

Psychoanalytic Theory, Therapy and the Self

HARRY GUNTRIP

MARESFIELD LIBRARY
LONDON

Copyright 1971 by Basic Books Inc.
This edition reprinted in 1977 with permission of
The Hogarth Press Limited, by
H. Karnac (Books) Limited
58 Gloucester Road
London S.W.7
England

Reprinted 1985

ISBN 0 946439 15 X

FOREWORD



In 1968 Dr. Harry Guntrip visited the William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis, and Psychology, as Visiting Distinguished Psychoanalyst. This volume is the written record of two seminars—one on theory, the other on clinical material. The unwritten record is much larger and perhaps more significant than the written. Dr. Guntrip brought a zest, a warmth, and a sparkling humor to his material, both theoretical and clinical. His intense interest, his patience, and his serious caring enlivened and stimulated a whole group of people to think more clearly about their ideas and their way of practicing.

"To care for people," writes Guntrip, "is more important than to care for ideas." This humane attitude is evidenced throughout in Harry Guntrip's approach to his patients, to his colleagues, and to theorists both past and present. First and foremost, he feels the experience with the patient, and from the experience, he conceptualizes so that theory is very close to experience. Though Guntrip is most clearly associated with Fairbairn and Winnicott, he is not identified with any school. This independence of thought leads to a very concise exposition

to break free and develop in its own right. The story of post-Freudian development is the story of its successful issue. The closer we keep to clinical experience, the more certain is this result. We have to remember that clinical practice does not exist as an arena for the display of psychodynamic theory; rather psychodynamic theory exists to preserve and develop whatever insights we gain in clinical practice.

NOTES

1. Harry Guntrip, *Personality Structure and Human Interaction*, The International Psycho-Analytical Library (London: The Hogarth Press; New York: International Universities Press, 1961).
2. Harry Guntrip, *Schizoid Problems, Object-Relations, and the Self*, The International Psycho-Analytical Library (London: The Hogarth Press; New York: International Universities Press, 1968).
3. Harry Guntrip, "The Object-Relations Theory of W. R. D. Fairbairn," *The American Handbook of Psychiatry*, vol. 3 (New York: Basic Books, 1966), chap. 17.
4. Leon Salzman, *Psychiatry and Social Science Review* 1, no. 12 (1967).
5. *Ibid.*
6. Melanie Klein, et al, *Developments in Psychoanalysis* (London: The Hogarth Press; New York: Hillary House, 1951), p. 1.
7. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (London: The Hogarth Press, revised edition, 1959; New York: International Universities Press).
8. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
10. W. Ronald D. Fairbairn, *An Object-Relations Theory of the Personality* (New York: Basic Books, 1954), p. 218.
11. Heinz Hartmann, *Essays on Ego Psychology: Selected Problems in Psychoanalytic Theory*, The International Psycho-Analytical Library (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964; New York: International Universities Press, 1965), pp. 72 and 294.
12. Bernard Apfelbaum, "On Ego Psychology: a Critique," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 47, pt. 4 (1966).
13. Clara Thompson, *Psycho-Analysis: Evolution and Development* (London's Allen and Unwin), p. 211.
14. Harry Stack Sullivan, *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry* (New York: Norton, 1953), p. 21.
15. *Ibid.*

Chapter 3

THE TURNING POINT: FROM PSYCHOBIOLOGY TO OBJECT-RELATIONS

HARRY STACK SULLIVAN
AND MELANIE KLEIN



Chapter 2 traced the struggle throughout Freud's work between the physicalistic type of scientific thought in which he had been trained and the need for a new type of psychodynamic thinking that he was destined to create. The first, or process theory, approach was enshrined in his instinct theory, which still persists even now in much of psychoanalytic terminology and writing: although his original quantitative theory of pleasure and unpleasure as physical processes determining all human action occurs now as no more than an occasional echo of the past. The second, or personal, approach became enshrined in his Oedipus complex theory, with its implications that it is what takes place between parents

to break free and develop in its own right. The story of post-Freudian development is the story of its successful issue. The closer we keep to clinical experience, the more certain is this result. We have to remember that clinical practice does not exist as an arena for the display of psychodynamic theory; rather psychodynamic theory exists to preserve and develop whatever insights we gain in clinical practice.

