

Human Nature, by D. Winnicott

a. Quotes:

- "Growth takes as long as the person is alive, especially if the person is healthy..." - Author (pg. 62)

b. General Notes:

- Part 1
 - Introduction (pg. 7)
 - "...I shall hope to make clear how first from a primary merging of the individual with the environment comes an emergence, the individual staking a claim, becoming able to be in a world that is disclaimed; then the strengthening of the self as an entity, a continuity of being, as a place where, and where from the self as a unit, as something body-bound and dependent on physical care [emerges]; then the dawning awareness (and awareness implies the existence of mind) of dependence, and awareness of the mother's dependability and of her love, which comes through to the infant as physical care and close adaptation to need; then the personal acceptance of functions and of instincts with their climax, of the gradual recognition of mother as another human being, and along with this a change from ruthlessness to concern; then a recognition of the third party, and of love complicated by hate, and of emotional conflict; the whole of this being enriched by the imaginative elaboration of every function, and the growth of the psyche along with that of the body; also the specialisation of intellectual capacity, dependent on the quality of brain endowment; and again along with all this the gradual development of independence of environmental factors, leading eventually to socialisation." (pg. 8)
 - Chapter 1 - The Psyche-Soma and the Mind (pg. 11)
 - "...health of the psyche is to be assessed in terms of emotional growth, and is a matter of maturity. The healthy human being is emotionally mature according to the age at the moment. Maturity gradually involves the individual in responsibility for environment." (pg. 12)
 - Chapter 2 - Ill-Health (pg. 15)
 - See text
 - Chapter 3 - Inter-Relationship of Body Disease and Psychological Disorder (pg. 19)
 - "The basis of psyche is soma, and in evolution the soma came first. The psyche begins as an imaginative elaboration of physical functioning, having as its most important duty the binding together of past experiences, potentialities, and the present moment awareness, and expectancy for the future. Thus the self comes into existence. The psyche has of course no existence apart from brain and brain functioning. Inheritance of personality traits and tendencies towards psychiatric types and disorders belongs to the physical, and limits are set to psycho-therapy by inheritance." (pg. 19)
 - Chapter 4 - The Psycho-Somatic Field (pg. 26)
 - "Human nature is not a matter of mind and body - it is a matter of inter-related psyche and soma, with the mind as a flourish on the edge of psychosomatic functioning." (pg. 26)
 - **"The psyche part of the person is concerned with relationships, relationships within, relationships to the body, to the external world.** Arising out of what may be called the imaginative elaboration of body functioning of all kinds and the accumulation of memories, the psyche (specifically dependent on brain functioning) binds the experienced past, the present and the expected future together, makes sense of the person's sense of self, and justifies our perception of an individual there in that body. The psyche, developing in this way, becomes something that has position from which to become related to external reality, becomes a thing with a capacity to create and to perceive external reality, becomes a qualitatively enriched being able to go further than can be explained by environmental influences, and able not only to adapt but also to refuse to adapt, and becomes a creature with what feels like a capacity for choice. None of this appears automatically as a growth phenomenon. There is indeed an inherent growth element, but the early dependence on an adaptive environment is so great that this factor of growth becomes overlaid. In bodily development the growth factor is more clear; in the development of the psyche, by contrast, there is a possibility of failure at every point, and indeed there can be no such thing as growth without distortion due to some degree of failure of environmental adaptation." (pg. 28-29)
- Part 2
 - Introduction (pg. 33)
 - "It will now be necessary to examine the development of the psyche-soma, which, with mind functioning, gradually becomes the individual self-conscious person, **a person not only related to environment but eventually taking part in the maintenance and re-creation of that environment.**" (pg. 33)
 - Chapter 1 - Interpersonal Relationships (pg. 36)
 - "Freud did the unpleasant things for us, pointing out the reality and force of the unconscious, getting to the pain, anguish, conflict which invariably lie at the root of symptom formations, also putting forward, arrogantly if necessary, the importance of instinct and the significance of childhood sexuality. Any theory that denies or bypasses these matters is unhelpful." (pg. 36)
 - **"In the human infant and child there is an IMAGINATIVE ELABORATION of all body functioning..."** (pg. 40)
 - **"The basis of everything is the love that develops between child and other persons."** (pg. 48)
 - Chapter 2 - The Concept of Health Using Instinct Theory (pg. 51)
 - **"Out of the material of the imaginative elaboration of body functioning** (which itself depends on the capacity and healthy functioning of one organ: the brain) the psyche is forged. It can safely be said that fantasy that is near to body functioning is dependent on the function of the part of the brain that is less modern in evolution, whereas self-awareness is dependent on [the] function of that which is more modern in the evolution of the human animal. The psyche therefore has a fundamental unity with the body through its relation both to the function of tissue and organs and to the brain, as well as through the way it becomes intertwined with it by new relationships developed in the individual's fantasy or mind, conscious or unconscious. For me the soul is a property of the psyche thus defined, and it too therefore depends eventually on brain function, and can be healthy or ill. I know that this is a personal view which is counter to the teaching of almost every religious system. It is with great diffidence therefore that I stick to the view I have formed. It is of great practical importance for every thinking person to come to a personal decision on this point, however, because of the modern treatment of mental disorder by leucotomy, that is by deliberate distortion of healthy brain functioning for the relief of suffering in the psyche." (pg. 52)
 - "It is for the purpose of keeping **the relationship between the body and the psyche which is fundamental and which in health is established and maintained**, that I use the term psyche-soma in the dissection of the personality. There is also the mind, a specialised part of the psyche that is not necessarily body-linked, though of course dependent on brain functioning. We indulge in a fantasy that there is a place, which we call the mind, where the intellect works, and each individual places the mind somewhere, and there feels muscular straining or experiences vascular congestion when trying to think. The brain itself is not used in the imagination for the placing of the mind, since there is no awareness of brain functioning; the brain functions silently and claims no acknowledgement." (pg. 53)

