good enough

D.W. Winnicott and Playwork

Penny Wilson
Donald Woods Winnicott, 1896 to 1971. Paediatrician, psychoanalyst, author and Broadcaster.

Why illustrate his work for playworkers? Well, he was a free spirit and learned stuff from all over the place. I wanted to pass him on to playworkers because D.W.W. didn’t make up theories and squeeze children to fit into them. He observed children and struggled to understand what he saw was play at the root of creativity and development of our establishing our place within and harmony with the external world. Good playworkers know that play is a vital, deeply serious, fun, urgent, sad, desperate, relaxing, form of communication. D.W.W. recognized this as important to child and adult life alike. His work has informed and inspired my work. And as we all know – we must share nicely.
**Meet the Good Enough Mother**

An ordinary, devoted mother. Her child is not yet born, but, just as her body is preparing to care for the new infant, DMW says her mind is too. She is in a state of sort of mental illness he calls Primary Maternal Preoccupation. She is preoccupied with her own infant, (before and for some months after it is born), to the exclusion of all other interests. "DMW p. 502 - 503: Her world revolves around the baby. She also has subconscious memories of her own birth and early infancy..........

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**You're the artist right?** A woman and a mother. How can you use this drivel about women being mentally ill when they're pregnant? Good grief.

DMW says "We are poor indeed if we are only sane." He means that Mum has to become obsessed with baby so that she can continually meet baby's demands. She has to be close enough to experience what child experiences.

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**Another Point - if You Please?**

What kind of patronizing, damning-with-faint-praise name for a woman is "The Good Enough Mother"? PHAAAA!!

"Bad Mother"? "Nicked Mother"? "Terrific mother"? Ahhh... good point - I selected the term carelessly. I didn't feel that the proper phrase had cropped up yet. It was necessary to describe a "Real Woman" not a theory. She creates an environment in which the child can grow and discover. She may make mistakes, but with help and advice, if she needs it, she will be fine! But, she knows, because she is in "Democracy Co-existence" with her baby, how to provide a "Reliable Continuity of Being." She is essentially adaptable because of her love.

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**Maybe the Good Enough Mother could be called GEM.**

She's a multi-faceted being. DMW says "ARTIST". Her work is vital to the health and happiness of society, which depends on her.

**Excellent superb non-compliance! After only one paragraph too! But perhaps we should move on?**
"The doing that arises out of being"

D.W.W. has a zestful approach to child development and consequently to adult life. He considers that an infant "comes at the world creatively." The primary urge is to create and that is the driving force for all development and a healthy way to live. He means much more than being able to draw cartoons or stencil your living room. His creative living is constant, "seeing everything afresh all the time. (Not getting killed or annihilated all the time with compliance.)"

In the Preface to Home is Where We Start from He quotes T.S. Elliot

"A lifetime burning in every moment" and he starts his autobiography...

...let me be alive when I die.
Magic and the Illusion

Ladies and Gentlemen,
permit me to introduce to you
Once again—sensually
co-existent, primarily maternally
pre-occupied, Good Enough Mother!

We will now demonstrate how, using
only Reliability, Predictability,
continuity of Being and, for the
purposes of this demonstration, FOOD,
she and her baby create a True Self.

G.E.M. provides reliability, predictability, and continuity of being.
Food is an example. "The mother's milk does not flow like an
excretion... it is a response to stimulus... the sight and feel of
her baby, and the sound of her baby's cry that indicates need.
It is all one thing; the mother's care of the baby are
the means of communication between the two—a Song
without words." 1959 p.112-113

The G.E.M. "meets the omnipotence of the child and to some
extent, makes sense of it. She does this repeatedly."

"A True Self begins to have life through the strength
given to the baby's weak ego by the mother's
implementation of the baby's omnipotent expressions."
It's all done

Now, at some point, the baby takes a look around... perhaps a baby at the breast does not look at the breast... looking at the mother's face is more likely. The baby sees themselves reflected in the mother's face—what the mother sees reflects in her face, seeing the baby.

