



The Independent Tradition: Play, Object Relations, and the Psychoanalytic Setting Spring Semester 2020

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It is really impossible to discuss Winnicott the developmental theorist, Winnicott the theorist of psychoanalysis as play, and Winnicott the setting theorist, as separate strands in his theory. Each of these areas are always in “play” as we learn about his contributions to psychoanalytic theory. And even at that, I haven’t mentioned whether or not he is best as understood as an object relations theorist or as a whole different kind of theorist.

A brief list of some of Winnicott’s most important ideas would include:: the transitional object; the primary maternal preoccupation; the holding environment; the good enough environment and the good enough mother; potential space; the capacity to be alone; true and false self; hate in the countertransference; the fear of breakdown; the capacity for concern; the anti-social tendency; and the use of the object. He was one of the first analysts to grasp intergenerational transmission of trauma. He was also one of the first analysts to emphasize the importance of countertransference, particularly negative countertransference. We could list many more unique contributions. .

My goal for our seminar is to try to get a sense of the enormous contributions that Winnicott and the Independent School have made to psychoanalysis. My hope is that as that as we study his theoretical and clinical concepts we will discuss how these ideas apply to our clinical work. Please let yourself think of your patients as you read so that we can apply these concepts clinically to your work. I will be thinking of vignettes and hope that you will too. Each seminar, I will begin by spending some time getting you oriented to the ideas that we have read about and to help better contextualize how these ideas emerged in the history of psychoanalytic thinking.

While the seminar will largely focus on Winnicott’s work, we will read some contemporary analytic writing generated by the Independent tradition especially by Thomas Ogden and Michael Parsons.

Even though an argument can be made to begin our work with his papers on play (since he redefined psychoanalysis around play), I think it makes more sense to begin with some of his developmental thinking. This will hopefully serve as a good foundation for the ways that Winnicott revolutionized our ways of thinking about psychoanalysis. His elaboration of potential space applies to not only those who create art in literature, poetry, film and on the

canvass, but to the analytic process itself. A part of Winnicott's genius was to see the analytic space as ontologically unique, one that creates new psychic possibilities for patient and analyst.

I look forward to working with you all again.

I: Introduction to Winnicott

Winnicott, D. (1945). Primitive emotional development. *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis*. pp.145-156. [Available in the library: Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsl.org.]

Ogden, T. (2001). Reading Winnicott. *Psychoanal. Q.* 70(2):299-323. [PEP Web Link](#).
Also found in Ogden, T. (2011): *Creative Readings: Essays on Seminal Analytic Works*. p. 76-97. London: The New Library of Psychoanalysis. [Available in the library: Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsl.org.]

Learning Objective: At the completion of this session the participants will be able to name and describe three different "surfaces" found within the therapeutic situation.

II. Transitional Phenomena and the Capacity to be Alone

Winnicott, D.W. (1953). The transitional object. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 34:89-97. [PEP Web Link](#).
Also, In: *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis*. (1965). Basic Books. pp.1-25. [PEP Web Link](#).

Winnicott, D.W. The capacity to be alone. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 39:416-420. [PEP Web Link](#).
Also, In: *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment*. (1965). New York: International Universities Press. [PEP Web Link](#).

Learning Objective: At the completion of this session the participants will understand the concept of "play" as it applies to clinical work and be able to demonstrate it within a clinical session.

III. The Relevance of Play for the Psychoanalytic Setting

Winnicott, D. W. (1968). Playing: Its theoretical status in the clinical situation. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 49:591-598. [PEP Web Link](#).
Also In: *Playing and Reality*. New York: Basic Books, pp.38-53. [PEP Web Link](#).

Parsons, M. (1999). The Logic of Play in Psychoanalysis. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 80(5):871-884. [PEP Web Link](#).

Learning Objective: At the completion of this session the participants will be able to observe and name developmental processes within an analytic process.

IV. Winnicott Continued

Winnicott, D.W. (1974). Fear of Breakdown. *Int. R. Psycho-Anal.* 1:103-107. [PEP Web Link](#).

Winnicott, D.W. (1965). Ego Distortion in Terms of True and False Self. In: *Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment*. pp.140-152. New York: International Universities Press. [Available in the library: Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsl.org.]

Optional

Modell, A.H. (1965). On Having the Right to a Life: An Aspect of the Superego's Development. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 46:323-331. [PEP Web Link](#).

Learning Objective: At the completion of this session the participants will be able to apply three specific concepts from the Independent tradition to their own written case formulation.

V. Winnicott Continued

Winnicott, D.W. (1954). The depressive position in normal development. *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis* pp.262-277. [Available in the library: Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsl.org.]

Winnicott, D.W. (1947). Hate in the countertransference. *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis*. pp.194-203. [PEP Web Link](#).

Learning Objective: At the completion of this session the participants will be able to demonstrate concepts from the Independent tradition in their clinical work.

VI. The Use of the Object

Winnicott: (1969). The use of an object. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 50:711-716. [PEP Web Link](#).
Also in *Playing and Reality* (1971). pp.86-95. New York: Basic Books. [PEP Web Link](#).

Cooper, S. Playing in the darkness: Use of the object and Use of the subject. *J. of the Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.* 66:743-765. [PEP Web Link](#).

Learning Objective: At the completion of this session the participants will be able to identify the stages of object relations in development.

VII: Contemporary Independent Thinking

Parsons, M. (2007). Raiding the Inarticulate: The Internal Analytic Setting and Listening Beyond Countertransference. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 88(6):1441-1456. [PEP Web Link](#).

Parsons, M. (2006). The Analyst's Countertransference to the Psychoanalytic Process. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 87(5):1183-1198. [PEP Web Link](#).

Learning Objective: At the completion of this session the participants will be able to identify the evolution of psychoanalytic theory.

VIII. Contemporary Independent Thinking Continued

Ogden, T.H. (2004). On holding and containing, being and dreaming. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 85(6):1349-1364. [PEP Web Link](#).

Ogden, T.H. (2019). Ontological psychoanalysis or what do you want to be when you grow up? *Psychoanal Q.* 88(4): 661-684. [PEP Web Link](#).

Learning Objective: At the completion of this session the participants will be able to describe the concept of holding in analytic work.