- Part 3
 - Introduction (pg. 67)
 - See text
 - Chapter 1 - The Depressive Position (pg. 69)
 - See text
 - Chapter 2 - Development of the Theme of the Inner World (pg. 84)
 - See text
 - Chapter 3 - Various Types of Psycho-therapy (pg. 88)
 - See text
 - Chapter 4 - Hypochondriacal Anxiety (pg. 94)
 - See text
- Part 4
 - Chapter 1 - Establishment of Relationship with External Reality (pg. 100)
 - "In the day to day life of infancy we can watch the infant exploiting this third or illusory world which is neither inner reality nor external fact, and which we allow to the infant although we do not allow it to the adult or even to an older child. We see the infant sucking fingers or adopting a technique of twiddling the face or murmuring a sound or clutching a piece of cloth, and we know that the infant is claiming magical control over the world in these ways, prolonging (and we allow it) the omnipotence that was met and so implemented originally by the mother's adapting. I have thought it useful to call the objects and phenomena that belong to this kind of experience "transitional" have called the objects used "transitional objects" and the techniques employed "transitional phenomena". These terms imply that there is a temporary state belonging to early infancy in which the infant is allowed to claim magical control over external reality, a control which we know is made real by the mother's adapting, but the infant does not yet know this. The "transitional object" or first possession is an object which the infant has created, although at the same time that we say this we actually know it to have been a bit of blanket or a fringe of a shawl or a Harrington square. The next possession will have been given to the baby by an aunt and for this the child must say "ta", thereby acknowledging a limitation of magical control and acknowledging dependence on the goodwill of people in the external world. How important then are these early transitional objects and techniques! Their importance is reflected in their persistence, even crude persistence over the years. Out of these transitional phenomena develop much of what we variously allow and greatly value under the headings of religion and art and also the little madneses which are legitimate at the moment, according to the prevailing cultural pattern. There is a no-man's-land between the subjective and what is objectively perceived that is natural to infancy, and this we expect and allow. The infant is not challenged at first, does not have to decide, can be allowed to claim of something that is borderline that it is at one and the same time self-created and perceived or accepted from the world, the world that existed before the conception of the infant. Someone claiming indulgence in this respect at a later age is called mad. In religion and in the arts, we see the claim socialised so that the individual is not called mad and can enjoy in the exercise of religion or the practice and appreciation of the arts the rest that human beings need from absolute and never-failing discrimination between fact and fantasy." (pg. 106-107)
 - Chapter 2 - Integration (pg. 116)
 - "Integration means responsibility..." (pg. 119)
 - Chapter 3 - Dwelling of Psyche in Body (pg. 122)
 - See text
 - Chapter 4 - The Earliest States (pg. 126)
 - See text
 - Chapter 5 - A Primary State of Being (pg. 131)
 - "A statement of this condition must involve a paradox. At the start is an essential aloneness. At the same time this aloneness can only take place under maximum conditions of dependence. Here at the beginning the continuity of being of the new individual is without any awareness of the environment and of the love in the environment which is the name we give (at this stage) to active adaptation of such a kind and degree that continuity of being is not disturbed by reaction to impingement. Except at the start there is never exactly reproduced this fundamental and inherent aloneness. Nevertheless throughout the life of an individual there continues a fundamental unalterable and inherent aloneness, along with which goes unawareness of the conditions that are essential to the state of aloneness. The wish to get to this aloneness is interfered with by various anxieties and is hidden in the healthy person's ability to be alone in the care of a part of the self detailed off for self-nursing. The state prior to that of aloneness is one of unaliveness, and the wish to be dead is commonly a disguised wish to be not yet alive. The experience of the first awakening gives the human individual the idea that there is a peaceful state of unaliveness that can be peacefully reached by an extreme of regression. Most of what is commonly said and felt about death is about this first state before aliveness, where aloneness is a fact and long before dependence is encountered. The life of an individual is an interval between two states of unaliveness. The first of these, out of which aliveness arises, colours ideas people have about the second death." (pg. 132)
 - Chapter 6 - Chaos (pg. 135)
 - "Chaos first arrives in the history of the emotional development of the individual through reactive interruptions of being, especially when such interruptions last too long. **Chaos is at first a broken line of being**, and recovery occurs through re-experience of continuity; if the disturbance is beyond a degree that is tolerable according to earlier experiences of continuous being, then by crude economic laws a quantity of chaos enters into the individual's constitution. Chaos becomes meaningful exactly as there is to be discerned some kind of order. It represents an alternative to order, and by the time chaos itself can be sensed by the individual it has already become a kind of order, a state which may become organised in defence against anxieties associated with order. Chaos gathers to itself new meaning in relation to the order that is called integration. **Unintegration, the primary state, is not chaotic. Disintegration is chaotic, being an alternative to order, and it can be said to be a crude kind of defensive organisation, defensive against the anxieties that integration brings.** Nevertheless disintegration is not a state that of itself can go forward, and in so far as disintegration must be maintained, so far must emotional development be in abeyance. Each form of chaos contributes to the chaos that belongs to the subsequent stages, and recovery from chaos in an early stage gives a positive contribution to recovery from chaos later. No doubt there is a degree of chaotic environment which can only result in a chaotic defensive state in the individual, with a result difficult to distinguish clinically from the mental defect that belongs to poverty of brain tissue. The defect results in this case from a permanent hold-up of development from a very early date. The chaos of the inner world is a much later phenomenon. In the language of later phenomena, chaos in the inner world is an organised state that derives from oral sadism, and belongs to the instinctual life of the human being who has attained unit status, and has an inside and an outside. Hypochondriacal anxiety belongs to this chaos within, and depression (in one form) implies a magical control over all inner phenomena, pending reconstitution of orderliness within. The chaos in the external world which is engineered by the depressive patient represents the individual's attempt to show what the inside is like. In defence against such a procedure the individual may become obsessed with the need for external orderliness, as in obsessional neurosis; but **obsessional behaviour all the time points to chaos within**, so that the obsessional orderliness cannot heal because it can only deal with the external representations or denials of the inner chaos. First, then, there is no chaos because there is no order. This can be called unintegration. Chaos appears in relation to

