

UNDERSTANDING INFANTS PSYCHOANALYTICALLY

A Post-Jungian Perspective on Michael Fordham's
Model of Development



ELIZABETH URBAN

‘Michael Fordham was a towering figure who introduced the developmental viewpoint and child analysis into Jungian thinking. He also fostered an ethos of mutually enriching collaboration with those of other theoretical persuasions. Elizabeth Urban’s book builds on this endeavour. She is widely known as a sensitive and creative clinician, and here the reader has the opportunity to follow her interrogation of her clinical and observational practice in the light of formulations by Fordham, Jung, Freud, Klein, Bion and Winnicott as well as infant researchers such as Trevarthen and Stern. Urban often addresses topics that are little explored or difficult to conceptualise – primary identification and Fordham’s “working from the self”, for example – and what she has to say is illuminating and original. This book will be of interest to practising clinicians as well as trainees, and to all those concerned with Jungian and psychoanalytic thought, with theory building, and with the foundations of the self.’

Maria Rhode, *Emeritus Professor of Child Psychology,
Tavistock & Portman NHS Foundation Trust*

‘This is a helpful book firstly because there has not been very much written about Michael Fordham’s theoretical and clinical model as well as his significant innovations in Analytical Psychology, and secondly because Elizabeth had a close professional relationship with Fordham that spanned over a long period of time. I met Elizabeth in the 1970’s during my own analytical training with Fordham, and she has always impressed me as a very devoted and conscientious follower of Fordham and his ideas. She both has an excellent understanding of his model as well as a clear way of communicating and expanding upon it with the integration of infant observation work, infant research, and psychoanalytical theory especially of Freud, Klein, Bion and Winnicott. Fordham believed very strongly in the integration of psychoanalytic theory into analytical psychology but he had less knowledge and experience in the area of infant research and he himself did not conduct his own infant observation but relied on the work of his students in the seminars that he taught over many years with Gianna Williams at the SAP (Society of Analytical Psychology).’

Brian Feldman, PhD, *Senior Training Analyst
for Inter-Regional Society of Jungian Analysts*

‘Elizabeth Urban, an experienced clinician and teacher, is a knowledgeable student of the work of Michael Fordham, having studied with him, over many years. She brings to her understanding of Fordham’s original contributions to Jungian child development her integration of the research and clinical studies of other psychologists, and neuro scientists. This work is a significant addition not only to Fordham’s work but to our understanding of infant and child development. This approach illuminates how we come to realize our individuality. Her work evidences the surges of development that occur in infancy, its impact

on consciousness, a sense of self, language and social awareness. Like Fordham she has conceptualised her clinical discoveries into a Jungian metapsychological model of how the infant's mind emerges. If Fordham left an outline of a model, it has been Elizabeth Urban's task to fill this in with detailed clinical and observational material. Her work has implications for assessment, treatment, and the appropriateness of different kinds of intervention when development is delayed. Elizabeth Urban's capacity to present clearly complicated ideas makes her work an invaluable addition to the literature of child development, and the realization of the self from a Jungian perspective.'

James Astor, *Emeritus Training Analyst
of Society of Analytical Psychology*

'When I first heard about Fordham's work, I was studying in Zurich in 1959 when Jung was still alive. I heard that Fordham approach to Jung's ideas was creating a new ground that would open up to analytic work with children. Nobody was in the least interested in analytic work with children at the Jung Institute in Zurich. My experience of work at the SAP in London, with students influenced by Fordham's work and with Fordham himself gave me the experience that one could exchange ideas about early development and object relations and discover that they could be integrated with Jung's theory. This is the core of Fordham's creative work and it is the core of Elizabeth Urban's beautiful book. Jung was explicitly focussing on the second half of life. Fordham opened up Jungian theory to the first and even the very early half of life. Elizabeth Urban's book captures the originality of Fordham's developments as an extremely creative Post Jungian.'

