

Babies and their Mothers, by D. Winnicott

a. Quotes:

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b. General Notes:

- Chapter 1 - The Ordinary Devoted Mother (pg. 3)
 - "Where there is good enough quality in the facilitating environment, which has to be a human one and a personal one, the inherited tendencies of the baby to grow have their first important achievements. One can give names to these things. The main thing is covered by the word integration. All the bits and pieces of activity and sensation which go to form what we come to know as this particular baby begin to come together at times so that there are moments of integration in which the baby is a unit although of course a highly dependent one. We say that the mother's ego support facilitates the ego organization of the baby. Eventually the baby becomes able to assert his or her own individuality and even to feel a sense of identity. The whole thing looks very simple when it goes well, and the basis for all this is in the very early relationship in which the baby and the mother are at one. There is nothing mystical about this. The mother has one kind of identification with the baby, a highly sophisticated one, in that she feels very much identified with the baby, but of course she remains adult. The baby, on the other hand, has an identity with the mother in the quiet moments of contact which is not so much an achievement of the baby as of the relationship which the mother makes possible. From the baby's point of view there is nothing else but the baby, and therefore the mother is at first part of the baby. In other words, there is something here which people call primary identification. There is the beginning of everything, and it gives meaning to very simple words like being." (pg. 11)
 - "The opposite of integration is a failure of integration or disintegration from a state of integration. This is unbearable. It is one of **the most basic unthinkable anxieties of infancy** which are prevented by ordinary care of the kind that nearly all infants do, in fact, get from an adult human being. I will enumerate very briefly one or two other similar basic growth processes. It is not possible to take for granted that **the infant's psyche will form satisfactorily in partnership with the soma, that is to say with the body and its functioning**. Psycho-somatic existence is an achievement, and although its basis is an inherited growth tendency, it cannot become a fact without the active participation of a human being who is holding and handling the baby. A breakdown in this area has to do with all the difficulties affecting bodily health which actually stem from uncertainty in personality structure." (pg. 12)
 - "Another thing that I could mention has to do with the beginnings of object-relating. This is already getting on towards a sophisticated view of psychology. You will recognise, however, the way in which, when the relationship between the baby and the mother is satisfactory, objects begin to turn up which the baby can use symbolically; not only the thumb for sucking but also something to catch hold of which eventually may become a doll or a toy. A breakdown here has to be measured in terms of a failure of the capacity for object-relating." (pg. 13)
- Chapter 2 - Knowing and Learning (pg. 15)
 - "Let me describe three stages in the infant's relation to the world (represented by your arms and your breathing body), leaving out hunger and anger, and all the great upheavals. First stage: the infant is self-contained, a live creature, yet surrounded by space. The infant knows of nothing, except of self. Second stage: the infant moves an elbow, a knee, or straightens out a little. The space has been crossed. The infant has surprised the environment. Third stage: you who are holding the infant jump a little, because the door bell rang, or the kettle boiled over, and again the space has been crossed. This time the environment has surprised the infant." (pg. 19)
- Chapter 3 - Breast Feeding as Communication (pg. 23)
 - "From my point of view the mental health of the individual is being laid down from the very beginning by the mother who provides what I have called a facilitating environment, that is to say one in which the infant's natural growth processes and interactions with the environment can evolve according to the inherited pattern of the individual. The mother is (with-out knowing it laying down the foundations of mental health of the individual. But not only that. If we assume mental health, the mother (if she is doing well is laying down the foundations of the individual's strength of character and richness of personality. On such a good basis the individual has a chance as time goes on to reach to the world creatively and to enjoy and use what the world has to offer, including the cultural heritage. It is unfortunately only too true that if a child is not started off well enough then the cultural heritage might just as well never have been and the beauty of the world is only a tantalising colour that cannot be enjoyed. In this way therefore there are truly the haves and the have-nots, and this has nothing to do with finance; it has to do with those who were started off well enough and those who were not started off well enough." (pg. 24-25)
 - "[H]olding and handling are more vitally important as indications of management than is the actual fact of a breast-feeding experience." (pg. 25)
 - "The thing that is important here is the recognition of the fact that the basis for this healthy development in the human individual is the survival of the object that has been attacked. In the case of a mother feeding a baby it is her survival not only as a live person, but also as a person who did not change at the critical moment into a vindictive person and did not retaliate." (pg. 32)
- Chapter 4 - The Newborn and His Mother (pg. 35)
 - "I have written a lot about this under the heading: "primary maternal preoccupation." In this state mothers become able to put themselves into the infant's shoes, so to speak. That is to say, they develop an amazing capacity for identification with the baby, and this makes them able to meet the basic needs of the infant in a way that no machine can imitate, and no teaching can reach." (pg. 36-37)
 - "You see two infants; one has been held (in my extended sense of the word) well enough, and there is nothing to prevent a rapid emotional growth, according to inborn tendencies. The other has not had the experience of being held well and growth has had to be distorted and delayed, and some degree of primitive agony has to be carried on into life and living. Let it be said that in the common experience of good-enough holding the mother has been able to supply an auxiliary ego-function, so that the infant has had an ego from an early start, a very feeble, personal ego, but one boosted by the sensitive adaptation of the mother and by her ability to identify with her infant in relation to basic needs. The infant who has not had this experience has either needed to develop premature ego functioning, or else there has developed a muddle." (pg. 38)
 - "In the psychology of emotional growth the individual's maturational processes, if they are to become actual, need the provision of a facilitating environment. This latter, the facilitating environment, rapidly becomes extremely complex. Only a human being can know an infant in a way that makes possible an increasing complexity of adaptation that is graded to the infant's changing needs. Maturation in the early stages, and indeed all along, is very much a matter of integration. I cannot repeat here all that has been written on details of primitive emotional development, but three main tasks come under this heading: integration of the self, the psyche dwelling in the body, and object-relating. Roughly corresponding to these are the three functions of the mother: holding, handling, and object-presenting." (pg. 38)
- Chapter 5 - The Beginning of the Individual (pg. 51)
 - See text
- Chapter 6 - Environmental Health in Infancy (pg. 59)
 - "Infant care can be described in terms of holding, especially if one allows the meaning of the term to expand as the baby grows older and the baby's world grows more complex. Eventually the term can usefully include the function of the family unit, and in a more sophisticated way the same term

