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Persons in Relation

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Persons in Relation: the interaction of philosophy, theology and psychotherapy in 20th century Scotland.

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Introduction
The importance of situating psychotherapy within a broader philosophical and ethical context has been argued recently by several writers. Noting the 'therapeutic turn' in contemporary culture, Charles Taylor has suggested that the narrowing of strategies to biochemical and medical approaches can lead to the exclusion of wider notions of guilt, forgiveness, freedom, and meaning. The therapeutic avoidance of these existential notions may even lead, he claims, to their suppression or displacement in ways that can be restrictive or damaging.[1] This complaint is echoed by other writers. In one of his last writings, Don Browning pleads for consideration of the *hermeneutical* dimension of psychotherapeutic activity.[2] The unconditional regard of psychotherapist for client may be a vital presupposition of the encounter. But why attach such priority to love and relationality? Psychotherapeutic activity seems to raise questions about the moral and spiritual framework within which we understand our personhood and its goals. 'This is the question as to whether the agent of change is the finite relationship or what it implies about some over-belief that testifies that neither a person's mother nor father, sister nor brother, shaman nor psychotherapist, is the exhaustive source of the client's worth but rather that some larger structure of meaning and being is this source.'[3]

The most significant interaction today between theology and psychotherapy is in the discussion surrounding spirituality, health and healing. Despite the formidable problems in providing an adequate definition of 'spirituality', discussion has drawn attention to the wider social, philosophical and religious context in which counselling and psychotherapy are situated.[4] Here too there is a renewed demand for a more holistic focus. Clients hold a range of presuppositions and spiritual assumptions that are deeply related to the sense that they make of themselves, their experience and the world. To bracket these out or suppress them in counselling can lead to frustration or at least a narrowing of goals.

In what follows, attention will be given to the philosophical and theological context of some important 20th century developments in psychotherapy, particularly in Scotland. These display the value of cross-disciplinary interaction and its close links with practice in ways that can prove instructive for the reinvigoration of that wider conversation urged by Browning and others. In particular, I argue that the philosophical underpinning of 'personal relations therapy' continues to offer significant resources for a conversation between theology and psychotherapy.

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[1] Charles Taylor, *The Secular Age* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 618–675.
[2] Don Browning, *Reviving Christian Humanism: The New Conversation on Spirituality, Theology and Psychology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2010), 100ff.
[3] Browning, ibid., 102. For a measured attempt to show how theological notions can both complement and adjust more secular approaches see Alastair V. Campbell, *Rediscovering Pastoral Care* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981).
[4] See for example William West (ed.), *Exploring Therapy, Spirituality and Healing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), and Philip Sheldrake, 'Spirituality and Healthcare', *Practical Theology*, 3.3 (2010), 367–379.

Trends in Scottish Philosophy

Recent research has shown that the character of Scottish philosophy lent itself to adoption by emerging practices and theories in counselling, psychotherapy and theology.[5] Although there is a risk of over-simplification here, one can point to several features of Scottish philosophy from the Enlightenment onwards which are relevant to our subject, particularly at a time when it continued to flourish within an European mainstream. This can be summarised by the claim that the Scottish philosophical tradition is typically holistic, practical, relational and open to the transcendent. These labels need some unpacking but each stems from the wider role of philosophy in Scottish culture. In his seminal work on the democratic intellect, George Davie has pointed to the ways in which this is a feature not simply of the religious life of Scotland but of its wider intellectual traditions, and in particular the central role exercised by philosophy in higher education.[6]

As holistic, philosophy exercised an integrative role within the wider curriculum. According to many of its exponents, it was not to be understood simply as one subject amongst many others, occupying an exclusive niche in the total field of knowledge. Instead, philosophy was regarded as exercising a unique role in clarifying and unifying other fields of knowledge so that their relationship to each other, their differences and their internal connections could be better understood. The value of a philosophical training for professional life was the clarity it afforded in understanding one's subject in terms of how it fitted into the bigger picture of human society, ethics, and well being. While some experts know more and more about less and less, it has been said that the philosopher, understood in this way, is someone who knows less and less about more and more. This approach to the subject may have been lost or eclipsed by the greater specialism within philosophy in recent years, but it is important in understanding how it functioned in Scotland until about the middle of the 20th century.

Scottish philosophy was typically concerned with the human subject as an agent, rather than a detached intellectual ego. Writing in criticism of Hume in the late 18th century, Thomas Reid pointed to the importance of agency in our understanding of causality and the working of the physical world. It is by pushing and pulling objects and knowing our bodies to be similarly determined by other material forces that we build up an understanding of the world around us and of irreducible notions such as 'power', 'will' and 'agency'.[7] This was reinforced in the 19th century as philosophers in Scotland engaged with Kant's ethics, especially the *Critique of Practical Reason*, with its account of the self as a moral agent in the world.

