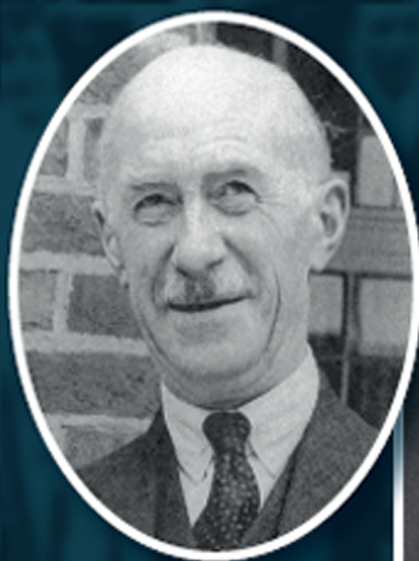


# FAIRBAIRN AND THE OBJECT RELATIONS TRADITION



**LINES OF DEVELOPMENT**  
Evolution of Theory and  
Practice over the Decades

**EDITED BY** GRAHAM S. CLARKE  
**AND** DAVID E. SCHARFF

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**LINES OF DEVELOPMENT**  
**Evolution of Theory and Practice over the Decades**

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# FAIRBAIRN AND THE OBJECT RELATIONS TRADITION

*Edited by*  
*Graham S. Clarke and David E. Scharff*

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## SERIES EDITORS' FOREWORD

*Norka Malberg and Joan Raphael-Leff*

This book celebrates the man who un-split the psychic atom. It articulates the momentous and often underestimated revolution instigated by Fairbairn's work, away from replacing solipsism with the fundamental need for human connectedness, vital throughout our lives.

Throughout its many chapters, *Fairbairn and the Object Relations Tradition* manages to convey the enormity of this paradigm shift—away from the fractured Freudian mind formed in isolation, a cohering body ego within a somatic predisposition and biological instinct (drive theory), to an *object relations* focus—the pristine ego self-recognised through the minds of others, becoming both structured and fragmented by their attunement and misrecognition.

With increased sophistication of research tools, Fairbairn's 'libido-as-object-seeking' challenge to Freud has now been confirmed by myriad neonatal studies, demonstrating even a newborn's innate desire to relate. And, building on Fairbairnian thinking, there has been a further postmodern shift towards what might be called a '*subject relations*' theory—the dialogical latticework of nonconscious self/other configurations that each partner brings to an intersubjective dyad.

These and many other themes are reflected in this book's rich offerings. To their great credit, Graham S. Clarke and David E. Scharff have generated a cross-continental multidisciplinary gathering of contributors, from Australia, Latin and North America, Europe and Asia. Accessibility is ensured by the format common to all our volumes: four overlapping categories—Historical, Clinical, Theoretical, and Application, each with a scholarly introduction by the co-editors.

The purpose of this series which Oliver Rathbone entrusted to us as series co-editors, is to honour a spectrum of psychoanalytic pioneers. By definition, these thinkers, like Fairbairn, have ventured into unknown or unclaimed territories—opening up new areas of theoretical enquiry and/or therapeutic work. Each volume explores the context in which a particular pioneer's

ideas arose, inspiring a tradition that expanded the original thinking through research, clinical developments, or practical applications across international borders and generations.

We trust that this fine collection of essays portraying Fairbairn's legacy will provide a welcome resource for professionals, students, candidates, and interested lay readers, stimulating new work in the field.

*Joan Raphael-Leff and Norka Malberg  
London*

## INTRODUCTION

*James S. Grotstein*

This is an extraordinary work: extraordinary in many ways. The choice of the subject, Fairbairn; the unusually well-crafted editing; the number of Fairbairn scholars who made contributions (thirty-nine); and the editorial choreography of the contributions. By editorial choreography I mean, while I was reading the book, I began to wonder if it had been written by a single author, partially because the flow of the chapters appeared seamlessly connected, and yet in its vastness the work was virtually all inclusive in dealing with Fairbairn's works—to say nothing of being inclusive of many of his unpublished works, which the Fairbairn family put at the editors' disposal.

Fairbairn had been a virtual Cassandra until recent times when his then futuristic, revolutionary ideas have become regarded as being of unusual value. Though formal in manner, writing style, and psychoanalytic technique, he was extraordinarily humanistic in his outlook, as is clearly seen in his concept of the primacy of importance of infantile dependency and of object relations and their ramifications. He was a keen analytic explorer, much like Ferenczi and especially Bion (whom he knew). He was the only analyst, to my knowledge, to create an anatomic scaffolding for the unconscious (endopsychic structure). The structure clearly anticipated the Kleinian concept of the pathological structure or psychic retreat. His work with trauma and religion was, along with so many other fields of study, seminal. If, for instance, we reunite the "exciting object" with the "rejecting object", we create the diabolical tantaliser who rejects and torments after he seduces.

It was unfortunate that Winnicott and Klein marginalised him. He had so much in common with them. His work, in my opinion, neatly complements Klein's and anticipates Winnicott's.

This is a gem of a book. I do so much want it to be successful: it is much needed.

## INTRODUCTION

*Graham S. Clarke and David E. Scharff*

In the view of the two of us who have had the privilege of editing this volume, Fairbairn has been the unifying theoretician behind the British object relations tradition by which we mean the Independent or Middle group of the British Psychoanalytic Society represented most notably in the mid twentieth century by Fairbairn, Guntrip, Winnicott, and Balint, as opposed to object relations thinking within Britain which would include Melanie Klein and her followers (Bacal, 1987; Clarke, 2011; Sutherland, 1980). Fairbairn's object relations theory provided the foundation for the wholesale shift within psychoanalysis to relational ideas that occurred in the last generation all over the world. He was a close student and great admirer of Freud, and knew Melanie Klein's work intimately. Drawing on his study of modern philosophy both for a new vision and for the critical thinking that marked his writing from the outset, he could see both the strengths and the weaknesses of their ideas. Reading through his lecture notes for his teaching of medical and psychology students at the University of Edinburgh in the 1930s, it has been possible to trace his close study of Freud and his critical thinking which resulted in the formulation of a new paradigm for psychoanalysis that burst on the scene in his writings of the 1940s, most of them published in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, the *British Medical Journal*, and the *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, and then collected together and published in his landmark book, *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality* (Birtles & Scharff, 1994).

We have put together this book with the intention of showing Fairbairn's accomplishment, his central role in the redefinition of psychoanalysis in the second half of the twentieth century, and of exploring the array of ideas that have built on his work. We invited authors who we thought could update his ideas by considering them critically with the same fine grain that he examined the ideas of Freud, Klein, and other forebears and contemporaries. Undoubtedly, he got some things wrong. Modern developments have affected what we can make of some of his original propositions. No science or art is or should be immune to revision. Newton's ideas hold

up, but they take a different place in physics in the light of Einstein, quantum mechanics, and chaos theory. Just so, Freud, Klein, and Fairbairn need continual re-examination for their relevance, and for the current place of their ideas in our theoretical and clinical thinking. Through his career, Fairbairn applied his new point of view broadly beyond analysis, to applications to medical, educational, and sociological fields, and, importantly, to developing a highly original psychology of art. Melanie Klein was influenced strongly by Fairbairn's papers as they were published in the *IJPA* during the early 1940s, which led to her rethinking her own work and renaming the "paranoid" position as the "paranoid-schizoid" position (Klein, 1946). We should also note that Fairbairn's model of the mind was one basis for the theoretical work of John Bowlby in the development of attachment theory, which is not explored in this volume (Bowlby, personal communication, 1973).

We are aware that over the years one of the obstacles to people coming to grips with Fairbairn's revolutionary ideas is the condensed and, to many, difficult style of his philosophically trained mind. Our prologue by Maurice Whelan mounts a trenchant defence of Fairbairn as a powerful and engaging writer which, we hope, will do much to dispel such concerns. We also hope that the contributions to this volume, while still as serious as ever about communicating the heart and soul of Fairbairn's vision, will be readily accessible to the general reader.

The focus of this volume spans past, present, and future. It begins with a summary and re-evaluation of Fairbairn's ideas from the position of nearly twenty years ago when his less known selected papers were first collected together and published. It documents the spread and influence of his ideas worldwide. And most of all, it showcases new ideas that have sprung from the platform his work provided, looking forward to the continuing evolution of ideas built both on those of his formulations that have stood the test of time, and on modifications and corrections that modern contributors offer. Inviting and gathering these has been an exciting task for us, and we hope that you, the reader, will share in the excitement of discovery that is here presented.

### *What is the object relations tradition that Fairbairn originated?*

Fairbairn offered a fundamentally new way of seeing people psychoanalytically. In a Copernican revision of classical theory Fairbairn declared that Freud's pleasure principle could no longer be seen as the centre of the psychological universe, and that his structural model also needed recasting so that the individual's world was not begun with a formless id out of which an ego grew, but began with an active, energetic, ego structure that was fundamentally object seeking and object relating. Crucially, we need to remember that this also led him to reformulate the focus of the therapeutic process—the engine of change. No longer could he hold with the idea that it was genetic reconstruction, the abreaction of memories, or transference interpretation, but fundamentally it was the relationship between patient and therapist, that determined the outcome of therapy. As he wrote,

I am convinced that it is the patient's relationship to the analyst that mediates the "curing" or "saving" effect of psychotherapy. Where long-term psychoanalytical treatment is concerned, what *mediates* the "curing" or "saving" process more specifically is the development of the

patient's relationship to the analyst, through a phase in which earlier pathogenic relationships are repeated under the influence of transference, into a new kind of relationship which is at once satisfying and adapted to the circumstances of outer reality. (quoted in Birtles & Scharff, 1994, p. 128)

This central point was also summed up by John Macmurray, a fellow Scot and contemporary, from whom Fairbairn drew, and who we quote to make the point that Fairbairn was not "an isolated self" alone in his thinking.