Gianna Williams, *Child Psychotherapist
and Psychoanalyst, Tavistock Clinic*

'I could try to puff this book by praising Elizabeth's unusually penetrating thinking about Fordham's contribution to Jung's archetypal theory as it pertains to infancy and the self. I could point out her gifts of symbolic understanding and interpretation and their effects on the healing of her patients. But I'd rather say that I wish I had had this text when I was training and working as a child psychotherapist. And I'd like to recall the help that she gave me with a 14-year old girl who left me feeling rebuffed and fixed in a state where it was impossible to reach her. In a phone discussion Elizabeth loosened my thinking which had got stuck, as though fixed in the girl's dream image that Elizabeth understood as depicting a self object. I was able to write up the ensuing material and pass on Elizabeth's insights at a Berlin-London conference and in a published paper. To me her book is invaluable.'

Miranda Davies, *retired Professional Member
of the Society of Analytical Psychology*

‘This remarkable book shares deep insights into infancy and the mother-baby relationship. The author has worked with Michael Fordham during his last ten years of life, discussing observations of her clinical work with mothers and babies as well as her work with adult and child patients. Based on forty-five years of clinical experience, Urban makes a unique contribution through demonstrating typical, universal (archetypal) patterns of behaviour at significant points of development during the first two years of infants’ lives. She significantly augments Fordham’s modified theories through her descriptions of clinical work elaborating upon and applying his theories.’

Jeanne Magagna, *Psychotherapy Services,*
Great Ormond Street Hospital



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Understanding Infants Psychoanalytically

Focussing on infants and the relationship between child and parent, this book presents a discourse on eminent Jungian child analyst Michael Fordham's model of development that extended Jung's theory to infancy and childhood.

In this book, Elizabeth Urban, a Jungian psychotherapist in weekly conversations with Fordham, proposes five key areas, such as identifying periods of primary self-functioning and the active participation of the infant in development, that contribute to the Fordham model of infant development. Drawing extensively on her observations and experiences working in a London child and adolescent unit, and a mother and baby unit, as well as using real-life observations to support the proposed contributions, the author provides a deeper understanding of infant development in the context of the relationship with the parents.

This book is a unique contribution to the study of child development and is of great interest to paediatricians, psychotherapists and other mental health professionals who work with children and their parents.

Elizabeth Urban trained in child and adult analysis at the Society of Analytic Psychology. During her training she was supervised by Michael Fordham, Jungian analyst, and continued to work with him until his death in 1995. Her work with Fordham deepened her interest in infancy, which resulted in her developing and integrating Fordham's theories into her clinical work with mothers with their babies in a psychiatric in-patient unit, her work with deaf children, her psychotherapeutic work in a London CAMHS unit, her private psychotherapy practice and her teaching internationally.



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Elizabeth Urban

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Michael Fordham, Dorothy Davidson and the Children's Section of the Society of Analytical Psychology (1974–2006). My gratitude is extended to Jane Dwyer, who introduced me to Jung's ideas, and Jeanne Magagna, who encouraged me and enabled me to publish this book.



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Introduction

Elizabeth Urban

The aim of this book is to present a discourse on Michael Fordham's developmental model extending Jung's theory to infancy and childhood. The chapters indicate how infant research, my own clinical and observational work, and ideas from related fields have contributed to my understanding of infant development. Throughout, Fordham's model has provided a useful and enduring framework for my thinking. What I have learned from research and my own experience adds new contributions to the model, based on, as Fordham would have put it, 'sufficient evidence' (Fordham 1993a, p. 5).

Michael Fordham

Michael Fordham is best known as a theoretical innovator and for a range of accomplishments still carrying his imprint. Besides developing a comprehensive Jungian model of development from foetal life to old age, he was on the editorial team of Jung's *Collected Works*, a leader in establishing the Society of Analytical Psychology, and the first editor of the *Journal of Analytical Psychology*; he set up an accredited Child Analytic Training and authored nine books and more than two hundred papers and reviews. These achievements speak to Fordham's intellectual strength, emotional robustness and character. Following Fordham's death, Donald Meltzer paid tribute to him, commenting, 'He was one of three great men I have known' (Meltzer 1996, p. 26). Expanding on this, James Astor wrote: 'Some . . . have compared him with Freud, Klein and Bion, but distinguished him from them in his capacity to combine pioneering clinical work with wearing the mantle of office, of running the Society, fostering the trainees and being neither inflated nor destroyed by the spoilers great men attract' (Fordham 1993b). Fordham's life (1905–1995) covered most of the 20th century and, correspondingly, the first century of psychoanalysis.

