

# CURRENT CONTROVERSY IN OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY AS OUTGROWTH OF A SCHISM BETWEEN KLEIN AND FAIRBAIRN

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Most contemporary discussions of object relations theory, borderline, and narcissistic pathology attempt to reconcile the divergent viewpoints of Kernberg and Kohut. Although both have contributed significantly to our understanding of normal development and of the personality disorders, their theories seem so fundamentally antagonistic that phenomena which one considers normal are deemed by the other to be pathological. In this paper we will examine the controversial aspects of both theories from an historical vantage point, based on the contention that the roots of the controversy are to be found in a schism within the British school of object relations between Klein and Fairbairn some four decades ago. Klein and Fairbairn mutually enriched each other's theories, though they differed fundamentally. I have already (1976) suggested that, although Kernberg attributes his basic concept of self-object-affect units as psychic building blocks to Fairbairn, in fact his ideas are more closely related to Klein. In the pages to come, I hope to show that, while Kohut views his contributions as almost entirely original, they bear a striking resemblance to the ideas of Fairbairn.

Following are some of the areas of current controversy to be examined in subsequent pages: (1) Are object relations and self-development fundamentally separate 'lines' and, if so, by what criteria can they be differentiated? (2) How important is a pre-object concept (the self-object, for example) to a theory of early development? (3) In the neonate, what is the relative significance of input from the caretaking person as contrasted with innate factors in the development of aggression (a nature-nurture controversy)? (4) Is the significant positive developmental role of the object primarily one of libidinal gratification or of empathic recognition and holding? (5) Is

empathic failure on the part of the object or conflict and defence within the subject the more significant causal factor in primitive pathological personality development? (6) Is the course of development better conceptualized as linear and quantitative or does it involve qualitative changes; hierarchical reorganizations involving both integration and differentiation? (7) What are the earliest meaningful psychic events? Are there psychic developments which precede self-cohesion? Specifically, are aggression and its derivatives, dissociative phenomena and projective identification, aspects of normal development which genetically precede self-cohesion and may become accentuated in the primitive personality disorders or are they meaningless fragments in lieu of a cohesive self? (8) Are developmental internalizations initiated by empathic failure on the part of the object or by the affective valence, both positive and negative, of experience? (9) Are the borderline and narcissistic personality disorders pathologies of object relations or of narcissism? It is, of course, in their writings about this last question that most of the controversy between Kernberg and Kohut has arisen. The reader will note that the questions were not chosen for their fundamental significance, but only to illustrate the contrasting viewpoints of Kernberg and Kohut in a way which allows us either to make a choice or to reject both positions.

Kernberg (1967) views borderline pathology as an object relations disorder determined primarily from within. Excessive rage, quite possibly congenital, is the cause, and splitting (which Kohut calls fragmentation), projective identification, and idealization are all defences against it. Borderlines, according to Kernberg, form unstable transferences characterized by transient projective identification of split internal object

relations units. In other words, the borderline personality is organized around conflict and defence, and the therapeutic objective is to interpret the defences and heal the splitting.

Kernberg believes that narcissistic personality is also an 'object relations' disorder; one characterized by a pathological defensive position against conflicts, over-mature (self-object differentiated) dependency (1974). He maintains that the narcissistic personality has achieved some degree of self and object constancy but has formed a pathological self-structure (the grandiose self) by merging or condensing the ego, the 'real self', the 'ideal self', and the 'idealized object'. Kernberg asserts that the idealized object for whom the narcissistic personality quests is a projective identification of this grandiose self. The narcissistic personality utilizes defences of denial, devaluation, and projective identification against the rage, guilt, and envy which mature dependency entails. As with borderlines, the objective of treatment is to interpret defences and to heal splitting.

