

Home is Where We Start From, by D. Winnicott

a. Quotes:

- "...rigidity [is] itself a guarantee against forward movement" - Author (pg. 32)
- "To fight and to lose is not worse for the soul than fighting and winning." - Author (pg. 220)

b. General Notes:

- Chapter 1 - Psychoanalysis and Science (pg. 13)
 - "Religion replaces doubt with certainty" (pg. 14)
 - "First you must have an idea of the general scheme of the emotional development of human beings. Then you must know about the tensions that are inherent in life, and the ways that are employed for dealing with such tensions. And then you must know about the breakdown of the normal defences and the establishment of second and third lines of defence, in other words, of the organization of illness as a way of carrying on in face of the failure of ordinary defences. Underlying the tensions are the instincts, the body functions that operate orgiastically. Of course, part of the individual's defence against intolerable anxiety is always the environmental provision. The setting for life evolves, normally, along with the individual, so that the dependence of the infant gradually develops into the independence of the older child and the autonomy of the adult. All this is very complex and has been worked out in great detail. It is possible to classify illness in terms of environmental breakdown. More interesting, however, is the study of illness in terms of the organization of defences in the individual. Each of these lines of approach teaches us about the life of ordinary normal people: one teaches us about society, and the other teaches us about the personal human tensions which are the concern of philosophers and artists and of religion. In other words, psychoanalysis has deeply affected our way of looking at life, and there is much more to come from psychoanalysis than has yet been brought across to the study of society and of ordinary people. In the meantime psychoanalysis continues to be a method of investigation which has no parallel or rival." (pg. 15-16)
 - "What is the main thing that psychoanalysis tells us about people? It tells us about the unconscious, about the deep and hidden life of each human individual, that which has roots in the real and imaginative life of earliest childhood. At the beginning these two things, the real and the imaginative life, are one and the same thing, because the infant at the beginning does not perceive objectively, but lives in a subjective state, being the creator of all. Gradually, in health the infant becomes able to perceive a world that is a not-me world, and to attain this state the infant must be cared for well enough at the time of absolute dependence." (pg. 16)
- Chapter 2 - The Concept of a Healthy Individual (pg. 21)
 - "**Individual maturity implies a movement towards independence, but there is no such thing as independence. It would be unhealthy for an individual to be so withdrawn as to feel independent and invulnerable. If such a person is alive, then there is dependence indeed!**" (pg. 21)
 - "In a complex way (which has received much study) development, especially at the beginning, depends on a good-enough environmental provision. A good-enough environment can be said to be that which facilitates the various individual inherited tendencies so that development takes place according to these inherited tendencies. Inheritance and the environment are each external factors if we speak in terms of the emotional development of the individual person, that is to say, of psychomorphology...It can usefully be postulated that the good-enough environment starts with a high degree of adaptation to individual infant needs. Usually the mother is able to provide this because of the special state she is in, which I have called primary maternal preoccupation. Other names have been given to this state, but I am using my own descriptive term. Adaptation decreases according to the baby's growing need to experience reactions to frustration. In health the mother is able to delay her function of failing to adapt, till the baby has become able to react with anger rather than be traumatized by her failures. Trauma means the breaking of the continuity of the line of the individual's existence. It is only on a continuity of existing that the sense of self, of feeling real, and of being, can eventually be established as a feature of the individual personality." (pg. 22)
 - "Let us say that in health a man or woman is able to reach towards an identification with society without too great a loss of individual or personal impulse. There must, of course, be loss in the sense of control of personal impulse, but the extreme of identification with society with total loss of sense of self and self-importance is not normal at all." (pg. 27)
 - "The life of a healthy individual is characterized by fears, conflicting feelings, doubts, frustrations, as much as by the positive features. The main thing is that the man or woman feels he or she is living his or her own life, taking responsibility for action or inaction, and able to take credit for success and blame for failure. In one language it can be said that the individual has emerged from dependence to independence, or to autonomy." (pg. 27)
 - "In an environment that holds the baby well enough, the baby is able to make personal development according to the inherited tendencies. The result is a continuity of existence that becomes a sense of existing, a sense of self, and eventually results in autonomy." (pg. 28)