He was born in London, the third of three children. His early family life was spent in Edwardian comfort, raised by liberal parents who were involved in social issues and mixed with various writers and artists; John Galsworthy was Fordham's godfather. In his memoir (1993b) Fordham described himself as a naughty child who loved his mother passionately. His accounts give less attention to her

precarious health (he had been born during one of her asthma attacks). Her unexpected death just as he was turning fifteen shattered Michael, leaving him cut off from his emotional life in a way that left him little sense of direction. This remained, despite the distractions of medical studies and his first marriage, until he entered therapy with a London Jungian and soon after met Jung. Fordham had informed Jung before going to Zurich that he required an income if he were to train with Jung. Despite this, Jung crushed Fordham's hopes, saying there were no opportunities for making a living there because of Swiss laws disallowing foreigners to work. He did however invite Fordham to a lecture the following day, and Fordham was impressed with Jung's humanity, directness, vitality and erudition. Back in London Fordham was furious at what he experienced as Jung's lack of sensitivity to his situation and then realised that his rage was the expression of a strong tie that had formed. This was accompanied by a lasting loyalty to Jung, preventing him from making close ties with psychoanalysts; he did not have analysis with a psychoanalyst, but at the end of his life he was engaged in discussions of ideas regarding infancy with the psychoanalysts Donald Meltzer and Gianna Polacco Williams.

In 1934 Fordham was awarded a fellowship at the London Child Guidance Clinic on Tavistock Square. He was the only Jungian amongst psychoanalysts at a time when Jungians were apprehensive, even disapproving, of child analysis, on the basis it would overwhelm the child's nascent ego. This initially handicapped him in his work with children until he discovered from Melanie Klein how to make emotional contact with his child patients through play. I understand that this was in response to the influx of pre-war refugees.

Linking with psychoanalysis and Kleinians

In 1944 London Jungians invited Fordham to set up a training, the first outside Zurich. At the same time Fordham became actively involved with the Medical Section of the British Psychological Society. Members were working analytically with patients with psychotic personality structures, as Jung had done, and the Medical Section provided a forum for analysts to discuss new concepts that applied to their work. Fordham recognised how these related to some of Jung's established ideas and drew attention to this in the introduction to his third volume. 'In recent years considerable changes have occurred in psychoanalysis in Britain. These have made it desirable to relate its new formulations to those of analytical psychology' (Fordham 1958, p. 2).

Although Fordham's thinking is essentially Jungian, his model lacked conceptual clarity without the ideas coming from new developments in psychoanalysis. The most significant influence was Klein herself: 'Winnicott, Bion and Scott . . . all derived their work from her, but she was the real innovator' (1985, p. 216). Fordham referred to her in all eight of his analytic books, beginning with his recognition in the first that unconscious phantasies are conceptually virtually identical to Jung's archetypes (Fordham 1944). Although Jung and Klein drew upon

quite different data, both conceptualised innate, instinctual features and processes, the expressions of which develop and become more complex while also continuing to operate on a primitive level throughout life. Both also realised that analytic access to these primitive operations is achieved through transference and counter-transference. While Jung 'thought of the analyst as just as much in the analysis as the patient' (Fordham 1985, p. 140), Klein's definition of projective and introjective identification contributed detailed dynamics that indicated how affects in the analyst can be used to further analysis.

Fordham was also a significant influence on Winnicott. Their hospital clinics were not far from each other, and they shared a close and warm relationship, discussing work. Fordham's personal admiration, respect and affection for Winnicott are evident in his tribute given to the British Psycho-Analytical Society in honour of Winnicott. He refers to the reciprocity between them by quoting from Winnicott's review of Jung's memoir, 'If we [psychoanalysts] fail to come to terms with Jung we are self-proclaimed partisans, partisans in a lost cause' (Fordham [1972], quoted in Fordham 1995, p. 196). In sparring with ideas, and contributing to each other's thinking, Fordham had especially high praise for Winnicott's clinical work (Fordham 1972, 1995) and also made use of the concept of transitional objects, although later holding reservations about generalising the idea because Fordham did not observe transitional objects in infancy as Winnicott had described (Fordham 1985). While Fordham acknowledged the importance to him of both Klein and Winnicott, he did not accept their metapsychologies.

