

In the work of psychoanalysis links are formed with numbers of other mental sciences, the investigation of which promises results of the greatest value: links with mythology and philology, with folklore, with social psychology and the theory of religion.

—Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*

Introduction

HARRY S. Guntrip was best known for his affiliation with two famous psychoanalysts from what is known as the British Independent tradition of psychoanalysis in England: Ronald Fairbairn and Donald Winnicott. This book traces the various influences on the development of his clinical and theological thinking in context of the historical tension between religion and psychoanalysis. The central feature of his development will be demonstrated as a series of polarities, both theoretical and personal, conflicts with which he wrestled theologically, psychologically, and interpersonally on the professional level and in his own personal psychoanalyses. A critical evaluation of the outcome of Guntrip's own personal psychoanalyses with Fairbairn and Winnicott will demonstrate the autobiographical nature of his theoretical analysis of schizoid phenomena: a psychological state of self-preoccupation and way of being in the world.

Songwriters Simon and Garfunkel colorfully capture in verse, in “I Am a Rock,” what became Guntrip's area of expertise: schizoid states of experience.¹

In his classic work, *Schizoid Phenomena, Object Relations and the Self*,² Guntrip describes with clarity the mindset of the person illustrated by Simon and Garfunkel's popular song. What is not obvious to the reader is that his book is autobiographical to a significant degree, in addition to being a scholarly work informed by clinical experience.

¹ Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel, “I am a Rock,” in *Greatest Hits* (Los Angeles: Sony Music, 1990).

² Guntrip, *Schizoid Phenomena, Object Relations and the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1968).

The autobiographical nature of the psychoanalytic tradition itself is, perhaps, best illustrated by Sigmund Freud's book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*,³ where the dreams that he analyzed and explored were largely his own. Guntrip chronicled his experience of his personal psychoanalyses with two prominent British analysts in a comparative fashion in "My Experience of Analysis with Fairbairn and Winnicott."⁴ The focal point in the psychoanalytic literature about his article has been his traumatic emotional attachment to his mother in the context of a number of developmental events in his childhood.

Guntrip's relationship with the pioneering Psychoanalytic Object Relations theorist, Ronald Fairbairn, reflected their shared interest in a psychology that was attachment and relationally oriented, in contrast to the biological drive theory of classical psychoanalysis. Guntrip was drawn to Fairbairn's remaking of Freud's classical model of the person seeking relief from the tensions of psychological drives, into a model where the person seeks attachment to primary caregivers. Both Fairbairn and Guntrip shared a hunger for a "full-blooded" approach to life, characterized by deeply meaningful relationships. Unfortunately for both, to varying degrees, their personal backgrounds had predisposed them to personalities that did not embody in practice what they both wrote about in theory. For example, Guntrip presented his psychoanalytic sessions with Fairbairn as a *classical* psychoanalytic experience that was characterized by Fairbairn's stoic distance and oedipal interpretations. In contrast he presented his analysis with Winnicott as reflecting what has been called the *romantic* vision in psychoanalysis, characterized by the notion of "maternal holding."⁵

In short, I would describe Harry Guntrip as embodying a personal polarity of subscribing to attachment-relationally oriented thinking and theology which conflicted with his personal history of schizoid adaptation: preoccupation with one's own world. My thesis is that this dynamic characterized Harry Guntrip's own life, and is what I propose to demonstrate in this study.

What Guntrip saw as the accomplishment of his psychoanalysis with Winnicott was his recovery of dream images about his relationship with his mother that vividly illustrated his deadening relationship with her, (or traumatic attachment). These dreams were stimulated by the death

³ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: Norton, 1985 [1900]).

⁴ Guntrip, "My Experience of Analysis with Fairbairn and Winnicott," *International Review of Psychoanalysis* 2 (1975) 145–56.