We need one another to be ourselves. This complete and unlimited dependence of each of us upon the others is the central and crucial fact of personal existence. Individual independence is an illusion; and the independent individual, the isolated self, is a nonentity. (*Persons in Relation*, 1961, p. 211)

Fairbairn revolutionised what Freud had offered by writing that the child and growing person was not primarily motivated by pleasure seeking, but by the need for relationship. He described the origins of this process in the following terms:

The process of differentiation of the object derives particular significance from the fact that infantile dependence is characterized not only by identification, but also by an oral attitude of incorporation. In virtue of this fact the object with which the individual is identified becomes equivalent to an incorporated object, or, to put the matter in a more arresting fashion, the object in which the individual is incorporated is incorporated in the individual. This strange psychological anomaly may well prove the key to many metaphysical puzzles. (*Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality*, 1952, p. 42)

The baby, from the beginning, is actively looking for a person with whom to relate, who will not just suckle him or her but will offer warmth and shelter and protection and, above all, love. Newborns are primarily motivated to relate deeply and lovingly to another person, and do everything in their power to maintain that relationship even to their own detriment. Indeed, one of Fairbairn's discoveries was the child's need to dedicate herself even to a bad object because of this fundamental need for relationship.

Fairbairn formulated his approach—the "object seeking" and "object relating" understanding of persons—in contrast to the classical Freudian instinctual approach in the series of papers written or published in the early Forties during World War II, although many of these ideas are already present in his earliest clinical papers printed, some for the first time, in his only book, *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality* (1952). For Fairbairn it is the earliest relationship with others that establishes a way of being and relating that is the foundation that will strongly influence who the person will become as an adult. This is not deterministic. It is a general hypothesis about the relational attributes and personal qualities that an adult has, and their origins in early relations with mother, father, siblings, and extended family. Fairbairn did not thoroughly explore the situation of historical specificity in which different child-rearing practices within different social systems produce different persons, different personalities, different psychopathologies; and individual circumstances and constitutional factors will influence the

degree to which such experiences are manifest. But he did explore the situation of socialisation in communism, and was indeed interested in this question (1935).

While Fairbairn acknowledged, as did Freud before him, that there are constitutional factors involved, his theory is firmly based upon the view that we come to be the people we are through our relations with our fellows. In that sense we could say it is existentialist: we are what we make of what we are made of. It is thus a wider view than just the psychoanalytic, and more than just a theory of psychopathology—although that is what it has sometimes been called. It is this investigation of the wider personal, psychological, social, spiritual, and political ramifications of Fairbairn's theory that we seek to explore in this book.

When we first conceived of the book we wanted to keep its remit as open as possible so that the variety of approaches and the range of interests would become manifest, and the synergy between the different aspects of this tradition would prompt further discussion beyond these pages, leading to renewed recognition and acknowledgment of Fairbairn's contribution, and therefore to its wider exploration and application. We approached people from a range of different backgrounds and a worldwide geographic distribution, whose previous work was related to furthering an understanding of Fairbairn's theory and practice in a wide variety of directions. We were gratified to receive an overwhelmingly positive response. We thank the many contributors to the book for their vital participation in this process, which we hope has been a learning experience for all concerned.

During the early development of the book, and, in some respect triggered by it, a further collection of Fairbairn's papers was donated to the manuscript collection of the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh by the Fairbairn family. These have been used to great effect in a number of chapters, resulting in new and illuminating research both into Fairbairn's ideas and into his personal history. We believe these to have been the last remaining papers of Fairbairn held in private hands, so the collection in the National Library of Scotland, and the repository of Fairbairn's own library, now held by the University of Edinburgh, represent all the extant works owned or written by Fairbairn, and comprise an invaluable source of material for further research and investigation.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the indefatigable work of Ellinor Fairbairn Birtles in keeping her father's ideas alive and available to the public and to Caro Birtles and the Fairbairn family for their generous donation of Fairbairn's papers to the National Library of Scotland.

### *Structure of the book*

In keeping with the series we have divided the contents of the book into four general categories—Historical, Clinical, Theoretical and Applications—though it would be fair to say that many of the contributions straddle several of these topics and different orderings of the contributions would have been possible. At the head of each part we have added a brief introduction to outline how each part holds together.

All the chapters in this book bar three were written specifically for this publication. The three previously published papers reprinted here might be called “anchoring points” for the first three parts. The initial paper by David E. Scharff and Ellinor Fairbairn Birtles, who did so

much to develop her father's ideas, puts Fairbairn in a psychoanalytic context at the end of the twentieth century, and shows the degree to which his ideas have become a commonplace of the assumptions of the profession, a foundation that is all too often unrecognised. In the [second part](#), we reprint Thomas Ogden's masterful reminder of the importance of reading Fairbairn—a paper that has already found a wide resonance within the profession. In the [third part](#), the reprinted paper is a model of clarity by John Padel. It is an excellent early review of Fairbairn's theory as a whole. Padel, Sutherland, and Guntrip represented the backbone of the sympathetic independent British support for Fairbairn's work from the publication of *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality* in 1952 to his wider recognition in the 1980s.

If you review the content of these three reprinted papers, it is clear that each has a different focus. Through the reprinted papers we can trace the actual history of psychoanalytic theory and practice along with the effects that Fairbairn's theory has had on the development of psychoanalysis. In the Historical part we see where Fairbairn's ideas might have come from, and the sort of social and historical settings in which they flourished. Here the question becomes, "To what extent did Fairbairn originate this tradition and where else did it come from?" It becomes clear that these ideas come out of a complex cultural milieu long in the making. The influence of Aristotle, Hegel, the Scottish Enlightenment and nineteenth-century Scottish interpreters of the Enlightenment, and the Presbyterian Church all play a part in the formation of Fairbairn's character and the evolution of his theory. Fairbairn's complex involvement with religion and his psychosexual development through his own upbringing and experience as reflected in his self-analytic notes are implicated in this process: witness the two contributions to this book that have benefited most from the recent additions to the manuscript collection at the National Library of Scotland. Fairbairn's relationship with Scottish contemporaries Suttie and Macmurray, whose ideas he shared to varying degrees, are also considered in detail.

Fairbairn's work has taken a long time to become known internationally. His influence has been greatest in the UK, Canada, and the USA. As his work has been influential within Europe as a whole, we have commissioned contributions from Scotland, France, Germany, Italy, Israel, Serbia, and Spain in the book. There are also contributions from Australia, Panama, and Argentina where there has been a well established long-term interest in Fairbairn's ideas. This is represented, in the Historical part, by an account of the development of a "Fairbairn Space" within the Argentinian Psychoanalytic Association—what in the UK might be called a "Fairbairn Special Interest Group". The "Fairbairn Space" has carried out a detailed study of Fairbairn's work and overseen its active application to a wide range of psychiatric and psychoanalytic contexts. The Latin American dimension to the development of Fairbairn's ideas is reflected in the fact that we have four other contributions to the book with strong Argentinian links.

In the Clinical part, beginning with Thomas Ogden's encouragement to read and reread Fairbairn, we have a number of clinically related investigations into key areas of theory. The origin and nature of internal objects and the differences between Fairbairn and Klein is a motif that runs throughout the book, as the differences between Fairbairn—representing British object relations theory—and the object relations theory of Klein are explored by different authors. In general, unless explicitly stated, all subsequent references to object relations thinking will be to the British object relations thinking initiated by Fairbairn. The place of the "Oedipus situation" is illustrated clinically with examination of significant differences between Fairbairn and Freud.

The extension from individual to couple therapy noted by Kernberg in the Historical part is later investigated in greater depth through attention to the importance allocated to Henry Dicks, and David and Jill Scharff's clinical use of Fairbairn's theory for therapy of couples and families. Fairbairn's contribution to the study of personality disorders, to the abuse, trauma, and the specifically "schizoid" nature of the multiplicity of dissociative identity disorder (D.I.D.) that can follow severe trauma, are all looked at from a clinical point of view. From Argentina comes a comprehensive attempt to classify a wide-ranging group of psychopathologies and to identify an underlying mechanism based in the idea of "schizoid conflict" that is so intrinsic to Fairbairn's theory. Fairbairn's own theory of dreams and dreaming as "state of affairs" or short "films" of inner reality is discussed both in relation to Winnicott's approach to dreams, and the importance of the countertransference. The place of the therapist as a "good object" is discussed and illustrated with clinical examples, using a relational view of the interaction between analyst and analysand, and based upon key ideas from Fairbairn's account of the pitfalls in the development of ontological security. Finally, the relationship between Fairbairn's theory and the future co-development of psychoanalysis, developmental psychology, attachment theory, and neuro-psychoanalysis is investigated.

In the Theoretical part we look at the ways that Fairbairn's theory has been understood and developed by a number of different theorists and at the wider problems which that theory has influenced. Our first contribution is by one of the less well known but most astute commentators on Fairbairn—psychoanalyst and Shakespearean scholar John Padel. This is followed by an appreciation of Padel's contribution to the understanding of Fairbairn over a number of years through his publications on object relations and presentations to the British Psychoanalytical Society. In other papers, Fairbairn's relationship to Guntrip and Winnicott is investigated in detail, followed by similarities between aspects of Ferenczi's work on trauma and Fairbairn's theory. There are then two papers considering Stephen Mitchell involvement with Fairbairn's ideas, followed by two papers exploring Pichon-Rivière's concept of the Link that partly derives from Fairbairn, and its resonance with Fairbairn's work. Another Argentinian analyst puts forward a view on the earliest position that the baby starts from, one he first proposed at the 2005 Scottish conference on Sutherland and Fairbairn. He relates this to creativity and art in Fairbairn's thinking.

Fairbairn's structural theory has always been a matter of controversy, but here we have a critical look at the theory from the point of view of a therapist trying hard to apply Fairbairn's theory but finding that aspects of the theory, as he understands it, will not work without revision. In a similar vein, we explore the standing of the scientific status of Fairbairn's theory. Finally in this part we also have two detailed philosophical investigations of Fairbairn's theory: one, of the idea of sub-egos and objects as a concept of mind, considering the arguments against such a view and then developing a novel and coherent way of understanding Fairbairn's theory; the second article places Fairbairn's thinking squarely in a European intersubjectivist tradition, represented by Merleau-Ponty, pointing to subtle differences in the ways that Fairbairn formulated his theory at different times in order to underline the importance of particular ways of describing the development of the endopsychic structure.

It has been gratifying that a number of contributions to the book make use of papers not normally considered when Fairbairn is being discussed, not just the papers in the second and

third parts of *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality* but also his two papers on art, which have long been ignored as were a number of other papers that were made more easily available with the collection *From Instinct to Self* (1994). In particular the importance of Fairbairn's thinking on sociological and group matters is raised by some of the contributors. This promises to be an exciting new extension of his ideas. Finally, in the Applications parts of the book we see how Fairbairn's ideas might be extended, and thus influence the realms of art and creativity, literature and film, sociology, group activities, social work, and child care practices.

