

# Psychoanalytic Theory, Therapy, and the Self, by H. Guntrip

## a. People / Organizations:

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## b. Quotes:

- "Great literature is saturated with psychopathology. Indeed many great writers and artists were profoundly disturbed and even eventually in-sane. But they possessed a genius for self-expression, and their tortured experiences tumbled out as they described the sufferings of their fictional heroes and heroines." - Author (pg. 14)
- **"To care for people is more important than to care for ideas, which can be good servants but bad masters..."** - Author (pg. 27)
- "Those who cannot make genuinely personal relations often fall back on bodily sexual relations as a substitute, only to find that sex does not fill the aching mental void." - Author (pg. 36)
- "We must use common sense and not be too theory-ridden." - Author (pg. 154)
- **"All human beings have fundamental things in common"** - Author (pg. 195)

## c. General Notes:

- Part 1 - Theory (pg. 1)
  - Chapter 1 - Seeing Freud in Perspective (pg. 3)
    - "Psychoanalysis can no longer be simply identified with the original, classic psychobiology." (pg. 5)
    - "...psychic phenomena are not visible as tangible "things" obviously existing in relative isolation from other "things." They are subjective experiences which different people verbalize in different ways. Nevertheless, the description of certain common experiences by people of extremely different types are found to have a cumulative consistency. The psychoanalyst, being himself human, can recognize the meaning of what they say by reference to his own experience. Moreover, what is in this sense clinically observable is found to imply the existence of other subjective experiences which have to be inferred to make sense of what is more directly known. Thus, the unconscious is both a clinical fact and an inference, or hypothesis." (pg. 6)
    - **"It becomes apparent that we do not by any means entirely grow out of our childhood experiences, and that, in so far as they are a source of acute anxiety and insecurity and angers, a great deal of all this is buried in the unconscious while our conscious self of everyday living develops on either a conformity or a rebellion basis, or more usually a mixture of the two.** Our conscious self has to develop ego-defences against the uprush of subtle intrusion of the turbulent unconscious conflicts. When these defences weaken or fail, the buried legacy of a too disturbed past erupts into consciousness to result in all degrees of mental or personal malfunctioning, ranging from mild anxiety symptoms to severe or, for the time being, total breakdown of adult mental functioning. All this inevitably puts great stress on the enormous importance of the formative experiences of early childhood." (pg. 8)
    - "Reliability, sympathetic objectivity, and the genuine understanding offered by the analyst, enables the emotionally disturbed person slowly to acquire the confidence to "free associate," i.e., to talk his way freely out of the emotional mire of past unhappiness in which he has been bogged down." (pg. 9)
    - **"Freud observed that "Identification is a substitute for a lost human relationship,"** or indeed for one that was urgently needed and unobtainable. Thus a child who finds that he cannot get any satisfactory kind of relationship with a parent who is too cold and aloof, or too aggressive, or too authoritarian tends to make up for his sense of apartness and isolation by identifying with, or growing like, that parent, as if this were a way of possessing the needed person within oneself." (pg. 10)
    - "All theories, especially those about human nature, are conditioned by the cultural era, the prevailing intellectual climate, and the dominant ideas of the time in which they are developed. Freud's theorizing was of necessity highly determined from the start by the scientific education in physics, chemistry, physiology, neurology, and general medicine and also by the prevailing ideas in academic psychology, philosophy, and social studies then prevalent. It was part of Freud's fate, which involved him in no little mental pain, that his own developing insights into human nature compelled him so often to clash with the legacy of his own educational heritage and the thinking of his contemporaries." (pg. 11)
    - "I will only observe here that psychoanalytical theory today centers less and less on the control of instinct and more on the development of a stable core of selfhood - that is, the laying of the foundations of a strong personal ego in a good mother-infant relationship at the start of life, and its subsequent fate in the ever varying types of personal relationships, good and bad, that make up our life." (pg. 12-13)
    - "There is not, however, now or ever, any possibility of treating the study of the many faceted phenomena of our human nature as the monopolistic preserve of any one profession or school of thought. The organic, behavioral, and psychodynamic sciences must learn to recognize each other's contributions and their own limitations, and learn to cooperate. Within the narrower ambit of the psychodynamic field, any tendency to preserve exclusive schools of theory as closed in-groups must spell the death of open-minded scientific inquiry and gravely hinder progress. **What I have sought to do here is to trace the growth of psychoanalysis from its nineteenth-century beginnings as a physically based psychophysiology and psychobiology, to a twentieth-century exploration of a new area in an over-all enlarged field of science, psychodynamics.** Psychodynamics is defined as the study of the motivated and meaningful life of human beings, as persons shaped in the media of personal relationships which constitute their lives and determine to so large an extent how their innate gifts and possibilities will develop and how, to use Donald Winnicott's terms, the "maturation processes" develop in the "facilitating" or so often "unfacilitating environment" of the other important human beings." (pg. 17)
  - Chapter 2 - The Starting Point of Psychodynamic Inquiry (pg. 19)
    - "There is something wrong with us if our theoretical ideas remain stagnant and impervious to change for too long. Theory is simply the best we can do to date to conceptualize the experiences our patients present to us. Winnicott once wrote that it is impossible for an analyst to be original, for what he writes today, he learned (from a patient) yesterday." (pg. 21)
    - "Before I came to psychoanalysis in practice, a rigorous training in philosophy made me skeptical about all theories. Clearly human thought never reaches finality. I came to the conclusion that particularly theories about human nature always represent a modicum of fact described within the limits of the cultural outlook of some one restricted period of social history." (pg. 22)
    - "Object-relations theory, or rather object-relational thinking, is a broad stream of thought today. Its roots may be found in the work of Freud on the Oedipus complex and the phenomena of transference and resistance in treatment. It expanded tremendously in the work of Melanie Klein on internal objects, became explicitly conscious of itself in American psychosociology and in Fairbairn's correlations of internal-object-splittings and ego-splittings, has been clinically developed in Erikson's ego-identity studies, and in the most radical way deepened by Winnicott's work on ego-origins in the earliest mother-infant relationships." (pg. 25)
    - "Freud's ideas fall into two main groups, (1) the id-plus-ego-control apparatus, and (2) the Oedipus complex of family object-relationship situations with their reappearance in treatment as transference and resistance. The first group of ideas tends to picture the psyche as a mechanism, an impersonal arrangement for securing detensioning, a homeostatic organization. The second group tends toward a personal