The human subject was generally understood as personal and relational by Scottish philosophers of different schools. There is a reaction historically against both atomistic and monistic patterns of thought which either dissociate subjects from each other (as in

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[5] I am particularly indebted to Gavin Miller, 'Scottish Psychoanalysis: A Rational Religion', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 44, (2008) 38–58. See also his work on R. D. Laing in 'How Scottish was R. D. Laing?, *History of Psychiatry*, 20, (2009), 226–232.

[6] George Davie, *The Democratic Intellect* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1961). For further background on the community of interests amongst Scottish philosophers during the 18th and 19th centuries, see Gordon Graham, *Scottish Philosophy: Selected Writings 1690–1960* (Exeter: Imprint Press, 2004), 1–11.

[7] See for example Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers* (1788), Essay I, Section V.

empiricism) or else so integrate them that their essential differences are dissolved into a cosmic whole (as in absolute idealism). To cite one example, the modified personal idealism represented in the writings of Andrew Seth Pringle Pattison in the late 19th and early 20th centuries stresses the extent to which the social world comprises persons who relate to one another while retaining rather than surrendering their unique status as individual persons. While personalism flourished elsewhere in Europe and North America, it was defended by a range of Scottish thinkers from the late Victorian period onwards, often with a religious hue.[8]

There may have been important differences between the older realist and the newer idealist traditions that competed in the later 19th century with respect to the mind-independence of the external world, but both sides were generally united by their sympathy to religious faith. This is hardly surprising since many of the key Scottish thinkers of the period were rooted in the life of one or other of the Presbyterian churches, several being sons of manses. However, this did not always manifest itself in a commitment to Christian orthodoxy let alone Presbyterian doctrine. The different accounts of God and the religious life that feature in Scottish philosophy are often heterodox. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that most of the leading Scottish philosophers from the late 19th and early 20th centuries were favourably disposed towards some form of theism (Fraser, Pringle-Pattison, Calderwood, Edward Caird, Jones, Lindsay, and Kemp Smith) and displayed an openness to religious concerns, more so than one finds in Anglo-Saxon philosophy of the same period. Much of this religious spirit was also fostered by the Gifford Lectures. After 1888, these were delivered in each of the ancient universities and generally offered a defence of religious belief and practice.[9]

The contribution of John Macmurray
A key catalytic figure to emerge around this time was John Macmurray (1891–1976). Macmurray was a philosopher who sought to bring his subject into close contact with wider trends in social and intellectual life. A leading figure in the Christian left during the 1930s, he interacted with churches and a range of professional bodies. Frustrated by the narrower interests of many philosophical colleagues, he proved more influential outside than inside his own professional guild. His output was marked not so much articles in specialist journals as by popular writings, BBC radio broadcasts and numerous talks and lectures.[10]

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[8] Cairns Craig has argued that the social vision of the Scottish idealists informed culture and politics in much of early 20th Scotland. See *Intending Scotland: Explorations in Scottish Culture since the Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 202. Craig also points to the ways in which Scottish thinkers exported these ideas to other parts of the English-speaking world, e.g. the sociologist Robert Morrison MacIver who taught at Columbia University and worked along political lines similar to those of Macmurray.

[9] An interesting example of the spiritual interests present in much of Scottish philosophy can be found in Norman Kemp Smith's correspondence with Baron von Hügel. *The Letters of Baron Friedrich von Hügel and Professor Norman Kemp Smith*, Lawrence F. Barmann (ed.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 1981). Kemp Smith maintained an 'idealist' position that spiritual values are in some way determinative of the universe. For an overview of the Gifford lectures, see Larry Witham, *The Measure of God: Our Century Long Struggle to Reconcile Science and Religion. The Story of the Gifford Lectures* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2005).

[10] For further information see John Costello SJ *John Macmurray: A Biography* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2002) and Esther McIntosh, *John Macmurray's Religious Philosophy: What it Means to be a Person* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011).

Macmurray's work from the 1920s onwards represents an attempt to develop a personalist vision of philosophy that is serviceable in other fields. The self is not the disembodied and detached mind of the Cartesian tradition.[11] Instead, the self is an agent that is positioned in a physical and social world. Its identity cannot be exhausted by material or organic patterns of explanation. These are important to understanding the human being, but an adequate description requires also the language of the personal that is reducible neither to material nor organic causal laws. The person interacts with other persons in relations that ought to be marked by freedom, love and friendship. Self-fulfilment is therefore found only in community, and it is in its promotion of community life that the real significance of religion is to be found. From his most mature work, the Glasgow Gifford Lectures of 1953–54, Macmurray published two volumes in late career – *The Self as Agent* (1957*)* and *Persons in Relation* (1961). These set out the philosophical ideas that he had been developing since the 1920s.