We hope that this volume, bringing together as it does contributions from a wide range of backgrounds by those who find common ground in their interest in Fairbairn, will find echoes in the wider culture of psychoanalysis and beyond. We hope that it will go a considerable way towards enabling us to clarify much that remains unsettled in the theory of object relations developed by Fairbairn. We believe that a fully extended theory of object relations is essential to further progress of psychoanalysis, and to its wider acceptance in concert with developmental psychology, attachment theory, neuroscience, and the social sciences as a whole.

We would like to thank all our contributors for their dedication and hard work and for their stimulating contributions to the continuing understanding of Fairbairn and the object relations tradition.

We would also like to thank the series editors Joan Raphael-Leff and Norka Mahlberg for giving us this exciting opportunity and Oliver Rathbone and Karnac for their generous support.

Graham Clarke has enjoyed the process greatly and benefited much from his productive collaboration with David Scharff. Graham would also like to thank his colleague Paul Finnegan for his friendship and their joint work over a number of years and his wife Sandra for her sensitive support and help during the process of editing this book and beyond.

David Scharff has enjoyed this fruitful and collegial collaboration so generously offered by Graham Clarke, and is grateful to all our contributors who generously and enthusiastically offered reviews and new ideas to enliven and mine the rich vein that Fairbairn first discovered. As so many times before, his wife Jill has supported the work, and contributed far more than her own specific contribution.

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## PROLOGUE

### Fairbairn the writer

*Maurice Whelan*

Some say Fairbairn is hard to read; he is too dense, too theoretical. He hasn't the writing flair of Freud and unlike Klein and Winnicott doesn't take you inside his consulting room to immerse you in the immediacy of the contact with a patient. I have always been intrigued by these comments because my own experience reading him is quite the opposite. So when asked to be part of this project I welcomed the opportunity to clarify my ideas, and hopefully to convey that clarity and make it possible for others to reap the full rewards of reading Fairbairn.

I began by posing some questions. Does it matter how people write? Is style significant? In psychoanalytical writing is content all important? Does it matter how we arrive at our understanding of the human mind as long as that understanding assists our patient? To provide some answers I sought the assistance of a few writing heavyweights, Sigmund Freud, Marcel Proust, and the English essayist William Hazlitt.

Good writing was important to Freud. (He was awarded the 1930 Goethe Prize for Literature.) In May 1922 Freud wrote to the writer Arthur Schnitzler (1862–1931). Schnitzler had trained as a doctor and a neurologist but turned from medicine to literature. Referring to Schnitzler's writing Freud said, "Whenever I get deeply interested in your beautiful creations I always seem to find behind their poetic sheen the same pre-suppositions, interests and conclusions as those familiar to me as my own" (Jones, 1957, p. 474).

Freud compliments Schnitzler on his "artistic gifts", his "mastery of language", his "creativity". Freud deserves our compliments for exhibiting similar qualities, his papers being a supreme example of his capacities as a writer.

In *Remembrance of Things Past* Marcel Proust wrote:

Style for the writer, no less than colour for the painter, is a question not of technique but of vision: it is the revelation, which by direct and conscious methods would be impossible, of the

qualitative difference, the uniqueness of the fashion in which the world appears to each one of us ... And it is perhaps as much by the quality of his language as by the species of ... theory which he advances that one may judge of the level to which a writer has attained in the moral and intellectual part of his work. Quality of language, however, is something that theorists think they can do without, and those who admire them are easily persuaded that it is no proof of intellectual merit. (1913–1927, 3, p. 916)

Proust states that style and vision and quality of language are interwoven threads that combine to determine the value of a text. To know the particularities of the individual writer is the key to reaping our just rewards from the labour we extend in reading them.

I have taught Fairbairn for twenty years. Though I consider him among the most important figures in psychoanalysis, I do not start with his ideas. I begin by attending to him as a writer and the piece of writing I start with is his 1954 paper, "Observations on the Nature of Hysterical States". This is the first page.

In addition to such intrinsic interest as hysterical states may be expected to possess for the psychopathologist, they must always assume a quite special significance for him owing to the fact that it was upon the intensive investigation of these states that modern psychopathology was founded. It was, of course, at the Salpêtrière in Paris that this investigation was originally set in motion by Charcot; but it is to Janet, his pupil and successor in research, that we owe the formulation of the concept of hysteria as a recognizable clinical state. Janet's achievement was not confined, however, to a classification and description of hysterical symptomatology. It included an attempt to provide a scientific explanation of the genesis of the phenomena displayed by the hysteric; and the explanatory concept which Janet formulated was, of course, the classic concept of "dissociation". In terms of this concept the hysterical state is essentially due to inability on the part of the ego to hold all the functions of the personality together, with the result that certain of these functions become dissociated from, and lost to, the rest of the personality and, having passed out of the control of the ego, operate independently. The extent of the dissociated elements was described by Janet as varying within wide limits, so that sometimes what was dissociated was an isolated function such as the use of a limb, and sometimes a large area or areas of the psyche (as in cases of dual and multiple personality); and the occurrence of such dissociations was attributed to the presence of a certain weakness of the ego—a weakness partly inherent, and partly induced by circumstances such as illness, trauma or situations imposing a strain upon the individual's capacity for adaptation.

Dissociation as described by Janet is, of course, essentially a passive process—a process of disintegration due to a failure on the part of the cohesive function normally exercised by the ego. The concept of "dissociation" thus stands in marked contrast to the concept of "repression" formulated somewhat later by Freud in an attempt to provide a more adequate explanation of hysterical phenomena. Freud was familiar with the investigations conducted at the Salpêtrière, to which he himself paid an extensive visit; but his researches into the nature of hysteria were preponderantly of an independent character. Thus his explanatory concept of repression was based essentially upon his own experience of the reactions of hysterical patients in his practice in Vienna. (pp. 105–106)

Fairbairn begins by drawing attention to the place of hysteria in the history of dynamic psychiatry, psychology, and psychoanalysis. He mentions Charcot and Janet and presents Janet's achievements, describing his interest in both description and explanation. Fairbairn takes us through stages of knowing: observation, description, classification, preliminary attempt at a scientific explanation, and formulation of an explanatory concept. With Janet he goes through all these stages and having done so proceeds to examine and critique them. Where weaknesses are found, Fairbairn points out the need to strengthen the existing order or develop a whole new understanding. He singles out Janet's understanding of dissociation. In Janet's concept of dissociation the ego cannot hold all the functions of the personality together. The cause is a certain weakness of the ego. Fairbairn points out a shortcoming of such a view, namely that a passive process is inferred. He moves on to Freud's concept of repression. Because Freud sees repression as an active process, great opportunities for a dynamic psychology are opened up.

The points I have drawn attention to are but a few of the many in this packed first page, which even today I take delight in reading. This page of writing illustrates the core idea I wish to communicate. To prepare the ground I turn to my final heavyweight, the great English essayist, William Hazlitt, and in particular to a piece Hazlitt wrote about his friend Joseph Fawcett:

I have heard [Fawcett] explain "That is the most delicious feeling of all, to like what is excellent, no matter whose it is". In this respect he practised what he preached ... There was no flaw or mist in the clear mirror of his mind. He was as open to impressions as he was strenuous in maintaining them. He did not care a rush whether a writer was old or new, in prose or in verse—"what he wanted" he said "was something to make him think" ... He gave a cordial welcome to all sorts, provided they were the best in their kind. He was not fond of counterfeits or duplicates. His own style was laboured and artificial to a fault, while his character was frank and ingenuous in the extreme ... Men who have fewer native resources, and are obliged to apply oftener to the general stock, acquire by habit a greater aptitude in appreciating what they owe to others. Their taste is not made a sacrifice to their egotism and vanity, and they enrich the soil of their minds with continual accessions of borrowed strength and beauty. (pp. 224–225)

\* \* \*

I have allowed my heavyweights to do a significant amount of punching for me as I advance my case and argue for greater attention to Fairbairn as a writer. Proust's contribution articulates the belief that the quality of writing reflects the quality of thought. The theorists think the quality of language is something we can do without, Proust tells us. Freud is firmly on Proust's side in that argument.

A writer's style is like a writer's fingerprint. It is a fingerprint of his mind and his—to use an old-fashioned word—sensibilities. If we return and read again the Fairbairn piece I have reprinted, we find not only a short history of psychological thought on hysteria but we are told a story, a story about Charcot who had an original idea and how that idea, like a baton, is taken up and passed by others who followed. The story is part of Fairbairn's vision. And he tells the story on his own unique way.

Now an opposing argument can claim that everyone is entitled to their own style and all styles should be treated equally. Not so, I would assert and the reasons I would advance at this juncture are contained in the piece from Hazlitt.

The portrait Hazlitt paints of Joseph Fawcett is an image befitting Ronald Fairbairn. It is delicious to like what is excellent no matter whose it is. Fairbairn moves from Charcot to Janet to Freud. He describes the progress of thought without diminishing or extolling any single person. He has acquainted himself with the particular contribution each man has made and presents it to us for our admiration. Fairbairn wrote his MD thesis on “Dissociation and Repression”. He admired Freud’s advancements. That he points to areas of criticism where further thought or alteration was desired in no way detracted from his respect. Allied to his criticism was a keen sense of gratitude. He could, like Fawcett enrich the soil of his mind with accessions of borrowed strength and beauty.

The penultimate comparison I will make between Fairbairn and Fawcett relates to the latter not being fond of counterfeits and duplicates. Counterfeits are false: false ideas, false styles. Duplicates duplicate; they fail to develop their own mind and style.

And now I can summarise this chapter. From my first reading of Fairbairn I was aware of being in the presence of a man who knew his own mind, and who, through his particular style, was introducing me to the workings of that mind. He invites you to sit alongside him, and attend to the workings of your mind. When I am in his company I imagine him as a very patient teacher and colleague, keen to know how I am attending to the evidence on hand, what concepts I am using, what language I employ to express my thoughts. He encourages a deep and honest interest in human beings and their sufferings. He invites us to be respectful, endlessly curious, and ever intent on broadening our understanding of humanity. This is Fairbairn’s contribution and challenge when we read him: to think for ourselves; to satisfy our own minds; to welcome good knowledge regardless of where it originates; to express ourselves in a voice that is uniquely ours. The voice in question is free from narcissistic self-aggrandisement—in Hazlitt’s terms, devoid of vanity and affectation. The person with such a voice has one priority: to speak in a way that helps others to think.

