

The Family and Individual Development, by D. Winnicott

a. Quotes:

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b. General Notes:

▪ Chapter 1 - The First Year of Life (pg. 3)

- "A great deal happens in the first year of the life of the human infant: emotional development starts at the beginning; in a study of the evolution of the personality and character it is not possible to ignore the events of the first days and hours (even the last part of the prenatal life when the infant is post-mature); and even birth experience may be significant." (pg. 3)
 - "Independence is something that is achieved out of dependence, but it is necessary to add that dependence is achieved out of what might be called double dependence. At the very beginning there is an absolute dependence on the physical and emotional environment. In the earliest stage there is no vestige of an awareness of this dependence, and for this reason the dependence is absolute. Gradually dependence becomes to some extent known to the infant who, in consequence, acquires the capacity for letting the environment know when attention is needed." (pg. 5-6)
 - "What is found at one year, however, is extremely variable, variable not only from one infant to another but also in any one infant. The achievement of a degree of independence may quite normally be lost and regained over and over again, and often an infant may return to dependence after being markedly independent at one year. This journey from double dependence to dependence and from dependence to independence is something that is not only an expression of the innate tendency of the infant to grow; this growth cannot take place unless a very sensitive adaptation is made by someone to the infant's needs. It happens that the infant's mother is better than anyone else at performing this most delicate and constant task; she is more suitable than anyone else because she is the one who is most likely to be quite naturally and without resentment devoted to this cause." (pg. 6)
 - "By the age of one year most infants have in fact achieved the status of an individual. In other words, the personality has become integrated. This is not of course true all the time, but at certain moments and over certain periods and in certain relationships the infant of one year is a whole person. But integration is not something that can be taken for granted; it is something that must develop gradually in every individual infant. It is not a matter simply of neuro-physiology, since for this process to take place there must be certain environmental conditions, actually, those which are best provided by the infant's own mother. Integration appears gradually out of a primary unintegrated state. At the beginning the infant is made up of a number of motility phases and sensory perceptions. It is almost certain that rest for the infant means a return to an unintegrated state. A return to unintegration is not necessarily frightening to the infant because of a sense of security that is given by the mother. Sometimes security means simply being held well. Both physically and in more subtle ways the mother or the environment holds the infant together, and unintegration can take place along with reintegration without the development of anxiety. Integration appears to be linked with the more definite emotional or affective experiences, such as rage, or the excitement of a feeding situation. Gradually, as integration becomes a settled fact and the infant becomes more and more knit together into a unit, so does the undoing of what has been gained become disintegration rather than unintegration. Disintegration is painful." (pg. 6-7)
 - "The infant at one year is firmly living in the body. The psyche and the soma have come to terms with each other. The neurologist would say that body-tone is satisfactory, and would describe the infant's coordination as good. This state of affairs, in which the psyche and the soma are intimately related to each other, develops out of the initial stages in which the immature psyche (although based on body functioning) is not closely bound to the body and to the life of the body. When a reasonable degree of adaptation to the needs of the infant is provided, this gives the best possible chance for an early establishment of a firm relationship between the psyche and the soma. Where there is a failure of adaptation, so there is a tendency for the psyche to develop an existence that is only loosely related to bodily experience, the result being that physical frustrations are not always felt with full intensity. Even in health, the infant of one year is firmly rooted to the body only at certain times. The psyche of a normal infant may lose touch with the body..." (pg. 8)
 - "By the age of one year the infant has quite clearly developed the beginnings of a mind. Mind means something quite distinct from psyche. The psyche is related to the soma and to body functioning, but the mind depends on the existence and functioning of those parts of the brain that are developed at a later stage (in phylogenesis) than the parts that are concerned with the primitive psyche. (It is the mind which gradually makes it possible for the infant to wait for the feed because of the noises that indicate that a feed will be forthcoming. This is a crude example of the use of the mind.) It could be said that at the beginning the mother must adapt almost exactly to the infant's needs in order that the infant personality shall develop without distortion. She is able to fail in her adaptation, however, and to fail increasingly, and this is because the infant's mind and the infant's intellectual processes are able to account for and so to allow for failures of adaptation. In this way the mind is allied to the mother and takes over part of her function. In the care of an infant the mother is dependent on the infant's intellectual processes, and it is these that enable her gradually to re-acquire a life of her own." (pg. 9)
 - "Characteristic of the human infant is fantasy, which may be thought of as the imaginative elaboration of physical function. Fantasy rapidly becomes infinitely complex, but at the start it is presumably restricted in quantity." (pg. 10)
 - "The innate creative impulse withers unless it is met by external reality (realized'). Each infant must re-create the world, but this is only possible if, bit by bit, the world arrives at the moments of the infant's creative activity. The infant reaches out and the breast is there, and the breast is created. The success of this operation depends on the sensitive adaptation the mother is making to her infant's needs, especially at the beginning." (pg. 16)
 - "Motility is the precursor to aggression..." (pg. 17)
- ### ▪ Chapter 2 - The Relationship of Mother to Her Bay at the Beginning (pg. 21)
- "Only if there is a good-enough mother does the infant start on a process of development that is personal and real. If the mothering is not good enough then the infant becomes a collection of reactions to impingement, and the true self of the infant fails to form or becomes hidden behind a false self which complies with and generally wards off the world's knocks." (pg. 24)
 - "Of this infant I would say: the ego is both weak and strong. All depends on the capacity of the mother to give ego support. The mother's ego is attuned to the ego of the infant, and she can give support only if she is able to orientate to her infant in the way that I have partially described. When there is a mother-infant couple in good working order the infant's ego is very strong indeed, because the infant ego is supported in all respects. The infant's reinforced and therefore strong ego is able very early to organize defences, and to develop patterns that are personal and that are strongly coloured by hereditary tendencies." (pg. 24)
 - "Where the mother's ego support is absent, or weak, or patchy, the infant cannot develop along personal lines, and development is then related, as I have said, more to a succession of reactions to environmental failure than to the internal urges and genetic factors." (pg. 25)
 - "On the basis of these considerations it is possible to categorize the function of the good-enough mother in the early stages. These can be boiled down to: (i) Holding (ii) Handling (iii) Object-presenting. (i) Holding is very much related to the mother's capacity to identify with her infant. Satisfactory holding is a basic ration of care, only experienced in the reactions to faulty holding. (ii) Handling facilitates the formation of a psychosomatic partnership in the infant. This contributes to the sense of 'real', as opposed to 'unreal'. Faulty handling militates against the development of muscle

