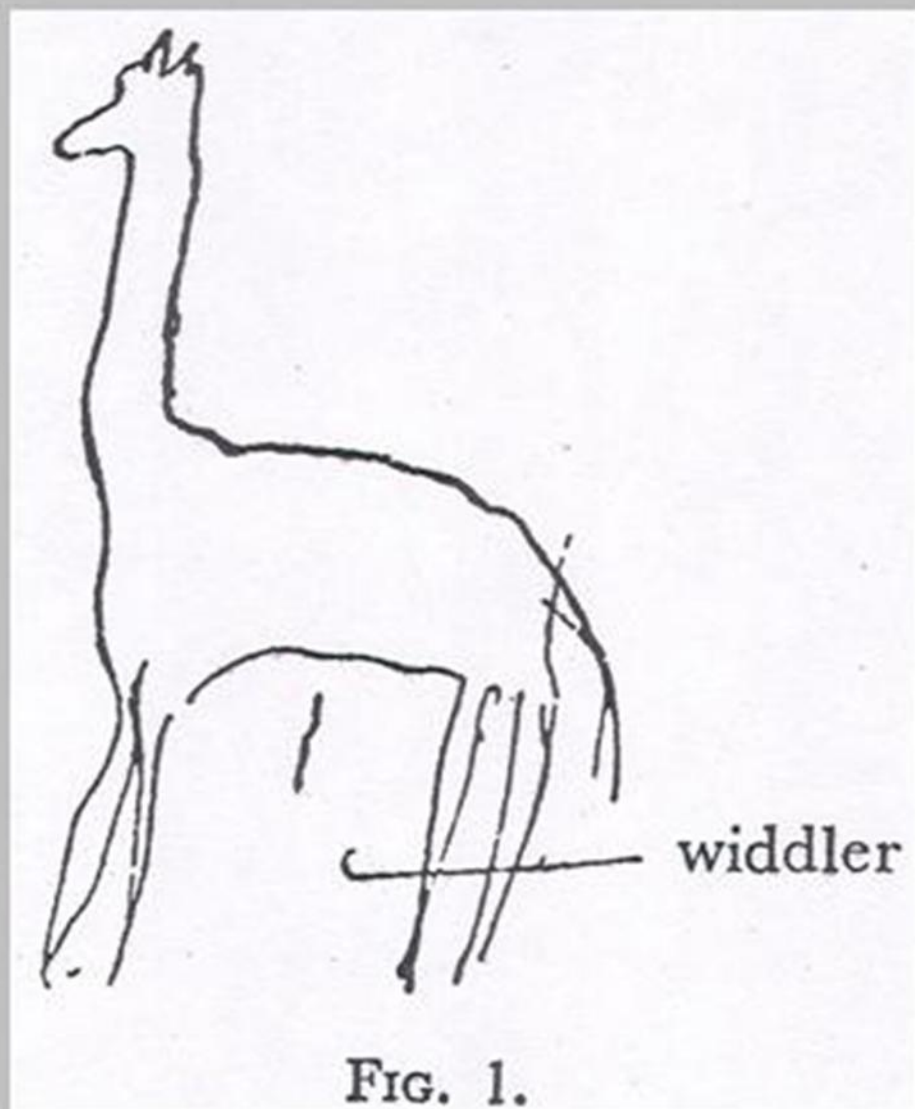
(Freud (1909, 1955) Analysis of a Phobia in a Five Year Old Boy, p. 13)

A giraffe drawn by Little Hans's father.



FIG. 1.

Little Hans adds the
giraffe's widdler (penis).



Little Hans extends the
giraffe's widdler.

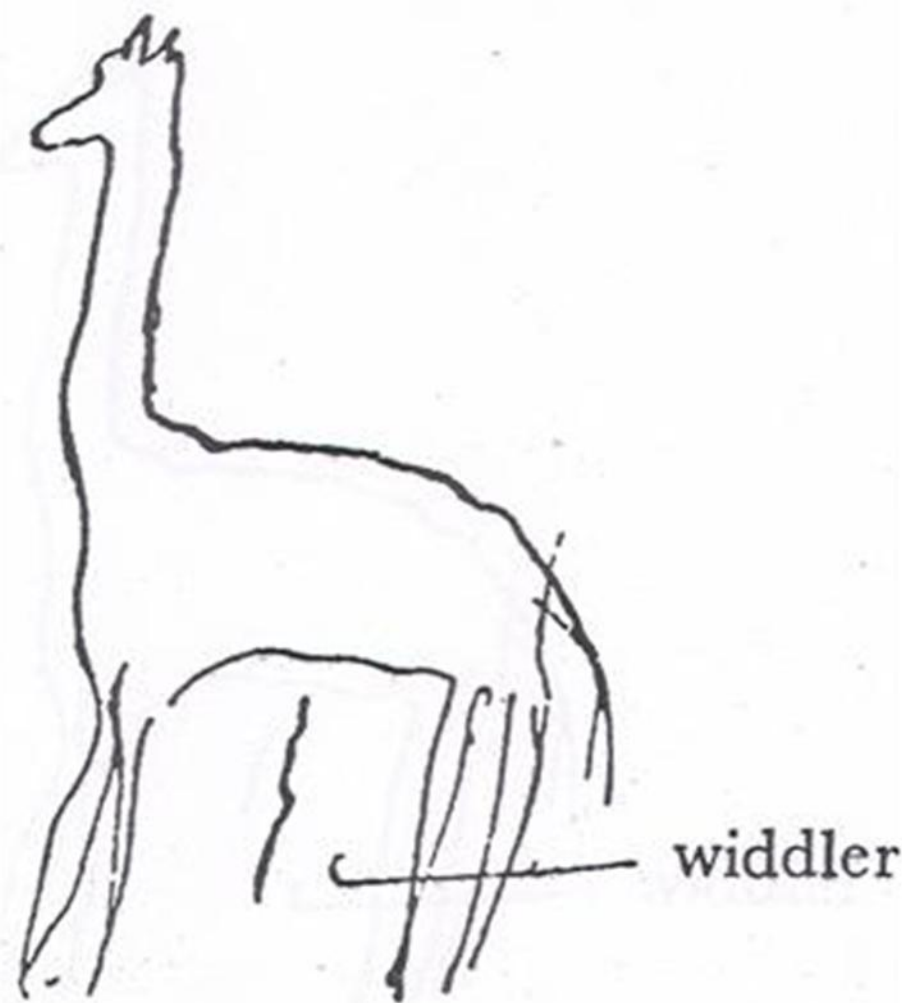


FIG. 1.