Kohut (1971), in contrast, views borderline pathology as a narcissistic disorder resulting from empathic failure on the part of the primary object. Rage, auto-erotic preoccupations, splitting and projection, and delusional restitution, are thought to be chronic and pathological breakdown products or fragments secondary to the failure of self-cohesion and the absence of a stable self-object relationship, both currently, and originally in the formative developmental years. Kohut maintains that psychoanalytic therapy of the borderline personality is usually not possible, because the pathological fragments cannot coalesce into a nascent self which might, in turn, form a stable self-object transference relationship with a sufficiently empathic person, characterized by archaic grandiosity or idealization. Although it might seem that this difference between Kohut and Kernberg would be testable by the simple expedient of examining the feasibility of treating borderlines, a successfully treated borderline would most probably be diagnosed by Kohut as a narcissistic personality, simply because he had succeeded in forming a self-object transference.

Kohut considers the narcissistic personality to be the product of a developmental arrest at the level of a normal archaic self-structure, the grandiose self (1971, 1977). His theory is one of

epigenesis rather than conflict and defence. He postulates that a bipolar or split self-object configuration which is normally found in children remains unresolved in the narcissistic adult. Rage and splitting in narcissistic personalities are considered to be pathological disintegration products, resulting from failures of phase-appropriate merger with an empathic object. The objective of therapy is to re-establish and maintain such a relationship, in the context of which the split or bipolar configuration will eventually resolve itself, by progressive 'transmuting' internalizations, into tensions between the ego's 'nuclear ambitions' on the one hand, and the ideals on the other.

Before any further attempts to compare Kernberg, Klein, Kohut, and Fairbairn, we shall briefly note some of the basic obstacles to such an endeavour. It seems fashionable today to dismiss Klein's contributions in black and white terms, that is, as 'all good' or 'all bad', rather than to view her as a germinal figure in relation to current controversy. Fairbairn's ideas have not been widely disseminated and accorded the respect they deserve outside British neo-Kleinian circles, and to the best of my knowledge, the implications of his differences with Klein have never been fully explored. Kernberg's concepts are at times internally inconsistent and confusing (Robbins, 1976; Holzman, 1976). His earlier, more widely known, and seminal ideas about the origin and earliest development of the psychic apparatus have in some instances been superseded without his explicit acknowledgement that he now views them as obsolete. Kohut presents the most significant obstacles, however, to a comparative endeavour, for he seems to interdict the possibility of integrating his self-psychology with other popular points of view, and he seems to accept criticism only from within the perimeter of his basic assumptions. Therefore, it is doubtful that he would appreciate efforts either to trace his theoretical roots or to integrate his point of view with that of others.

#### KERNBERG AND KLEIN

*Klein.* The derivation of Klein's contribution from Freud is often overlooked. The importance of the death instinct, and the intimate

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relationships between instinct and object, and instinct and fantasy come from Freud. Klein's belief that objects are sought in order to externalize a part of the death instinct is related to Freud's belief that the object is an aspect of the instinct, and that the basic importance of objects is as targets for the drives. Freud's idea that 'each instinct expresses itself in terms of affect and in terms of ideas' (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, p. 13) is similar to Klein's assertion that instincts are split into a drive component and a fantasy component. In many areas Klein's work complements or supplements Freud. She elaborates the dyadic relationship as Freud did the triadic. She asserts that rage and hatred are as important as love. She gives splitting in the primitive psychic repertoire a place analogous to that later accorded repression; and envy in the dyadic relationship a place comparable to jealousy in the triadic.

In still other respects, however, Klein's theories depart radically from Freud. These include postulating the presence at birth of an ego capable of fantasies about objects and of defensive operations as well as a theory of structuralization of the neonatal psyche (splitting) in response to threats posed the intact ego by the death instincts.

Klein appears to be asserting that the death instinct is responsible for differentiation of the psychic apparatus into drives, fantasies about objects, and defensive ego operations at or immediately following birth. The ego (as mind) and the dual instincts (as force or energy external to mind) are intact and distinct in a hypothetical natal state, after which the ego is postulated to split in self-preservation due to the power of the death instinct, and in doing so, to split the instincts and to assimilate them as mental representations. But the appearance of neonatal differentiation in Klein's theory is deceiving. The split instincts, the split ego, and fantasy about 'internal' and 'external' objects, all seem to be interchangeable aspects of an as yet undifferentiated matrix. That is, the instinct-ego matrix splits into a drive and a fantasy component. The death instinct/ego splits into the aggressive drive, and, by deflection and projective identification, the fantasied bad object toward which aggression is directed, while the life instinct/ego splits into the libidinal drive, and, by deflection and projective