 - "Object-relating is something that the maturational process drives the baby to achieve, but cannot happen securely unless the world is presented to the baby well enough. The adapting mother presents the world in such a way that the baby starts with a ration of the experience of omnipotence, this being the proper foundation for his or her later coming to terms with the Reality Principle. A paradox is involved here, in that in this initial phase the baby creates the object, but the object is already there, else he would not have created it. The paradox has to be accepted, not resolved. Now let us carry this over to the fields of mental illness and to adult health. In schizoid illness, object-relating goes wrong; the patient relates to a subjective world or fails to relate to any object outside the self. Omnipotence is asserted by means of delusions. The patient is withdrawn, out of contact, bemused, isolated, unreal, deaf, inaccessible, invulnerable, and so on." (pg. 30)
 - "In health a great deal of life has to do with various kinds of object-relating, and with a 'to-and-fro' process between relating to external objects and relating to internal ones. In full fruition this is a matter of interpersonal relationships, but the residues of creative relating are not lost, and this makes every aspect of object-relating exciting. Health here includes the idea of tingling life and the magic of intimacy. All these things go together and add up to a sense of feeling real and of being, and of the experiences feeding back into the personal psychological reality, enriching it, and giving it scope. The consequence is that the healthy person's inner world is related to the outer or actual world and yet is personal and capable of an aliveness of its own. Introjective and projective identifications are constantly taking place. It follows that loss and ill fortune (and illness, as I have said may be more terrible for the healthy than for those who are psychologically immature or distorted. Health must be allowed to carry its own risks." (pg. 30-31)
 - "I refer to those people who have unconsciously needed to organize a false-self front to cope with the world, this false front being a defence designed to protect the true self. (The true self has been traumatized and it must never be found and wounded again.) Society is easily taken in by the false-self organization, and has to pay heavily for this. The false self, from our point of view here, though a successful defence, is not an aspect of health. It merges into the Kleinian concept of a manic defence - where there is a depression but this depression is denied, by unconscious process of course, so that the symptoms of depression appear as their opposites (up for down, light for heavy, white or luminous for dark, liveliness for deadness, excitement for indifference, and so on)." (pg. 33)
 - "Being and feeling real belong essentially to health, and it is only if we can take being for granted that we can get on to the more positive things." (pg. 35)

- "Health is not associated with denial of anything" (pg. 35)
 - **"It is human beings who are likely to destroy the world.** If so, we can perhaps die in the last atomic explosion knowing that this is not health but fear; **it is part of the failure of healthy people and healthy society to carry its ill members."** (pg. 37)
- Chapter 3 - Living Creatively (pg. 39)
 - "To be creative a person must exist and have a feeling of existing, not in conscious awareness, but as a basic place to operate from. Creativity is then the doing that arises out of being. It indicates that he who is, is alive. Impulse may be at rest, but when the word 'doing' becomes appropriate, then already there is creativity." (pg. 39)
 - "Creativity, then, is the retention throughout life of something that belongs properly to infant experience: the ability to create the world." (pg. 40)
 - "Here I want to remind you of the special mental mechanisms of projection and introjection: I mean the functions of identifying oneself with others and others with oneself." (pg. 47)
- Chapter 4 - Sum, I Am (pg. 55)
 - See text
- Chapter 5 - The Concept of the False Self (pg. 65)
 - See text
- Chapter 6 - The Value of Depression (pg. 71)
 - **"In the beginning the infant is the environment and the environment is the infant.** By a complex process (which is in part understood, and on which I and others have written at great length' the infant separates out objects and then the environment from the self. There is a half-way state in which the object to which the infant is related is a subjective object. Then the infant becomes a unit, first momentarily and then almost all the time. One of many consequences of this new development is that the infant comes to have an inside. A complex interchange between what is inside and what is outside now begins, and continues throughout the individual's life, and constitutes the main relationship of the individual to the world. This relationship is more important even than object-relating and instinct gratification. This two-way interchange involves mental mechanisms that are named 'projection' and 'introjection'. And then much happens, in fact, very much indeed, but it would be out of place to develop this statement further in this context. The source of these developments is the inborn maturational process in the individual, which the environment facilitates. The facilitating environment is necessary, and without its being good enough, the maturational process weakens or wilts. (I have often described these matters, and they are