- Ernst Kris wrote, “When the artist creates during inspiration he is subject to an ego regression but it is a partial and temporary ego regression, one controlled by the ego which retains the function of establishing contact with an audience.”

(Kris (1952) Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art, p. 167)

- The drawings of schizophrenics, however, are characterized by: “the tendency to fill space, to crowd in, the stereotypy and the rigidity of all shapes, and the hypertrophy of symbols.”

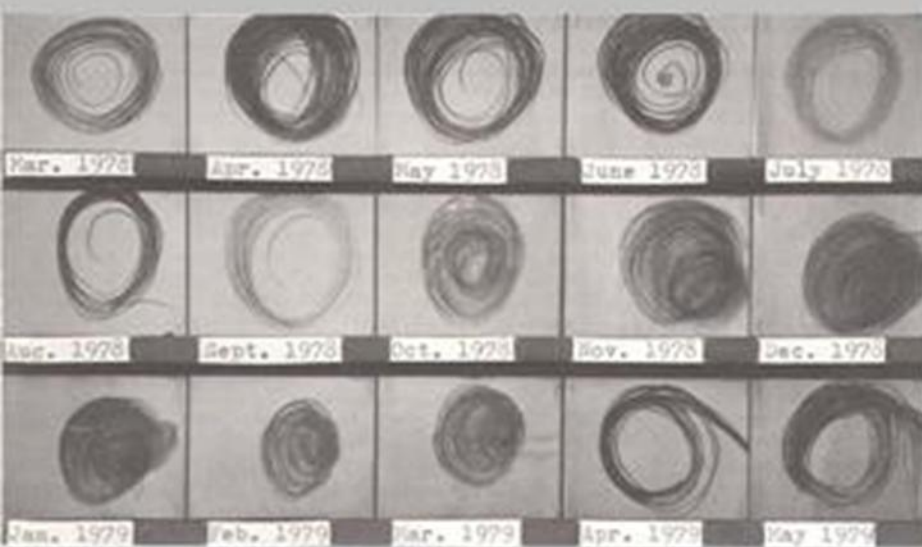
(Kris & Pappenheim, (1952) in Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art, p. 152)

- “By his word the insane artist commands the demons, and by his image he exercises magic control. Art has deteriorated from communication to sorcery.”
(Kris, 1952, Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art, p. 61)

Thus, the path from sorcery to communication is characterized by the exchange and refinement of lower order defenses for higher order defenses.

- **Suppression** or **avoidance** - the conscious effort to not be aware of something that has already entered consciousness.
- **Projection** is the displacement and relocation of the person's thoughts, feelings, desires, etc. into others or the outer world.
- **Restriction of the ego** is a limiting of activity to avoid threatening and overwhelming external stimuli.





Here are - Dinosaurs
Tyrannosaurus Rex
Giraffes
Triceratops
Jaws both types
Elephants
and trees and grass

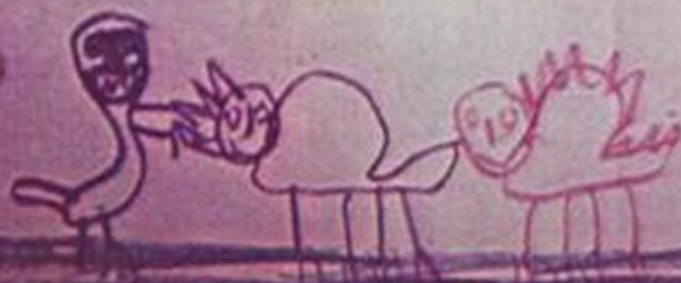
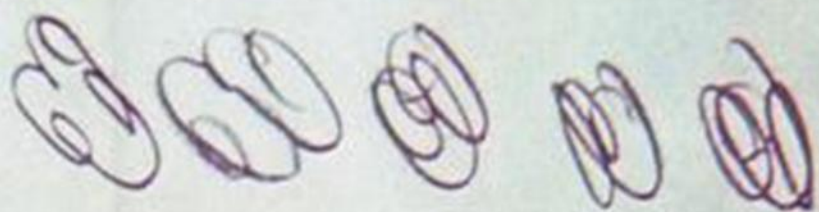


