FAIRBAIRN AND FERENCZI.

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This will be an exploration of a series of links between Ferenczi's and Fairbairn's theories aspects of which are already known and discussed by others, notably Jay Frankel (1998, 2002a, 2002b), and some which I suggest are important but unrecognized parallels between their theories. I think that Fairbairn's object relations theory, or 'psychology of dynamic structure' as he called it, embodies many aspects of Ferenczi's thinking on trauma.

Ferenczi's most famous, or perhaps infamous, paper was the 'Confusion of Tongues between Adults and the Child' (Ferenczi 1955 pp 156-167) presented at the 12th I.P.A. congress in 1932 but denied publication in English by Ernest Jones as editor of the I.J.P.A. This paper developing Ferenczi's late ideas on trauma was eventually published in the I.J.P.A. in 1949 but was the occasion for Ferenczi's break with Freud and his effective rejection by the I.P.A.

I am going to look at this paper initially from the point of view of its structural implications since for me it represents a very clear set of parallels to Fairbairn's developed model. Later on I will suggest a number of other links between Fairbairn and Ferenczi but given that Fairbairn did read German I will work on the assumption that he could have read the original in 1933 when it was published in the *Internationale Zeitschrift fur Psychoanalyse* and been influenced by it although his 1927 and 1931 papers already suggest that he had begun to develop his ideas on endopsychic structure.

The central point of Ferenczi's paper is the reality of sexual and other abuse of children as the exogenous origin of neurosis, something that Freud had given up in the late 1890's. The reality of abuse and its role in generating neurosis and psychosis is something that is recognized by Fairbairn whose theory has been describes as a 'deficit' theory precisely because of the pathogenic lack of care from significant others in the family and society.

One of the most common consequences of such abuse is the splitting of the self or personality as a form of defense; "we talk a lot about the splitting of the personality, but do not seem sufficiently to appreciate the depth of these splits." (pg. 160)

A problem that Ferenczi first encounters in therapy as he is trying to get his patients, who seem to be stuck in repetitive processes, to criticize him, is uncovered again in the relationship of the patient to their abuser. At the bottom of this repetition seems to be a compulsion,

to subordinate themselves like automata to the will of the aggressor, to divine each one of his desires and to gratify these; completely oblivious of themselves they identify themselves with the aggressor. (pg. 162 emphasis in original).

This understanding of the 'introjection of the aggressor' (ibid) finds strong parallels in Fairbairn's idea of the 'moral defense' and his understanding of the 'repetition compulsion' (and the 'death instinct') as attachment to internalized bad objects. It is worth noting that Ferenczi's account of his relationships with his patients who are stuck in repetitive patterns and Fairbairn's own description of the way that hysterical patients idealize their analyst is another strong parallel and pointer towards a structural correlate in Fairbairn of the insights that Ferenczi had reached.

Fairbairn argued that his theory was ideally suited to understanding multiple personality disorder (now usually called DID) and its origins in repeated traumas during childhood a point that Ferenczi seems to be already familiar with.

If the shocks increase in number during the development of the child, the number and the various kinds of splits in the personality increase too and soon it becomes extremely difficult to maintain contact without confusion with all of the fragments, each of which behaves as a separate personality yet does not know of even the existence of the others. (pg. 165)

Ferenczi's description could be taken to be a description of the endopsychic structure that Fairbairn developed.

Throughout this paper with the various splits of the personality and the introjection of the other one can feel Ferenczi encountering the limitations of the language of classical psychoanalysis and his reaching towards a language of an endopsychic structure comprised by ego-structures and internal objects.

There is a lot more in Ferenczi's paper than I have brought out but it seems to me that the parallels between this late theory of trauma and Fairbairn's own theory are strong.

Fairbairn didn't cite Ferenczi in his major work so establishing a provenance is difficult. Fairbairn didn't cite many other people either but as I have argued recently (Clarke 2011), based upon a heavily underlined copy of *The Origins of Love and Hate* that Fairbairn had in his library, Ian Suttie did have a strong influence on hi thinking. Suttie was friendly with and influenced by Ferenczi, his wife Jane also having translated many of Ferenczi's papers into English e.g. *Further Contributions to the Theory and Technique of Psycho-Analysis* (1926), so one possible and significant link between Fairbairn and Ferenczi is through the work of Suttie.