Playing & Reality p.112

With Mirrors

- Baby looks
- Mum looks
- Baby sticks out tongue, so does Mum.
- Baby smiles, Mum smiles
- Baby whoops, Mum whoops

Now, through this first playful interaction, baby recognizes mother as an 'objectively perceived environmental feature'. She is an object. So is baby. Object relations begin.

When I look, I am seen, so I exist. Now I can afford to look and see. Now I look and see creatively, and what I perceive I also perceive.

DWM means seeing oneself through being seen by another.

One of my patients said "Wouldn't it be awful if the child looked into a mirror and saw nothing?"

So, what if... Mum is wrapped up in her own world, does not mirror the child, show it its self? If a depressed mother cries all the time, she is preoccupied by her grief, baby will react to her. The reflection manipulating the face's scary thought, it will learn, for example, to be depressed, or spend its life doing things to cheer mum up. Both are reactive responses, resulting in the development of a false self.

Baby doesn't have the luxury of learning to be; it has to survive.
The Holding Environment is a vast and complex set of conditions... it "takes account of the infant's skin sensitivity - touch, temperature, auditory sensitivity, visual sensitivity, sensitivity to falling, (action of gravity)."

The Holding Environment - when it works, changes to meet the needs of the child as it grows. It offers a secure place in which the child can develop - like a womb? Except it never becomes too small for the child.
**Transitional**

Baby has now reached the stage of Relative dependence.

Infant has thoughts of ‘me’ and ‘not me’. But still needs lots of care.

From Winnicott’s close observation and his desire to tease out the relationship between inner and outer realities, came a brilliant piece of insight: What did he see? (This is so typical!) He sees the corner of a blanket.

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**Objects**

Here, in my wallet I carry a photograph of my loved one. The photo is not me, but mine. The photo is not my loved one, but a symbol of them. The photo makes separation from them bearable. I have it when we are together, and when we are apart. It helps me to remember that we will be together again. I treasure this photograph. It is a much loved object.

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One senses that it is with some relief that Winnicott cites A.A. Milne and Schultz as having immortalized Transitional Objects — PR p 40
TRANSGITIONAL
AKA: The Potential Space - The Location

I have spent many hours in a warm and beautiful café next door to my children's school. I drop my little girl at nursery after lunch, then pick her up at 3:30. They learn and play in a safe place without me. I sip coffee and learn and play with ideas for this book - without them. We are in Transitional Spaces using their in potential creatively.

I am dependent. I am alone. I have a reliable mother whose continuous existence makes it possible for me to be alone for a while. I can play in her presence. I have a True Self. The capacity to be alone.

We have seen the child using a Transitional Object to move from Absolute dependence on Mum to having a place of its own in the world. DNW sees this as allowing a new area/dimension of living that belongs neither to internal or external reality. These Transitional Phenomena he sees as being intrinsically linked to Playing and Creativity.

"No human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality. Relief from that strain comes in an intermediate area in direct continuity with the play area of a small child who is lost in play!"

Phenomena

of cultural experience or the Place where we live.

Playing is not just for babies, if we are honest, we never stop playing... well, do we?

Listening to a Beethoven Symphony... making a pilgrimage to a picture gallery... reading Tolle and Cressida in bed... playing tennis?

DNW asks: "What are we doing when we... do any of the above activities? "Not only what are we doing, but where are we doing it?"

Illustrate... Allow me to introduce you to you-come with their inner-realities and their True Selves, (which is why it feels REAL man...)

...playing for you in External Reality, masters in and of the Potential Space - and THAT'S BE BOP.
Living happily ever after

He was described in many ways... Pied Piper, Mother Goose. Most often as pixie-like. Once, in impish mood in 1958 he coins a one-off phrase, to describe a highly satisfactory transitional phenomenon... this is rather cheeky...

"Ego-Organism" because he wants to draw attention to the climax and the importance of that climax contained at a concert or at the theatre or in a friendship.