- psychology of the influence people have on each other's lives, particularly parents on children. This second group of ideas led Freud beyond the study of sex, with its obvious biological basis and function, to aggression, with its obvious social concomitants of guilt and depression, and so to the concept of the superego, an aspect of psychic life not traceable to biology but based on identification with parents. The superego enshrines the fact of personal object-relations, since Freud pointed out that the overcoming of the Oedipus complex is effected by identification taking the place of Oedipal relations with parents." (pg. 28-29)
- Chapter 3 - The Turning Point: From Psychobiology to Object-Relations (pg. 45)
    - "Whereas Freud's theory was basically physiological and biological, **I do not think that Klein's theory is in any genuine sense biological at all; it is philosophical, and more like a revealed religious belief than a scientific theory in its basic assumptions. Everything in life for Klein is dominated and overshadowed by the mighty and mysterious forces of life and death, creation and destruction, locked in perpetual struggle in the depths of our unconscious psychic experience, and constituting our very nature as persons.**" (pg. 58)
  - Chapter 4 - The Broadening Theoretical Reorientation (pg. 69)
    - See text
  - Chapter 5 - The Crucial Issue: System-Ego and Person-Ego (pg. 103)
    - "Psychoanalysis has to understand the person, the unique individual as he lives and grows in complex meaningful relationships with other persons who are at the same time growing in their relationships with him. This mutual living arises out of biological conditions and goes on in sociological conditions, but it achieves a spiritual independence of both on the level of its own special significance, that of the person-ego in personal relationships. A human being is a psychosomatic whole in which the soma provides the basis of material existence and the machinery for carrying out the purposes of the psychic self. He has bodily appetites and functions to subserve existence, great mental resources, and a latent self that is his *raison d'être* to find and be in the process of relating to his complex material and human environment. This involves that being is more fundamental than doing, quality more fundamental than activity, that the reality of what a man does is determined by what he is, as when a middle-aged woman on a British television program said, 'I plunged early into marriage and motherhood, trying to substitute 'doing' for 'being?'" In this lies the difference between adapting and relating, which is why I must disagree with Hartmann when he writes, "An investigation such as this one, which uses man's relation to his environment as its point of departure, should focus on action." Adaptation is one-sided and is certainly a matter of action. But personal object-relations are essentially two-sided, mutual by reason of being personal, and not a matter of mutual adaptation merely, but of mutual appreciation, communication, sharing, and of each being for the other." (pg. 111)
    - "If human infants are not surrounded by gen-wine love from birth, radiating outward into a truly caring family and social environment, then we pay for our failure toward the next generation by having to live in a world torn with fear and hate, full of grossly unhappy people who wreck marriages and friendships and constantly swell the ranks of the deeply disturbed, from unproductive hippies living in a flimsy fantasy world, to criminals, delinquents, and psychopaths. In between are the all too common fanatical adherents of scientific, political, economic, educational, and religious ideologies trying to call or drive us to various types of earthly paradise, and always failing to devote their resources to the one necessary thing, achieving a recognition of the fact that the importance of security for babies and mother outweighs every other issue. If that is not achieved, everything else we do merely sustains human masses to struggle on from crisis to crisis, from minor to major breakdowns." (pg. 114)
    - "The innermost schizoid core of a depersonalized human being is very difficult to reach for complex reasons. It is (1) withdrawn and regressed in fear, (2) repressed because the weak infant is unacceptable to consciousness, (3) disintegrated in the beginnings of its ego-structure, thus feeling unreal and not a proper person, and (4) most profoundly of all, unevoked in its potentialities, never fully called to life in the unfacilitating environment." (pg. 118)