February

27

1974

The Dinosaurs



February

28

1974

The Dinosaur

Here are dinosaurs

Tyrannosaurus Rex

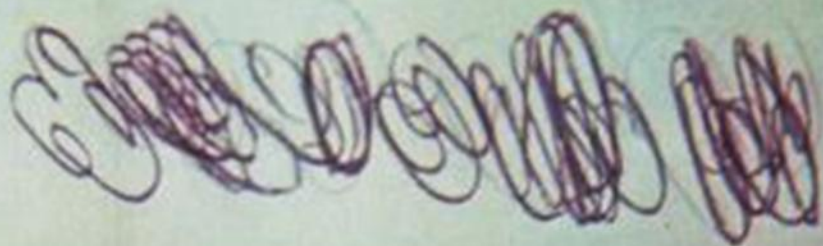
Brachiosaurus

Stegosaurus

Triceratops

Edmontosaurus

and trees and grass

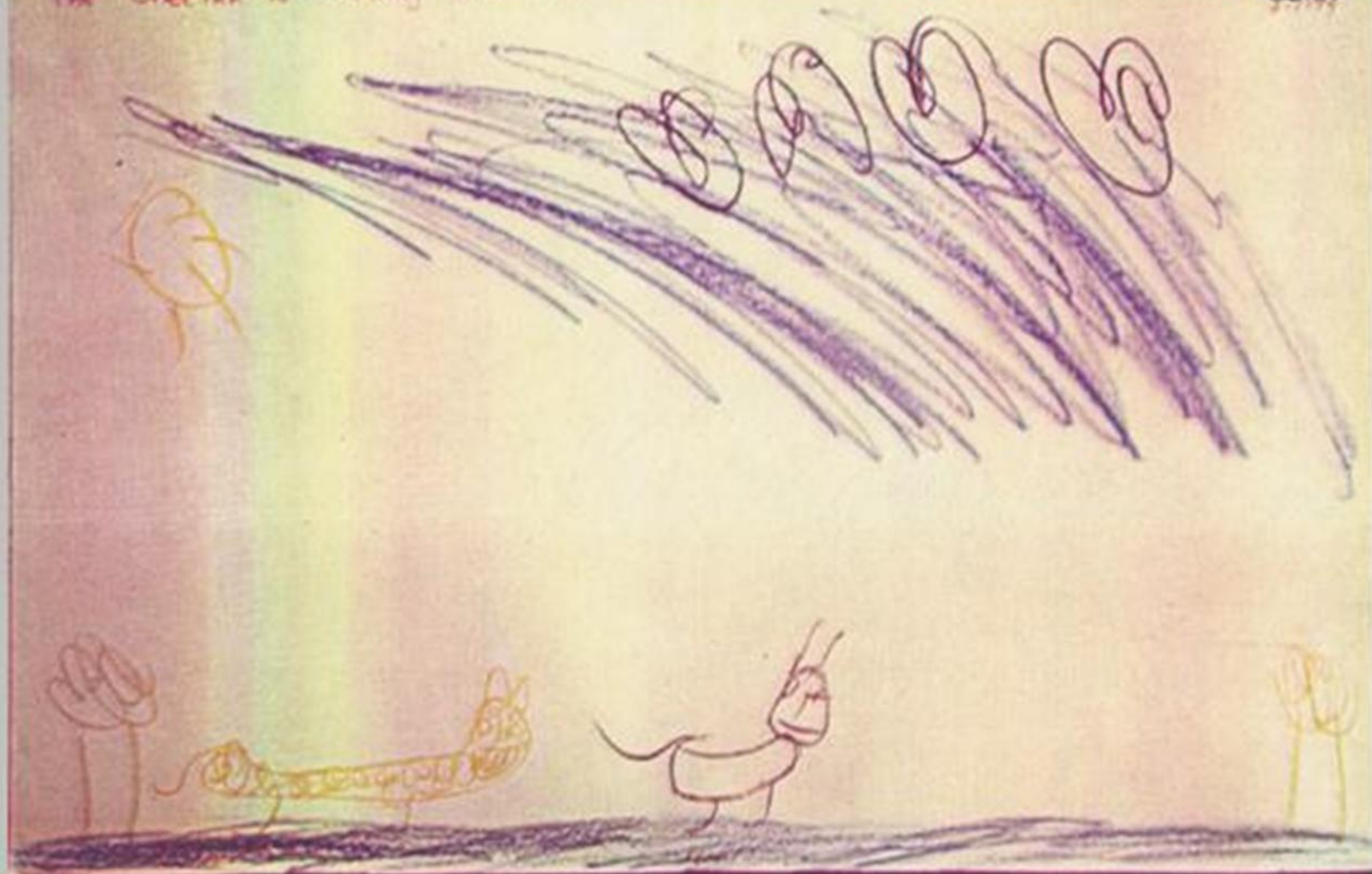


February

28

1974

The Cheetah is Chasing the cheetah



March

1

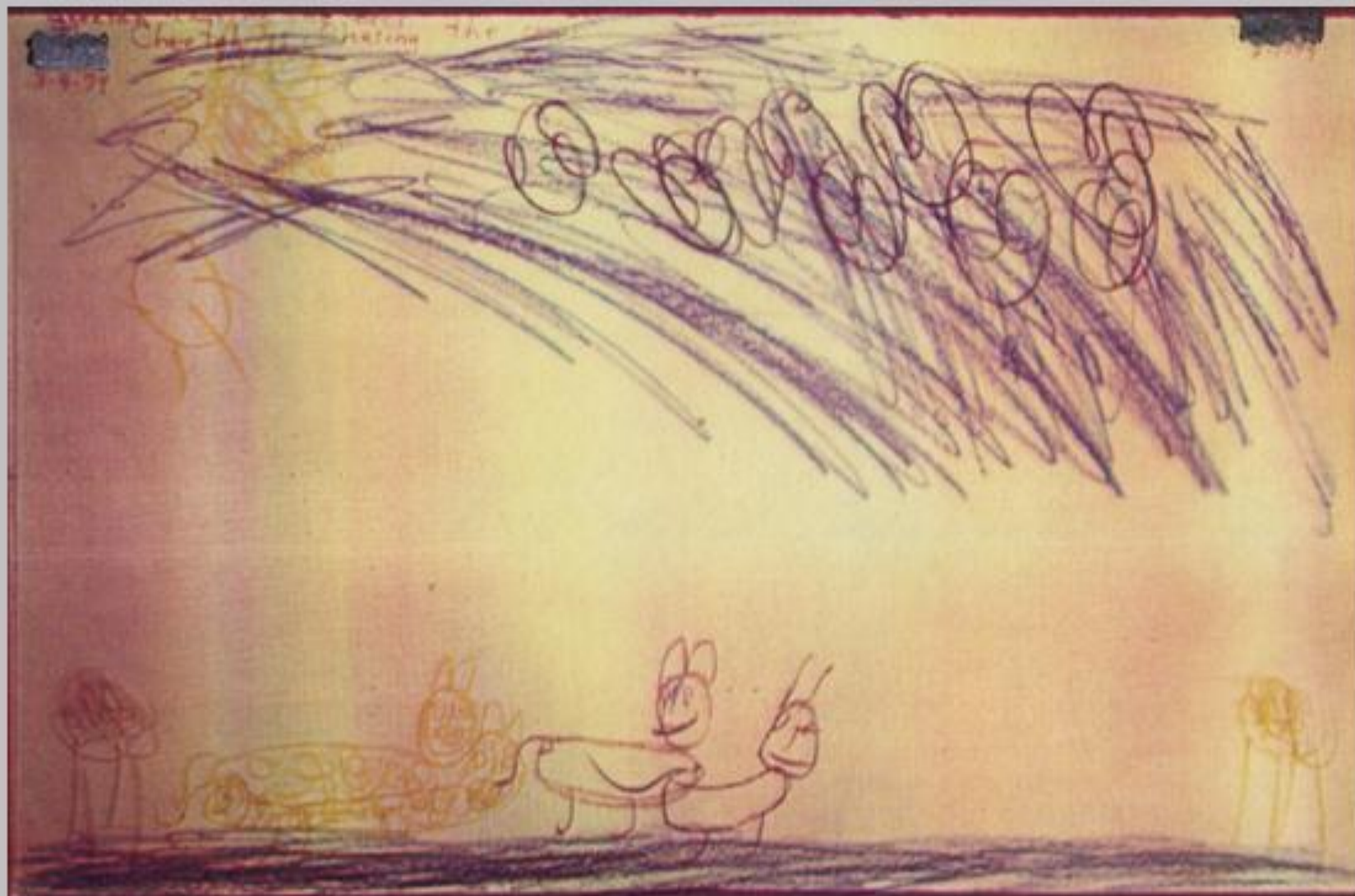
1974



March

4

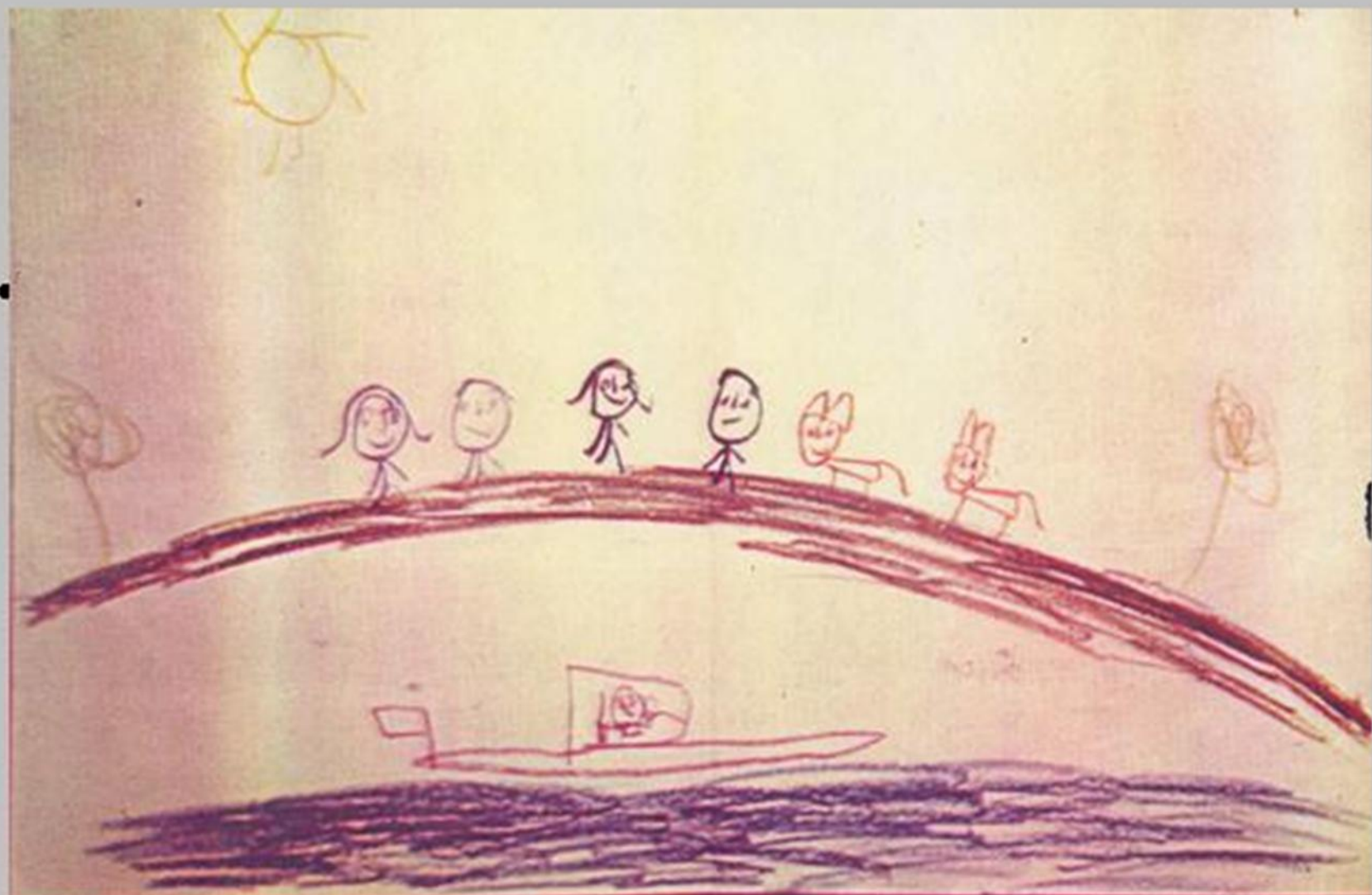
1974



March

4

1974



January

31

1974

I ride in a
motor boat. I
go fast burning
down the water



March

25

1974

Ist ride in a
motor boat. I
go fast burning
down the water



Jan March

35

1974

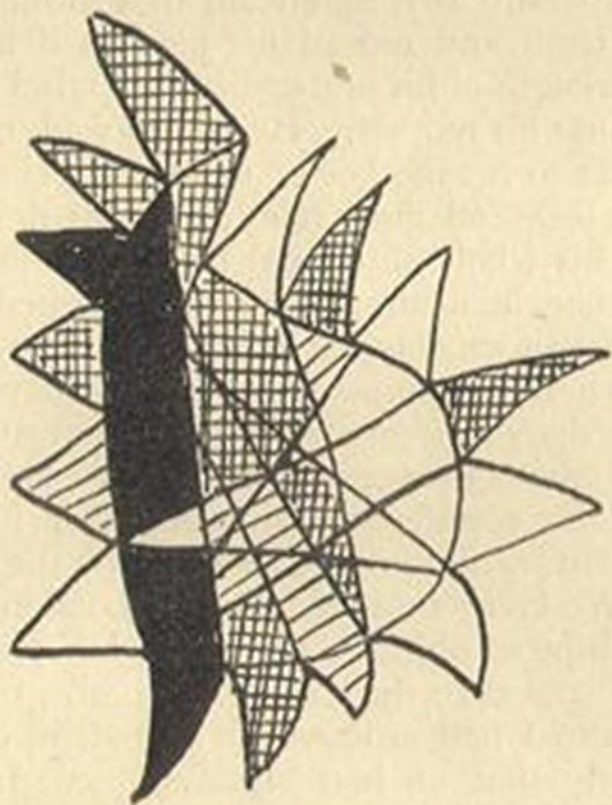


Hermine Hug-Hellmuth

- Intellectualization is the use of directed intellectual activity as a means of controlling affects and impulses.

mother. *Drawing I* expressed his anxieties about his mother's body, attacked by the bad Hitler-father (bombs, thunderstorms,