identification, the fantasied good or idealized object toward which the libidinal drive is directed. The fantasies are experienced toward actual objects, sought primarily in order to externalize the instincts, in particular to mitigate destructiveness. Projective identification is a part of the initial splitting process, and subsequently functions to create external persecutors as well as good objects (in the process depleting the ego). Hence, by definition, intrapsychic differentiation between ego, instinct, fantasy, and reality in the infant is more apparent than actual. Inner fantasy objects are confused with external real objects, with mental representations, with structures, and with parts of instincts. The theory attributes to the neonate an impossible perceptual and cognitive precocity and it also suggests an anthropomorphized psyche. We are left to speculate that projection rather than empathic observation, and concrete rather than abstract thinking, were the sources of some of these ideas.

The first third or so of the first year is termed by Klein the paranoid-schizoid position; paranoid because of the predominance of hatred, projective identification, and persecutory anxiety, symbolized by relations with the fantasied 'bad breast', and schizoid, first to denote the importance of splitting in organizing experience, and later, after Klein's dialogue with Fairbairn, to suggest the importance of fantasy over reality. Part-object relations characterize this period, persecutory anxiety experienced from the bad breast defended against by projective identification of hatred, and the separate libidinal quest for the fantasied good breast. In addition to enabling an actualization of fantasy, real objects also have a corrective function. Introjection of the 'good object' is 'therapeutic' against persecutory anxiety and against ego weakness consequent to splitting; that is, the infantile libido and the introjected good part-object combine to form the purified pleasure ego. For Klein, then, it is the good object that is initially introjected, whereas both good and bad objects are projected, for badness originates from within.

Klein designates the middle third of the first year, approximately, as the 'depressive position', referring to the strengthening of the ego by good introjects consequent to gratifying relations, and a resultant diminution in splitting, so that the good and bad part-objects are largely supplanted

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by the whole object. Split love and hate are replaced by ambivalent love, and the split ego is replaced by the whole ego. This whole ego, aware of a precarious dependency on the ambivalently perceived whole object which is threatened by rage and envy, experiences depressive anxiety and guilt, related to the predominant fantasy that hatred will destroy the object of dependency, a fantasy that gains substance from the infant's periodic regression to a paranoid-schizoid position. The whole ego employs new defences of reparation and mania, in lieu of the earlier defences of splitting and projective identification. Reparation, or projection of goodness onto an object damaged by hatred, is the forerunner of sublimation. The manic defence, which is less constructive, consists of denial of dependency and the experiential triad of control, triumph, and contempt or devaluation.

Kernberg. According to Kernberg, the infantile psyche perceives and organizes experience from birth onward; initially in non-integrated ways, then integrated around drive, conflict, and defence, and finally around larger whole self and object units. Development consists of new integrations and organizations, first involving the response of a weak psychic apparatus to drives and affects, and later involving a strengthened psyche capable of conflicts and defences. A preponderance of libidinal gratification over rage and frustration contributes to normal as opposed to pathological development.

The ego at birth includes the beginnings of the primary autonomous functions, including perceptual capacities, and the capacity to introject experiential engrams and dichotomize them according to valence, positive or negative (1976, p. 35). Kernberg calls these introjects 'self-object-affect units', after Fairbairn, even though he maintains that, at first, the self and object representations in each unit are not differentiated (1976, pp. 75, 87). These introjected units comprise the 'building blocks' of the psychic apparatus, which is at first a dual structure. Their separation is known as primary 'pre-defensive' splitting. It is also described as a manifestation of the weakness of the nascent ego (1976, pp. 35-7).