integration, and a return to chaos is called disintegration. The next defensive states are not chaotic, but are of the nature of splitting. **Splitting is an essential state in every human being**, but one that need not be significant if the cushioning of illusion is made possible by the mother's management. In absence of active adaptation that is good enough the splitting becomes significant, with the following result: (1) Root of true self, with spontaneity, related omnipotently to subjective world, incommunicable, and (2) False self related on compliance basis (without spontaneity) to what we call external reality. Gradually, as development proceeds, the individual can encompass the splitting that exists in the personality, and then lack of wholeness is called dissociation. The attainment of unit status and of the depressive position makes possible the dramatisation of chaos, of splitting and of dissociations in the personal inner world, the complex results of personal instinctual experiences being incorporated into these dramatisations. Disintegration after the individual has attained unit status is an organised undoing of integration, brought about and maintained because of intolerable anxiety in experience of wholeness. The splitting up in disintegration occurs along lines of cleavage in the inner world set-up, or of perceived outer world cleavage. Dissociation is a term describing a condition of the relatively well developed personality, in which there is a rather exaggerated lack of communication between various elements. For instance there may be an absence of communication between the sleeping and waking states by remembered dreams. There is a normal dissociation (in time) between the life of a child of 3 and the life of that child after growing a few years older. Dissociation may show as a liability to "fugues", to periods of action and life that are out of character, and unremembered after. The individual now becomes able to lose touch with the vast organisations associated with primitive levels of existence, and to enjoy a consciousness, enriched and also troubled by the unconscious. Certain elements in the self remain unacceptable to the self and a special form of unconscious (the repressed) is now a feature. Repression is the term given to the loss from the consciousness of a more or less healthy person of groups of feelings, memories, and ideas, the cause being intolerable pain that belongs to consciousness of coincident love and hate, and of fear of retaliation. Allied to this is inhibition of instinct. It is in respect of repression that psycho-analysis brings about relief in the classical way, by enabling the patient to become conscious of the conflict and to tolerate the anxiety that belongs to a free instinctual expression. If development proceeds well the individual becomes able to deceive, to lie, to compromise, to accept conflict as a fact and to abandon the extreme ideas of perfection and an opposite to perfection that make existence intolerable. Capacity for compromise is not a characteristic of the insane. The mature human being is neither so nice nor so nasty as the immature. The water in the glass is muddy, but is not mud." (pg. 135-138)

- Chapter 7 - The Intellectual Function (pg. 139)
 - "At first there is soma, then a psyche that in health gradually - becomes anchored to the soma; sooner or later a third phenomenon appears which is called intellect or mind." (pg. 139)
- Chapter 8 - Withdrawal and Aggression (pg. 141)
 - See text
- Chapter 9 - The Birth Experience (pg. 143)
 - See text
- Chapter 10 - Environment (pg. 152)
 - "In maturity environment is something to which the individual contributes and for which the individual man or woman takes responsibility. In a community in which there is a sufficiently high proportion of mature individuals there is a state of affairs which provides the basis for what is called democracy. If the proportion of mature individuals is below a certain number, democracy is not something which can become a political fact since affairs will be swayed by the immature, that is to say, by those who by identification with the community lose their own individuality or by those who never achieve more than the attitude of the individual dependent upon society." (pg. 152)

c. Further Readings:

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