

## Psychoanalysis as Play and the Play of Psychoanalysis: Developments in Contemporary Independent and Relational Thinking

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When Winnicott redefined psychoanalysis and the analytic situation as a play setting, he created a seismic shift in clinical and theoretical psychoanalysis. He was developing a revolutionary understanding of intersubjectivity and inventing, along with Bion in parallel fashion regarding dreaming, the ontological strain in psychoanalysis.

Winnicott's concept of play grew out of a cluster of ideas associated with the Independent Tradition, the latter of which has important overlap and difference with contemporary developments in interpersonal and relational theory. We are still mining Winnicott's insights regarding the analytic setting as a form of playing. Simply put, this is the purpose of this seminar.

Here, we will explore playing as a process out of which the patient's experience of being and becoming is hopefully developed. In understanding both Winnicott's theory of play and the contemporary evolution of his theory within the Independent and Relational traditions, a question I will try to foreground is how we are able to maintain the mystery and magic of play as well as the ambiguity of inside and outside that are inherent to it. In a forthcoming book (2022), *Playing and Becoming*, I have tried to bring together my thoughts on these matters.

I will try to help you think about and find your own version of play in your work, borrowing and discarding from these traditions. Hopefully, the seminar will stimulate your thinking about new elements of play that you have not considered such as the interdependence and paradox of mourning and playing, as well as questions regarding an ethic of playing. The clinical examples that I will present and that I hope that you will present are often puzzling, paradoxical, and enigmatic in

capturing places of play within the intersubjective setting of analytic work.

Understanding the patient's and analyst's resistance to play is some of the hard work and fun. These forms of resistance include the analyst's relationship to the patient's and their own internal objects. In general, patients have to find an analyst who is ready to play and this may involve a tremendous amount of countertransference activity on the part of the analyst.

We will begin by reading a few key Winnicott papers that are the basis of understanding his contribution to play. Then we will read from a several authors whom I regard as contributing to contemporary versions of the Independent Tradition (loosely defined) including Parsons, Ogden and some of my own recent writing. Finally, we will think about Winnicott and contemporary Independent tradition writers in relation to Relational thinking about play.

I look forward to working with you and please let me know if you have any questions about the seminar.

Steven

I: An Introduction to the Independent Tradition with Focus on the Development of the Theory of Play

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

Parsons, M. (2009) An independent theory of clinical technique. *Psychoanal. Dial.* 19: 221-236.

### Optional Reading

Winnicott, D. (1945). Primitive emotional development. In: *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis*, p. 145-156.

Ogden, T. (2001). Reading Winnicott. *Psychoanal. Q.* 70(2): 299-323.

Also found in Ogden, T. (2011): *Creative Readings: Essays on Seminal Analytic Works*, p. 76-97. London: The New Library of Psychoanalysis.

### II. Playing and Reality

Winnicott, D. (1951) Transitional objects and transitional phenomena.

In *Playing ad Reality*. New York Basic Books, 1971 (pp. 1-25).

Fonagy, P. and Target, M. (1996) Playing with reality: I. Theory of Mind and the normal development of psychic reality. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 77:217-233.

### III. The Psychoanalytic Setting as a Place of Play

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

Cooper, S. H. (2021) Toward an ethic of play. *Psychoanal. Q.* 90: 373-397. Also in *Playing and Becoming*. London/New York: Routledge (in press).

### Optional

Winnicott, D.W. (1968) The place where we live. Volume 8, Winnicott Collected Papers

#### IV. The Use of the Object and its Relevance to Play

Winnicott: (1969) The use of an object. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 50: 711-716. Also in *Playing and Reality, 1971*, New York: Basic Books, p. 86-95.

Ogden, T.S. (2016). Destruction Reconceived: On Winnicott's 'The Use of an Object and Relating through Identifications'. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 97(5):1243-1262.

#### V. Enactment and Play

Benjamin, J. (2016) From enactment to play: Metacommunication, acknowledgement, and the third of paradox. *Rivista Di Psicoanalisi.* 62: 565-593.

Civitarese, G. (2008). Immersion versus interactivity and the analytic field. *Int. J. Psychoanal.* 89:209-230.

#### VI. Limit as Constitutive of Play and Thinking about the Limits of Play and Improvisation.

Ringstrom, P.A. (2001). Cultivating the improvisational in psychoanalytic treatment. *Psychoanal. Dial.*, 11(5):727-754.

Parsons, M. (2006) The analyst's countertransference to the psychoanalytic process. *Int. J. Psychoanalysis.* 87: 1183-1198.

#### Optional

Cooper, S.H. (in press) The limits of intimacy and the intimacy of limits: Play and its relations to the bad object. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*

VII. More on Finding the Object and Subject of Play: Mourning, and  
Becoming in Psychoanalysis

Corbett, K. (in press) Transit: Playing the object, finding the analyst.

Cooper, S. H. (in press) The play of mourning. *J. Amer. Psychoanal.* Also in  
*Playing and Becoming*. London/New York: Routledge (in press).

Optional

Cooper, S. H. (2018) Playing in the darkness: Use of the object and Use of the  
subject. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.* 66: 743-765.

VIII. Independent Tradition Thinking Regarding Playing, Dreaming and  
Becoming

Ogden, T. H. (2018) How I talk with my patients. *Psychoanal. Q.* 87: 399-414.

Ogden, T.H. (2019). Ontological psychoanalysis or what do you want to be  
when you grown up? *Psychoanal Q.*, 88(4): 661-684.

Optional

Cooper, S. H. (2022) "I Want You to Be:" Thinking about Winnicott's View of  
Interpretation in Ontological and Epistemological Psychoanalysis. In,  
"Playing and Becoming in Psychoanalysis." London/New York:  
Routledge (in press)

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