[H]uman experience is, in principle, shared experience: human life, even in its most individual elements, is a common life; and human behaviour carries always, in its inherent structure, a reference to the personal Other. All this may be summed up by saying that the unit of personal existence is not the individual, but two persons in personal relation; and that we are persons not by individual right, but in virtue of our relation to one another. The personal is constituted by personal relatedness. The unit of the personal is not the 'I' but the 'You and I'.[12]

It is evident that Macmurray conforms to the characteristics of the Scottish philosophical tradition as described above. However, much of his career was spent in Oxford and London before his arrival in Edinburgh, and his influence was thus extensively exercised throughout the UK. The interaction with various professional bodies is particularly significant, including his impact upon developments in psychotherapy.

A holistic approach demands that the patient or client be viewed as a person and not merely as an organic entity. This personal-relational context not only determines the relationship that exists between therapist and client but it must also condition the former's understanding of the situation, needs and direction of the client. The person aims at friendship, freedom and love. Macmurray could even state in one of his typically striking remarks that all meaningful action is for the sake of friendship. While this is an over-generalisation that neglects the significance of the natural world (including animals), it remains an arresting idea. Whenever he addressed professional groups, Macmurray would remind his audience that in working with their clients, patients or pupils they were dealing with persons and not mere objects of study. On one occasion, he remarked that in his own work he would sometimes ask himself have I been teaching my pupils or have I simply been teaching my subject.[13] If we do only the latter – seek to present our subject – then we will fail to attend to the important personal dimension of the teacher-pupil relationship. This applies also to the relationships between doctor and patient, and therapist and client. As Dean of the Faculty of Arts in Edinburgh, Macmurray was responsible for establishing the first Department of Nursing in a UK university. He argued successfully that this should be situated within the Arts and not the Science Faculty since nurses were caring for the needs of persons in all their

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[11] For a critical account of the pervasiveness of this tradition in western theological anthropological see Fergus Kerr, *Theology After Wittgenstein*, 2nd edition, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).
[12] *Persons in Relation* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), 61.
[13] 'A Philosopher Looks at Psychotherapy', *Individual Psychology Pamphlets*, 20, 1938, 10.

psychosomatic wholeness. Doubtless, his own experience as a medical orderly for two years in the Great War had some relevance to this conviction.[14]

From a proper understanding of the setting of human life, there follows a persons-in-relation approach that aspires not to independence or detachment but to the realisation of mutual dependence and inter-relatedness. The person is fulfilled neither through independence nor subordination, but in a relationship of freedom and love to other persons. The desire for independence must assume a false form of detachment, while an attempt at subordination or control creates a bond that must depersonalise the other. The paradigm for this is the mother-child relationship which begins at birth and which from the beginning is a highly structured complex of interactions and patterns of behaviour which not only enskill the child and enable it to take its place in a community of relations, but also provides a sources of mutual delight and joy for mother and child. He writes explicitly about the mother-son relationship in Chapter 2 of *Persons in Relation* although it is clear from what he says that this relationship can be established between any carer and a child; it is not biologically delimited. In growing up, the child does not cease to be interrelated and dependent but rather transposes these into the terms of mature adult existence, in particular with reference to free, conscious activity.[15]

In an earlier study on *Reason and Emotion* (1935), Macmurray had argued for the integration of these. All thought is directed towards action and is thus informed by the feelings and emotions that surround the ends of action. Not only our thoughts but our feelings also are capable of being judged rational or irrational. But we recognise this in other persons more than ourselves, Macmurray notes. Our task today is to come to a greater self-awareness of our emotional lives and to shift our feelings from concentration upon the narrower interests of the self to 'the world outside'. (30). 'Emotional reason is our capacity to apprehend objective values'. A dominant theme in his writings is that as persons we fulfil our nature through love of the other. The opposite of love is not hate but fear. Our emotions, of which we are only dimly aware, diminish our capacity to love through a fear of the other. It is the overcoming of fear, therefore, that is necessary for the proper expression of love. The two activities which typically promote this, according to Macmurray, are art and religion. In different ways, they seek to expose the nature of our emotions, to discipline them and direct them towards the proper end of human personhood.

When dealing with issues in medicine, Macmurray insists upon the importance of the whole psycho-physical field in understanding the condition of the patient.[16] While conceding that he speaks as an amateur in this respect, he points out that each of us knows what it is to be a patient in a doctor's surgery. In almost all cases, the patient is asking the doctor to help him or her, and in doing so is generally anxious about a condition, an ailment or a problem. The reaction of the doctor can increase or diminish this anxiety. Often the underlying condition is explained by a physiological cause that can be remedied by the appropriate prescription of drugs. However, we cannot assume that this is always the case. There are forms of anxiety that do not have a primary organic explanation and it is these with which the psychotherapist is typically faced.

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[14] See Costello, op. cit., 336.
[15] One possible weakness in Macmurray's approach is his seeming lack of awareness of the ways in which the mother-child relationship is problematized. R. D. Laing noted this in annotations to his personal copy of *Persons in Relation*. See Gavin Miller, 'How Scottish was R. D. Laing?', op. cit., 227.
[16] See 'A Philosopher Looks at Psychotherapy', op. cit., 9–22.