Kernberg's explanations of 'valence' and the energies of splitting are somewhat confusing. In

chapter 1 of his 1976 book, edited from his well-known 1966 paper, drive and affect, used interchangeably, comprise valence (1976, pp. 29-30, 35). There it is assumed that separate libidinal and aggressive drive derivatives of the presumably separate dual instincts are present in the neonate, and that experiences occurring under the aegis of the aggressive drive are affectively unpleasurable, and valence negative, whereas those occurring under the sway of the libido are pleasurable, and valence positive. Later in this same book (1976, chapters 3 and 4), Kernberg asserts that it is affective experiences which are responsible for the segregation of introjected building blocks into positive and negative valence clusters and that the drives differentiate subsequently.

At the three-month point, approximately, the ego is said to emerge as a more active psychic structure, characterized by the capacity to segregate the self and object representational components of the introjected self-object-affect building blocks, by the development of secondary splitting (a defensive process), and by the presence of the earliest sense of self (all good) and other (all bad). This development corresponds closely to Freud's 'purified pleasure ego' and Mahler's 'symbiosis'. The separate drives emerge as 'polarizations' toward or away from the dual structures, which Kernberg calls the libidinal and the aggressive series of internal object relations units, respectively. The earliest sense of self is associated with the former, the earliest sense of other with the latter, and splitting is now utilized actively to maintain the structural separation and keep the 'all good' series uncontaminated. In other words, defensive splitting creates the earliest boundary between self and object representations. Kernberg hardly discusses the role of the object in these early developments, other than to imply that libidinal gratification fosters predominantly positive introjections, and frustration engenders rage and negative introjections. Presumably in good-enough development positive introjections soon predominate and fusions or integrations of what was initially a split psychic structure eventually occur, resulting first in ambivalent self and whole object representations, and eventually in the more complex structuralization of the psyche leading to the tripartite apparatus. In the borderline personality, nature (because tinged

with rage), nurture (because noxious), or both, may be such that earliest introjections are predominantly negative. Splitting must then be maintained defensively in order to ensure a reasonably good sense of self and the availability of predominantly good objects.

According to Kernberg, both borderline and narcissistic pathologies are based on defences of splitting and projective identification used to maintain the belief in potentially gratifying object relations in the face of a preponderance of rage. These pathologies differ from the psychoses by the presence of some capacity to differentiate self from object representations realistically (though pre-ambivalently). The borderline personality has not achieved the level of integration of representational systems of opposite valence, but instead maintains splitting for defensive purposes (secondary splitting) in order to control badness. The mechanism of projective identification of the aggressive series of internal object relations leads to the borderline's use of actual objects to control his hatred and devaluation, and a tendency to idealization fosters the quest for the good object.

Kernberg defines narcissism as the libidinal investment of the differentiated self-representations; in other words, he does not conceptualize a state of primary narcissism (undifferentiation). Developments called narcissistic, including pathological ones, occur after the capacity for realistic self-object differentiation and ambivalent whole object relations; after the formation of a cohesive self. Kernberg maintains that there are two types of narcissistic pathology: The first disorder in which object choice is modelled after self-representations (homosexuality) occurs subsequent to self-object differentiation. In the second, as in Klein's depressive position, self-object differentiation is at times sustained and at other times relinquished. Differentiated object relations are defended against by self-self relationships; in other words, the grandiose self relates by projective identification to the idealized object. It is this second conception of narcissistic pathology which is at issue in the controversy with Kohut, and it is based on postulation of a grandiose self-object relationship in defence against a more mature whole object relationship involving conflict between envy and rage toward the whole object of dependency on the one hand, and fear and guilt over damaging or

losing the object, on the other. There is 'pathological condensation' of the ego, the 'real self', (the archaic grandiose self; normal megalomania of infancy), and the 'idealized object' (or idealized parent imago), to form the pathological grandiose self, which Kernberg, in contrast to Kohut, maintains is not a libidinal configuration in a normal developmental sequence. This pathological grandiose self manifests denial and aggression in the form of covert devaluation of the real object of dependency, and also projectively identifies itself, leading to the effort to create a more satisfying relationship with a pathologically idealized object. Whereas the conflicts of the borderline personality revolve around aggression, those of the narcissistic personality relate primarily to dependency.