complex.) Thus, ego structure and strength become a fact, and the dependence of a new individual on the environment moves further and further away from the absolute and towards independence, though never reaching to absolute independence. The development and establishment of ego strength is the important or basic feature indicating health. Naturally the term 'ego strength' comes to mean more and more as the child matures, and at first the ego has strength only because of the ego support given by the adapting mother, who for a while is able to identify closely with her own infant. There comes a stage at which the child has become a unit, becomes able to feel: I AM, has an inside, is able to ride his or her instinctual storms, and also is able to contain the strains and stresses that arise in the personal inner psychic reality. The child has become able to be depressed. This is an achievement of emotional growth. Our view of depression, then, is closely bound up with our concept of ego strength and of self-establishment and of the discovery of a personal identity, and it is for this reason that we can discuss the idea that depression has value." (pg. 72-73)
- Chapter 7 - Aggression, Guilt and Reparation (pg. 80)
 - "The difficult thing is for each individual to take full responsibility for the destructiveness that is personal, and that inherently belongs to a relationship to an object that is felt to be good - in other words, that is related to loving. 'Integration' is a word that comes in here, because if one can conceive of a fully integrated person, then that person takes full responsibility for all feelings and ideas that belong to being alive. By contrast, it is a failure of integration when we need to find the things we disapprove of outside ourselves and do so at a price - this price being the loss of the destructiveness which really belongs to ourselves. I am talking, therefore, about the development which has to take place in every individual of the capacity to take responsibility for the whole of that individual's feelings and ideas, the word 'health' being closely linked with the degree of integration which makes it possible for this to happen. One thing about a healthy person is that he or she does not have to use in a big way the technique of projection in order to cope with his or her own destructive impulses and thoughts." (pg. 82)
- Chapter 8 - Delinquency as a Sign of Hope (pg. 90)
 - **"...the antisocial tendency is linked inherently with de-privation.** In other words, it is not the general social failure that is responsible so much as a specific failure. For the child that we are studying, it can be said that things went well enough and then they did not go well enough. A change occurred which altered the whole life of the child and this change in the environment happened when the child was old enough to know about things. It is not that the child could come here and give a lecture on himself or herself but, given suitable conditions, the child is able to reproduce what happened because of having been far enough developed at the time to have been aware. In other words, in special conditions of psychotherapy the child is able to remember in terms of the material produced, in playing or in dreaming or in talking, the essential features of the original deprivation. I want to contrast this with environmental disturbances at an earlier stage of emotional development. A baby deprived of oxygen does not go around hoping to convince someone that if there had been enough oxygen, things would have been all right. Environmental disturbances distorting the emotional development of a baby do not produce the antisocial tendency; they produce distortions of the personality which result in illness of psychotic type, so that the boy or girl is liable to mental hospital disorder or else he or she goes through life with certain distortions of reality testing and so on, perhaps of the kind that are accepted. **The antisocial tendency relates not to privation, but to a deprivation.** The characteristic of the antisocial tendency is the drive that it gives the boy or girl to get back behind the deprivation moment or condition. A child who has been deprived in this way has first suffered unthinkable anxiety and then has gradually reorganized into someone who is in a fairly neutral state, complying because there is nothing else that the child is strong enough to do. This state may be fairly satisfactory from the point of view of those who are in charge. Then, for some reason or other, hope begins to appear, and this means that the child, without being conscious of what is going on, begins to have the urge to get back behind the moment of deprivation and so to undo the fear of the unthinkable anxiety or confusion that resulted before the neutral state became organized. This is the very deceptive thing that those in care of antisocial children need to know if they are to see sense in what is going on around them. Whenever conditions give a child a certain degree of new hope, then the antisocial tendency becomes a clinical feature and the child becomes difficult" (pg. 91-92)
- Chapter 9 - Varieties of Psychotherapy (pg. 101)
 - See text
- Chapter 10 - Cure (pg. 112)
 - "Psychoanalysis is not just a matter of interpreting the repressed unconscious; it is rather the provision of a professional setting for trust, in which such work may take place." (pg. 114-115)
- Chapter 11 - The Mother's Contribution to Society (pg. 123)
 - See text
- Chapter 12 - The Child in the Family Group (pg. 128)