Although genuinely felt, much of this anxiety is imaginary and groundless, and its cure lies in achieving the dominance of more positive motivations. These comprise faith, trust and love of others. To establish these, there must be mutual confidence between doctor and patient, therapist and client. Their relationship itself is an instance of the personal, a token of trust and friendship.

Macmurray's theological position is elusive. He himself did not affiliate with any branch of the church in his years as a philosopher, and only in retirement did he take the decision formally to join the Quakers, he and his wife living for many years in the community at Jordans in Buckinghamshire. His views on religion, however, revolve around several recurrent themes. Religious practice is more important than belief. It involves the formation and celebration of community so that ritual is more important than doctrine. God, he describes, merely as 'the field of the personal'. A commitment to the teaching of the Hebrew prophets and Jesus is unmistakable. They aim at the creation of an ethical and religious community called the kingdom of God. In the ministry of Jesus, this is universalised to include Jews and Gentiles in a single international moral commonwealth. One of his later works dealt with 'the philosophy of Jesus', an essay deriving from a paper delivered at the Edinburgh Theological Club.[17] Religion itself, he claims, is a celebration of community whether in music, dancing, ritual or the sharing of meals. One possible advantage of this is that Macmurray's philosophical goals do not require too much creedal delineation on the part of the faith community. To that extent, his work might be consistent with a range of different religious outlooks, although this possibility is not really explored in his writings.

Object Relations Psychology – Fairbairn and Suttie
Macmurray is not a writer who footnotes extensively, so it is often difficult to discern whom he is reading and reacting to in his work. However, one key source that is cited in his Gifford Lectures is Ian Suttie's 1936 study *The Origins of Love and Hate*. Macmurray had encountered this work shortly after its publication. Its thesis is that love as the need for companionship was a deeper need than Freud had understood and it is the primary element in a child's relationship with its mother. Macmurray found in Suttie's work empirical confirmation for lines of argument that he had been developing philosophically, and he drew upon his work extensively.

The son of a GP, Suttie (1899–1935) himself trained in medicine at Glasgow University before going on to specialise in psychiatry. The aforementioned book appeared shortly after his death in 1935, much of it being based on research submitted for the MD degree in 1924. Suttie practised in Glasgow (Gartnavel), Perth and Colinsburgh before moving to the Tavistock Clinic in London. His work is of continuing interest and was republished in 1988 with an introduction by John Bowlby. Suttie's wife had translated the work of Sandor Ferenczi, and Suttie quotes with approval his dictum that 'it is the physician's love that heals the patient.' *The Origins of Love and Hate* is also marked by an extended discussion of religion in its pathological and healthy forms. Suttie makes much of the neglected matriarchal models in religion. He argues that both paternal and maternal themes are combined in Christianity by the overcoming of the twin deficiencies to which each reacts – guilt and infantile dependence. Here again Jesus appears as a model of healthy living. The personality of Jesus combines serenity with compassion in a theoretically ideal way. This is what is needed by both the neurotic and

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[17] *The Philosophy of Jesus* (London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1973).

the child in us. 'The confidence [of Jesus] never suggests indifference while on the other hand the sympathy never appears as agitation.'[18] Suttie's career being cut short by sudden death, opportunities for collaboration with Macmurray and others were prematurely ended. Nevertheless, his book remains a landmark study for Macmurray and it is only the psychological work he references in his Gifford Lectures thirty years later.

Suttie himself might be located within a psychotherapeutic tradition that has strong Scottish elements, these being reflected in much of the early work of the Tavistock Clinic. Its founder and first director was Hugh Crichton-Miller, another figure whose work deserves closer attention. The son of a Church of Scotland minister, he trained in psychiatry and developed an expertise in dealing with nervous traumas during the First World War. Although similarly elusive for a theologian, his integration of psychotherapy and religion in a series of publications is reminiscent of Macmurray's philosophy in important respects.[19]

Alongside this work, there stands the contribution of Ronald Fairbairn's object relations psychology. Having set out to train for the ministry of the Scottish Episcopal Church, he read philosophy but turned to psychotherapy in 1919, establishing a career as a lecturer in the University of Edinburgh and also as a private psychotherapist. Finding his father's Presbyterianism and his mother's Anglicanism somewhat repressive, he sought to escape this through much of his later life. Working to some extent in intellectual isolation from colleagues in England, Fairbairn's contribution has been eclipsed by that of Melanie Klein, often regarded as the founder of object relations psychology.[20] Nevertheless, he remains an important pioneer figure in the development of post-Freudian approaches through offering an early account of the importance of relationality in understanding the human self. As individuals we have drives – these are conditioned by their development in our infancy. To this extent, Fairbairn's work reposes upon that of Freud. But the situation is distorted if we view these drives as the function of atomised individuals. As human beings we are not so much drawn into interaction with others as already situated in a social context with others as our natural condition. In an important paper written in 1930, he describes appetitive tendencies that have distinctive objects, e.g. the love of one's mother. If not satisfied, these are refracted in feelings such as fear and sorrow. The result of this is that social relationships are introduced as important from the outset for understanding our drives and frustrations.[21]