Although Kernberg acknowledges a theoretical debt to Fairbairn, who also employs concepts of introjection of self-object-affect units, as well as their segregation or splitting into structures, and he is quite critical of Klein's ideas, he retains such concepts as the dual instinct theory and pre-formation of the psychic apparatus in some of his writing, while modifying or discarding them elsewhere. He does not perceive the newborn as a cauldron of badness, yet he presents an energetic motivational theory in which aggression and ego defences against it such as splitting are central factors. He also postulates an active anthropomorphic psyche early in infancy, similar to the relations with the fantasied good and bad breasts in Klein's paranoid-schizoid position. This primitive psyche includes an ego which from birth perceives, discriminates, and introjects homovalent part-self and object representations linked by specific drives and affects, and from three months of age also fantasizes about them, projectively identifies them, and functions defensively. Perhaps Kernberg has merely utilized and retained misleading terminology derived from later childhood, and unintentionally suggests predated or precocious differentiation of the neonatal psyche, including perceptual organization, formed self-representation, object-representations, ego, aggressive and libidinal drives, conflict, and defence, instead of starting afresh with new terminology more appropriate to the undifferentiated state, and an epigenetic model emphasizing gradual differentiation and integration. But whether it is intentional or not,

Kernberg falls into the same trap of aduatomorphic and pathomorphic theorizing which ensnared Klein, taking later observations of development, both normal and psychotic, and projecting them into infants in the first half year of life, while defining the terms in such an interchangeable way as to suggest that the newborn state is really undifferentiated. As a result, like Klein, he suggests that the young infant possesses a precociously functioning and aggression-motivated psychic apparatus which is capable of complex perceptions, discriminates representations, affects, and drives, remembers, fantasizes, introjects and projects. Such a viewpoint is hardly credible given the meticulous studies of Piaget, among others.

In addition, the theories of Kernberg and Klein both lack a pre-object concept and are insufficiently attentive to the developmental role of objects. The relationship of the subject to his projected self-object-affect units comes closest to a pre-object relationship. Although Kernberg does not go so far as Klein, who perceives the function of the primary object as compensatory, he implies that the mother of development is the mother of libidinal gratification (positive introjection) or frustration (negative introjection). This formulation of the early object relationship is both sketchy and inadequate, and the animated building block model on which it is based does not account sufficiently for nascent structure and function.

Kernberg has adapted Kleinian notions about conflict and defence in early infancy. However, these concepts usually imply repression, a dynamic unconscious, tripartite structuralization, and whole object relations; in short, a differentiated and integrated psyche. The tripartite structural model seems no more appropriate to borderline pathology than it does to early infancy. Borderline thinking is marked precisely by the inability to conceptualize and tolerate conflict, and by dissociation of the potential poles of conflict. Once again, it appears that Kernberg has condensed more mature cognitive skills with their primitive precursors. Nevertheless, Kernberg's ideas about conflict and defence in borderlines seem apt to many clinicians, perhaps because primitive states of adaptation appear similar to more mature defences with their symbolic substrates. That is, archaic unintegrated states may

be rigidly and aggressively maintained because of secondary gains around passivity, dependency, and emotional dyscontrol.

The similarity between Kernberg and Klein does not end with scrutiny of the first months of life in the genesis of the borderline personality. Kernberg's specific theory of the narcissistic personality is strikingly similar if not identical to Klein's description of manic defences in the depressive position.

On the positive side, Kernberg's optimism about forming a workable transference relationship with borderlines, his attention to primitive defence-like states, and his emphasis on phenomena which the observer might attribute to the patient but the patient is not subjectively aware of, such as dissociations, rage, and projective identification, are all significant contributions to our understanding of early development and related adult psychopathology.

