

*For each individual is the synthesis not only of existing relations, but of the history of these relations. He is the précis of all the past.*¹

“[Phantasy is] the mental corollary, the psychic representative, of instinct. There is no impulse, no instinctual urge or response which is not experienced as unconscious phantasy. ... The first mental processes, the psychic representatives of bodily impulses and feelings, ... are to be regarded as the earliest beginning of phantasies. ... All impulses, all feelings, all modes of defense are experienced in phantasies which give them mental life and show their direction and purpose.”²

“The operation of an instinct ... is expressed and represented in mental life by the phantasy of the satisfaction of that instinct by an appropriate object. Since instincts operate from birth, some crudely phantasy life can be assumed as existing from birth. ... From the moment the infant starts interacting with the outer world, he is engaged in testing his phantasies in a reality setting.”³

“The first ... [potentially satisfying] object of the infant is, of course, his mother’s breast, although there can be no doubt that the form of his mother as a person soon begins to take shape round the original nucleus of this maternal organ. Under theoretically perfect conditions the ... relationship of the infant to his mother would be so satisfactory that a state of ... frustration [failure to reduce or satisfy drives] could hardly arise; and, as I see it, there would consequently be no ambivalence on the part of the infant towards his object ...”⁴

“Such perfect conditions [symmetry] are, however, only theoretically possible for the human infant born into a cultural group; and in actual fact the ... [satisfying] relationship of the infant to his mother is disturbed from the first by a considerable measure of frustration, although, of course, the degree of such frustration varies in different cases. ... From the point of view of the infant himself it is a case of his mother becoming an ambivalent object, i.e. an object which is both good and bad. Since it proves intolerable to him to have a good object which is also bad, he seeks to alleviate the situation by splitting the figure of his mother into two objects. Then, in so far as she satisfies him ..., she is a good object, and, in so far as she fails to satisfy him ..., she is a bad object. The situation in which he now finds himself placed proves, however, in its turn to be one which imposes a severe strain upon his capacity for endurance and his power of adjustment.”⁵

¹ Gramsci (1891–1937), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (1971, p. 353).

² Isaacs (1948, p. 81–2).

³ Segal (1975, pp. 13–23).

⁴ Fairbairn (1944, p. 82); for didactic purposes the term *libidinal* was omitted and replaced by “[potentially satisfying]”, thus reducing the terminological load on physiologically oriented readers.

⁵ Fairbairn (1944, p. 82).

“Being a situation in outer reality, it is one which he finds himself impotent to control, and which, accordingly, he seeks to mitigate by such means as are at his disposal. The means at his disposal are limited; and the technique which he adopts is more or less dictated by this limitation. He accordingly follows the only path open to him and, since outer reality seems unyielding, he does his best to transfer ... the situation to the field of inner reality, within which he feels situations to be more under his own control.”⁶

“I find myself for a moment in the interesting position of not knowing whether what I have to say should be regarded as something long familiar and obvious or as something entirely new and puzzling. ... Let us suppose, then, that a child’s ego [internal space] is under the sway of a powerful instinctual demand which it is accustomed to satisfy and that it is suddenly frightened by an experience which teaches it that the continuance of this satisfaction will result in an almost intolerable real danger. It must now decide either to recognize the real danger, give way to it and renounce the instinctual satisfaction, or to disavow reality and make itself believe that there is no reason for fear, so that it may be able to retain the satisfaction. Thus there is a conflict between the demand by the instinct and the prohibition by reality [Segal’s “impacts of reality”]. But in fact the child takes neither course, or rather he takes both simultaneously, which comes to the same thing. He replies to the conflict with two contrary reactions, both of which are valid and effective. On the one hand, with the help of certain mechanisms he rejects reality and refuses to accept any prohibition; on the other hand, in the same breath he recognizes the danger of reality, takes over the fear of that danger as a pathological symptom and tries subsequently to divest himself of the fear. ... Both of the parties to the dispute obtain their share: the instinct is allowed to retain its satisfaction and proper respect is shown to reality. But everything has to be paid for in one way or another, and this success is achieved at the price of a rift in the ego which never heals but which increases as time goes on. The two contrary reactions to the conflict persist as the centre-point of a splitting of the ego.”⁷

“An internal object relationship necessarily involves an interaction between two subdivisions of the personality, each subdivision capable of being an active psychological agency. ... I suggest that the internalization of an object relationship be thought of as necessarily involving a dual subdivision of the ego. *Such a dual split would result in the formation of two new suborganizations of the ego, one*

⁶ Fairbairn (1944, pp. 82–3). A note for the psychologically educated reader: The words “the traumatic factor in,” which some might consider critical, were omitted as they point to a distinction between Klein and Fairbairn on the issue of which aspect of the object is transferred to the inner world: “[I] disagree ... with his [Fairbairn’s] view that to begin with only the bad object is internalized ...” (Melanie Klein, Notes on some schizoid mechanisms (1975, p. 3).) Klein’s version is more congruent with the present essay, although for our dialogue the choice does not matter much.

⁷ Freud (1938, pp. 275–6); with text in [square brackets] added for didactic purposes.

identified with the self in the external object relationship and the other thoroughly identified with the object.”⁸

“Each individual builds working models of the world and of himself in it, with the aid of which he perceives events, forecasts the future, and constructs his plans.⁹ ... [These models are] becoming increasingly sophisticated, in particular by their coming to incorporate representational models of the environment and important people in it and also of the self as a living active person.¹⁰ ... the patterns of interaction to which the models lead, having become habitual, generalized, and largely unconscious, persist in more or less uncorrected and unchanged state even when the individual in later life is dealing with persons who treat him in ways entirely unlike those that his parents adopted when he was a child.”¹¹

“the myth of the isolated individual mind”¹²



Figure 4.2

⁸ Ogden (1983, pp. 233-4).

⁹ Bowlby (1973, p. 203). This is literally a description of Rosen's relations between structured languages (or models) as discussed in [Chapter 3](#).

¹⁰ Bowlby (1988, p. 62).

¹¹ Bowlby (1988, p. 130).

¹² Stolorow and Atwood (1992).