The Society of Analytical Psychology had been set up in 1946. By 1955, under Fordham's influence, the Society was absorbing psychoanalytic ideas and technique, thereby creating an ideational split that was eventually resolved in 1976 by a group of predominantly Zurich-trained analysts separating from the SAP. Over the same period clinical discussions for members working with children gradually shaped into the Child Analytic Training. This entailed providing an infant observation seminar and, at Esther Bick's recommendation, Gianna Polacco Williams, an established Kleinian familiar with Jung's ideas, was appointed its leader. Fordham joined the group as a 'guest observer', and he at last acquired data from direct observations of infants. Fordham stated, 'Here, it seemed, was my hypothesis being enacted graphically and often dramatically. . . . The integrative sequences stared me in the face' (Fordham 1987, p. 357). Williams' and Fordham's discussions were so rich that a second monthly seminar including trainees was formed, separating discussions on observations from those on theory. In linking Jungian and Kleinian ideas, Williams drew Fordham's interest to the post-Kleinians, in particular Bion, whose ideas of 'O' and beta elements closely parallel Jung's concepts of the self and psychoids. Fordham focused on Bion in his review of Meltzer's series *The Kleinian Development* (Meltzer 1978), drawing further comparisons (Fordham 1980). Bion's influence appears in Fordham's late writing (post-1980), as did Meltzer's. In 1981 Fordham nearly died from a viral infection that affected his heart. As he convalesced he met weekly with Meltzer, to whom he credited 'my surprisingly good recovery' and

from whom he ‘developed . . . a rich professional and literary existence’ (Fordham 1993b, p. 142).

An understanding of the links Fordham established between Jung and Klein would be incomplete without a comment on the historical context in which they occurred. The post-war period was highly productive for both psychoanalysis and analytical psychology yet fell in the shadow of the breakdown of the Freud-Jung relationship. As James Astor points out, Jung became deeply introverted and drawn into dreams and envisioned phantasies that had hallucinatory elements. Although Jung was internally broken up, he did not experience a psychosis that impaired his sense of reality; he continued to work and maintain family life. In contrast Freud’s response was extroverted. Fearing that Jung would try to dominate psychoanalysis with his ideas, Freud contributed to the view that Jung was ‘mad’ in order to explain his defection. Thereby it became the politics of psychoanalysts to isolate Jung through defamation.

This was the professional climate in which Fordham began his work: a climate in which psychoanalysts, trained at the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, as a matter of loyalty to Freud did not read Jung – or at least did not admit to doing so.

(Astor 1995, p. 4)

Some of the SAP membership felt a sense of inferiority combined with resentment at what they considered to be psychoanalysts’ intentional lack of acknowledgement of Jung’s contributions.

For instance, [Fordham] emphasised Jung’s recognition that the total involvement of the analyst in the [analytic] process was relevant to a successful therapeutic encounter – a point of view now widely acknowledged by psychoanalysts but not attributed to Jung.

(Astor 1995, p. 121)

Bion appears to be an example. Bion did know about Jung’s ideas; he attended Jung’s Tavistock Lectures in the autumn of 1935 with his patient Samuel Beckett, who was particularly taken with a comment Jung made about one of his cases. One of Beckett’s biographers, Anthony Cronin, suggested that Bion and Beckett discussed Jung’s diagnosis of the little girl’s case, and Bion’s theory concerning psychological and biological birth (Cronin, 1999). This raises the question as to whether Bion was influenced more by Jung or Beckett. Or, alternatively, as Williams commented, was it that ‘these thoughts . . . , to use Bion’s phrase, [were] “looking for a thinker” . . .?’ (Davies and Urban 1996, pp. 57–58).

Winnicott, and possibly other psychoanalysts, may have been directly influenced by Jung and used Jung’s ideas with a patient, or patients, thereby claiming that the experience had become their own and then conceptualising this according to the analyst’s theoretical point of view. While perhaps wanting in intellectual

diligence, might this have presented a pragmatic and not entirely dishonest solution to a dark dilemma?