Stephen Mitchell has recently written, 'It was Fairbairn's most far-reaching contribution to be among the first to intuit that the establishment and maintenance of relationships with others is as fundamental to the nature of the human organism as breathing oxygen.'[22] A recent body of research has provided confirmation and considerable

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[18] Ian Suttie, *The Origins of Love and Hate* (London: Free Association, 1988), 142. In this discussion of Suttie and Crichton-Miller, I am much indebted to Gavin Miller, 'Scottish Psychoanalysis: A Rational Religion', op. cit. For further contextualising of Suttie see also Cairns Craig, *Intending Scotland*, op. cit., 262ff.

[19] E.g. Hugh Crichton-Miller, *The New Psychology and the Preacher* (London: Jarrolds, 1927). See also Elizabeth Fergusson Irvine, *A Pioneer of the New Psychology: Hugh Crichton-Miller* (Chatham: Mackay, 1963).

[20] For an account of Fairbairn's theoretical affinities with Klein see John D. Sutherland, *Fairbairn's Journey into the Interior* (London: Free Association, 1989), 37ff.

[21] See 'Libido Theory Re-evaluated', *From Instinct to Self: Collected Papers of W. R. D. Fairbairn*, Vol. 2, D Scharff and E. Birtles (eds.), (Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1994), 115–156.

[22] Stephen Mitchell, *Relationality: From Attachment to Intersubjectivity* (London: Routledge, 2009), 107.

refinement of these ideas by showing how as small babies we seek out other selves because our brains are wired to respond to the sight of other faces, human smells, voices and even communicative signals.

We are designed, in ways we are just beginning to appreciate, to be drawn into a wide array of reciprocally regulating interactions and shared affects with other human beings, and this mutual regulation and sharing is necessary for babies to be able to use their brains to become specifically human, language-generating creatures, with specifically human minds.[23]

There are clear resonances here with the kind of philosophical work that Macmurray and others were pursuing. It is worth noting that Fairbairn had studied philosophy in Edinburgh under Pringle-Pattison, a leading exponent of personal idealism. Fairbairn's own teaching in psychology, moreover, took place within the Department of Philosophy and required engagement with the history of philosophical thought.[24] His account of the self as determined by its relationship to other selves seems indebted to idealist notions of personal identity over against most atomistic accounts of the self. The self is shaped by its conscious activity in relation to other selves, a notion illustrated by Hegel's dialectical account of the master-slave relationship with its unhappy consciousness. All this provides further support for Graham Clarke's recent proposal that 'personal relations theory' is the term that best captures the broad thrust of this approach to psychotherapy and the links between its key exponents.[25]

Broader developments
By the mid-twentieth century, we find a burgeoning of interest in academic study, church life and other professional groups that drew inspiration from these developments. For example, the influence of personalist philosophy is discernible in the activities of the Abenheimer-Schorstein Group in the University of Glasgow. A loosely affiliated cross-disciplinary group that met during the late 1950s and 60s, its two leaders were both Jewish exiles teaching in Glasgow. Together they assembled a group of psychologists, philosophers, theologians, literary scholars and others.[26] In many ways, their leading light was the theologian Ronald Gregor Smith who gave much direction and impetus to their work. Others included John Macquarrie, Ian Henderson, and R. D. Laing. The group met in each other's homes and read widely in different fields, but with a strong focus on personalist philosophy especially Buber, Macmurray and Baillie. Gregor Smith is a particularly interesting figure given his commitment to the concept of the secular Christianity. He had translated Buber from the German and was heavily influenced by Bultmann and Bonhoeffer in his teaching and writing. By a secular Christianity, he intended an approach in which the church would increasingly make its way out of a narrowly religious province into an increasingly self-confident world where it would establish ministries in workplaces, hospitals, schools and so on.[27] His work generally exhibits strong personalist themes, many of these being heavily influenced by Martin Buber. In his introduction to *I and Thou* (his translation of Buber's *Ich und Du*), Smith notes the similarity of Buber's work to Pringle-Pattison's personal

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[23] Mitchell, op. cit., 106–7.

[24] For discussion of Fairbairn's philosophical background and interests see David E. Scharff and Ellinor Fairbairn Birtles (eds.), *From Instinct to Self: Collected Papers of W. R. D. Fairbairn*, Vol. 1 (Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1994), xiii–xiv.

[25] Graham Clarke, *Personal Relations Theory: Fairbairn, Macmurray and Suttie* (Routledge: London, 2006).