- tone, and that which is called 'coordination, and against the capacity of the infant to enjoy the experience of body functioning, and of BEING. (iii) Object-presenting or realizing (that is, making real the infant's creative impulse) initiates the infant's capacity to relate to objects. Faulty object-presenting further blocks the way for the development of the infant's capacity to feel real in relating to the actual world of objects and phenomena." (pg. 26-27)
- Briefly, development is a matter of the inheritance of a maturational process, and of the accumulation of living experiences; this development does not occur, however, except in a facilitating environment. The facilitating environment is first absolutely and then relatively important, and the course of development can be described in terms of absolute dependence, relative dependence, and towards independence." (pg. 27)
 - Chapter 3 - Growth and Development in Immaturity (pg. 29)
 - "The reader should know that I am a product of the Freudian or psycho-analytic school. This does not mean that I take for granted everything Freud said or wrote, and in any case that would be absurd since Freud was developing, that is to say changing, his views (in an orderly manner, like any other scientific worker) all along the line right up to his death in 1939. As a matter of fact, there are some things that Freud came to believe which seem to me and to many other analysts to be actually wrong, but it simply does not matter. The point is that Freud started off a scientific approach to the problem of human development; he broke through the reluctance to speak openly of sex and especially of infant and child sexuality, and he accepted the instincts as basic and worthy of study; he gave us a method for use and for development which we could learn, and whereby we could check the observations of others and contribute our own; he demonstrated the repressed unconscious and the operation of unconscious conflict; he insisted on the full recognition of psychic reality (what is real to the individual apart from what is actual); he boldly attempted to formulate theories of the mental processes, some of which have already become generally accepted. Arising out of all this is something that is relevant here. Each individual starts and develops and becomes mature; there is no adult maturity apart from the previous development. This development is extremely complex, and it is continuous from birth or earlier right up to and through adulthood to old age. We cannot afford to leave anything out, not even the happenings of infancy, not even those of very early infancy." (pg. 29-30)
 - "If we turn, then, rather artificially, to the unexcited state, what do we find? For one thing we find we are studying the ego in the self's journey towards autonomy. We are studying, for instance, the development in the infant of a sense of unity of personality, a capacity to feel (at any rate at times) integrated. Gradually, too, the infant begins to feel to be a dweller in what we so easily see as that infant's own body. All these things take time, and are greatly helped by sensible and consistent management of the body, bathing, exercising, and so on. Then there is also the development of a capacity to relate to external reality. This task which every infant must achieve is complex and difficult, and very definitely needs the attention that a devoted mother is qualified to give. The objectively perceived world is never the same as what is conceived of, what is seen subjectively. This is a big trouble with all human beings, but by actively adapting at the start a mother superimposes external reality on what the infant conceives of; she does this well enough, and often enough, so that the infant becomes contented to leave this problem to be taken up later as part of the game called philosophy. One more thing: if the environment behaves well, the infant has a chance to maintain a sense of continuity of being; perhaps this may go right back to the first stirrings in the womb. When this exists the individual has a stability that can be gained in no other way. If external reality has been introduced to the infant in small doses, accurately graded to the infant's or child's understanding, the child may grow up to be capable of making a scientific approach to phenomena, and may even perhaps carry a scientific method into the study of human affairs. If this happens, and if it is successful, then there is something owing to the devoted mother who laid the foundations..." (pg. 39)
 - "To restate it: **we want to make it possible for each individual to find and establish his or her own identity in such a solid way that eventually, in the course of time, and in that individual's own manner, there will be attained a capacity to become a member of society - an active, creative member, without loss of personal spontaneity and without loss of that sense of freedom which comes, in health, from within.**" (pg. 40)