I leave the content of his ideas in the safe hands of all the other contributors to this book. If I have made it possible for the reader to reap greater rewards from reading Ronald Fairbairn I will have succeeded in my task.

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PART I  
HISTORICAL



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## INTRODUCTION TO PART I

Graham S. Clarke and David E. Scharff

We begin with assessment of Fairbairn's background, origins, and theory, many themes from which are taken up throughout the book. Written by David E. Scharff and Ellinor Fairbairn Birtles, Fairbairn's daughter, who worked tirelessly to keep Fairbairn's ideas alive, their joint editorship of the two-volume *From Instinct to Self* (1994), published twenty years ago, documents Fairbairn's magnificent contribution to psychoanalytic thinking. David E. Scharff's and Ellinor Fairbairn Birtles's 1997 paper locates Fairbairn's work philosophically within the history of psychoanalysis, and points to his widespread but under-acknowledged influence. Intrinsic to their argument is a thorough summary of Fairbairn's theory.

The next four contributions, exploring the connection with and influence between Suttie and Fairbairn, point to work that has gone on, subsequent to the original publication in 1997 of the paper (reprinted here), researching the historical and social context in which Fairbairn was developing his revolutionary theory. Gal Gerson identifies Hegelian themes in Fairbairn's work and argues that he follows a different path from other contemporary object relations theorists like Suttie, Bowlby, and Winnicott. Based upon the often-overlooked sections and chapters in *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality* that concern social issues, Gerson argues that Fairbairn's idea of mature dependence is based upon finding a balance between family and state in which the state is the higher order institution, which is why the instance of Sophocles's *Antigone* is material. This might also reflect the influence of Aristotle on Fairbairn's thinking since, "For Aristotle, political activity is not merely a way to pursue our interests, but an essential part of the good life" (Michael Sandel, 2011). Consequently, mature dependence must involve playing a full role in the social world. (Ron Aviram, in the Applications part, also takes up this theme with an investigation into Fairbairn's social thinking.)

Gavin Miller draws attention to the many religious and scientific influences in the late Victorian and Edwardian Scottish cultural context "in which love itself was dignified as a

scientific reality worthy of methodical investigation” (Miller, this volume, p. 47). This helped to make possible the thinking of both Fairbairn and Suttie. Gabriele Cassullo addresses the project of integrating Janet’s and Freud’s model of mind with reference to the work of Ferenczi, Suttie, and Fairbairn.

Neville Symington looks at the relationship between Scottish contemporaries Fairbairn, Suttie, and Macmurray and the roots of their theories. He thinks that both Fairbairn and Suttie, while they tried to transcend Freud’s theory, failed to go far enough in their advocacy of relationship in human communication. He argues that only John Macmurray’s “natural theology” is an adequate grounding for the sort of “reciprocal relations” that psychoanalysis aspires to.

Thanks to a recent donation of Fairbairn’s personal papers by the Fairbairn family to the National Library of Scotland, who hold all of Fairbairn’s other manuscripts, it is now possible to investigate aspects of Fairbairn’s personal life more thoroughly than even the excellent biography of Fairbairn by “Jock” Sutherland. Marie and Lowell Hoffman have used the newly available manuscript material to look in detail at Fairbairn’s lifelong involvement with the church and religion and to suggest deep resonances between Fairbairn’s views and Calvinism. Hilary Beattie has used Fairbairn’s less well known papers and his newly available self-analytic notes to go more deeply into his personal struggles over his own sexuality.

Fairbairn’s work has been influential in Argentina for a long time. A number of contributions throughout the book illustrate that connection. Mercedes Campi and her co-authors’ introduction to the “Fairbairn Space” in Argentina gives a history of Fairbairn’s influence in that country along with the current concerns of the group which are developed further in the Clinical part.

Returning to the present status of Fairbairn’s thinking within contemporary psychoanalysis, Otto Kernberg, who, as much as anyone, has kept the ideas of Fairbairn relevant, reinforces the conclusions that Ellinor and David drew in 1997. Kernberg notes the degree to which different traditions within psychoanalysis have run in parallel without converging even though they represent similar approaches. In particular he notes the similarities between Fairbairn and Edith Jacobson. Kernberg also points to ways in which Fairbairn’s model has been expanded by people like Henry Dicks who applied it to couple therapy, a topic considered by Molly Ludlam in the Clinical part.

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## CHAPTER ONE

# From instinct to self: the evolution and implications of W. R. D. Fairbairn's theory of object relations\*

*David E. Scharff and Ellinor Fairbairn Birtles*

**I**n 1952 Ernest Jones wrote in his introduction to Fairbairn's *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality*:

Instead of starting, as Freud did, from stimulation of the nervous system proceeding from excitation of various erotogenous zones and internal tension arising from gonadic activity, Dr. Fairbairn starts at the centre of the personality, the ego, and depicts its strivings and difficulties in its endeavour to reach an object where it may find support ... All this constitutes a fresh approach in psycho-analysis which should lead to much fruitful discussion. (p. v)

W. R. D. Fairbairn brought an original voice and formulation to psychoanalysis. Without general awareness among analysts, his theoretical contributions have guided the revolution in psychoanalysis during the past twenty-five years (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983; Sutherland, 1989), and his formulations have contributed to the widespread application of analysis to other areas—to the study of trauma and multiple personality, infant development, marriage and the family, religion and pastoral care, to the understanding of groups, institutions, and society, to psychology of the arts, and to an evolution in the philosophical understanding of human experience. Nevertheless, his ideas passed from being little known to being general assumptions without ever being widely and distinctly acknowledged. In this paper we begin by discussing Fairbairn's background and the philosophical and psychoanalytic origins of his thought; we then outline

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the central tenets of his object relations theory of the personality, and finally we briefly consider its wider implications. It has been suggested that the extent of Fairbairn's contribution has been largely unrecognised because he worked in relative isolation in Edinburgh, Scotland from the 1920s until his death in 1964. Close study of the context in which he developed his innovative ideas shows that the seeds of his mature ideas were present from his first records of his thinking in the middle 1920s, when he was writing and teaching graduate and postgraduate students in philosophy, psychology, and medicine. Despite his distance from London, Fairbairn kept well informed about psychoanalytic developments in London, and especially the new work of Melanie Klein, but it is true that he was unable to respond in person to the issues taken up in the "Controversial Discussions" undertaken in London during the war, although he did submit one brief contribution that was read for him (King & Steiner, 1991). He also had frequent if periodic contact with many of the important British analysts during the 1940s and 1950s. The geographical separation from major analytic societies may even have helped preserve Fairbairn's independence of mind, but it may also have kept his ideas from receiving the understanding and recognition they deserved. For instance, critical commentary written in response to Fairbairn's articles and his book within British psychoanalysis in the 1940s and 1950s failed to appreciate the magnitude of Fairbairn's move from a biological instinct theory to a psychological theory of a self chiefly motivated by the need for relationships throughout life. Although Fairbairn provided a new paradigm for the twentieth century (Sutherland, 1989), one which ultimately organised the ensuing development of psychoanalysis, only a few analysts recognised this at the time he was writing.

Soon, however, the heart of Fairbairn's work became an intrinsic, accepted core of the thinking of the Independent Group of British analysts, whose prominent members included Balint, Winnicott, Sutherland, and Bowlby. His work was always of immediate interest to Melanie Klein and her followers, as was hers to him (Klein, 1946; Scharff, 1996). However, because Klein remained dedicated to Freud's drive theory even while stressing the importance of object relationships from the beginning, we will see later how her theory, like Freud's, remained grounded in the mould of nineteenth-century mechanical physics, in the need of the child to rid himself of excessive increments of the drive derivatives. Since instinct theory retains a somatic rather than psychological basis for mental function, Klein's theory works best for those conditions in which the model of early infantile dependence based on somatic need offers a useful metaphor. It is more problematic as an account of mature adult responsibility and interdependence.

Fairbairn altered his orientation fundamentally, shifting from Freud's topographical, impulse, and structural models to a psychology based on the need for and internalisation of relationships. His theoretical shift was based on the alternative motivation of a dynamic self seeking an object from whom it gained recognition and security. This shift also provided the theoretical basis for the centrality of the therapeutic relationship, and therefore presaged the clinical shift in the writing of the Kleinians and others to the use of countertransference and of the therapist's subjective experience (Heimann, 1950; Klein, 1952; Winnicott, 1949). His understanding of the importance of the relationship with the mother and family in infant and child development came fifteen years before Winnicott's and Bowlby's published accounts and expansion of ideas in this realm, and were an important part of the climate in which they later developed their contributions. His theory still remains fundamental to a rigorous underpinning of their work.

### *Fairbairn's training and experience*

On 16 November 1916, while on active duty in the Royal Artillery in Scotland and shortly before his posting to the Middle East, Fairbairn visited the "Craiglockart Hosp. (for nerve-shaken officers)", where he met "the Cambridge psychologist Capt. [W. H. R.] Rivers" (Fairbairn's diary, 1916). The hysterical injuries, or war neuroses, that he saw there made an indelible impression on him and he decided to undertake medical training in order to become a psychotherapist. His study of Freud began in 1919 with *The Interpretation of Dreams* and continued until his death in 1964. In 1921, while still a medical student, he began analysis with Dr Ernest Connell three to five times per week from July of that year probably until the end of December 1922. Connell was an Australian, who came to Edinburgh in 1920 and practised psychoanalysis there from 1921. From Fairbairn's diaries, it *appears* that Connell held an appointment at Craighouse Mental Hospital during the 1920s. It has not been possible to establish when his analysis with Connell ended as the diaries for 1923, 1924, and 1925 are the only ones missing in a series that goes from 1910–1964. However, Fairbairn started private psychoanalytic practice in 1923, when he qualified in medicine. From that date until 1935 he held a variety of appointments at mental hospitals in and around Edinburgh, which ran concurrently with his lectureships in psychology in the discipline of mental philosophy from 1927–1935, and in psychiatry from 1931–1932. His special subject was adolescence, and he also taught philosophy. He used psychoanalytic techniques in his clinical work at the University Psychological Clinic, and, from 1933, at the Child and Juvenile Clinic. In 1929, while acting as an expert witness, he was the first person to introduce the concept of "diminished responsibility" in a court of law.