I



- BLACK
- LIGHT BLUE
- ▨ PURPLE
- ▩ RED

poisonous toadstools). As we shall see when we discuss his associations to *Drawing II*, the whole empire represented his mother's body and was pierced by his own 'bad' genital. In

- **Isolation** is an effort to ward off unpleasant stimuli by distancing oneself from them or by isolating affects from ideas.
- **Abstraction** is a kind of **intellectualization** in which the focus is not on the troublesome affect laden reality of the problem but on the concepts and patterns of life.
- **Splitting** is the manner in which two opposing attitudes toward an object are maintained and split off from one another temporally in order to satisfy an instinctual demand.
- **Rationalization** is the use of rational explanations to avoid owning thoughts, feelings and desires.

- **Undoing** is a way of managing an impulse by expressing it and then doing something to reverse its impact or its message.
- **Minimization** is the effort to make some stimuli less threatening by saying it is smaller than it is or treating it as smaller or less important than it is.
- **Repression** is a mode of managing threatening impulses by simply not allowing them into consciousness.
- **Denial in fantasy** is a way to avoid external threats, such as social interaction, by retreating into fantasy.

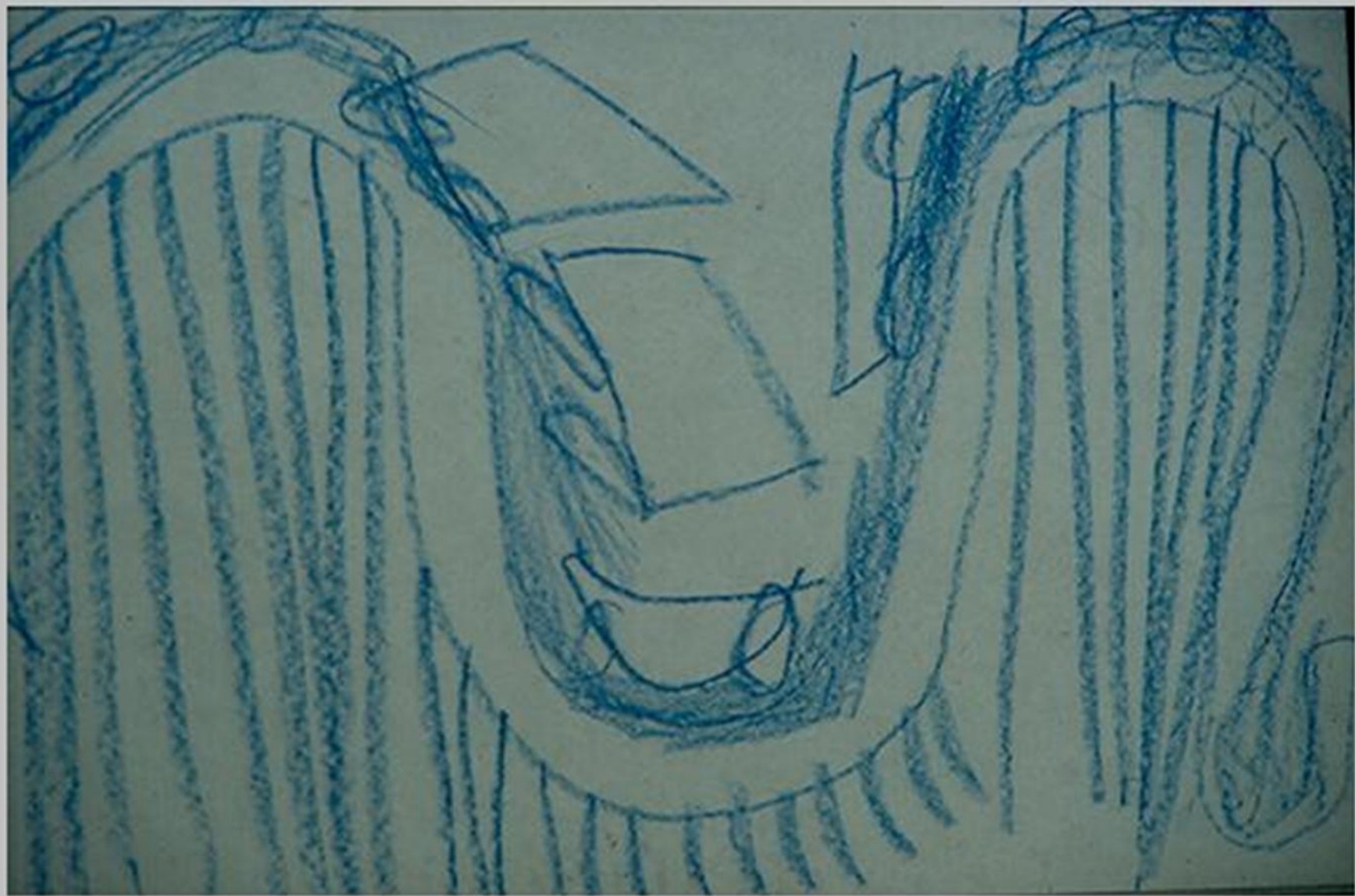
- **Denial** is an unconscious effort to manage external threats by, in a sense, saying, 'They don't exist.'
- **Turning against the self**, or the intrapunitive stance, is the way some people suppress and repress their anger and then redirect it toward themselves.
- **Regression** is the tendency to deal with threatening stimuli in manners associated with earlier levels of development.