Fairbairn had books by Ferenczi in his personal library that predate the development of his own object relations theory *-Contributions to Psycho-Analysis* (1916) and *The Development of Psychoanalysis* (1925) co-authored with Otto Rank. The full development of the relationship between Fairbairn and Ferenczi would require a detailed examination of Fairbairn's underlining of these texts but I do not have room to analyze these underlinings in any detail here.

Berman (pg. 145) commenting on Frankel's paper on identifying with the aggressor (2002b) suggests that Ferenczi's work on "identification/introjection and transference" can be seen "as a groundbreaking potential foundation for an object relations theory of the personality" even if this was never developed fully by Ferenczi. Berman notes parenthetically that when Fairbairn developed his own object relations theory, he "never recognized Ferenczi's contribution" (pg. 146). Berman then quotes the following sentence from Ferenczi's 1909 paper 'Introjection and Transference',

The neurotic is constantly seeking objects with whom he can identify himself, to whom he can transfer feelings, whom he can thus draw into his circle of interest i.e. introject. (Ferenczi, 1916, pp 40-41).

This is *not one* of the passages Fairbairn had marked even though he had marked passages before and after it - but it was clearly a passage that he had read.

Fairbairn met Ferenczi at the 1929 International Congress of Psycho-Analysis in Oxford U.K. (Scharff and Birtles, Vol II pg. 454). Scharff and Birtles note a number of characteristics of Ferenczi's approach, which they imply are also found in Fairbairn. They refer to an historic conference on Ferenczi in London in October 1993 where Ferenczi's move from a one-person to a two-person psychology was noted, as was,

an awareness of the participatory nature of the mother-infant relationship and ideas of 'narcissistic splitting', with a potentially pathological outcome, resulting from infantile deprivation. (pg. 454)

They then list a number of other areas developed by Ferenczi and reflected in the papers they include in their collection of Fairbairn's work. In particular, work on the 'nature and aims' of psychoanalysis and the practical application of its 'method', both of which would be consistent with the underlined copy of Ferenczi and Rank's *The Development of Psychoanalysis* in Fairbairn's library.

A few years ago I was looking in some detail at Fairbairn's model and trying to find a consistent way of recasting it to make all of the implicit aspects of the overall operation of the model explicit and ordered in accordance with the Freudian topographic categories (Clarke 2005). I suggested that the model should be modified to include preconscious libidinal and antilibidinal object-relations based dyads, a model that my colleague Paul Finnegan and I have used recently to discuss Multiple Personality Disorder or Dissociative Identity Disorder (Finnegan and Clarke 2012).

In Fairbairn's only contribution to the 'Controversial Discussions' he suggested that 'the time is ripe for us to replace 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 organized structure, an identity of their own, an endopsychic existence and an activity as real within the inner world as those of any objects in the outer world.' (Scharff and Birtles, VII, pg. 294)

Since, for Fairbairn, all of the egos and objects in the internal world are person-like agents, this explains why he argued consistently throughout his work that his model was perfectly suited to an understanding of Multiple Personality Disorder (Clarke and Finnegan 2011).

A couple of years before he died Fairbairn produced a synoptic seventeen-point outline of his object relations theory (Fairbairn, 1963).

Point sixteen of the synopses, goes as follows: -

What Freud described as the 'superego' is really a complex structure comprising (a) the ideal object or ego-ideal, (b) the antilibidinal ego, and (c) the rejecting (or antilibidinal) object. (pg. 225)

While developing the paper reconciling Fairbairn's model with Freud's topographic categories I came across a paper by Ferenczi, from 1928, called, 'The Elasticity of Psycho-Analytic Technique', which ends in a way that is startlingly reminiscent of point sixteen of Fairbairn's synopsis. In his closing summary Ferenczi says he needs to clarify the idea that he puts forward in the paper that "a sufficiently deep character analysis must get rid of any kind of super-ego." He suggests that people might misinterpret this as implying that he was, "robbing people of all their ideals." He goes on to clarify,