#### FAIRBAIRN AND KOHUT

Fairbairn. Fairbairn's theory (1952, 1963; see also Guntrip, 1961 and Wisdom, 1963) departs in significant ways both from Freud and from Klein. He repudiates Freud's pleasure principle, the libido theory, and the death instinct; energetic concepts are replaced by 'dynamic structures' in quest for objects. Indeed, his focus is on the vicissitudes of dependency, not libido, and on the self-object dyad rather than the triad. For Fairbairn, auto-eroticism and aggression are both secondary phenomena, the former regressive, and the latter a consequence of frustration. The psyche structuralizes by splitting, both vertical (dissociated but conscious) and horizontal (repression). Repression is a primary mechanism, and it is directed not against impulses but against introjected bad objects and the parts of the ego which seek relations with such objects. Structuralization and differentiation of the psyche is the consequence of bad object experiences, not loss-inspired narcissistic identifications. Finally, there are different explanations for the neuroses.

Fairbairn also rejects Klein's concept of a death instinct; for him, aggression is a secondary phenomenon. He asserts that real, good object relations are of primary importance in development; aggression and fantasy develop later, the former in response to disappointment, the latter in

an effort to master internally the unsatisfactory real experiences. For Klein, in contrast, fantasy is primary and tends to dominate and distort real experience. Fairbairn places much emphasis on structure while Klein does not. He believes earliest experience involves structuralizing introjection of a bad object, whereas Klein asserts the earliest process is one of splitting, and subsequently the infant projectively identifies a fantasy component of the split instinct.

Fairbairn's is a theory of the person in which the self and its object relations is the primary unit, and no attempt is made at further reductionism to concepts derived from physics and biology. The neonatal state is that of an 'intact ego' in relation (primary identification) to a pre-ambivalent object. This neonatal ego is capable of operating according to a rudimentary reality principle, has a libidinal aspect, and orients behaviour toward objects (1952, p. 89). As the ego differentiates, it seeks 'good object' relations modelled after the primary identification. This postulate about primal object-seeking is certainly consistent with recent observations by Condon & Sander (1974) of dance-like interactions between neonates and their mothers. However, Fairbairn's terminology is a bit confusing, because his primal state is defined both as undifferentiated and as a state of initial ego intactness. This confusion can be partly clarified by recognizing that Fairbairn here uses the ego concept much as Freud did (*das ich*) in his prestructural writings, to signify a primary self rather than an intrapsychic structure.

For Fairbairn, development involves the reciprocal relations between objects and 'dynamic structures'. There are no energic concepts, per se. Instincts have been discarded. 'The libido' of Freud is not recognized. Libidinal activity, however, is an aspect of the object-seeking structures. Persons seek objects, not pleasure; pleasure is merely the sign to the object; the erotogenic zones are particular routes to the object. Such an hypothesis is consistent with current thinking about the growth-promoting quality of empathic relations, as well as their central importance for therapy. That is, although patients often maintain that they will be cured by gratification of impulses, neither satisfactory infantile development nor therapeutic efficacy seem to depend on libidinal gratification alone so much as on good relationships in context of

which gratification may also occur. While Fairbairn observes that auto-erotic activities are overemphasized when object relations fail, he does not postulate a pleasure principle or a primary autistic state in normal development as did Freud, so that such manifestations of regression do not imply earlier developmental parallels.

Fairbairn emphasizes the primacy and vicissitudes of dependence in his theory, and is not much concerned with the development of the sexual instinct per se. The developmental process commences with an intact ego-self in primary identification, undifferentiated from the object. Fairbairn does not elaborate the growth-promoting effect of good relations. However, frustrating, unsatisfying relationships are responsible for differentiation of the ego into three dynamic structures, the conscious 'central ego' and the repressed, unconscious, and mutually split-off libidinal and anti-libidinal egos, structures which, as numerous authors (Wisdom, 1963; Guntrip, 1961) have observed, resemble Freud's tripartite structural apparatus. Through incorporative attitudes, introjection, and splitting (a general mechanism subsuming repression), both of ego and of object, unsatisfactory relations are mastered intrapsychically. Splitting creates units comprising a bit of ego, a bit of object, and a linking impulse segregated into the three 'egos'. The major observable normal consequence of internal mastery of disappointing relationships is schizoid withdrawal and subsequent depression followed by distortion of subsequent real relationships by projective identification. The central, or observing ego strives after a projectively identified 'ideal object' while split-off exciting and rejecting objects with their unconscious roots in the frustrations of early experience create a series of complications that Fairbairn has elaborated in his descriptions of the schizoid and depressive positions and the neuroses. Similarity to more traditional structures (ego, ego ideal, superego, and id) is evident. As Wisdom (1963, p. 147) elaborates, 'the schizoid position is characterized by splitting the external object, introjecting a bad object, having the sense that this object has been made bad by loving, and splitting the ego'. Fairbairn's schizoid position, characterized by detachment and apathy, part-object relations, and internal fantasy life having to do with insatiability, or fears of destroying the good object by love, is in