⁵ Carlo Strenger, "The Classic And The Romantic Vision In Psychoanalysis," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 70 (1989) 593.

of Winnicott himself, a tragic loss for Guntrip that evoked unconscious images of a faceless and armless mother who was unable to provide the psychological connection and emotional holding that the schizoid person both lacks and hungers for. His schizoid defenses, exemplified by Guntrip's compulsive intellectualization, prevented him from experiencing his withdrawn and vulnerable self within his sessions with Winnicott. This was the central way for him to keep distance from the overwhelming emotions of loss that he carried inside himself from childhood. This illustrates what can be called the paradox of the schizoid experience: the apparent necessity of the death of his *flesh and blood* relationship with Winnicott in order for him to experience his internalized emotionally dead relationship with his mother. This trauma and loss was carried by his repressed and withdrawn *weak ego*, or vulnerable self. Guntrip's inability to experience the vulnerability of his internalized trauma in a *regression to dependence* upon Winnicott *within the living relationship* reflects the tragic aspect of his personal *schizoid phenomena*.

The Place of the Personal in Psychoanalysis

The stereotype of psychoanalysis in America is probably best represented by the images courtesy of Woody Allen: the detached doctor who silently listened to Allen pontificate about his childhood as he lay on the couch. What is most unfortunate is that this picture of psychoanalysis *has* been characteristic of the American tradition. Bruno Bettelheim, perhaps best known for his writing as a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps of the 1930s, argues in *Freud and Man's Soul*⁶ that translations of Freud from German into the English, including Strachey's in The Standard Edition, has "led to erroneous conclusions, not only about Freud the man but also about psychoanalysis."⁷ His centerpiece is understanding what Freud's sense of the word "psychoanalysis" itself means. "'Psyche' is the soul—a term full of the richest meaning, endowed with emotion, comprehensively human and unscientific."⁸ He is not presenting Freud as religious, but rather as "deeply humane . . . a humanist in the best sense of the word. His greatest concern was with man's innermost being."⁹ He goes on to imply that the *Freudian* psychoanalysis of America does not reflect the true Freud at all. Again, in regards to the translations, the "English accent in 'psy-

⁶ Bruno Bettelheim, *Freud and Man's Soul* (New York: Vintage, 1984).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

choanalysis' is on 'analysis,' . . . with the German word *Psychoanalyse*, on the other hand, the accent is on the first syllable—on 'psyche,' the soul.¹⁰ From Bettelheim's personal account, the contrast between his experience of psychoanalysis in Vienna to that of the United States is astounding.

For nearly forty years, I have taught courses in psychoanalysis to American graduate students and to residents in psychiatry. Again and again, I have been made to see how seriously the English translations impede students' efforts to gain a true understanding of Freud and of psychoanalysis. Although most of the bright and dedicated students whom it has been my pleasure to teach were eager to learn what psychoanalysis is all about, they were largely unable to do so. Almost invariably, I have found that psychoanalytic concepts had become for these students a way of looking only at others, from a safe distance—nothing that had any bearing on them. They observed other people through the *spectacles of abstraction*, (emphasis added) tried to comprehend them by means of intellectual concepts, never turning their gaze inward to the soul or their own unconscious. This was true even of the students who were in analysis themselves—it made no appreciable difference. . . . Psychoanalysis as these students perceived it was a purely intellectual system—a clever, exciting game—rather than the acquisition of insights into oneself and one's own behavior which were potentially deeply upsetting. It was always *someone else's* unconscious they analyzed, hardly *their own*. They did not give enough thought to the fact that Freud, in order to create psychoanalysis and understand the workings of the unconscious, had had to analyze his *own* dreams, understand his *own* slips of the tongue and the reasons *he* forgot things or made various other mistakes.¹¹

Harry Guntrip was a champion of the *Personal* in psychoanalysis. His legacy is seen in the naming of his collected papers by his protégé, Hazell, as *Personal Relations Therapy*,¹² a more humanized version of the traditional "Object Relations" language. Guntrip himself was a protégé of John Macmurray, professor of Moral Philosophy at London University, and later at Edinburgh University. Macmurray's Gifford lectures of 1954, *Persons in Relation*,¹³ are the capstone of three decades of writing that I will

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, (emphasis in original) 6–7.

¹² Jeremy Hazell, ed., *Personal Relations Therapy: The Collected Papers of H. J. S. Guntrip* (Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1994).