From 1929, when Fairbairn attended the International Psychoanalytical Congress in Oxford, he was internationally acknowledged in psychoanalysis. He was elected as an associate member of the British Psychoanalytical Society in 1931 and a full member in 1939. His experience of the dissociative symptomatology of sexually and physically abused children, and of adults suffering from war neurosis, began with his clinical work in 1923 and continued to the end of his life. In spite of his personal reservations as to its validity (1932, unpublished) Fairbairn followed Freud's example and undertook self-analysis (Sutherland, 1989, pp. 65–82).

### *The philosophical origins of Fairbairn's thought*

Fairbairn brought to his own writing a careful study of Freud's major contributions and a dedication to logical thought derived from his training in philosophy. For this reason it is relevant to review the philosophical origins of his point of view. There are two distinct philosophical traditions within European thought. The first, Platonic tradition, is dissociative in that it examines discrete parts of functions in isolation from the whole. The second, derived from Aristotle, is integrative, relating parts to each other within a whole. Freud's view of human nature assumed a Platonic division between mind and body, a dualism that was enshrined in the Christian intellectual tradition and which was consistent with the nineteenth-century scientific tradition. In this view, mind and body are concrete entities whose mode of connection is conflictual opposition, leading by analogy to Freud's ideas of conflict between life and death instincts or between sex and aggression, id and ego, and the individual and society. In Freud's

view of mental health, conflictual dualism is expressed in the form of what Isaiah Berlin (1949) called “negative freedom”, that is, freedom “from” interference from internal or external forces. In this way a fundamentally exclusive and defensive psychology was incorporated into psychoanalytic theory.

In contrast, Fairbairn’s critical reorientation of psychoanalysis assumes a dialectical idea of human nature, an Aristotelian view expanded in the nineteenth century by Kant and Hegel, who defined human nature as integral and participatory: each individual strives for integration and reciprocity. Mind and body have equal status, and conflict is accommodated through the medium of change and mutually influencing reciprocity between differing elements.

Fairbairn’s philosophical roots sprang from his extensive studies in the Department of Mental Philosophy, undertaken as his first degree at Edinburgh University before his medical studies. There the focus was on the psychology of man and the products of his mind, undertaken in such studies as logic, ethics, and the philosophies of law and education. The metaphysical content of the syllabus was influenced by the interest of Professor Andrew Seth, later called Pringle-Pattison (1882) and that of his contemporaries, in the philosophical development of Kantian and Hegelian ideas. Fairbairn supplemented this background with postgraduate studies in Greek philosophy and the German language, undertaken in Germany. This course of study gave him a thorough knowledge of the philosophical accounts of the subjective experience of that which is “other”, a sensibility that includes the subject’s capacity for self-reflection. We will see shortly that this background eventually crystallised as a mainstay of Fairbairn’s own theory of internalised object relations.

In the Hegelian philosophical account, the innate capacities for language, symbolisation, and rational thought are understood to be dependent for their development on an adequate environment. The dialectic exchange between subject and object (the “other”) results in a new relationship or synthesis. The relationships between subject and object provide the progressive epistemological element necessary for the growth of language and thought. Fairbairn’s understanding of this philosophical point of view enabled him to place relational meaning and value, rather than gratification, at the motivational centre.

In order to discuss Fairbairn’s intellectual shift in more detail, let us review the Aristotelian and Hegelian origins of his thinking in more detail. Aristotle was the first Western philosopher to develop a holistic psychology based on his observations of the effects that one object had on another, and the extent to which the one was active in response to the other. Using this methodology, Aristotle moved from Platonic psychology in which the *form* of the human being—the body—was devalued and the power of reason exalted, to one in which the *experience* of existing in a world of phenomena is contained with the form of the person. Mind and body thus have equal status. Aristotle wrote, “Man is an animal naturally formed for society.” The major consequence of a shift from a discrete entity in which development is preprogrammed to one in which “Man” is defined as a “social animal” is to highlight the role of physical and emotional dependence. It is for this reason that infantile dependence and its vicissitudes play such a significant role in Fairbairn’s psychoanalytic account.

In 1807 Hegel wrote that the dissatisfactions of unsatisfied desire are allied to each person’s need to possess that which is “other”. This notion of the unsatisfactory nature of encounters motivated by desire became, in Fairbairn’s theory, the root motivation for splitting of the

ego, and thus for the construction of endopsychic structure, personality development, and psychopathology. Through these routes, Fairbairn developed a psychology of individuation and of the identity of the self essentially based on the meaning of relationships rather than on instinctual gratification.

Hegel drew on three major factors described by Aristotle (Schacht, 1972, pp. 292–293). In the first, “essence” is defined as “your very nature”, what we now recognise as genetic inheritance, within which rationality is a defining characteristic of the human species. The second factor is “coming-to-be”—the change from potentiality to actuality that can be seen in the case of the infants who have the unactualised potentiality to become fully rational beings. The third is the “originative source of change ... in one thing in relation to another”. Many changes in living creatures appear at first to be of their own doing, but on closer inspection can be seen to be responses reactive to their experience in the environment. The changes involved in physical maturation originate within the child himself “coming-to-be”, while the child’s adaptive response to his parents and to external reality would fit in the category of reactive change. When the environment is satisfactory, “self-realisation” occurs—that is to say, optimal actualisation of potential.

For Hegel, rational decisions have to be self-conscious. Being human involves the capacity for rational thought and self-reflection. Perhaps it was in following Hegel’s lead in this area that Fairbairn posited an early capacity for mental sorting as the basis for splitting and repression, which he thought begins so early in life. It has been argued that Fairbairn assumed too great a capacity for cognition in infants. One of his arguments against Freud’s theory of the unconscious was that there is no reason for infantile affective experience to be repressed if it is the result of instinctual stimulation alone. Experience must first reach some level of cognition or recognised experience before repression is required. Modern infant research as reported by Stern (1985) has confirmed the early functioning of cognition in infants. Fairbairn, following Stout (1927), had already argued that “[A]lthough the mental life of the infant belongs characteristically to the perceptual level, it is not altogether devoid of ideational, and even conceptual, elements” (1943b, p. 293).

Now let us listen to Hegel:

It is the facts or the contents in our consciousness, of whatever kind they are, that give character or determination to our feelings, perceptions, fancies and figurative conceptions; to our aims and duties; and to our thoughts and notions. From this point of view, feeling, perception, etc. are the forms assumed by these contents. The contents remain one and the same, whether they are merely felt, or felt with an admixture of thoughts, or merely and simply thought. In any one of these forms, or in the admixture of several, the contents confront the consciousness, or are its object. But when they are thus objects of consciousness, the modes of the several forms ally themselves with the contents, and each form of them appears in consequence to give rise to a special object. (1817, p. 243)

Here Hegel can be seen to be describing an unconscious process through which affect is associated with “facts” or “contents” in the mind. It is this association, which may be a complex of affects connected with the “fact” or mental image, that is the “special object”. Thus inner objects

are composed of “fact”—the image of the object—and the affects attached to it. In Fairbairn, the mother as the “fact” or “content” is seen in three affective modes: alluring, rejecting, and acceptable or “good”. These are the “*forms assumed by contents*”. Each form, in conjunction with the “fact”—the mother—then gives rise to the objects which Fairbairn described as “exciting”, “rejecting”, or “ideal” respectively. We will discuss the details of this idea later, but the point here is that because the mother is defined by three separate affective experiences, she becomes three separate mothers, each of whom embodies a separate relationship with the child. This view of the child as experiencing separate mothers is consistent with Fairbairn’s postulation of splitting of the object.

For Hegel, self-consciousness “requires an object from which to differentiate itself”. Such an object has to be recognised as alien and a “form of opposition to it”. The Hegelian scholar, Singer, writes:

There is therefore a peculiar kind of love-hate relationship between self-consciousness and the external object. The relationship, in the best tradition of love-hate relationships, comes to the surface in the form of desire. To desire something is to wish to possess it ... to transform it into something that is yours and thus to strip it of its foreignness. (1983, p. 57)

Singer notes that such desire arises from the need for self-consciousness to find an external object but “yet finds itself limited by anything that is outside itself” (p. 58). To “desire something is ... an unsatisfactory state for self-consciousness”. In this dilemma, Singer notes that Hegel makes “the object of self-consciousness another self-consciousness”. This implies that the object is returned to the external world, and has its own autonomy—no longer controlled by the subject. In Fairbairn’s model, splitting of the object into three parts occurs in order that the individual should retain limited control over unsatisfactory aspects of the object, leaving the ideal or satisfactory object free for interaction and connection with the external world. This is Fairbairn’s way of representing the infant’s recognition of another independent “self-consciousness”. Because the central ego is associated with the ideal object in the inner world, external reality always plays an important role in relationships of the inner world.

The acknowledgement by the infant that the mother is separate also carries the implication that the infant himself is perceived by the mother as separate, and that the infant understands this mental separateness. Self-consciousness includes recognition that the self is an object both to the mother and to himself. That is to say, the condition of self-consciousness is one of fundamental splits in the ego, fitting Fairbairn’s contention that splitting of the ego is universal.

We saw that Hegel made “the object of self-consciousness another self-consciousness”. For Hegel this took the form of God or the Absolute Spirit. In secular form, the state is a representation of the absolute. The important point here is complex: that which is other is also that within which the self is incorporated. Fairbairn also drew attention to this phenomenon:

The process of differentiation of the object derives particular significance from the fact that infantile dependence is characterised not only by identification, but also by an oral attitude of incorporation. In virtue of this fact the object with which the individual is identified becomes equivalent to an incorporated object, or, to put the matter in a more arresting fashion,

the object in which the individual is incorporated is incorporated in the individual. (1941, pp. 42–43)

We have stressed the Hegelian origins of Fairbairn's philosophical position because it serves to clarify the distinction between his view of human nature and that of Freud. Although Hegelian ideas provided the underpinning from German philosophy in Freud's student days, it was Schopenhauer's ideas that provided the cultural milieu within which he was educated. Discussing Freud's philosophical background, Ellenberger (1970, pp. 541–542) and Anzieu (1986, p. 32) record his attendance at Brentano's lectures. Brentano's (1973) main contribution to philosophy was a theory in which it is "the intentionality or directedness of mental states that marks off the mental from the physical" (Blackburn, 1994, p. 49). Here we can see a possible connection with Freud's early notions of wish fulfilment, but the notion of intentionality also fits well with Schopenhauer's (1886) contention of will as the driving force of human motivation.

