



The Squiggle Foundation

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I have always felt a lot of affection and admiration for Donald Winnicott. It was not only that my own father worked for him during the war at St Mary's, Paddington (my father was a musician and a conscientious objector and had a life-long interest in psychoanalysis), or that I met him myself when I was a student at the London School of Economics, where he gave a marvellous series of lectures not long before he died. He was able to inspire people with his humanity and presence. His books give out such a quality of lived

experience, which permeates his understanding of how we experience ourselves. He knew about 'being' and 'doing' not as intellectual ideas, but from his own experience, and from an ability to resonate very deeply with other people. There is something simple about the way he writes, which is asking us to experience the lived reality of what he is describing for ourselves.

And this isn't easy! Some of the things he describes are not easy to understand cognitively, but require to be sensed at

quite a subtle level of 'felt sense' or embodiment.

I was reminded of this not long ago when, inspired by my affection for Winnicott, and by the name of the organisation, I went to a meeting of the Squiggle Foundation, which was set up in his memory and which holds a regular series of lectures by psychoanalysts on themes relating to his work. The lecture was interesting, but to me, coming from a background of psychotherapy informed not only by psychoanalysis but also by humanistic and psychospiritual perspectives, there was something deeply old-fashioned about what was being said. It was as though whole areas of human experience were being skirted around rather demurely. That we live and have our emotional being within our bodies, that there is something profoundly healing about deeper levels of consciousness that transcends cognitive understanding or personality, and which sometimes need to be acknowledged and worked with in non-cognitive ways — these ideas are embedded in Winnicott's work, and are central to it. The lecture was an at-

tempt to move towards an understanding of how to work at these levels in terms of practice, but there was absolutely no acknowledgement of the enormous contribution of humanistic and integrative psychotherapy in these areas over recent years. It was apparently necessary to go back to the 1940s for sufficiently reputable examples.

There were a lot of psychoanalysts in the audience. The discussion was highly intellectual, and I left feeling as though I had been in a timewarp. I have a deep respect for psychoanalytic ideas, and work with them extensively in my own practice, but I felt from this encounter how dry and intellectual the psychoanalytic world can be, how encapsulated in a self-referring clique which seems set on depriving itself of the juiciness and wholeness of lived experience offered by other psychotherapeutic approaches.

It seems this division is currently being acted out yet again in the separatist movement within the structures established to regularise training and accreditation in Britain. I wonder what Winnicott's response would have been.