marked contrast to Klein's schizoid position, which consists of projection of fantasy onto actual objects, aggression, persecutory anxiety, and split-off idealization. In the subsequent depressive position, similar fears to love are associated with fears of destroying the good object with hatred. The neuroses, which develop still later, reflect the defensive techniques employed to master good and bad object relations.

Just as libido is reduced by Fairbairn from a primal force to an aspect of structure and a pathway to the object, so aggression is thought not to be a primary force, but rather a reaction to infantile frustration and deprivation, one reflected in later attitudes toward the projectively identified exciting and hostile objects.

In criticism of Fairbairn's theory, he, like Klein and Kernberg, has not satisfactorily resolved the neonatal paradox of undifferentiation and function, so that at one point he stresses the former, while at another he speaks of capacities to differentiate part-objects, affects, to introject, segregate, and structure experience. He does not emphasize or elaborate the constructive and growth-promoting aspects of structuralization. His de-emphasis of drive and instinct may be most questionable in regard to aggression, for he assigns it no normal developmental role. It is simply a consequence of frustration rather than an innate characteristic of the organism, either congenital or epigenetic. On the other hand, his emphasis on object relations is consistent with current recognition of their importance in normal development and effective psychotherapy. Moreover, as we shall next elaborate, his core ideas are harbingers of Kohut, particularly his de-emphasis of libido, his conception of aggression as a disintegration product and his focus on the primary relationship between the self as a dynamic structure, and an empathic self-object. When such a relationship fails or disappoints, both Fairbairn and Kohut describe the expression of rage, the development of perverse, auto-erotic phenomena, and an overall picture of detachment and apathy, in some instances alternating with excitement, and based on horizontal and vertical splitting. On the other hand, when the good object relationship succeeds, it promotes growth in ways Kohut, in particular, has elaborated.

Kohut. For purposes of clarity, Kohut's 1971 and 1977 books will be discussed separately. He seems to have undertaken the task of elaborating the pathways Freud hinted at in 1914 leading from infantile megalomania to object idealization, the ego ideal, and normal self-regard, while rejecting Freud's formulation (1911 and elsewhere) that narcissism is a way-station between auto-eroticism and object-love.

In Kohut's theory the first psychically meaningful events do not occur until the second year of life. At that time there emerges a bipolar self-object self, delineated by parental empathy, and equivalent to the child's central subjective experience. Subsequent development is linear and quantitative. Earliest polarities may evolve but they never integrate. The opportunity to merge with an empathic self-object followed gradually by well-timed frustrations of the wish to merge promotes normal growth, while the lack of an empathic object or the fostering of merger states after they have served their developmental purpose promotes pathology.

In his 1971 book, self-psychology is securely rooted within traditional psychoanalytic meta-psychology. Kohut there defines the self as a structure cathected with narcissistic libido, and as representations located in each of the tripartite structures. Narcissistic libido, in turn, is defined both by 'quality of charge' and by the meaning of experience. Because the self is cathected by a particular kind of libido, and develops through experiences with a 'self object' beginning with a primary identification-like merger which are allegedly different from early object relations, Kohut maintains that the self has an actually (not heuristically) separate line of development.