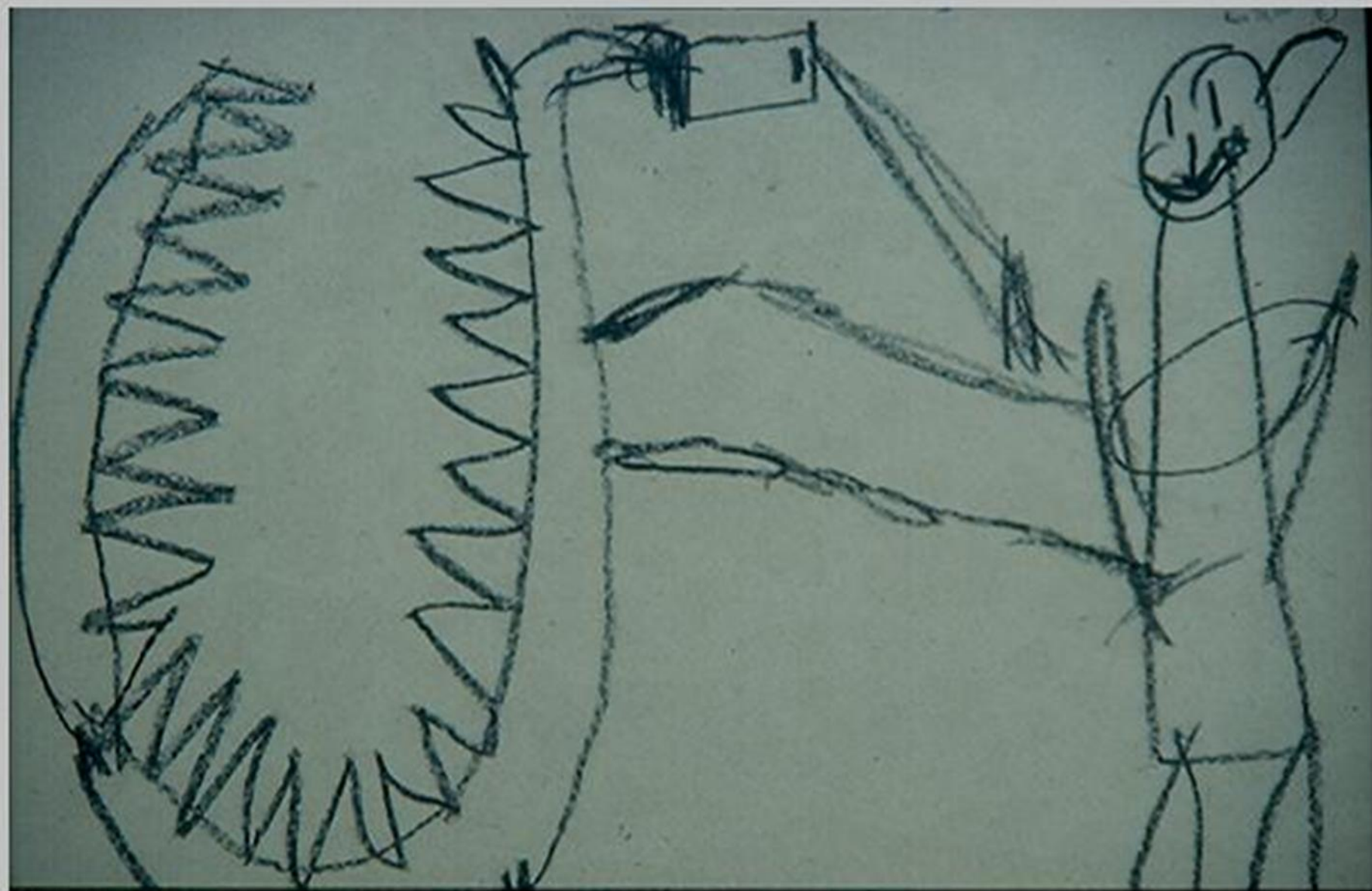
- **Regression in the service of the ego** is evident in the child who can allow him/herself to enter freely into the drawing activity.
- **Acting out** is the tendency to unconsciously go into action and live out problematic dynamics rather than seeking solutions through cognitive and affective channels.
- **Reaction formation** is the warding off of forbidden wishes by taking the opposite attitude or moving in the exact opposite direction.