¹³ John Macmurray, *Persons in Relation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954).

show are the principal influence in molding Guntrip's theological-philosophical thinking. Guntrip traces his own development in stating,

I found my earlier studies in religion and philosophy were by no means irrelevant. I had been thoroughly trained in a "personal relations" school of thought, not only in theology but in the philosophy of Professor J. Macmurray. Such books as J. Oman's *Grace and Personality*, Martin Buber's *I and Thou* and J. Macmurray's *Interpreting the Universe*, *The Boundaries of Science*, and *Reason and Emotion* had left too deep a mark for me to be able to approach the study of man in any other way than as a "Person."¹⁴

Guntrip did not approach integration of these influences in his life as a harmonizing of disciplines, which he would have called "an artificial attempt to 'fit them together.'" His *personal* journey led him to his consulting room with patients, where for many years he was in the process of working out this blending of his theology, philosophy, and psychology of the Person. Within the intimacy of the encounters with his patients, and in the form of "the natural emergence of a fully psychodynamic theory of personality within psychoanalysis," he digested and metabolized these various aspects of the human Person.¹⁵ From my perspective, he was practicing a "religionless Christianity in a world come of age," a phrase, ironically, he personally rejected, apparently due to its arrival in Britain via the "Death of God" theologians, without an understanding of its original source, Dietrich Bonhoeffer.¹⁶

The Religion of Psychoanalysis

In 1992 I was attending a presentation by a British psychoanalyst on John Bowlby, known for both his break with a classical version of Psychoanalysis by Melanie Klein, and his subsequent interest in how human beings attach and form bonds with their caretakers. As I learned that this analyst was familiar with those who knew and respected Guntrip in England, I shared my thoughts and plans for this work on Guntrip. He was surprised at the role that theology played for Guntrip, noting, "I thought all psychoanalysts were atheists" (personal communication). This has been the *orthodox* position of many psychoanalysts, one that has been *religiously* held.

¹⁴ Guntrip, *Personality Structure and Human Interaction* (New York: International Universities Press, 1961) 19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (New York: Macmillan, 1953).

The history of the psychoanalytic movement reads like that of Christian Church history: a record of intolerance where there is a “remarkable history of schisms in psychoanalytic institutes, testifying to the difficulty of containing, much less accepting, theoretical differences within existing organizations.”¹⁷ In “The Intolerance of Diversity in Psychoanalytic Institutes,” Kenneth Eisold develops this theme of the rampant denominationalization of the psychoanalytic movement, including “the more hidden history of factionalism and intellectual intimidation that besets institutional life.”¹⁸ While noting the historical nature of these schisms as part of the analytic tradition as reflected in Freud’s anxiety over his succession, Eisold presents a dynamic answer to the origin of this phenomena based in “an understanding of the anxieties aroused by the ongoing collective professional activities of psychoanalysts.”¹⁹ The isolation of psychoanalytic work, characterized by its immersion in the dyads with the patient as well as with the supervisor, produces an anxiety that “derives from the contradiction between the analyst’s need to belong to a particular school and his need to believe that he is fully receptive to the clinical material of his patient.” In addition to this is the anxiety generated by the “culture of psychoanalysis” itself which “sees itself apart from the world of social reality.”²⁰ One of the “social defenses” of “intolerance for intellectual differences” that Eisold identifies is turning to the theories that link the analyst “to a community of like-minded practitioners” as a way to manage the “continual assaults on their emotional lives” that come with the territory of practicing psychoanalysis. This is more than an echo of Bettelheim’s experience of the intellectualization of psychoanalysis. It is the application of Freud’s own thesis in *Future of an Illusion* that “religion” is a set of obsessive-compulsive defenses to anxiety. In short, psychoanalysis is a human phenomenon no less prone to such “adaptations.” In fact, it has its own very complex sets of orthodoxies (metapsychology or theory) and rituals (techniques) of practice.

Guntrip makes much of the polarity in Freud between his clinical genius, and his theoretical abstractions that did not faithfully represent his clinical insights.²¹ He foreshadows Eisold’s thesis in seeing Freud dis-

¹⁷ Kenneth Eishold, “The Intolerance of Diversity in Psychoanalytic Institutes,” *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 75 (1994) 785.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 786.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 785.

²¹ Guntrip, *Psychoanalytic Theory, Therapy, and the Self* (New York: Basic, 1971).

torting the very personal and subjective nature of analytic work in his theorizing to maintain status within the “scientific” community of his day. (Ironically, Guntrip did not have the insights of Bettelheim who argued that Freud did indeed reflect the human and personal, but that this was lost in translation.) Guntrip acknowledges Freud’s identification of “neurotic forms of religion which are an essentially infantile longing for a lost Mummy and Daddy,”²² yet critiques his reductionism of religion in toto. Guntrip in the later development of his theological thinking, “Religion in Relation to Personal Integration,” 1969, ultimately casts religion within his object relational motifs. His psychoanalytic psychology, following Fairbairn, is characterized by the centrality of the splitting of the ego and the schizoid core as the ultimate task for psychoanalysis to address. His theological philosophy joins with “personal integration” as the ultimate task of both therapy and theology.