Normal differentiation of the self-object matrix into self and object is a smooth and continuous process. The self-object is assimilated into structure by 'transmuting internalizations' which are instigated by 'optimal frustrations' of the wish to merge with the self-object. Two distinct and stable configurations or structures characterize primary narcissism: The grandiose self, analogous to Freud's 1915 'purified pleasure ego', and the idealized parent imago. Through optimal mirroring and gradual frustration at the hands of the empathic self-object, the grandiose self ultimately evolves into the mature ego, characterized by self-esteem, initiative, ambition,



and the capacity for pleasure. Through a similar developmental sequence with the idealized self-object, the idealized parent imago is gradually transformed into the 'idealized superego' which appears to amalgamate more traditional concepts of ego ideal and superego, and to perform functions related to values and ideals, as well as curbing of the drives and self-soothing.

Kohut maintains that both the narcissistic and borderline personality disorders reflect pathological arrests in self-development. The narcissistic personality is characterized by a cohesive self (or selves) similar to the normal self-aggrandizing and idealizing configurations which, although subject to temporary regressive auto-erotic fragmentation, enters into a stable narcissistic (self-object) transference. The narcissistic personality experiences symptoms of 'ego depletion' because his investments are not in mature ego functioning but in the archaic grandiose self and idealized objects. Symptoms of alternating grandiosity, excitement, shame, embarrassment, hypochondriasis, and depression, reflect poor self-regulation. The grandiose self may be horizontally split-off (like Fairbairn, this is how Kohut describes repression), in which case symptoms of ego depletion, including lack of initiative and a sense of meaning, as well as depression, will be prominent; and/or vertically split off, in which case episodic functioning based on grandiosity will alternate dissociatively with more normal functioning. The grandiose and idealizing configurations may alternate in ascendancy, but idealization is also primary, not a product of projective identification as Kernberg asserts. In response to breach of the self-object relationship, each configuration may be regressively transformed, first into delusional thinking (sometimes religious in the case of the idealizing configuration) and subsequently into fragmentary perverse and auto-erotic fantasies and activities.

Just as Kernberg has subsumed narcissistic personality under the borderline pathologies of object relations, so Kohut considers borderline personality another disorder of narcissism, characterized by a non-existent or extremely unstable cohesive self. The central pathology—rage, splitting, auto-erotic preoccupations and delusional restitution—reflects chronic fragmentation. Either an archaic self never formed to begin with or else it was permanently shattered by

major failures early in life on the part of the primary object, hence the pathology cannot be encompassed within a transference relationship.

Kohut's 1977 book is a more radical reformulation of psychoanalytic theory, relegating most of traditional metapsychology to the periphery and placing self-psychology at the centre. His definition of self in the 1977 book is strikingly similar to Fairbairn's. The self, defined in the broad sense' is the centre of inquiry, and the primary psychological configuration is the merged relationship between the self and empathic self-object. The drives are subsumed in this configuration: 'Nondestructive aggressiveness is . . . a part of the assertiveness of the demands of the rudimentary self . . . Destructiveness (rage) and its . . . companion . . . conviction that the environment is essentially inimical—M. Klein's "paranoid position" . . . are disintegration products—reactions to failures of traumatic degree in the empathic responsiveness of the self-object . . . [these] tenets . . . also apply to the libidinal drives . . . The primary psychological configuration (of which the drive is only a constituent) is the experience of the relation between the self and the empathic self . . . If the self is seriously damaged . . . then the drives become powerful constellations in their own right' (1977, pp. 120-2).

The nascent self conceptualized in the context of a merged relationship as a dynamic but dissociated pair of structures is the first significant psychic development in infancy. It 'emerges' during the second year of life (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). In this model, there are no normal antecedent organized developments such as Klein and Kernberg postulate. Kohut traces the development of psychic structure from phase appropriate mergers of the aggressive grandiose self with the mirroring self-object, and of the idealizing self with the idealized omnipotent self-object, followed by optimal failures of merger which induce transmuting internalization. The grandiose self evolves within the first few years of life into nuclear ambitions, in relation to mother, whereas the idealizing self evolves, around 4-6 years of age into nuclear ideals, in relation to both parents. These two poles of the cohesive self, ambitions and ideals, provide the self with a sense of continuity. Self-development (and therapy of narcissistic personality) terminates, for all intents