In reality my objective was to destroy only that part of the super-ego, which had become unconscious and was therefore beyond the range of influence. I have no sort of objection to the retention of a number of positive and negative models in the pre-conscious of the ordinary individual. In any case he will no longer have to obey his pre-conscious super-ego so slavishly as he had previously to obey his unconscious parent imago. (Ferenczi, 1956, pg. 101)

In Fairbairn's theory the ideal object/ego-ideal is in the preconscious and is effectively the repository of experiences with good objects, while the antilibidinal dyad is in the unconscious and is equivalent to a punitive super-ego and repository of relations with bad objects.

Both Ferenczi and Fairbairn see significant aspects of the endopsychic structure in similar ways, and they share the therapeutic aim of reducing the power of, or, removing completely, the unconscious punitive aspect of the super-ego and removing, or transforming, bad objects.

Fairbairn read German so he could have read Ferenczi's paper on its publication in 1928 when he was already treating patients many of whom were schizoid and in whom he detected both splitting and personification of 'functional structural units' that were like, but not reducible to, the ego, the id and the super-ego (Fairbairn 1931).

It was during this period (late 1920's) that Fairbairn was writing his MD thesis on 'Dissociation and Repression' (Scharff and Birtles, Vol II, pp 13-79) in which he concluded that repression was a special form of

dissociation of the unpleasant viz. that form which occurs when the dissociated elements consist of tendencies belonging to the instinctive endowment and thus forming part of the structure of the mind itself. (pg. 79)

Repression then becomes understood as,

a process where mental tendencies are denied conscious expression, if their incongruity with the structure of the organized self is such that the conscious expression of these tendencies would cause unpleasure. (p.79)

The libidinal and antilibidinal dyads then, as unconscious structures, embody primitive feelings that threaten the relationship of the person with the world and are originally split-off and repressed in a situation where the life of the person is dependent upon maintaining contact and succour with others and in particular with the mother.

In another paper by Ferenczi from the late 1920's called "The Adaptation of the Family to the Child" (Ferenczi, 1956) which Fairbairn could easily have read since it was published in the *British Journal of Medical Psychology* under the editorship of John Rickman who Fairbairn admired (Fairbairn 1959). In a section of Ferenczi's paper, which is of considerable importance in my view, Ferenczi writes,

The real traumas during the adaptation of the family to the child happen in its *transitional* stages from the earliest primitive childhood to civilization, not only from the point of view of cleanliness, but from the point of view of sexuality." (Ferenczi, 1956, p. 68, emphasis added)

This quotation seems to me to resonate with Suttie's statement that, "we put the whole social environment in the place once occupied by mother" (Suttie, p.16). Furthermore this is, I think, the first use of the term 'transitional' within psychoanalysis -a term that we later become familiar with from Winnicott, but which had been used earlier by Fairbairn, as Winnicott acknowledged in his original version of the paper on transitional objects (1953 IJP 34:89-97) in a footnote.

In Fairbairn's view development could be divided into three stages. An initial stage of 'infantile dependence' when our object relationships are characterized by identification and a final, but difficult to achieve, stage of 'mature dependence' when all our object relationships are with properly differentiated external objects and the unconscious libidinal and antilibidinal structures have been dissolved. Between these two situations is a 'transitional stage' in which the various libidinal and antilibidinal object relationship possibilities, that were repressed during infantile dependence in order to preserve and sustain our relationship with significant others, could be looked at again and our powers expanded and enhanced by allowing ourselves new object relations possibilities. This transitional stage is also the place where the various neuroses manifest themselves as we seek to come to terms with our objects, both internal and external as we grow and develop.