- The clinical implication is that the therapist needs to interpret or manage the defenses to allow the child to move, for example, from acting out, restriction of the ego and inhibition up to intellectualization, rationalization, and repression and on to humor, regression in the service of the ego and sublimation in order to express and come to terms with the unconscious fantasies behind the conflicts and deficits that brought the child to therapy in the first place.

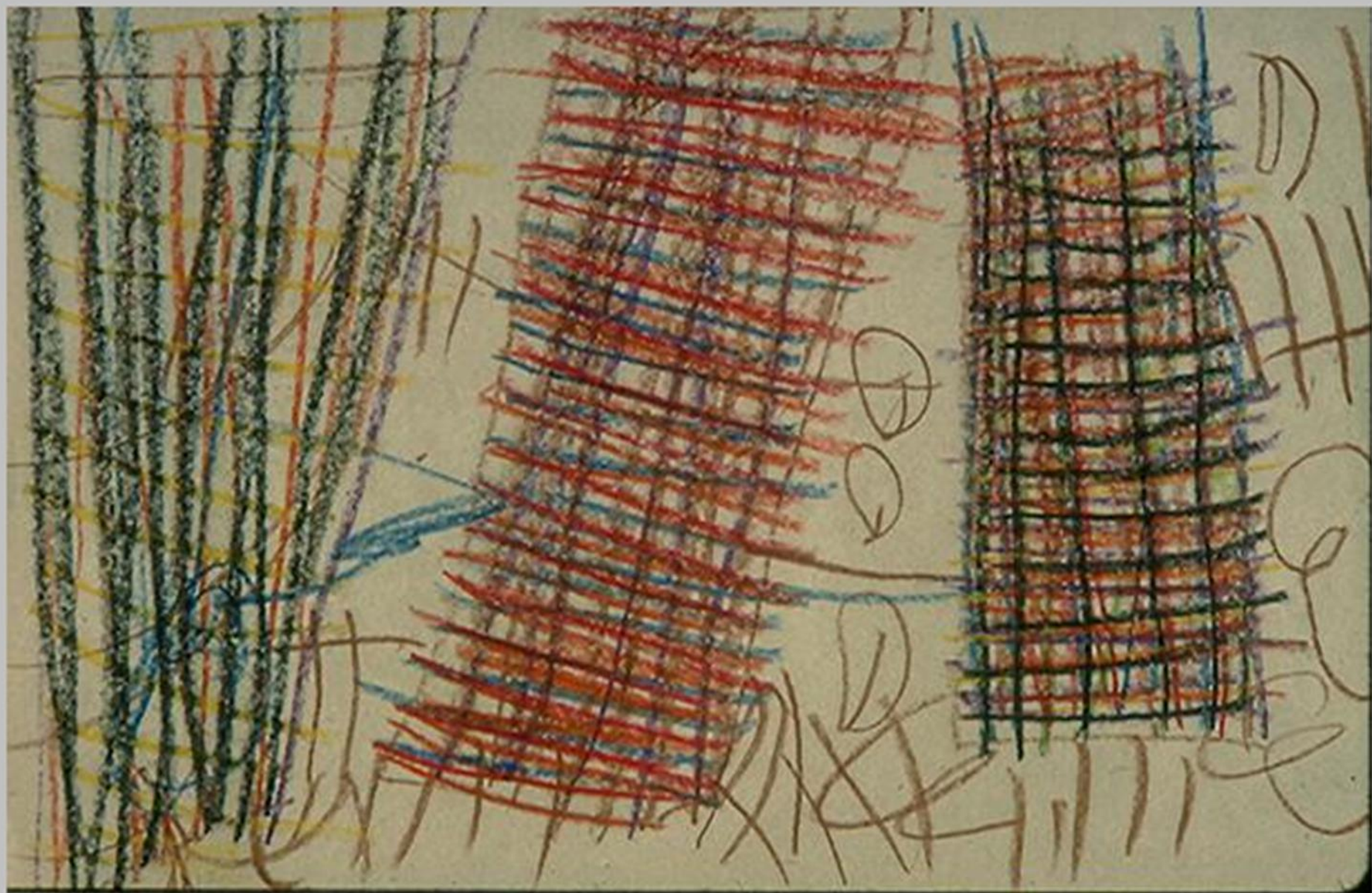


