

Winnicott, the Other and the theory of mind

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Winnicott, l'Autre et la théorie de l'esprit

Michèle Benhaim

My communication leans on the chapter 5 of « Of paediatrics in the psychoanalysis », difficult text of Winnicott which is called: « Mind and its reports with cheval glass-soma ». This article was read in the medical section of the British Society of Psychology on December 14th, 1949 and seen again there

I shall enunciate first the essential points which contains this text, then I shall try to articulate them with freudian concepts and lacaniens, from psychoanalytic point of view, and with a cognitive concept post - piagétien from psychological point of view.

Winnicott leaves Jones's purpose which, leaning on hypothesis that the irreducible psychical elements have forcing a (neurological) somatic equivalent, thinks that mind indeed does not exist as entity.

Winnicott opposes to it, noticing from his part, in the grown-up clinical psychopathologie, that mind works so much décrit by the patients as a located entity.

If cheval glass-soma, hear the new-born baby, develop "normally ", mind, for him, do not exist as entity; it is only when développementales tendencies are "abnormal « that mind can institute as a wrong entity and a wrong location.

Mind has, Winnicott compares the psyche an imaginary elaboration of parties, feelings or of somatic functions of which he makes. This last, the psyche, subject would not know how to locate it, not even in the cerebrum.

The correlation of the psyche and the soma constitutes the primitive stage of individual development. Finally, later, the body living with its borders differentiating inside outside, will be felt by subject as core of its imaginary Self.

Here is therefore some preprefatory considerations advice from Winnicott is going to build its « theory of mind ». It is going to lean for it on patients' grown-up private hospital having regressed under transfer up to a very primitive stadium until nt.

We know that for Winnicott, mental health rests on the feeling of a continuity of existence. Condition so that this feeling becomes established, is recovering, he says to us in this text, of what he names « a perfect environment », that is an environment which fits actively to needs

A not perfect environment empiètera on the infant then forced to react to the detriment of its continuity of existence.

This perfect environment will be assured by the good ordinary, capable mother to fit actively to the needs of his infant and whose this aptitude rests on the devotion which it dedicates him.

Besides, this adaptation will be made easier by its own narcissism, its imagination and its memories, who, via identificatoires processes, will allow him the access to a knowledge on the needs of the infant.

Here are therefore purposes which we can articulate to the defined mother as baby other one serving, at this logical time of subjective building, big Other one.

In effect, referring to the symbolic system to which it belongs, the mother, as interlocutor of primordial relation, transmits in her insu to the infant about whom she is concerned, of features of the big Other who determines it, but filtered by her clean subjectivity, that is by the significant of his peculiar history.

So, in the same movement, can be the environment improved on the floor of the big Other one;

the devoted ordinary mother, that is a baby other one would serve as it, and the union of two would consist of this « good enough mother », whose "enough " conceals the passage of an environment, first absolutely good, at the beginning, in a comparatively good environment

Passage which is made if the mother is already only "enough " good, that is if there has already been a space which the infant will be able to invest to palliate in « not - very » maternal.

This distance which Winnicott institutes in sound "enough " points out that the wish of the mother is always concerned elsewhere that in a complete preoccupation for the infant, recuperate in a way what the name of the father allows in terms of separation;

it is what allows us to understand why Winnicott includes that in the needs of the me of the infant « not to be treated » or else that « to be actively left ».

To be, not left, but « actively » abandoned recuperates the high symbolization from which is recovering the freudian fort-da but also to cross it « a sur melts ever so » only Lacan..

What allows us to read winnicottiens concepts in the light of landmarks such as the big Other one and the baby other one, it is that it uses two terms in this text: perfect environment and environment enough good which precedes it and that will see itself dressing traits of perfection thanks to the child, more exactly thanks to her mental activity.

Activity that can then be received as an impulse towards symbolism which the infant would put straightaway in work to urge his mother to fit to his needs.

In other words, that the mother is concerned about the child he will include an environment enough good, but that she thinks of the child, will adapt him him of the place of a perfect environment.

The faculty to understand of the new-born baby, its unprompted impulse towards symbolism, urges the mother not to be, it, wholly perfect. Very quickly it is not any more enough, says to us Winnicott that the mother fits actively to the infant on the physical register but also by ' "imagination": that the mother in effect thinks of the infant hire the building of subject in this mouvement double of estrangement / separation au have within envisage the building of a theory de mind.

Leak out edification of which Winnicott conditions in the elaboration of a perfect environment which, if it is lacking, will be source of pathologies being recovering from the psychosis.

The actual private hospital of the hyperactivities of the child would win to re-visit these concepts: these functionings of hyperactivity where intellectual function seems to take over faced with a faulty environment to organize care towards the new-born baby.

And mind is not made for it but to help to understand, or even to use a relating "deficiency".

Freud has already recalled, in a sense, the cognitive register as defence counters the pulsionnel.

Winnicott recalls these extreme situations shone where mental functioning replaces the « good mother », Other one, to the advantage of dependency to the true mother other one).

Coordinated means mind on the cheval glass, excess of theory of mind, paranoia? Though it is, this disturbance there if origin in previous logical time in possibility for the infant to hate, that is to evict outside.

Active adaptation could be recovering from the maternal transitivity: however, where this last requires that the mother assumes a knowledge to the infant, Winnicott puts forward contrariwise an infant relieved not to know and being able to rely on a mother who knows.

The concept of « pure being of pleasure » which Lacan moves forward and that will specify a mythical time, a kind of instant prop where no one, neither instant, nor the child, really does not know who shouts and who hears shouting, could get outside us from the dead end: a kind of on this side of subject where from will appear « environment enough good » and this Other logic than assumes a « environment improve ».

Environment from which the infant will have to free himself if he does not want to risk the bet in danger of her existence as separated subject.

Winnicott with the « perfect environment » articulate subjectivity and intersubjectivity. It puts us, by stressing the vital necessity of this environment, the way of necessary maternal interpretation, that is on made mayor it is to Other than primordial experience is first entrusted: wish it is the wish of Other one.

The « theory of mind " which works out Winnicott from such a defined frame, environment, without which « an infant this does not exist », covers, seems to me t-il of the logical fundamental time of structuringsuch as this acquisition image of a certain emotional adulthood and as Winnicott names « the capacity to be alone in the presence of other one ».

Perfect environment contains the misery of the infant, makes psychical place in which the infant in misery can feel lack without dying from it.

It if origin of an environment "enough " good, just enough but not too much to allow the distance within which subject constructs its theory, that is starts to think of its report of Other one.

The specialists of correlations mother / infant such as B. Golse notices that from 6 months (stadium of the mirror to Lacan) the reciprocal information of the mother and the infant on the psychical state of other one operates;so at the time when the child does not speak still it achieves intersubjectivity, living of him and other one.