Additionally, Schopenhauer suggested that drives and desires can become psychically suppressed and distorted. Ellenberger wrote that Thomas Mann "felt that Freud's description of the id and ego was 'to a hair' Schopenhauer's description of the will and the intellect, translated from philosophy to metaphysics" (1970, p. 209). While the accuracy of this comment can be questioned, another aspect of Schopenhauer relevant to Freud is his contention that it is only when the individual achieves a state of dissociation from drives and desires that peace or "Nirvana" can be attained. While Nirvana is an Eastern concept, it is compatible with the Freudian idea that the psyche seeks a condition of stasis. It is also compatible with the theory of inertia of Helmholtz (1847), to whom Freud was connected by Brücke, a teaching colleague of both Helmholtz and Freud. In summary, we can say that the view of human nature assumed by Brentano, Schopenhauer, Brücke, and Freud is that of an atomistic individual *acted upon* by both internal (instinctual) and external (environmental) forces. In contrast, for Hegel and Fairbairn the individual person is *acting within* specific relationships, initially within the family and then within increasingly larger units of human society, which are themselves in an active dialectic with the environment. Thus for Hegel and Fairbairn the person seeks the optimum development of potential in common and in concert with others, rather than in spite of them.

### *Fairbairn and the philosophy of science*

A fuller understanding of the philosophical origin of Fairbairn's contribution allows us to locate psychoanalysis as an integrated discipline within the mainstream of twentieth-century thought. When we turn to the contrasting scientific frameworks that Freud and Fairbairn used to develop their metapsychology, we can see a difference that parallels the contrast between Freud's Platonic dualism and Fairbairn's Aristotelian integration. It was Fairbairn's revised view of the scientific assumptions underpinning psychoanalysis that gave his theory an essential philosophical and scientific coherence that cannot be separated from his clinical insights.

Freud's ideas relied upon the nineteenth-century mechanical view of physics dominated by Helmholtz's (1847) conception of energy as divorced from structure, that is to say that a body is essentially inert until there is an outside application of a "quantum" of energy. When the energy source is withdrawn, the body's energy is determined by the laws of inertia, and

because of resistance, tends to return to rest. Freud viewed mental energy as if it were an external source of energy applied to the mind, which he viewed almost as if it were made up of contents analogous to things with a measurable mass. Energy, therefore, came to bear on opposing forces that took the form of opposing instincts with conflicting aims. When Freud applied this model to mental structure, the conflicting aims of the ego and id instincts—and later the life and death instincts—had to be resolved. He perceived that a state of inertness would take over if the energy was suppressed or neutralised. Freud's theory of repression fitted both his clinical observations and his view of the mind as conforming to the laws of Newtonian physics. In this model, repression acts as a de-energising force, producing a steady state of the mind at rest, and thus a stable mental structure.

Freud's (1923b) structural model also postulates the apparently evolutionary development of the ego out of the id, and of the superego out of the ego. This use of phylogenetic ideas in association with evolutionary ones can be traced to Freud's friendship with Stanley Hall. Hall (1904) thought that just as the foetus passes through the full evolutionary process (ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny), so the individual psyche's development recapitulates the evolution of mind. Hall's postulation of this process during adolescence led him to suggest that phylogenetic development was responsible for disruptive social and pathological behaviour. Freud followed the implications of this evolutionary model of mind in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930a), where he depicted the individual in direct conflict with society throughout the life cycle. Hence, Freud extended the conflictual and dualistic mode to the entire realm of discourse between the individual and the external world. The individual, divided against his instincts internally, was also beset beyond himself by being inherently in conflict with society.

In contrast, the twentieth-century view of science is interactive and interdependent. It originated with Einstein, Planck, and Heisenberg among others. The shift in scientific model came directly as a result of the implications of Einstein's 1901 theory of relativity in which  $E = mc^2$ . In this formula, energy and mass are interchangeable and interrelated. From this discovery, a new model of physics conceptualised physical bodies as composite entities that contain an inherent potential that is actualised by means of active interactions with the external environment. Moreover, the idea of "opposing forces" was reformulated into a theory of mutual attraction and synthesis. An example from physics occurs when atoms combine to form molecular structures with different and distinct characteristics unlike the elements that make up the new molecule. The qualities of the new molecules cannot be predicted by knowledge of the component elements nor of the energy involved in the transformation. In the modern scientific view, all substances have spatial relationships within their environment that are determined both by physical and energetic factors. Thus energy and structure are inseparable.

From his first study of *The Ego and the Id* (1923b), Fairbairn found Freud's use of energy problematic without knowing exactly how to resolve his sense of the incongruity in Freud's argument (Scharff & Birtles, 1994). He already understood that energy and structure could not be divorced in the way that Freud's mind/body dualism implied. Eventually, he was able to formulate a psychology in which mental structure and content are interrelated. In his new object relations theory of the personality, he replaced Freud's idea of mental energy with the postulation that mental structure and content are joined by an affective charge that gives meaning and that is the hallmark of the relationship between the two.

### *The early studies*

Fairbairn's early writing and teaching were unpublished until 1994 (ibid.). In the years from 1928 to 1930, he concentrated on understanding three aspects of Freud's contribution: psychic structure, instinct theory, and the nature of repression. He seemed to have intended to write a book-length explication and critique of Freud. The early seminar notes and papers are extremely thorough, but his ambition to write a book on Freud was apparently given up in the mid-1930s when he moved from his academic post at Edinburgh University to full-time private practice.

Initially, Fairbairn focused his attention on psychic structure. In lecture notes for classes he taught at Edinburgh University (1928), he identified logical inconsistencies in Freud that he felt were associated with Freud's postulates concerning the topography of mental structure. It was logically inconsistent, Fairbairn wrote, to say that the ego grew out of the id but was in fundamental opposition to it, as it was to assert a similar opposition of the superego to the ego. In his papers on the superego written in the next year, Fairbairn explored Freud's account of the relationship between the three structures (1929a). His arguments hinge on the primitive nature of the Freudian superego and its functioning as both a conscious and an unconscious phenomenon, and as both agent and subject of repression. He thought his own clinical experience demonstrated that Freud mistook psychic functions and phenomena for structures. While he had no doubt about the reality of the observable *phenomena* of superego *functioning*, he concluded that its *operation* within the psyche does not signify a separate structure opposed to the ego and imposed upon it. Instead, he followed Freud's account of the development of the superego *function* as analogous to a process of object identification, but he added that this development is associated with "sentiment formation", a first step along the path of locating the central role of affects in object relations. He wrote, "If the superego is usually more organised than a complex and less organised than a secondary personality, it would yet appear to be a psychical organisation of a similar order" (ibid., p. 101).

These early papers and seminar notes follow Freud in viewing the id as the home of instinctive impulses, but the questions Fairbairn raised in writing them mark the beginning of his theoretical reorientation from instinct theory to a theory of personality based on the relationship of the ego to its objects. Already in 1929 Fairbairn asked, "How is the super-ego repressed if it is itself the structural agent of repression?" He concluded that *the ego is a dynamic entity and the superego a mental function designed to promote progressive adaptation to the environment*. The super-ego function can then be undertaken *by any relationship* into which the ego, "or part of the ego", enters with an object.

In this early attitude of questioning, he took a first step to his later position, based on the inseparability of matter and energy, in which superego functions are matters of internal relations of mutual influence between ego and object, that is, towards his later description of superego functions carried out by internalised ego structures derived from the early mother-child relationship and from the reorganisation of these in the Oedipal period (Fairbairn, 1954b, 1963a). It is of more than incidental interest that it is in these lectures that Fairbairn first used the term "organised self" instead of the term "ego", a first step on the road to personalising endopsychic structure. Although he never fully delineated this shift himself, it remains an assumption within

his theory that was later elaborated by his students Guntrip (1969) and Sutherland (1994) with Fairbairn's approval.

Fairbairn's study of Freud's structural theory was followed by a study of libido theory and of the life and death instincts (1930). He related Helmholtz's influence to Freud's use of the idea of "opposing forces". Much later, Fairbairn summarised this early work when he wrote,

... although Freud's whole system of thought was concerned with object-relationships, he adhered theoretically to the principle that libido is primarily pleasure seeking, i.e. that it is directionless. By contrast, I adhere to the principle that libido is primarily object-seeking, i.e. that it has direction ... Thus Freud's view that libido is primarily pleasure-seeking follows directly from his divorce of energy from structure; for, once energy is divorced from structure, the only psychical change which can be envisaged as other than disturbing, i.e. as pleasant, is one which makes for the establishment of an equilibrium of forces, i.e. a directionless change. By contrast, if we conceive of energy as inseparable from structure, then the only changes which are intelligible are changes in structural relationships and in relationships between structures, and such changes are essentially directional. (1944, p. 126)

Fairbairn's doctoral thesis (1929b), written at about the same time as the early papers on the superego, was titled "Dissociation and Repression". In it, he traced contributions from Freud, Janet, Rivers, and McDougall, among others. He was still bound by Freud's use of the pleasure principle when he concluded that dissociation is a general capacity of man, while repression is a specific instance of the operation of dissociation in relation to that which is "unpleasant". But he continued his early move beyond the pleasure principle when he wrote, "[I]n the case of repression the dissociated elements consist essentially in tendencies belonging to mental structure" (p. 79). If we widen the notion of that which is "unpleasant" beyond the notion of simple gratification and take note of the affective component in its meaning, we move towards Fairbairn's later contention that what is repressed is the experience of failures of loving care that are most perceived as "unpleasant" by the infant. This study of the relationship of dissociation and repression formed the background for Fairbairn's later idea of splitting of the personality under the impact of extreme experience of the "unpleasant", as illustrated in his later formulation that splitting and repression of the personality occur under the impact of a person's "frustration of his desire to be loved as a person and to have his love accepted" (1941, pp. 39–40).