Psychic growth is a site of dispute within Fairbairn scholarship and one, towards which my paper on Freud's topographic categories was, in part, directed. During ordinary growth and development, after the initial structure generating exchanges with significant others and the development of the basic endopsychic structure, there are different ways in which non-structuring internalizations (Rubens 1985) might take place and account for growth and development to some degree. One is simply to expand one's skills

and experience through normal social life and education and, to develop new powers. Another, which is of a more defensive nature, is to reinforce ones internalized good object through one's experience of relationships with external good objects. A commentator on Fairbairn, who I have found particularly helpful in understanding the 'psychology of dynamic structure', is John Padel. It is Padel who made a crucial point in understanding Fairbairn and in seeing how object relations thinking is already present in Freud as well. Padel's understanding is that it is object relationships that are the lingua franca of the self. As Freud, in his paper 'On Narcissism', says, our first internalization is of the nursing couple and the affective link between them, a relationship that we can then 'inhabit' from either side. As Padel puts it:

One of Fairbairn's most important contributions to our ideas about the functioning of the ego is that what is repressed is always a relationship (though it may be symbolized or represented as an object) ... [and] ... what is internalized is always a relationship (or that complex of relationships which is a total situation) although it may be symbolized or represented by an object. (Ego in current thinking, IJPA 1985 12: 273-283; 278)

This is a view that Ogden developed at about the same time (Ogden 1983). Berman's paper commenting on Frankel contains a reference to Ogden's 1983 conclusion that Fairbairn's insight was "that it is object relationships and not objects that are internalized." (pg. 233)

For Fairbairn the first defense in infancy against an unsatisfactory relationship is incorporation of the object relationships with the pre-ambivalent external object as a structure generating process creating the first internalized object relationship (PSOP pg. 42-3). Fairbairn thought that the infant was reality oriented to some degree at birth and that a turn towards exclusive pleasure seeking was based upon a failure of that initial object relationship (PSOP, pg. 140). In short, it was the way that the infant had been treated and what they made of it that was important. Exclusive pleasure seeking was a product of failed relationships. It was Ferenczi's insistence upon the reality of abuse that led to Freud's animosity towards his 'Confusion of Tongues' paper but Ferenczi's viewpoint is totally consistent with Fairbairn's view of an original orientation towards reality and the importance of what really happens to the child in the aetiology of psychological disturbance.

Fairbairn was a visiting psychiatrist to the Emergency Medical Service in Scotland during World War Two. Jock Sutherland was an assistant physician at the same hospital dealing with soldiers, "suffering from psychoneurotic states occurring during or after exposure to combatant action." Sutherland published a paper in the British Medical Journal called 'A survey of one hundred cases of war neuroses' in September 1941. In 1943 Fairbairn himself published 'The War Neuroses: Their nature and significance' in the British Medical Journal based upon material gathered from the hundred cases of war neuroses described by Sutherland. In his chapter on the war neuroses in his book -a revised version of his BMJ paper- Fairbairn argues that it is infantile dependence and separation-anxiety that are the underlying problems, a view that had been noted in Sutherland's original paper but is developed by Fairbairn with a far greater amount of supporting clinical evidence.

In his 1943 paper on the repression and return of bad objects Fairbairn introduces a new form of defense, which he calls the 'moral defense' that has obvious parallels with the concept of 'identification with the aggressor'. In his response to Berman and Bonomi (2002b) Frankel discusses in some detail Fairbairn's 'moral defense' and the light that it might throw on the feelings of guilt that arise in the victims of abuse, which Ferenczi accounts for by reference to "the introjections of the guilt feelings of the adult" (Ferenczi 1933 p 162). Frankel suggests that Fairbairn was "closer to the mark" in explaining these guilt feelings and that "nothing in Fairbairn's explanations require that the perpetrator feel guilty" (Frankel, 2002b, p 165). Fairbairn's view of the treatment and rehabilitation of sexual offenders (1946) is that

any distress which he may display, if he falls foul of the Law, consists rather in fear of the forfeiture of social and material advantages than in any genuine guilt or remorse, which, if present at all, is invariably short-lived (pg. 293).

For Fairbairn the moral defense or 'the defense of the super-ego' or 'the defense of guilt' involves the internalization of the unconditionally bad object relationships and their transformation into conditionally bad object relationships. To do this the child has to internalize his good objects into the ego-ideal, which then performs a super-ego role.