    - "Winnicott suggests that this toy is the very first definite symbol of relationship, and is actually the beginning of culture. Culture is the ever-expanding elaboration of our symbols for representing our life as persons, as consisting in the meaningful development of our personalities toward maturity in those interpersonal relations that are the very stuff of living. The whole of art, literature, and religion are embraced in culture in this sense. Science is not a part of culture, being a more pedestrian, utilitarian thing, however much its studies of our expanding universe stimulate our imagination. If ego-unrelatedness is the essence of the schizoid state of de-personalization, unreality, and nonentity, then ego-relatedness is the foundation of the experience of ego-reality and self-hood, the feeling of inbeingness as a definite self." (pg. 119)
    - "The more primitive the society, the more aggression becomes simply self-defense. Margaret Mead described a peaceful tribe in which there is a minimum of distinction between the sexes, where boys and girls played cooperative and gentle games together, and both parents were equally interested in the raising of children, giving them plenty of love and attention. **The more complex societies become, the more fears and insecurities create vicious circles of suspicion, defensiveness, defense by attack, and counterattack. An aggressive society becomes self-perpetuating, a nearly insoluble problem.** But we must not blindly ascribe this to nature and instinct. It is a sign of the bankruptcy of the creative capacities to live and love. Being, the sense of assured stable selfhood, is the basis of healthy doing, of spontaneous creative activity. Without it, doing can only be forced self-driving to keep oneself going, a state of mind that breeds aggression, in the first place against oneself; and then to gain some relief from self-persecution, it is turned outward against other people, situations, or causes, creating the social neuroses of fanaticism, political, religious, or idiosyncratic." (pg. 120)
    - "To summarize, a human infant can only grow to be a person-ego, a self, out of his original state of total mergence in and identification with his mother prior to birth, if the mother's ego support for him after birth is adequate through the period of his separating out from her mentally. Then, as a strongly formed personal self with an unshakable deep experience of basic ego-relatedness as a built-in foundation for future growth, the adult socialized ego develops the mature capacity both to be alone without feeling isolated, and to commit and involve himself in true self-devotion, or even apparent self-abnegation for adequate reasons, without losing his proper individuality. This perhaps is the peak of maturity (unfortunately easily neurotically counterfeited), to be able to give oneself to the utmost in love, for convincing reasons, without loss of ego-integrity. The model for this is the mature mother with her baby, which, as Winnicott says, may look like illness but is in fact the supreme mark of health; that is, not infatuation but genuine self-giving. This must also be the mature way of falling in love, which need not therefore be, as Freud seems to have thought, a neurotic infatuation. It must also be the hallmark of mature friendship of every degree, and finally of the psychotherapeutic relationship. Perhaps it is the reality of genuine religious experiences, which needs exploration." (pg. 124)
  - Part 2 - Therapy (pg. 143)
    - Chapter 6 - The Schizoid Problem (pg. 145)
      - "In fact it is now apparent that these problems in human relationships very often arise out of deeper problems of the inadequate development of what Winnicott called basic ego-relatedness, than is at first apparent. **When that is lacking, the unfortunate individual's whole life is a struggle by all kinds of superficial relationships, techniques of dealing with people and events, and role-playing, to manufacture the feeling of being a genuine person.** We cannot assume that the built-in experience of basic ego-relatedness is beyond damage. In our time we have to consider how far the extreme pressures of totalitarian political regimes backed by physical violence can push the strongest beyond their breaking-point." (pg. 149)
    - Chapter 7 - Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy (pg. 175)
      - See text

d. Further Readings:

- (Article) Alienation and the Individual, by P. King