### *Fairbairn's object relations theory*

Between 1940 and 1944, Fairbairn wrote the series of papers which constitute the heart of his contribution and which were published as the first four papers of *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality* (1952). In the first of the papers, "Schizoid Factors in the Personality" (1940a), he described the ubiquitous quality of splitting in the personality.

This was followed by "A Revised Psychopathology of the Psychoses and Psychoneuroses" (1941), in which he based the framework of psychopathology on the vicissitudes of dependence. Aristotelian psychology holds that dependency is necessary for development, as we have

noted. Fairbairn wrote in this paper that the total dependence of the newborn takes a gradual developmental path to the mature dependence of the adult personality. Neither physical nor psychic development is attainable in isolation, so the individual is necessarily dependent upon relationships with other individuals in the external world. The child's initial dependence on parents is gradually transformed to adult dependence on other adults, and on culture, education, political order, law, and nature. Fairbairn described mature dependence as "a capacity on the part of the differentiated individual for cooperative relationships with differentiated objects" (1941, p. 145). In mature dependence, individuals are able to accept and relate to the integrity of other selves. In this paper, Fairbairn goes on to describe phobic, obsessional, hysterical, and paranoid syndromes as varying "transitional techniques" for handling internal object relationships during the transition from infantile dependence to mature dependence, rather than seeing these symptoms as deriving from failures at specific psychosexual stages to which the individual later regresses.

The third paper of the collection, "The Repression and the Return of Bad Objects (with Special Reference to the 'War Neuroses')" (1943a), described the dedication of the ego to painful object relationships lest it lose part of itself. Here Fairbairn must also have been drawing on his considerable experience with psychic trauma, obtained as a combat officer in World War I, and from seeing abused children clinically in the 1930s (Birtles & Scharff, 1994; Sutherland, 1989). In trauma and rejection, painful part-object relations are split off and repressed, but they continue to press for expression and recognition—for a return to consciousness. Here Fairbairn was able to explain why children tend so persistently to blame themselves for bad experiences even in the face of abuse. They are, he said, trying to maintain the object as good in order to maximise the chance of being loved. If the object is seen as bad, then nothing the child can do, not even atonement for badness, will secure love—a condition he termed "unconditional badness", while if the child sees itself as bad and the object as good but treating the child badly because of the child's own badness, there is a chance of being loved if only the child can right things himself ("conditional badness") (1943a, pp. 65–72).

By 1944, Fairbairn could make a formulation of object relations theory which was essentially complete. In "Endopsychic Structure Considered in Terms of Object-relationships" (1944) he wrote that the infant is born with an ego that is initially whole but undifferentiated. In the face of inevitable dissatisfactions in handling by the mother, the infant first incorporates the object to deal with the pain of the frustration. However, now faced with the problem of having a painfully rejecting object inside, the central part of the ego—or central ego—splits off and represses those aspects of the object still felt to be intolerably painful. He added that a part of the ego itself is always split off in conjunction with these part-objects, and that this constellation of ego and object is characterised by the affective tone of the problematic relationship which cannot be borne in consciousness. He described the fate of ego and object constellations organised around persecution and rejection, which he termed a relationship between the internal saboteur (the ego component) and the rejecting object. (He later called these the anti-libidinal ego and rejecting object.) The other class of painful object relationship is that between the libidinal ego and libidinal object (later termed the exciting object), described as a relationship built around the excessive excitement of need—that is, the relationship with part of the mother who is felt to overfeed, hover anxiously, or act seductively. The central ego itself acts to repress both the

rejecting object constellation and the libidinal object constellation, the motive being that they are too painful to be borne in consciousness.

Some years later, Fairbairn added that there was a parallel relationship between central ego and its object, which he called the ideal object—that aspect of the object not subject to repression. In the case of the hysteric, the ideal object is shorn of sexuality and aggression, leaving it a neutralised object (Fairbairn, 1954b). The complete endopsychic structure is therefore made up of six subparts, which are in dynamic relation to each other through repression and mutual influence. He further noted that even the object parts of the self are actually ego structures, and therefore capable of initiating psychic action (1944, p. 132), a situation illustrated by the possibility of the patient acting in a way that can be seen as being in identification with the way the patient felt previously treated by a parent.

The following diagram provides a synopsis of Fairbairn's six-part structure of the personality.

Finally, Fairbairn described the way the internal ego and object structures exert dynamic influence on each other. The situation he described specifically involved what he called secondary repression of libidinal ego and libidinal object by the anti-libidinal ego. (This situation is indicated by an arrow in Figure 1.) Clinically we see patients who use anger to cover up

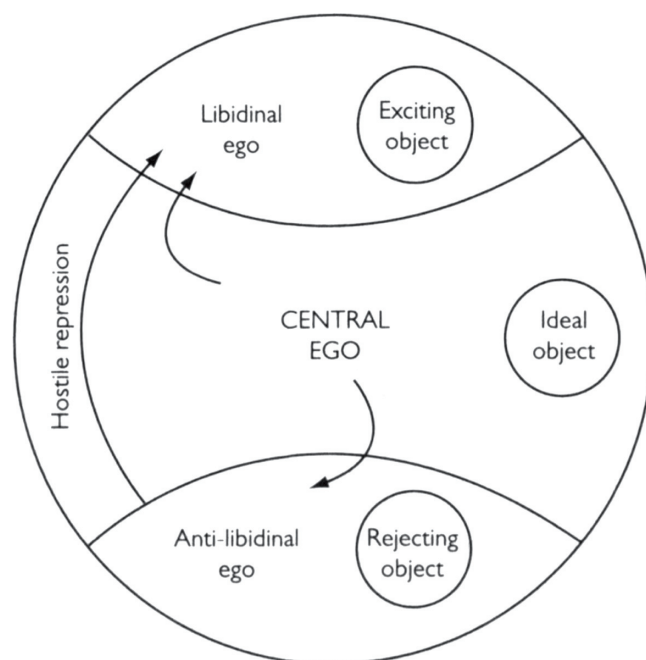


Figure 1. Fairbairn's model of psychic organisation. The central ego in relation to the ideal object is in conscious interaction with the caregiver. The central ego represses the split-off libidinal and anti-libidinal aspects of its experience along with corresponding parts of the ego that remain unconscious. The libidinal system is further repressed by the anti-libidinal system. (From D. E. Scharff, 1982. By permission, Routledge.)

the affect of unrequited longing stemming from their libidinal object constellation. They are more comfortable with an angry stance towards objects than with painfully unsatisfied longing. Although Fairbairn did not describe the parallel situation, once he pointed the way to the internal dynamic relationship between object relations sets, we can see that the libidinal ego can also secondarily repress the anti-libidinal relationship, as represented in patients who show an exaggerated sense of love and hope—a too-good-to-be-true personality—in order to mask resentful anger that is even more painful to them. The point that emerges is that all internal structures are in constant dynamic interaction with each other. This dynamic is more fluid and changeable in health than in pathology, where it tends to become fixed or frozen in one or another pattern.

In “Endopsychic Structure” (1944) and later in his paper “Observations on the Nature of Hysterical States” (1954b), Fairbairn also discussed the Oedipus situation in revolutionary terms, writing that it was not dependent upon a castration complex or on the possession or lack of a penis, or even on active and passive sexual characteristics. The beginning of the Oedipal problem, he noted, was based upon the original deprivation of the abandoned baby on the hillside (*ibid.*, pp. 27–29), associated with the capacity of the parents to thwart, frustrate, and reject the child. The development of sexuality depends not on ideas phantasised by the child, but upon the living reality of the dependence relationship as understood by the child to involve sexual relatedness, and exciting and rejecting objects projected into sexual parts of the body. Gender and sexual orientation are dependent upon a blend of identification and object-seeking. Maturity for Fairbairn is no longer a matter of a genitality which sexually infuses the personality, but of a mature individual with a capacity to relate to a whole other person when both of them are understood to have genitals. In consequence, it is the parent’s own mature responsiveness to the child’s needs which predisposes that child to future mental health and well-being, rather than a relatively isolated aspect of sexual development.

Fairbairn did not overlook the way psychic development depended upon and interacted with inherent genetic and constitutional capacities as embodied in Freud’s concept of drives. His own view of drives requires some clarification. The view of “instincts” (1930), which orchestrates his work, involved two main types of tendencies. Those that could be properly defined as drives are concerned with the preservation of the body. These respond to internal states such as hunger, object need, and sexual desire. The second group of tendencies are “reactive” and respond to experience in the external world. Frustration and consequent anger and aggression come into this category, and he clearly believed that aggression, while of fundamental importance, was a secondary, reactive tendency (1952, 1963). However, object relationships can incorporate any affect that has arisen as a response to either internal or external tendencies. In such situations, reactive tendencies operate in a manner analogous to “drives”. An example of this would be violent behaviour that had originated as anger due to infantile frustration incorporated affectively within an internalised relationship.

Fairbairn thought that potential in each individual is dependent upon genetic predisposition. The internal structures and genetic capacities of the individual confer a flexibility for development in the same way that the structure of the carbon atom defines its capacities for molecular relationships. This much derives from Freud’s discussion of the drives and inherited basis of personality. But for Fairbairn, such development is always in concert with actual experience, and the drives achieve meaning only within the structure of relational experience (1956b).

Inner reality, and therefore personality, are the outcome of continuous series of a dialectic of encounters between endowment and external reality.

Fairbairn took as his beginning point an integral ego that intrinsically seeks relationships with important sustaining figures. This picture of the ego we might now call an unformed inherent potential to become a self (Sutherland, 1994). Within the sustenance of these relationships, the infant and growing child takes into his psyche both experiences that are painfully frustrating and those that are satisfying. As the child does this, his psyche is organised by this introjection of objects and by a splitting of the ego (or self) into units of relational structures. In the process the child constructs an internal reality that is derived from experience with external reality. The mind is thus made up of structures that contain prior relational experience, although these structures are heavily modified by the intrinsic process of the structuring itself—by the limitations of the child's capacity to understand at the time experience is taken in, and by the distortions and modifications introduced by developmental issues and the biases of the child's prior experience. Once inner reality is thus established, it monitors and influences external reality and relationships in a never-ending cycle, in which it also continues to be modified by these external relationships.