To discuss religion, we must establish some common ground as to what it is, not in terms of doctrines or organizations but facts of experience. . . . Freud (1927) saw that when he described religion as a regression to infantile dependence, and the projection of the parent image on to the universe. But that only describes neurotic religion. It is more realistic to see this basically important “personal relations factor” as not in itself infantile, but as the essential permanent factor in our existence at every stage of life, and as itself undergoing a process of maturing that is central to all our development as persons. . . . I take “religion” not as theological doctrine, nor as an intellectual activity, or an organization; . . . I take it as an overall way of experiencing life, of integration or self-realization through communion with all that is around us, and finally our way of relating to the universe, the total reality, which has, after all, evolved us with the intelligence and motivation to explore this problem: all that is meant by “experience of God” (emphasis in original).²³

The Subjective Basis of Metapsychology

Robert Stolorow argues that the ultimate basis for every metapsychological (or theoretical) model is the subjective experience and orientation of the author. In his classic study of the psychohistories of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Wilhelm Reich, and Otto Rank, *Faces in a Cloud: Subjectivity*

²² Hazell, ed. *Personal Relations Therapy*, 271.

²³ *Ibid.*, 274–75.

in *Personality Theory*,²⁴ he traces the contextual influences of each of their respective life histories and how it shaped their psychological theorizing. This is a theme that Guntrip himself champions:

This leads me to observe that in psychology more than in any other study a writer's judgment is related to his own personal approach to the subject. This in turn arises out of the structure of his own personality and his experience of life. This fact is familiar to us in religious, philosophical and political thinking, where the objective and the subjective most plainly interact. In science it has always been the tradition that thinking is purely objective. This is now realized to be less true than used to be taken for granted, but it is least of all true in psychology. Often, in reading psychoanalytic and psychiatric literature, and trying to form a judgment on its conclusions about human beings, I have wished I knew what sort of person the writer was.²⁵

Robert Coles in *The Spiritual Life of Children* addressed what it meant for him to be one who was reared in the psychoanalytic tradition, and how he was impacted by the *person* of his psychoanalytic mentors. During the social unrest of the early 1960s in the American South, he was diverted from his original plans of entering “the profession of psychoanalytic child psychiatry” to that of a “field worker,” learning to talk with children not as “patients,” but as they were going through their everyday lives. He began a career of thirty years of writing about children, collecting their drawings, paintings, and their various *takes* on life in notebooks and on tape. He reflects upon how he began to organize that material in light of these mentors.

I had by then gotten to know Erik H. Erikson rather well: I had studied with him and helped teach the course he gave at Harvard. I also came to know, luckily, Anna Freud, first by correspondence and later through meetings in both the United States and England. Those two veteran child psychoanalysts, both wise, thoughtful human beings, were of enormous help to Jane and me as we tried to make sense of what we'd done and tried to figure out where we might next go. In 1978 Anna Freud made a suggestion: “It would be of interest if you went over your earlier work and looked for what you might have missed back then,” she said. I remember being somewhat perplexed and amused at the time. I got no leads from her as to what we might discover if we followed her advice;

²⁴ R. Stolorow and G. Atwood, *Faces in a Cloud: Subjectivity in Personality Theory* (New York: Aronson, 1979).