 - **"...the family is a group whose structure is related to the structure of the individual personality.** The family is the first grouping, and of all groupings it is the one which is the nearest to being a grouping within the unit personality. The first grouping is simply a reduplication of the unit structure. When we

- say that the family is the first grouping, we are quite naturally talking in terms of the growth of the individual, and this is justified by the fact that the mere passage of time has no link with human living that is comparable in strength to the link that belongs to the fact that at a certain point in time each person starts and by a growth process makes an area of time personal. The child is beginning to separate out from the mother, and before the mother becomes objectively perceived, she is what might be called a subjective object. There is quite a jerk that the child has to experience between the use of a mother as a subjective object, that is to say an aspect of the self, and an object that is other than self and therefore outside omnipotent control; and the mother performs a most important task in adapting herself to the child's needs so that she blurs a little this terrible jerk to which I have referred and which belongs to meeting the Reality Principle. The mother-figure becomes reduplicated." (pg. 130-131)
- Chapter 13 - Children Learning (pg. 142)
 - "I never think of the state of a person here and now except in relation to the environment and in relation to the growth of that individual from conception and certainly from the time around the birth date. The individual baby is born with inherited tendencies that fiercely drive the individual on in a growth process. This includes the tendency towards integration of the personality, towards the wholeness of a personality in body and mind, and towards object-relating, which gradually becomes a matter of interpersonal relationships as the child begins to grow up and understand the existence of other people. All this comes from within the boy or girl. Nevertheless, these processes of growth cannot take place without a facilitating environment, especially at the start when a condition of dependence obtains which is near absolute. A facilitating environment must have a human quality, not a mechanical perfection, so the phrase 'good-enough mother' seems to me to meet the need for a description of what the child needs if the inherited growth processes are to become actual in the development of the individual child. In the beginning the whole of the development takes place because of the tremendously vital, inherited tendencies towards development - towards integration, towards growth, the thing that one day makes the child want to walk, and so on. If there is a good-enough environmental provision, these things take place in that child. But if the facilitating environment is not good enough, then the line of life is broken and the very powerful inherited tendencies cannot carry the child on to personal fulfilment." (pg. 144)
 - "A good-enough mother starts off with a high degree of adaptation to the baby's needs. That is what 'good-enough' means, this tremendous capacity that mothers ordinarily have to give themselves over to identification with the baby. Towards the end of a pregnancy and at the beginning of a child's life, they are so identified with the baby that they really practically know what the baby is feeling like, and so they can adapt themselves to the needs of the baby in such a way that the baby's needs are met. Then the baby is in the position of being able to make a developmental continuity of growth which is the beginning of health. The mother is laying down the basis for the mental health of the baby, and more than health - fulfilment and richness, with all the dangers and conflicts that these bring, with all the awkwardnesses that belong to growth and development." (pg. 145)
 - "Acts of human reliability make a communication long before speech means anything - the way the mother fits in when rocking the child, the sound and tone of her voice, all communicate long before speech is understood. We are believing people. Here we are in this large hall and no one has been worried about the ceiling falling down. We have a belief in the architect. We are believing people because we are started off well by somebody. We received a silent communication over a period of time that we were loved in the sense that we could rely on the environmental provision and so get on with our growth and development. A child who has not experienced preverbal care in terms of holding and handling - human reliability - is a deprived child. The only thing that can logically be applied to a deprived child is love, love in terms of holding and handling. To do it later in a child's life is difficult, but at any rate we may try, as in the provision of residential care. The difficulty comes from the child's need to make tests and to see if this preverbal loving, holding, handling, and so on, stands up to the destructiveness that comes with primitive loving. When all goes well, this destructiveness becomes sublimated into things like eating, kicking, playing, competition, and so on. Nevertheless, the child is at this very primitive stage - here's somebody to love, and then the next thing is destruction. If you survive, then there is the idea of destruction instead. But first of all there is destruction, and if you start to love a child who was not loved in this preverbal sense, you may find yourself in a mess; you find yourself being stolen from, windows broken, the cat being tortured, and all sorts of frightful things. And you have got to survive all this. You will be loved because you have survived." (pg. 147-148)