Although Fairbairn's model was built largely out of the study of pathological development, he always intended that it should explain normal development and thus form the framework for a general psychology. We can amend Fairbairn's theory in order to bridge the gap to a general psychology in the following ways, which we believe to be consistent with his actual use of his concepts. In the normal personality, the central self contains tendencies of need for objects, and of need for separation from objects within the context of relationships. Both the desire for objects (the libidinal tendency that includes sexual longing), and the need for separation from objects (the anti-libidinal tendency that includes limit setting) are normal ways of relating. It is only when these are excessive that they become pathological. Internal objects are embedded in the self structures of which they are a part, but we can also see that the needy exciting object and the rejecting object are in part associated with central self and the object of the central self as objects of libidinal attachment and limit-setting objects respectively. All the elements of internal object relations are in constant dynamic relation to each other. The situation can be summarised in the following diagram.

The fixity that occurs when patients attempt to maintain patterns as defensive closed systems, attempting to bar continual interaction with and feedback from others, tends to make the inner world resemble a closed system. This is the situation of resistance, which in Fairbairn's view emanated not solely from internal conflict between mental structures, or from reluctance to making the unconscious conscious. He thought that patients' resistance in psychotherapy stemmed from a reluctance to exposing parts of the patients' internal reality to therapists, to an unwillingness to give up parts of their internally organised self:

I have now come to regard ... the greatest of all sources of resistance [to be] the maintenance of the patient's internal world as a closed system ... [I]t becomes still another aim of psychoanalytical treatment to effect breaches of the closed system which constitutes the patient's inner world, and thus to make this world accessible to the influence of outer reality. (1958, p. 84)

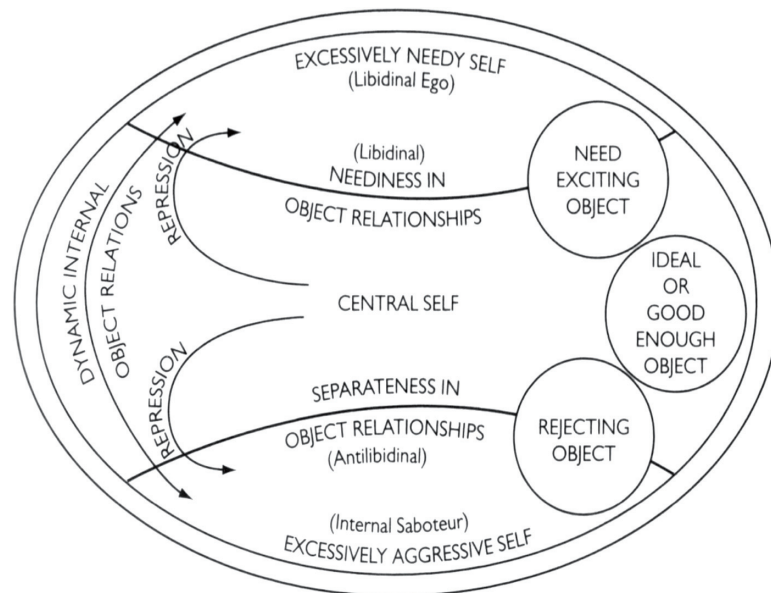


Figure 2. Revision of object relations theory. Neediness and separateness are aspects of the Central Self. Exciting and Rejecting Objects partly communicate with the Ideal Object and are partly repressed. All aspects of self and object are in dynamic relation. (From D. E. Scharff, 1992. By permission, Jason Aronson.)

Under these circumstances, the patient feels that psychoanalysis is an assault on the inner world as a closed system, and trains his resistance on the person of the analyst, who he comes to feel is responsible for the assault.

A fundamental contribution of object relations theory comes from the principle inherent in the formulation of the complex relationship between the infant and the mother. It is the notion that one must understand the subjective experience of the child to understand the meaning of the object relationships involved. Nevertheless, while the child-centred view that Fairbairn maintained in developing his notions of endopsychic structure gave him a new and powerful perspective, it also limited his ultimate reach. We can now see how the mother-child paradigm can be enriched by the newer analogies of current scientific understanding, by a view derived from field theory of the inextricability of objects from their context, a view that was adumbrated when Fairbairn wrote, "[T]he object in which the individual is incorporated is incorporated in the individual" (1941, p. 43). His description of "exciting" and "rejecting" objects also contains within it the potential for a more subtle appreciation than the original formulation. In a broader perspective, acceptance and rejection are experienced by the mother as well as the child. In order to experience a satisfying relationship, both mother and child have to be able to give and to receive: the experience must by definition be interdependent and interactive, what has now been called "intersubjective" (Stern, 1985).

When Fairbairn modified psychoanalytic theory, he replaced Freud's model based on a differentiation between conscious and unconscious structure with a focus on the differentiation

between inner and outer realities. Freud's structural model was concerned with the progressive taming of the drives. Fairbairn replaced this with an open systems, information-processing model able to take advantage of the cybernetic principles of the newer models made available through modern physics, chemistry, and mathematics. This shift made it possible for analytic theory to move beyond a two-dimensional theory in which the individual only moves in a linear direction, growing by moving forward and retreating through regression to fixation at prior positions as a result of trauma or overwhelming stress. In Fairbairn's model, the individual structures internal reality out of accumulated experience, but does so in order to understand current external reality at each successive phase. The storage of prior history allows the individual to make sense of current experience, and the internal reality that conserves structure while, at the same time, it continues to be susceptible to modification throughout life. In psychoanalysis, current experience with the analyst gives information about internal object relations because these are what the patient is using, as he or she does in every interpersonal encounter, to make sense of the therapeutic experience.

As he described his object relations theory of the personality, Fairbairn came to realise that it is the relationship between patient and therapist that is the crucial factor for growth and change, not, as others had considered, the single factors of exact interpretation, genetic reconstruction, transference interpretation, or any particular technical recommendations isolated from the personal factor. Rather, it is the use of technique within the growth-promoting relationship that is the fundamental agent of change:

In my own opinion, the really decisive factor is the relationship of the patient to the analyst, and it is upon this relationship that the other factors ... depend not only for their effectiveness, but for their very existence, since in the absence of a therapeutic relationship with the analyst they simply do not occur ... [W]hat I understand by "the relationship between the individual and his analyst" is not just the relationship involved in the transference, but the total relationship existing between the patient and analyst as persons. (1958, pp. 82–83)

This shift of emphasis stemmed directly from his proposal for a new theoretical basis for psychoanalysis. It is a shift that has been sustained in contemporary analysis, which has now moved even further to emphasise the person of the analyst and the use of the analyst's subjective experience as a fundamental therapeutic tool (Gill, 1984; Hoffman, 1991, 1996; Jacobs, 1991; Spillius & Feldman, 1989). In this practical way, object relations theory also laid the ground for further developments of analytic theory itself, and for its application to many other fields in new and interesting ways: to research in the mother–infant relationship and in infant development, to group and institutional applications, to the use of psychoanalytic theory and technique with families and couples, and to new developments in social theory, theology, and group relations.

Fairbairn began to apply object relations theory to social policy, social issues, philosophy of science, child development, education, and the psychology of art. His first steps in these directions went far enough for us to see the potential range and usefulness of his ideas (Fairbairn, 1952; Scharff & Birtles, 1994). Later writers have enlarged on the many implications of Fairbairn's work. The first to do so were Guntrip and Sutherland, both of whom were analysand, student,

and colleague to Fairbairn. Guntrip began by summarising Fairbairn's work (Guntrip, 1961). He suggested to Fairbairn that the term "self" more accurately described the issues Fairbairn had been discussing while using the term "ego" (1969). Fairbairn expressed agreement with him (Sutherland, 1989). Guntrip followed the theme of the self's search for an elusive sustaining object, which he summarised in his work on the "regressed libidinal ego"—that part of the ego which becomes deeply repressed in consequence of the failure to find a sustaining relationship with an object (Guntrip, 1969). Some have felt that Guntrip's specific theoretical elaboration distorted the symmetry of Fairbairn's theory, but it is clear that Guntrip extended the reach of Fairbairn's contribution towards a theory of the self. The concept of the regressed libidinal ego is an extrapolation from Fairbairn's theory, which describes a mental state rather than a structure, depicting the unconscious but subjective experience of the failure of the mother to perceive and communicate to the infant her acceptance of the infant's selfhood. The failure of experience of self-development seems to represent a combination of the effect of aggression redirected, turned from the object to the libidinal self, and of subjective experience of the failure of the self in the face of experience with a mother who is unavailable because of preoccupation or depression. The result is that the child incorporates a non-responding and non-affirming aspect of the object as central to its primary relationship.

Sutherland began by spreading the word. In a landmark paper given at the Menninger Clinic (Sutherland, 1963), he outlined the scientific basis for Fairbairn's work and made it available to a wider audience in America, which included Kernberg, who discussed Sutherland's paper (Kernberg, 1963), and made a great deal of use of Fairbairn's contribution in his own subsequent work (1976, 1980). Sutherland's encyclopaedic grasp facilitated the growth of psychoanalytic theory and application partly through his own writing, but principally through his editorship of the central international vehicles of psychoanalysis—the *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, and the *International Psychoanalytical Library*, and through his stewardship of the Tavistock Clinic as its medical director for twenty-one years. In these ways he kept Fairbairn's ideas alive and well as a quiet but strong undercurrent in the development of psychoanalysis.

It was not until the publication of Sutherland's biography of Fairbairn in 1989, and the gathering of Sutherland's own papers, published as *The Autonomous Self* (1994), that we could see how his own interest in the evolution of the self moved the theoretical work forward, especially in the realm of investigation of the self as an overarching entity throughout life which bridges from the individual's internal object relations to relations with other individuals and with the wider society.

Of the other writers who applied Fairbairn's work in important ways, perhaps the best known is John Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980). Bowlby specifically acknowledged his Fairbairnian orientation in the development of attachment theory and the ethological approach to infant development (personal communication), which have spurred the enormous increase in our understanding of the mother–infant relationship during the last twenty-five years while also leading to other research which has enhanced our understanding of the biology of mind (Schore, 1994). Henry Dicks (1967) blended Fairbairn's contribution with Klein's work on projective identification in applying object relations theory to marital work and to a psychology of interaction. This in turn allowed Shapiro and Zinner (collected in J. Scharff, 1989) and Scharff and Scharff