may be employed to describe case-work, as practised by the caring professions. At the beginning, however, it is the physical holding of the physical frame that provides the psychology that can be good or bad. Good holding and handling facilitates the maturational processes and bad holding means repeatedly interrupting those processes because of the baby's reactions to failures of adaptation. Facilitation, in this context, means that there is adaptation to basic need, and this happens to be something that cannot be done except by a human being. An incubator is adequate for the premature infant, but at the birthdate the baby has maturity that needs human care, even if it is valuable for the mother to be able to use a cot or a pram. The human mother can adapt to the baby's needs at this early stage because she has no other interest, for the time being. It is the luck of most babies to be held well most of the time. On this they build confidence in a friendly world, but, more important, because of being held well enough they are able to make the grade in their very rapid emotional growth. The basis of personality is being laid down well if the baby is held well enough. Babies do not remember being held well - what they remember is the traumatic experience of not being held well enough." (pg. 62-63)

- "...when the mother and the baby come to terms with each other in the feeding situation this is initiation of a human relationship. This sets the pattern for the child's capacity for relating to objects and to the world" (pg. 63-64)
- "[The mother's] adaption to need...enables the baby to discover the world creatively" (pg. 65)
- Chapter 7 - The Contribution of Psychoanalysis to Midwifery (pg. 69)
 - See text
- Chapter 8 - Development in Child Care (pg. 83)
 - See text
- Chapter 9 - Communication Between Infant and Mother (pg. 89)
 - "The basis for all theories about human personality development is continuity, the line of life, which presumably starts before the baby's actual birth; continuity which carries with it the idea that nothing that has been part of an individual's experience is lost or can ever be lost to that individual, even if in various complex ways it should and does become unavailable to consciousness." (pg. 90)
 - "The most precarious part of the complex that is called a baby is the baby's cumulative experience of life. It really does make a difference whether I am born to a bedouin where the sand is hot, or to a political prisoner in Siberia, or to a merchant's wife in England's damp but beautiful west country. I may be conventionally suburban, or illegitimate. I may be an only child, an oldest child, or the middle one of five, or the third boy of four boys in a row. All this matters and is part of me." (pg. 91)
 - "The mother's capacity to meet the changing and developing needs of this one baby enables this one baby to have a line of life, relatively unbroken; and enables this baby to experience both unintegrated or relaxed states in confidence in the holding that is actual, along with oft-repeated phases of the integration that is part of the baby's inherited growth tendency. The baby goes easily to and fro from integration to the ease of relaxed unintegration and the accumulation of these experiences becomes a pattern, and forms a basis for what the baby expects. The baby comes to believe in a reliability in the inward processes leading to integration into a unit. As development proceeds, and the baby has acquired an inside and an outside, then the environmental reliability becomes a belief, an introject based on the experience of reliability (human, not mechanically perfect)." (pg. 97)
 - "Successful adaptation thus gives a sense of security, a feeling of having been loved" (pg. 98)

c. Further Readings:

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