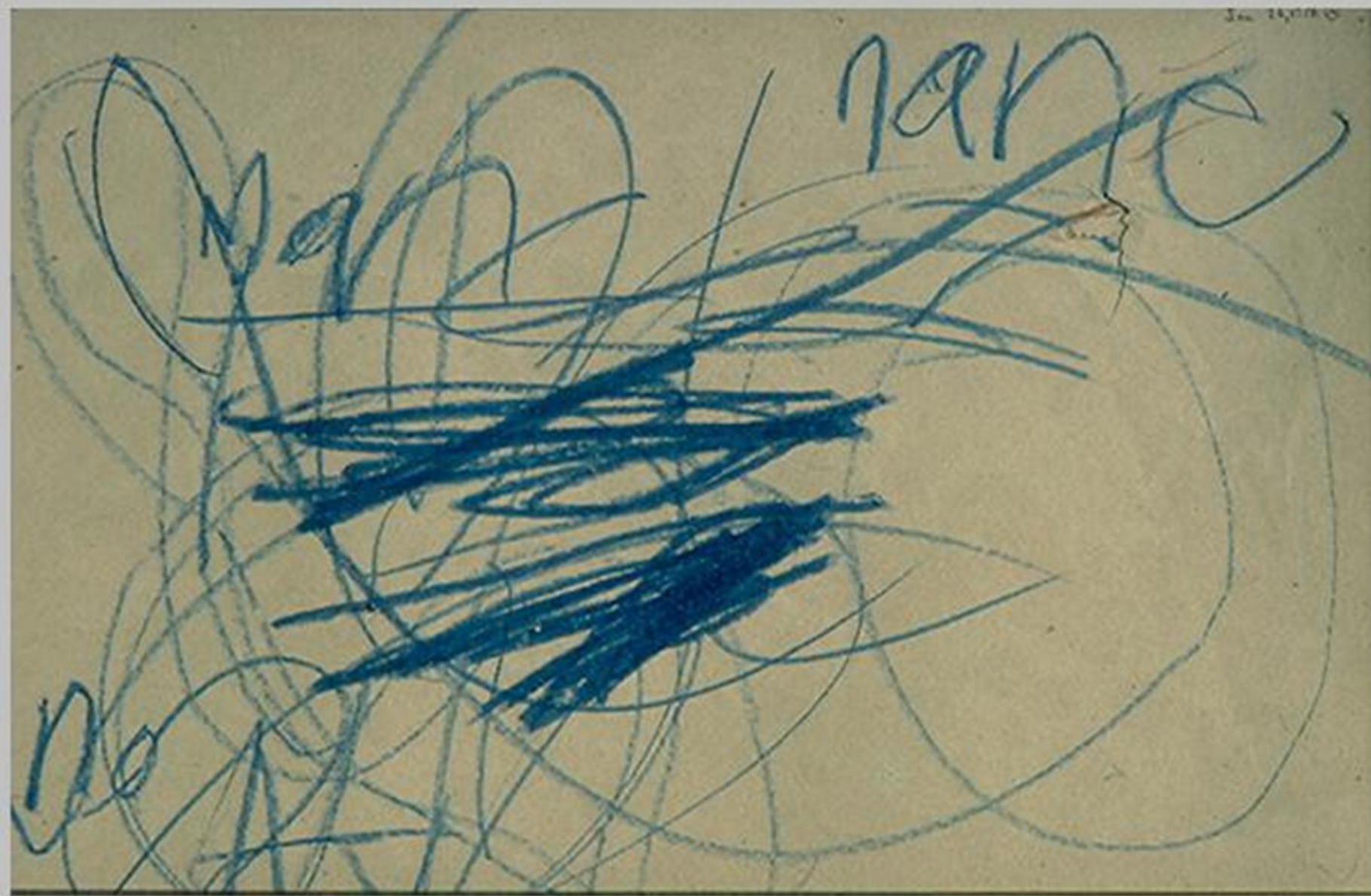




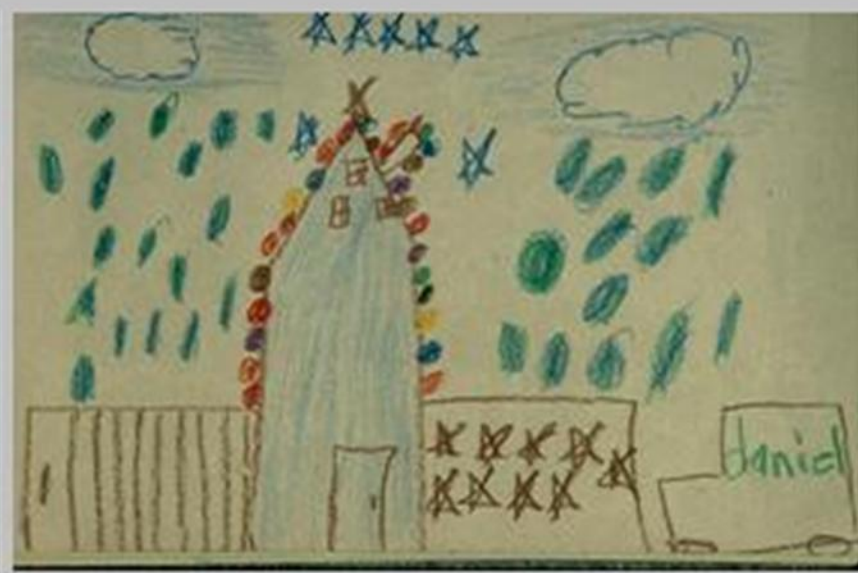
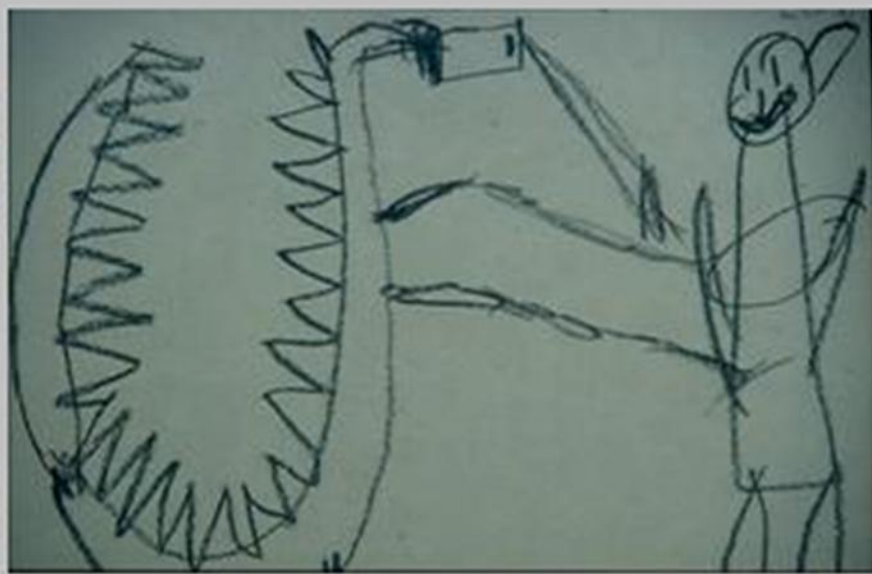












Recognizing Defenses in the Drawings and Play of Children in Therapy

Presentation of the previously published article
Recognizing Defenses in the Drawings and Play of Children in Therapy.
Psychoanalytic Psychology. Volume 22, Number 3, Summer 2005
Daniel Benveniste, Ph.D.

A Carter–Jenkins Center

production



The End

copyright 2006