 - Chapter 4 - On Security (pg. 42)
 - "[P]eople must live freely in order to live imaginatively. Freedom is an essential element, something that brings out the best in people. Nevertheless, we have to admit that there are some who cannot live in freedom because they fear both themselves and the world" (pg. 43)
 - "It is the surroundings that make it possible for each child to grow, and without adequate environmental reliability the personal growth of a child cannot take place, or such growth must be distorted. Furthermore, as no two children are exactly alike we are required to adapt specifically to each child's needs. This means that whoever is caring for a child must know that child and must work on the basis of a personal living relationship with that child, not on the basis of something learnt and applied mechanically. Being reliably present and consistently ourselves we provide a stability which is not rigid, but alive and human, and this makes the infant feel secure. It is this in relation to which the infant can grow, and which the infant can absorb and copy. When we offer security we do two things at once. On the one hand, because of our help the child is safe from the unexpected, from innumerable unwelcome intrusions, and from a world that is not yet known or understood. And also, on the other hand, the child is protected by us from his or her own impulses and from the effects that these impulses might produce." (pg. 44)
 - Chapter 5 - The Five Year Old (pg. 48)
 - See text
 - Chapter 6 - Integrative and Disruptive Factors in Family Life (pg. 57)
 - "The family has its own growth, and the individual small child experiences the changes that belong to the family's gradual expansion and to its troubles. The family protects the child from the world. But gradually the world begins to seep in. The aunts and uncles, the neighbours, the earliest sibling groups, leading on to schools. This gradual environmental seeping-in is the way by which a child can best come to terms with the wider world, and follows exactly the pattern of the infant's introduction to external reality by the mother." (pg. 58)
 - Chapter 7 - The Family Affected by Depressive Illness (pg. 72)
 - See text
 - Chapter 8 - The Effect of Psychosis on Family Life (pg. 88)
 - See text
 - Chapter 9 - The Effect of Psychotic Parents on the Emotional Development of the Child (pg. 99)
 - See text
 - Chapter 10 - Adolescence (pg. 114)
 - "**Each individual is engaged in a living experience, a problem of existing.** There exists one real cure for adolescence, and only one, and this cannot be of interest to the boy or girl who is in the throes. The cure for adolescence belongs to the passage of time and to the gradual maturation processes; these together do in the end result in the emergence of the adult person. This process cannot be hurried or slowed up, though indeed it can be broken into and destroyed, or it can wither up from within, in psychiatric illness." (pg. 115)
 - "The adolescent is essentially an isolate. It is from a position of isolation that a beginning is made which may result in relationships between individuals, and eventually in socialization. In this respect the adolescent is repeating an essential phase of infancy, for the infant is an isolate, at least until he or she has repudiated the not-me, and has become set up as a separated-off individual, one that can form relationships with objects that are external to the self and outside the area of omnipotent control. It could be said that before the pleasure-pain principle has given way to the reality principle the child is isolated by the subjective nature of his or her environment. Young adolescents are collections of isolates, attempting by various means to form an aggregate through the adoption of an identity of tastes. They can become grouped if they are attacked as a group, but this is a paranoid organization reactive to the attack; after the persecution the individuals return to their state of being an aggregate of isolates." (pg. 117)

- "Behind the antisocial tendency there is always some health and then an interruption, after which things were never the same again. The antisocial child is searching in some way or other, violently or gently, to get the world to acknowledge its debt; or is trying to make the world re-form the framework which got broken up. At the root, therefore, of the antisocial tendency there is this deprivation. At the root of adolescence in general it is not possible to say that there is inherently a deprivation, and yet there is something which is the same, but, being less in degree and diffused, it just avoids overstraining the available defences." (pg. 125)

c. Further Readings:

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