In so far as the child leans towards his internalized bad objects he becomes conditionally bad vis-à-vis his internalized good objects and in so far as he resists the appeal of his internalized bad objects he becomes conditionally good vis-à-vis his super-ego. (Fairbairn 1952, pg. 66)

In Fairbairn's own words the essential feature and aim of the moral defense is to convert a situation in which

the child is surrounded by bad objects into a new situation in which his objects are good and he himself is bad. (pg. 68)

Fairbairn argues that this is a higher level of mental development, the level at which the super-ego operates and to which the interplay between the ego and the super-ego belongs. "It is the level at which analytic interpretations in terms of guilt and the Oedipus situation are alone applicable". This is also the level at which psychotherapy is often "rather exclusively conducted". (pg. 68) Fairbairn thinks this is both regrettable and dangerous since he argues that "guilt operates as a resistance in psychotherapy" (pg. 69). If the 'coercive and moralizing' therapist becomes a bad object to the patient, he simply leaves him but if he becomes a super-ego figure "he may effect a temporary improvement in symptoms by supporting the patient's own super-ego level may relieve guilt but they may actually have the effect of intensifying the repression of the internalized bad objects and "thus leaving the cathexis of these objects unresolved." (pg. 70)

This is where the dynamics of the endopsychic structure and the question of the appropriate account of the process of psychic growth are rejoined. If the account that Rubens and Mitchell and others give of the adequacy of the combination of no structuring internalization and the strengthening of the super-ego (ego-ideal) is followed we can arrive at precisely the problem that Fairbairn describes. It is only if, as Padel has argued, the repressed bad objects can be brought to consciousness and dissolved and the repressed powers transformed and reintegrated into the central self that Fairbairn's overall aim of healing the splitting that has led to the endopsychic structure in the first place can be achieved.

This brings us back to Ferenczi's 1928 comments on the elasticity of analytic technique where the aim of a sufficiently deep character analysis is to get rid of the unconscious punitive super-ego and to strengthen the preconscious ego-ideal. This is an aim that is totally consistent with Fairbairn's own,

the chief aim of psychoanalytical treatment is to promote a maximum 'synthesis' of the structures into which the original ego has been split, in the setting of a therapeutic relationship with the analyst. (Scharff and Birtles, Vol. I, pg. 83)

And

it becomes still another aim of psychoanalytical treatment too 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" (Scharff and Birtles, Vol. I, pg. 84)

Thus, Fairbairn's object relations theory can be seen as Ferenczi's theory of trauma transformed; generalized into a structural theory of psychopathology based upon object relationships.

In Ferenczi, trauma leads to dissociation and dissociation is of person like subselves. If the trauma is sufficiently severe these split off selves can be unknown to the rest of the person.

Fairbairn starts (developmentally) with identification leading to internalization of the first object relationship and then introduces splitting/dissociation as the first defense against the possible breakdown of object relations between child and mother leading to the basic endopsychic structure.

For Ferenczi therapy for such trauma is to reintegrate the split off selves into the main self. And complete therapy involves recasting the unconscious aspects of the super-ego into preconscious parts of the super-ego (the ego-ideal).

Fairbairn's whole therapeutic is to reduce the splitting of the self and reintegrate the split off parts into an increasingly whole person with as little split off unconscious elements as possible, strengthening the preconscious ego-ideal by internalizing relations with good objects.

For Ferenczi, during development, after the initial identification or early attachment to mother there is a period of transition in which the initial splitting of inner reality is open for renegotiation as the child accommodates to separation anxiety and to the sexual and social mores of the culture.

Fairbairn makes the transitional period that follows the establishment of the basic endopsychic structure a significant phase of development and the location of the psychoneuroses.

The basic endopsychic structure is three dyadic relations-based internal working models of mother and self-based upon the splitting of relationships with mother into the acceptable, the over exciting and the over rejecting. In the process of psychic growth relationship possibilities that have been repressed become possible again and are reintegrated into the central ego/ideal object dyad.

Thus, psychic growth within Fairbairn's theory represents the reconstitution of the mother and the reintegration of the self in a dialectical movement that rehearses the Kleinian idea of reparation towards mother and the Winnicottian idea of development of the self. This is also the best description of the creative process from an object relations perspective in my view (Clarke 2004).

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