After wading through text trying to capture it, we at last get a peek at the joy of creative living. Jacques Lacan termed "Joissiance" on "The inalienable power to ecstasy, virtually legal imperative to pursue desire." Bollas, 1989.

"Every child has the right to play." UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

"Let the children Boogie." David Bowie

All well and good, but what if...

Drum worked a lot with children whose environment had failed them. Most of these were evacuees. They were SUFFERING (and making other people suffer too!)

By suffering, I mean acute confusion, disintegration of the personality, falling forever, a loss of contact with the body, complete disorientation and other states of this nature.

- The Unintegrated Baby:
  - Helplessness... AAAH!
  - Cute little nappies
  - Much admired
  - Not a rare in the world...
  - Baby Recognized Me!

- The Disintegrated Older:
  - Out of control in a system I don't understand
  - Oh shit! Incontinence - filthy, dirt-soiled self
  - Everyone's looking at me, talking about me, exposure!
  - Don't know how to look after myself
  - Oh my god! There are alien life forms out there
  - They are making noises, its a code - I don't understand a word!
  - I'm falling
  - I'm screaming in public
  - I am alone, I'm dying and I'm alone.
  - Do I exist if you are not here to see me or care for me?

Not a fear of madness to come, but of madness that has already been experienced. It is a fear of the return to madness.
Chapter 2. Integration

Baby has learned it has a whole self—marked by the boundaries of its skin. It can recognise its self in relation to other people, objects, food, time, space. There has developed an order.

**Baby is integrated**

However... D.W.W. recognizes that this order is delicate. It is of a Precarious State. "Perhaps Humpty Dumpty pleased us so much because personal integration is such a Precarious business" — (HN ch 2)

**Unintegration** can now only occur in special psychological situations—or madness.

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**Delinquency as a Sign of Hope.**

The cartoon, Chapter One.

**Unintegration**

The beginning before each individual creates the world anew, there is a simple state of being, a dawning of awareness of Continuity of Being. (HN ch 6)

Unintegration, says D.W.W., our "Primary State." Our natural starting point.

A baby in the womb or a tiny infant is unintegrated. It has not claimed its place in space and time yet— it can't! Its parents hold it in place.

"At this stage, physical care is psychological care." W.W. p 239

**Chapter 2. Integration**

Space and time. I am separate from other people.

This is me—what whole in... me, my space, me in my space, me in my day, me in my night, me and my mum.

Me and object.

Me and food.

Me and the world.

Me and other people.
Chapter 3. Disintegration

Congratulations on your integration.

"If the home fails the child" or there is any sort of "reactive interruption of Being" the frame work of his life is broken. Order is disrupted.

The whirling disintegrated child uses anti-social tendencies to "communicate" in an attempt to create outside what an attempt to create inside is like. That is, they could make everyone freeze.

If this is not understood as a communication of anxiety the child grows more skilled in the creation of chaos.

Sometimes a child will see hope from someone outside the home - a possibility to help sort out the original situation. Even at this time the anti-social tendency is active as a "defensive organization".

Chapter 4.

Working together.

Compliance. The world and its details being recognized, but only as something to be fitted in with or demanding adaptation. Compliance carries with it a sense of futility for the individual and its associated with the idea that nothing matters and that life is not worth living (P. 182).

Diagram @ shows a picture of a compliant child. Compliance is a result of being seen or heard. This child has made itself invisible and silent. It is slowly vanishing.

Non-compliance however - aka subversive non-compliance.

Non-compliance.

What is "that child doing"?

YUP...or what else could you say?

It's creating chaos!

Aha! and Creative Living is the opposite of Compliance.

Yes and can you see and hear this child?

Oh, yes. That's not a silent invisible child.

OK something matters to this one. It is looking for some outside help. Delinquency is a sign of hope.

It is using energy to get back to a time when there was HOPE before suffering unthinkable anxieties. Hope that someone will hear and see there was a time when everything was hopeful." (P. 230)
for:
Kipper, Bug, Bird &
JB Wilson, my continuity of being.
and Chris Taylor

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