[26] See Jack Rillie, 'The Abenheimer/Schorstein Group', *Edinburgh Review* 78/79 (1988), 104–107.

[27] Ronald Gregor Smith, *Secular Christianity* (London, SCM, 1968).

idealism. As he appropriated later works of Buber, he affirmed the importance of an existential encounter with others and God which avoided the modern social dangers of an isolated egoism or an impersonal collectivism. This he regarded as constituting the essence of Buber's humanism and central to the mission of the churches.[28]

One of the most noteworthy aspects of this intellectual movement was its close proximity to developments in practice. For example, in the work of the British churches from the 1960s onwards, we find a stronger focus on pastoral care, on the establishment of counselling centres, and on the importance of house-groups where people could meet, converse and interact in ways that were less constrained by the more formal activities and physical environment of the churches. Further inspiration came from the Iona Community and the vision of its founder, George McLeod. The focus on community, incarnation and a reaching out to the physically and emotionally deprived in society was apparent. Evangelicals such as Tom Allan were also at the forefront of these developments often in urban settings, the Tom Allan Counselling Centre in Glasgow being the first of its kind to be established in Scotland.[29] House groups became not an alternative to patterns of worship and church organisation, but a complementary activity that created space for different types of interaction amongst members and adherents. More specialist chaplaincy ministries became increasingly common, these no longer being limited to the armed forces, but established in hospitals, universities, prisons and industrial workplaces. Departments of Practical Theology emerged in Scotland and elsewhere, each offering specialist courses on pastoral care and counselling, topics that had not featured explicitly in the Divinity curriculum.

Another key figure in the transmission of this persons-in-relation approach is Harry Guntrip (1901–75) psychotherapist and Congregational minister, who taught in the Department of Psychiatry at Leeds University. After an early experience of unsuccessful psychoanalysis, he came into contact with Fairbairn and later Winnicot, undergoing a total about 1000 and 150 hours of therapy with each respectively. This entailed weekly visits to Edinburgh over many years for sessions with Fairbairn, in the course of which he became not only his patient but also a collaborator.[30] Analysis with Fairbairn enabled him to understand better how much of his personal anxiety stemmed from the brutal treatment of his mother following the death of his younger brother Percy, and also (through Winnicot) of the trauma induced by the withdrawal of her affection at an earlier stage in his childhood.

Psychoanalytic therapy is not like a 'technique' of the experimental sciences, an objective 'thing-in-itself' working automatically. It is a process of interaction, a function of two variables, the personalities of two people working together towards free spontaneous growth…. For me, Fairbairn built as a person on what

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[28] See Keith W. Clements, *The Theology of Ronald Gregor Smith* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 111. One of the most interesting developments of this movement outside the UK has been the foundation of the Cairnmillar Institute in Melbourne by Francis McNab. The name derives from his two Aberdeen mentors – the theologian David Cairns and the psychiatrist Malcolm Millar. Founded in 1961, the Cairnmillar Institute established a ministry of counselling and psychotherapy in the context of Christian service at St Michael's Church, since when the centre has developed an impressive research and educational programme served by a sizeable cohort of professional staff. In his own popular writings, McNab has sought to draw together the discourses of theology and psychology.

[29] See Alexander Forsyth, 'Walking the Tightrope: The Missiology of Tom Allan for Today', *Journal of Practical Theology*, 4, (2011), 227–245.

[30] Guntrip later wrote up his account of this analysis. See 'Analysis with Fairbairn and Winnicot' in *Personal Relations Therapy: The Collected Papers of H. J. S. Guntrip*, Jeremy Hazell (ed.), (Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1994), 351–370.

my father did for me, and as an analyst enabled me to discover in great detail how my battles for independence of mother from three and a half to seven years had grown into my personality make-up. Without that I could have deteriorated in old age into as awkward a person as my mother. Winnicott, a totally different type of personality, understood and filled the emptiness my mother left in the first three and a half years. I needed them both and had the supreme good fortune to find both.[31]

Guntrip's own work on psychotherapy develops much of the object-relations psychology of his two friends, yet it also displays an open eclecticism to insights from Freud and others, while also stressing the significance of relationality. 'We dare not pose as omniscient and omnipotent because we have a theory.'[32] His importance resides not only in his synthesising of ideas but also in his capacity to communicate a personal relations therapy these to wider audiences, particularly in the USA after lecturing there in 1968. In his fusion of therapy and theology, he develops an account of healthy religion along the earlier lines of Macmurray. 'I take "religion" not as a 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".[33] For Guntrip, psychotherapy was an expression of his call to pastoral ministry.

However, it is disappointing to find how little this is developed from the theological side; the endeavour is largely at the psychotherapeutic end. The reference to different philosophies and religions, together with the allusions to Wordsworth, suggest that Guntrip finds this wider sense of a personal unity with the universe to be at the core of all religious experience. The integration of the self with the world is analogously related to the integration that is achieved by relating well to other persons and may even be caused by it. Beyond this, Guntrip seems reluctant to offer greater theological specification.