 - Chapter 14 - Adolescent Immaturity (pg. 150)
 - "In our theory of child care, continuity of care has become a central feature of the concept of the facilitating environment, and we see that by this continuity of environmental provision, and only by this, the new baby in dependence may have a continuity in the line of his or her life, not a pattern of reacting to the unpredictable and for ever starting again." (pg. 154)
 - "Growth is not just a matter of inherited tendency; it is also a matter of a highly complex interweaving with the facilitating environment." (pg. 157)
 - "Immaturity is a precious part of the adolescent scene. In this is contained the most exciting features of creative thought, new and fresh feeling, ideas for new living. Society needs to be shaken by the aspirations of those who are not responsible. If the adults abdicate, the adolescent becomes prematurely, and by false process, adult. Advice to society could be: for the sake of adolescents, and of their immaturity, do not allow them to step up and attain a false maturity by handing over to them responsibility that is not yet theirs, even though they may fight for it. With the proviso that the adult does not abdicate, we may surely think of the strivings of adolescents to find themselves and to determine their own destiny as the most exciting thing that we can see in life around us. The adolescent's idea of an ideal society is exciting and stimulating, but the point about adolescence is its immaturity and the fact of not being responsible. This, its most sacred element, lasts only a few years, and it is a property that must be lost to each individual as maturity is reached. I constantly remind myself that it is the state of adolescence that society perpetually carries, not the adolescent boy or girl who, alas, in a few years becomes an adult, and becomes only too soon identified with some kind of frame in which new babies, new children and new adolescents may be free to have vision and dreams and new plans for the world. Triumph belongs to this attainment of maturity by growth process. Triumph does not belong to the false maturity based on a facile impersonation of an adult. Terrible facts are locked up in this statement." (pg. 162)
 - Chapter 15 - Thinking and the Unconscious (pg. 169)
 - "In human affairs, however, **thinking is but a snare and a delusion unless the unconscious is taken into account**. I refer to both meanings of the word, 'unconscious' meaning deep and not readily available, and also meaning repressed, or actively kept from availability because of the pain that belongs to its acceptance as part of the self." (pg. 169)
 - "[T]he intuitive method has its drawbacks, one of the greatest of which is that intuitive people are liable to be hopeless at talking about the things they 'know' so easily." (pg. 169-170)
 - Chapter 16 - The Price of Disregarding Psychoanalytic Research (pg. 172)
 - "The poet in me reaches to a whole truth in a flash, and the scientist in me gropes towards a facet of the truth; as the scientist reaches the immediate objective, a new objective presents itself. Poetic truth has certain advantages. For the individual, poetic truth offers deep satisfactions, and in the new expression of an old truth there is opportunity for new creative experience in terms of beauty. It is very difficult, however, to use poetic truth. Poetic truth is a matter of feeling, and we may not all feel the same about one problem. By scientific truth, with limited objective, we hope to bring people who can use their minds and who can be influenced by intellectual considerations to agreement in certain areas of practice. In poetry, something true crystallizes out; to plan our lives we need science. But science boggles at the problem of human nature, and tends to lose sight of the whole human being." (pg. 172-173)

- "I will remind you, however, that psychoanalysis tends to show that the basis of mental health is not only hereditary, and is not only a matter of chance events; the basis of mental health is being actively laid down in the course of every infancy when the mother is good enough at her job, and in the span of every childhood that is being lived in a functioning family." (pg. 179)
 - "Psychoanalysis has shown the way in which the maturational process in individual growth needs a facilitating environment and how this facilitating environment is itself a highly complex thing, with its own developmental characteristics." (pg. 180)
- Chapter 17 - This Feminism (pg. 183)
 - See text
- Chapter 18 - The Pill and the Moon (pg. 195)
 - See text
- Chapter 19 - Discussion of War Aims (pg. 210)
 - "Behaviour is one thing and total behaviour is another. Total behaviour includes historical responsibility; it also takes into consideration the widening of the basis of motivation through one's unconscious identification with one's enemies. Total behaviour also takes note of the capacity of the individual to get gratification in connection with ideas, perhaps aggressive or cruel ideas, and to derive relief when intolerable ideas that threaten to become conscious are acted out - that is, when the responsibility for them is shared by the other members of a group." (pg. 211)