In the course of these decades Fordham's assimilation of Kleinian principles into Jungian theory has been passed down to become the hallmark of the SAP. Providing the SAP with an identity of its own did much to resolve the SAP's need for finding it by comparison with the Institute of Psychoanalysis, while facilitating continuing links between SAP analysts and their psychoanalytic colleagues.

The Fordham model

In this section I introduce concepts that are developed in most of the chapters of this book. I regard the concepts from a post-Jungian perspective that draws upon Fordham's links with Kleinian thought. Here it is important to appreciate that the Jung-Freud collaboration broke down in part because they did not agree on the essential nature of psychic energy: for Freud it was sexual and object-related, and for Jung it was neutral and directed overall towards self-realisation in its deepest meaning.

The self

There is little consensus in psychology, sociology or philosophy on what is meant by 'the self'. Jung first identified what became his theory of the self from a series of drawings he made as he recovered from the breakdown of his relationship with Freud. He soon realised that they were mandalas, ancient spiritual and ritual symbols in Hinduism and Buddhism which represent the universe. In Kleinian thought the self is based on Freud's structural theory. Although 'not explicitly defined . . . [it] seems to indicate a concept of wholeness which embraces the ego, super-ego, and id, and is even perhaps something more as well' (Fordham 1957, p. 198); that is, it implies a wholeness that unites the structural parts.

For Jung the self is explicitly the whole of the individual, which is more than the sum of its constituents. This gives it a conceptually superordinate position in relation to the parts, as it operates autonomously as an overall organising principle providing the functional unity of mind and body in a constant flux of states of the organism. As the totality, the self transcends and unites all its parts, and thus opposites; for instance, container and contained, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, instinct and spirit. As this includes the opposites of conscious and unconscious, the self is ultimately beyond experience and unknowable. Here lies the historical reference in Eastern thought: the self is inherently mysterious; it is mystical. Bion captured this in his succinct abstraction of 'O':

Its existence as indwelling has no significance whether it is supposed to dwell in an individual person or in God or the Devil; it is not good or evil; it cannot be known, loved or hated. It can be represented by such terms as ultimate reality or truth. . . . L, H, K are links and by virtue of that fact are substitutes

for the ultimate relationship with O which is not a relationship or an identification or an atonement or a reunion.

(Bion 1984, pp. 139–140)

The primary self

Jung's work and interests were with the adult mind, and his thinking and concepts apply accordingly. Initially Fordham accepted that self theory did not pertain to childhood or his child patients, but by the mid-1940's he had acquired clinical evidence that put 'back very much earlier than Jung's view had supposed the capacity of the child to have a "centrum"' (Fordham 1947, p. 271).

Winnicott had theorised that the initial state in infancy is unintegration followed by integration, but Fordham turned this around and postulated a primary state of integration, a primary self which is the source out of which development emerges.

Acknowledging Bion, Fordham wrote:

I take (the primary self) to represent a state in which there is no past and no Future, though is present like a point which position but no magnitude. It has no desires, no memory, no images, but out of it by transformation all of these can deintegrate. There is consciousness and no unconsciousness— it is a permanent absence.

(Fordham 1985, p. 33)

As a biologist, Fordham postulated what refers to a species-specific life force: a primary self expressed in individuality, adaptability and mixing and blurring categories of discourse, embracing contradictions, and sliding between ideas rather than linking them. . . . Yet in scientific writings, such transgressions lead us to anything and everything we fancy – because, as is readily logically demonstrable, from a contradiction any proposition follows.

(O'Shaughnessy 2003, p. 1523)

O'Shaughnessy sees this from the perspective of the reality principle, which has its own means of validation. What Jung and Bion are referring to is a different order of reality having its own noumenal epistemology, in contrast to the sense-grasp of the phenomenal and its logical ordering. Thus it can be argued that non-scientific language is appropriate because it captures the nature of this other sensed reality, the 'ultimate'.

The ego

Klein posited that the ego is an innate, discrete organising structure, while Jung held that the ego is a derivative of the self and thus a secondary organiser. In