²⁵ Guntrip, *Personality Structure*, 18.

it was her manner as she made the suggestion which was especially persuasive: a mix of wry detachment and warm-spirited interest (emphasis added). Meanwhile, Erik Erikson had been sharing with Jane and me his experiences in South Africa, where he had gone to deliver an address at the University of Cape Town. “You might want to compare what you’ve seen in the South with what is happening over there,” he remarked one day as the three of us were having lunch. Years later, as we worked in South Africa with black and “colored” and white children, *we often remembered that moment* (emphasis added).²⁶

Harry Guntrip’s life reflected in his own way what it meant to be influenced by such significant figures within the psychoanalytic tradition. On the one hand he spent much energy and spilt much ink in reaction to Heinz Hartmann’s Ego Psychology tradition, as it echoed Anna Freud, Hartmann’s close collaborator’s thinking. In a theme that spanned his writing career, Guntrip opposed the philosophy of science of the “objective observer” embodied by Hartmann in favor of his own view of the inherent subjectivity of “psychodynamic science.” On the other hand, he traced the path of his own growth, both personally and theoretically, under the influence of his two analyses with Fairbairn and Winnicott.²⁷ In a fascinating third vantage point of this process, Jeremy Hazell describes the transition in the person of Guntrip which he experienced as Guntrip’s analysand, (that is, client or patient).²⁸ During Harry’s analysis with Winnicott, Hazell saw Guntrip soften and come to embody the tenets of his personal object relations theory which seemed to be limited to the more intellectual sphere during Guntrip’s earlier analysis with Fairbairn. The centrality of Guntrip’s own schizoid process, where one’s “true self” is kept locked up in “cold storage” and therefore needs evocation, was one that was skillfully theorized with Fairbairn, but only realized with Winnicott. The difference is seen in the personal metapsychology of each analyst: Fairbairn as the brilliant, but himself schizoid, theoretician, and Winnicott as the winsome “court jester of the British Psychoanalytic Society,”²⁹ who’s pre-verbal holding capacity brought Guntrip’s inner self more to light.

²⁶ Robert Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1990) xii–xiii.

²⁷ Hazell, ed., *Personal Relations Therapy*, 351.

²⁸ Hazell, “Reflections on My Experience of Psychoanalysis with Guntrip,” *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 27 (1991) 153.

²⁹ Christopher Bollas, *Winnicott Lectures* (cassette recording) (Tustin, CA: Newport Psychoanalytic Institute, 1982).

The Politics of Polarities: Conflict or Complementarity?

Guntrip, in his doctoral dissertation, (later published as *Personality Structure and Human Interaction*), traces the development of psycho-analytical theory as “an unconscious pattern of development of a dialectical type.”³⁰ “The original *European psychobiology* of Freud” is presented as this Hegelian *Thesis*: the classic psycho-analytical teaching. He then presents the *psychosociology* in America, including Karen Horney, Erik Fromm, and Harry Stack Sullivan as the *Antithesis* to the classical stance. Guntrip’s *Synthesis* is his British object relational orientation that “comes to correlate the internal and the external object-relationships in which the personality is involved” (emphasis in the original).³¹ His approach is his way to interrelate the internal, intrapsychic Freudian emphasis with the external, interpersonal one of the American schools.

Here again, in theory, Guntrip takes an approach that would bring harmony to the divergent trends in psychoanalysis. Yet in practice, Guntrip engaged in career long polemical arguments with Hartmann and the dominant ego psychological school on the one hand, and Behaviorism as represented by Hans Eysenck on the other. Although he was analyzed by two prominent analysts from the British Independent school, Fairbairn and Winnicott, he did not receive formal training as a psychoanalyst and was never a member of the British Psychoanalytic Society. In 1956 he was therefore “ineligible to attend the centenary celebrations” of the birth of Sigmund Freud, “but with typical crusading spirit, he published ‘Centenary Reflections on the Work of Freud’. . . . Guntrip continued his argument against the depersonalizing methods of Eysenck and the behaviourists, who, in their desire for scientific status, showed a tendency to reduce the patient to an oversimplified mechanism.”³² Guntrip’s professional battles with Hartmann and Eysenck, his external objects, seem to have mirrored his internal object world of internalized early relationships which are tense and obsessive, where he was never really at peace, either internally or externally. He carried with him the internal psychological object of his unavailable and unattachable mother. His professional world seemed to follow in suit. As Hazell notes, “One can perhaps detect in these arguments [of Guntrip for a personal growth viewpoint] the struggles of a nonmedical psychoanalytic psychotherapist working daily in academic departments of psychiatry and psychology, with their strongly organic and

³⁰ Guntrip, *Personality Structure*, 50.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

³² Hazell, ed., *Personal Relations Therapy*, 9.

behavioral influence.”³³ This dynamic, again, echoes the autobiographical influences upon Guntrip’s theoretical and clinical writings.

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³³ Ibid.