Not everyone was enthusiastic. Some common criticisms can be discerned, for example in John Mackenzie's comments in *The British Weekly* in 1958. MacKenzie argues that psychotherapy is seriously limited by its methods, resources and practice. It cannot give what only the church can provide. People need a moral framework, the forgiveness of sins, the removal of guilt, and the gifts of faith, hope, love and insight – all gifts that the Holy Spirit alone can offer. The psychotherapist seated behind the couch cannot offer the love and friendship that we crave. Stung by these criticisms, Harry Guntrip offered a robust but commendably courteous response two weeks later.[34] The image of the detached analyst is outmoded, he claimed – post-Freudians such as Fairbairn, Klein and Fromm-Reichmann have long departed from such approaches. The effectiveness of psychotherapy requires the love and sympathy of the therapist; this alone can expose and enable the healing of our wounded areas. The patient must be treated as a person of worth, taken seriously in her own difficulties and 'not merely blamed, put off, pressed

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[31] Ibid., 366–7.

[32] Ibid., 367.

[33] Ibid., 275. Similar lines of relating religion and psychology are articulated in *Psychology for Ministers and Social Workers* (London: Independent Press, 1944). For a discussion of the influences on Guntrip and the setting of his theology see Trevor M. Dobbs, *Faith, Theology and Psychoanalysis: The Life and Thought of Harry S. Guntrip* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2007). His work continues today in The Guntrip Trust which is closely allied to the Scottish Institute for Human Relations.

[34] See the various exchanges in *The British Weekly*, March/April, 1958. Guntrip's contribution is reproduced in *Personal Relations Therapy*, op. cit., 399–404.

and moulded to suit other people's convenience.'[35] Moreover, he goes on to argue, psychotherapy often seeks to dispel pathological guilt. This is not the healthy guilt that requires to be acknowledged and it should not be reinforced by suggesting that divine forgiveness is its remedy. McKenzie's subsequent responses in *The British Weekly* were more irenic, suggesting that there was much common ground between them while maintaining that psychotherapy is in fact of limited success only. Guntrip simply notes the increasing pathologies of the contemporary world, although he might have pointed out that everything the church itself does is at most of partial success.

Contemporary Appropriation
At a time of increased attention to cross-disciplinary and collaborative projects in the academy, it is worth recalling these earlier interactions that characterised the relationship of philosophy, theology and psychotherapy. They show the value of maintaining conversations across boundaries, and of the potential loss of broader perspectives that can result from increased specialisation in the academy. The risk of over-simplification and the fear of arousing censure for an amateurish construction of work outside one's own immediate expertise remain genuine. But these dangers can be countered by the creation of safe spaces for conversation, mutual respect, and a readiness of all parties to present their work in an accessible register. The attention that discussions of spirituality and health are currently receiving makes this a particularly opportune moment to revisit the wider humanistic context that marked much pioneer work in psychotherapy.

Alasdair MacIntyre's denunciation of the functional roles of therapist, bureaucrat and manager in our time may be part of a wider lament for the loss of ethical agreement concerning the nature and goals of human life.[36] Notwithstanding this complaint, these earlier traditions in philosophy and psychotherapy do suggest an approach that is rooted in a wider understanding of persons, community, relationality, love and freedom and which offers a broader framework for therapeutic transactions. The continuing vitality and salience of this tradition, particularly with respect to recent empirical work in child psychology, provides important resources of which theologians should be aware in any engagement with psychotherapy.[37]

In reclaiming this tradition, Colin Kirkwood has pointed to several positive benefits for the practice of psychotherapy.[38] Its stress on relationality underscores the importance of the bond between psychotherapist and client, based on an equality of regard. As persons

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[35] *British Weekly*, 20.3 (1958), 11.

[36] 'The manager treats ends as given, as outside his scope; his concern is with technique, with effectiveness in transforming raw materials into final products, unskilled labor into skilled labor, investment into profits. The therapist also treats ends as given, as outside his scope; his concern also is with technique, with effectiveness in transforming neurotic symptoms into directed energy, maladjusted individuals into well-adjusted ones. Neither manager nor therapist, in their roles as manager and therapist, do or are able to engage in moral debate.' Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1981), 30.

[37] For an account of how recent work in child psychology resonates with these broader philosophical traditions see Colwyn Trevarthan, 'Proof of Sympathy: Scientific Evidence on the Personality of the Infant and Macmurray's 'Mother and Child', in David Fergusson and Nigel Dower (eds.) *John Macmurray: Critical Perspectives* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 77–118.

[38] Colin Kirkwood, 'The persons-in-relation perspective: Sources and synthesis', in *The Legacy of Fairbairn and Sutherland: Psychotherapeutic Applications*, Jill Savege Schaff and David E. Scharff (eds.) (London: Routledge, 2005), 18–38.