 - "The easy way out for the individual is for him to see the unpleasant parts of himself only when these appear in others. The difficult way is for him to see that all the greed, aggression and deceit in the world might have been his own responsibility, even if in point of fact it is not. The same is true for the State as for the individual." (pg. 212)
 - "The truth seems to be that we like the idea of freedom and admire those who feel free, but at the same time we are afraid of freedom, and tend at times to be drawn towards being controlled. The difficulty in understanding this is that the conscious and the unconscious are by no means identical. Unconscious feelings and fantasies give illogicality to conscious behaviour. Also, there can be a wide discrepancy between what we like when we are excited and what we like interim. Interference with the exercise and enjoyment of freedom comes in two main ways. Firstly, the enjoyment of freedom only applies at all simply to the periods between bodily excitements. There is but little bodily gratification, and none that is acute, to be got out of freedom; whereas the ideas of cruelty or slavery are notoriously associated with bodily excitement and sensual experiences, even apart from actual perversion in which these things are acted out as a substitute for sexual experience. Therefore, lovers of freedom must be expected periodically to feel the seductive power of the idea of slavery and control. It may not be polite to mention the secret bodily pleasures and the thoughts that go with them, but the extraordinary lapses from freedom that history records cannot be explained under a conspiracy of silence and denial. Secondly, the experience of freedom is tiring, and at intervals the free seek a rest from responsibility and welcome control." (pg. 214)
 - "Freedom puts a strain on the individual's whole personality; the free man is left with no relief from any ideas he may have of being persecuted. He is left with no logical excuse for angry or aggressive feelings except the insatiability of his own greed. And he has no one to give or withhold permission to do what he wants to do - in other words, to save him from the tyranny of a strict conscience. No wonder people fear not only freedom, but also the idea of freedom and the giving of freedom." (pg. 215)
 - "It is quite a rare thing to meet an individual who is free and feels free, who can take responsibility for his actions and thoughts without over-frustrating himself, that is, without manifesting inhibition in excitement. **Both inhibition and licence are easy, and both may be cheaply bought by giving over responsibility to an idealized leader or to a principle; but the result is poverty of personality.** Freedom being something that has to be forced on to those who are able to take it, a seer is needed to evaluate freedom and to show people it is worth fighting for and dying for, and this is true over and over again, generation after generation. Tolpuddle martyrs win freedom for their own generation, not for the trade-unionists of all time. The love of freedom will not of itself beget freedom. And the fact that men in slavery love the idea of freedom does not mean that they will love freedom when they are free. At first taste of it, at any rate, they are paralysed by it, fearing what they may do with it, as is well known. Then they come to terms with it, which means that to a greater or lesser degree they give it up. It is difficult to feel free, and no less difficult to give others freedom. The war period provides us not only with a temporary relief from the strain of being free, but also it gives opportunity for dictators to have their little day. We have dictators all over the place, and they often do wonderful things which could never have been done in a parliamentary way. Aim having been agreed on, execution is merely a matter of efficiency." (pg. 216-217)
- Chapter 20 - Berlin Walls (pg. 221)
 - "...there is always conflict in the social milieu, but also that conflict is invented and maintained by the individuals that compose society; and individuals not only suffer from the conflicts in the world around them, but also they get relief when conflict outside the individual gives relief from conflict within - that is to say, in the personal inner psychic reality." (pg. 223)
- Chapter 21 - Freedom (pg. 228)
 - "It is true, however, that defences are an essential part of the structure of the human personality, and that without the organization of defences there is only chaos and organization of defences against chaos." (pg. 231)
 - "The concept that is helpful here is that in psychiatric health there is a flexibility of the defence organization, whereas in psychiatric ill health, by contrast, the defences are relatively rigid. In psychiatric health, for instance, there can be detected a sense of humour as a part of the capacity to play, and the sense of humour is a kind of elbow-room in the area of the defence organization. This elbow-room gives a feeling of freedom both to the subject and to those who are involved or who wish to become involved with the individual concerned. In the extreme of psychiatric ill health there is no elbow-room in the area of the defence organization, so that the subject is bored with his or her own stability in illness. It is this rigidity of the defence organization that makes people complain of a lack of freedom." (pg. 231)
- Chapter 22 - Some Thoughts on the Meaning of the Word 'Democracy' (pg. 239)
 - See text
- Chapter 23 - The Place of the Monarchy (pg. 260)
 - See text

c. Further Readings:

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