The interpersonal setting of our lives should ensure that our approach to psychotherapy is not overly dominated by attention to inner worlds. The importance of actual past and present relationships and of our sociocultural contexts can be given appropriate recognition. Moreover, while the typical malaise of earlier periods may have been forms of repression, we are now faced with a range of disorders that have their roots in the overstimulation and dissociation of a consumerist culture. The roving and restless freedom of the autonomous self is marked not by domination but by an increasingly desperate search for pleasure and fulfilment.

The notions of the personal, of personal responsibility, of real freedom in John Macmurray's sense of the term, of the cultivation of the capacity to ponder, to weigh up, to make positive directional choices, and sometimes to say no, have been almost obliterated. For us, as psychoanalytic psychotherapists and counsellors, there is a challenging ethical task: to reaffirm the importance and value of the personal life, and the perspective that society consists primarily of persons in personal relations.[39]

Conclusion

One risk in establishing a positive relationship between theology and psychotherapy is that of attempting a premature integration or synthesis of different disciplines and forms of activity. One can find traces of this in earlier discussions. The religious roots and motivation of several key practitioners led to an enthusiasm to reach a single discourse of psychotherapeutic theology or equally theological psychotherapy. The holistic approach and synoptic vision of Macmurray pulled in this direction also. This could lead to two contrasting problems. On the one side, there was a tendency to pour religion into the moulds that had been created by psychoanalytic theories. As a result, much that was distinctive in theology was at risk of being reduced to an epiphenomenon or a spiritual dimension of psychotherapeutic goals.[40] In some cases, the translation of theological categories into psychological ones seemed to evacuate the language of God of any real significance and consign Jesus to the status of a prophet or moral exemplar. Of course, there are legitimate theological arguments and disagreement around these issues, but these are primarily theological not psychotherapeutic. To reach too quickly for a synthesis of discourses runs the risk of distortion and loss of understanding; this may have been a particular temptation from those who were fleeing traditional patterns of Christian belief and affiliation in the mid-20th century. But there was also a danger from the other side. The appropriation of psychotherapy could be similarly eclectic and superficial, undoubtedly a problem given the diversity and contested discourses of experts in the field. The difficulty in acquiring expertise and in making critical judgements about competing approaches could too easily elude the non-specialist.[41]

One central problem is how the concept of God is to be located. Is it merely a cipher for talk of human community and the personal other? This seems to the position to which Macmurray's philosophy inclines, and it is echoed in much of Guntrip's synthesis of theology and therapy. Here a transcendent referent seems to be excluded or at least considered otiose. This generates a significant theological problem. If the union of self

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[39] Ibid., 37.

[40] See for example Alastair V. Campbell, 'Review of Lake, F. 1981. *Tight Corners in Pastoral Counselling*, Darton, Longman and Todd' *Contact*, 74 (1982), 25–26. For an overview of the contribution of *Contact* see David Lyall, 'Contact/Practical Theology at Fifty: Beacon or Mirror for a Changing Discipline?', *Practical Theology*, 3.2 (2010), 151–161.

[41] For a survey of the theological issues see Gordon Lynch, 'Pastoral Counselling and Pastoral Theology' in *Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, James Woodward and Stephen Pattison(eds.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 223–232.

and world is described in religious terms – recall Guntrip's appeal to Wordsworthian religion – then this seems to amount to something like an organic or pantheist unity of God and world which effectively de-personalises that interaction. The ontological distance between God and world is lost. Yet this 'distance' or 'otherness' is a necessary condition for the ascription of personal terms to the God-world relationship. Without some account of transcendence, the union of God and world is better described in organic terms (such as body and soul) as opposed to personal categories. There is something ironic in a personalist philosophy having this religious outcome, yet this is seldom explored in the literature.[42]

Nevertheless, although the attempt at a rapid integration of disciplines and methods can be problematic, there remain good reasons for seeking a healthy interaction of philosophy, theology and psychotherapy. We might even view these as approaches in need of each other with respect to their understanding of persons in relation, human flourishing, and the dynamics of the self. To this end, the legacy of Fairbairn, Macmurray and Suttie and its development today in relation to recent experimental work remains an important resource for the theologian.[43] It is one that resonates with a theological anthropology which stresses psychosomatic unity, the relational dimension of existence, the common good and the corporate nature of the church. A fruitful dialogue is needed that brings together overlapping disciplinary interests, not for the sake of achieving a totalising discourse, but for the promotion of wider and more holistic strategies for human well-being and social fulfilment. Some of the half-forgotten endeavours of previous generations continue to offer wisdom and insight for the task.[44]

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[42] A notable exception is Frank Kirkpatrick, *Together Bound: God, History and the Religious Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[43] Daniel J. Price has attempted to bring Karl Barth's theological anthropology into conversation with object relations psychology. See *Karl Barth's Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

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