N O T E S

1. Harry Guntrip, *Personality Structure and Human Interaction*, The International Psycho-Analytical Library (London: The Hogarth Press; New York: International Universities Press, 1961).
2. Harry Guntrip, *Schizoid Problems, Object-Relations, and the Self*, The International Psycho-Analytical Library (London: The Hogarth Press; New York: International Universities Press, 1968).
3. Harry Guntrip, "The Object-Relations Theory of W. R. D. Fairbairn," *The American Handbook of Psychiatry*, vol. 3 (New York: Basic Books, 1966), chap. 17.
4. Leon Salzman, *Psychiatry and Social Science Review* 1, no. 12 (1967).
5. *Ibid.*
6. Melanie Klein, et al, *Developments in Psychoanalysis* (London: The Hogarth Press; New York: Hillary House, 1952), p. 1.
7. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (London: The Hogarth Press, revised edition, 1959; New York: International Universities Press).
8. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
10. W. Ronald D. Fairbairn, *An Object-Relations Theory of the Personality* (New York: Basic Books, 1954), p. 218.
11. Heinz Hartmann, *Essays on Ego Psychology: Selected Problems in Psychoanalytic Theory*, The International Psycho-Analytical Library (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964; New York: International Universities Press, 1965), pp. 72 and 294.
12. Bernard Apfelbaum, "On Ego Psychology: a Critique," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 47, pt. 4 (1966).
13. Clara Thompson, *Psycho-Analysis: Evolution and Development* (London's Allen and Unwin), p. 211.
14. Harry Stack Sullivan, *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry* (New York: Norton, 1953), p. 21.
15. *Ibid.*

Chapter 3

THE TURNING POINT: FROM PSYCHOBIOLOGY TO OBJECT-RELATIONS

HARRY STACK SULLIVAN
AND MELANIE KLEIN



Chapter 2 traced the struggle throughout Freud's work between the physicalistic type of scientific thought in which he had been trained and the need for a new type of psychodynamic thinking that he was destined to create. The first, or process theory, approach was enshrined in his instinct theory, which still persists even now in much of psychoanalytic terminology and writing; although his original quantitative theory of pleasure and displeasure as physical processes determining all human action occurs now as no more than an occasional echo of the past. The second, or personal, approach became enshrined in his Oedipus complex theory, with its implications that it is what takes place between parents

and children that primarily determines the way personality develops; and in his transference theory of treatment, that the object-relations of childhood have to be lived through again in therapeutic analysis if the patient is to grow from them. Only object-relational thinking can deal with the problem of meaning and motivation that determines the dealings of persons with another, and the way they change and grow in the process. The history of psychoanalysis is the history of the struggle for emancipation, and the slow emergence, of personal theory or object-relational thinking. Outside the confines of orthodox psychoanalysis and its organizations, early break-away members pursued lines of thought that might have helped theory to move in this direction. Rank never became influential enough, and his contribution, as Ernest Jones shows, stimulated Freud but led to no particular goal. Adler certainly attempted an ego-psychology, but since he did little more, theoretically, than substitute the power drive for the early Freudian sex drive, Adler's theory simply swung from one extreme to the other; and since it also involved a swing from the unconscious to the conscious, it lacked the depth that was always so important in Freud's views. Sullivan acknowledged a debt to Freud, but unlike Adler's his thought was not mainly a reaction against Freud but a genuine development of his own independent insight. Sullivan's view that the biological substrate underpins, as it were, the life of interpersonal relationships, which is the real subject matter of the science of human beings, provides a sure theoretical basis for a properly psychodynamic science. In his own way Jung also transcended the biological for the personal, and developed an ego-psychology, a theory of individuation. Both Jung and Sullivan were men of unique intuitive powers. Freud was surely an unusual combination of the thinker who was both intuitive and systematic, and his great difficulty was that the systematic Freud felt obliged to build on what he had been taught, while the intuitive Freud went ahead to explore new paths. Yet he

From Psychobiology to Object-Relations

provided the beginnings of a systematic framework of theory, which however much it has proven to be necessary to change under the pressure of clinical experience, has proven equal to the strain of internal development and has in its own time taken into itself the insights of Sullivan and Jung. The steady psychoanalytical accumulation of clinical facts has at length brought its theory to the object-relational point of view, which the intuition of Jung and Sullivan, though in very different ways, jumped ahead to reach. It is the detailed psychoanalytical progress through about eighty years of research, to arrive at the present state of object-relations theory that I seek briefly to trace, through one or two of its main agents.

The work of Melanie Klein is the real turning point in psychoanalytical theory and therapy within the Freudian movement itself. Although Freud's own move into ego-analysis and group psychology beginning around 1920 prepared the way, there was something new in Klein's work. It is now a matter of history that a tremendous theoretical struggle raged in the British Psychoanalytical Society between the followers of Klein and the orthodox analysts who regarded her work as heresy. However it felt to those involved, it was a sign of vigorous intellectual activity. It cannot be dismissed as a purely internal affair because the issues were too important for the whole future thinking of psychoanalysis. Kleinians claimed and still claim that they are fundamentally orthodox and loyal to Freud. Apart from the fact that the idea of orthodoxy has no place in science, where there is no room for sects but only for the open-minded search for truth, we must also ask: "To which Freud? The physiological process theory Freud, or the personal object-relations theory Freud?" That question could hardly have been asked as long ago as 1930 in the way in which we are asking it today. Kleinians appeared orthodox enough, if that mattered in science, for they took over all of Freud's terminology of instinct theory, of id-drives

of sex and aggression, and his structural scheme of id, ego, and superego, even outdoing most other analysts in orthodoxy to the extent of making the death instinct the absolute basis of their metapsychology. They simply claimed to be further developing Freud's thought in a logical way. Hanna Segal writes:

The Kleinian technique is psychoanalytical and strictly based on Freudian psychoanalytic concepts. The formal setting is the same as in classical Freudian psychoanalysis . . . in all essentials the psychoanalytical principles as laid down by Freud are adhered to.¹

Yet their critics sensed that here was something new that seemed like a radical departure from the classical theory. And indeed there was, and it seems that Kleinians are themselves now realizing this as time has distanced the old controversy. Segal continues:

Could it be said therefore that there is no room for the term "Kleinian technique?" It seems to me that it is legitimate to speak of the technique as developed by Melanie Klein, in that the nature of the interpretations to the patient and the changes of emphasis in the analytical process show, in fact, a departure, or, as she saw it, an evolution from the classical interpretations. Melanie Klein saw aspects of material not seen before, and interpreting those aspects revealed further material which might otherwise not have been reached and which, in turn, dictated new interpretations seldom, if ever, used in the classical technique.²

That, I am sure, is correct, and I can see no reason why Melanie Klein's work should not be accepted as both an evolution and a departure from Freud's ideas. We expect evolution to produce something new.

I do not think that the apparently orthodox classical aspect of Kleinian theory, namely the perpetuation of the terminology of Freud's instinct theory, and his structural id-ego-superego scheme, along with his oral, anal, phallic, and genital concepts, is in reality as orthodox as it appears to be, though it

From Psychobiology to Object-Relations

is more easily discerned now than it could have been at first. For one thing, there is very little of Freud's psychophysiological speculation surviving in Klein's work. She is without doubt psychodynamic. The only reason why we have come to make special use of the term object-relations as denoting a special type of theoretical emphasis, is that Freud, beginning his work in an age of material or natural science, took it for granted that the study of human nature in any scientific sense would *have* to be based on physiology and biology. It has taken a very long time to struggle through to the realization that that is a study of the *machinery* of the personal life, not of its *essential quality*, to use Freud's own term, a study of the mechanisms of behavior and not of the meaningful personal experience that is the essence of the personal self. Freud never really saw that in theoretical terms. Hartmann has followed him in this, and hopes that his system-ego theory "may prove capable of correlation with brain-physiology," and he wrote, "It is only when we consider the social phenomena of adaptation in their biological aspect that we can really start getting psychology rightfully placed in the hierarchy of science, namely as one of the biological sciences." The assumptions of Freud's early work are here persisting so strongly into his later work, that both Freud's and Hartmann's ego-theory remain tied to the ground and unable to develop to the level of a new psychodynamic science. This should stand firm in its own right as a scientific study of human beings, not as organisms, but as personal egos, whole selves in personal relationships, whose lives have meaning and value to them only in those terms. Melanie Klein's work is not at all a logical development of Freud's psychobiology in the way Hartmann's was.

Just how restrictive this tie to biology and ultimately physiology is, can be gauged from the fact that Hartmann's view of the function of the ego is that it is an organ of adaptation to be biologically understood. That is surely an utterly inadequate view of the ego, which psychologically is the core of

self-hood in the person. *Adaptation* as the overriding aim ends up in the development of what Winnicott calls a "False Self" on a conformity basis. A "True Self" is not just adaptive but creative and able to contribute what is fresh and new to the environment. Even Erikson is restricted in his thought by this persistent undercurrent of thinking tied to biology and ultimately physiology. In *Childhood and Society* he writes, "I do not think that psychoanalysis can remain a workable system of enquiry without its basic biological formulations, much as they may need periodic reconsideration."³ In his chapter, "The Theory of Infantile Sexuality," Erikson gives us just such a reconsideration, which as I hope to point out in the following chapter, wholly transcends biology in the sense in which Freud based psychoanalysis upon it. But it seems doubtful whether Erikson himself realized the extent of this, for the old id psychology dies hard. He writes:

The id Freud considered to be the oldest province of the mind . . . he held the young baby to be "all id" . . . the id is the deposition in us of the whole of evolutionary history. The id is everything that is left in our organization of the responses of the amoeba and the impulses of the ape . . . everything that would make us "mere creatures." The name "id" of course designates the assumption that the ego finds itself attached to this impersonal, this bestial layer, like the centaur to his equestrian underpinnings; only that the ego considers such a combination a danger.⁴

I find this passage astonishing and unrealistic, in its assumption that human nature is made up, by evolutionary "layering," of an ineradicable dualism of two mutually hostile elements. This would justify every pessimistic philosophy that human frustration and despair have ever thrown up. If it were true it would mean that the goal of a mature, whole human person is a fiction and is impossible. We would all be happier if we were frankly Centaurs, but in that case, though the "equestrian underpinnings" would remain bestial, the apparently human top half would not be truly human. The mythical figure

From Psychobiology to Object-Relations

of the Centaur is simply evidence of how far back in history human beings have suffered from pathological split-ego conditions. The use of this Centaur symbol as a model convinces me that Erikson did not see how effectively his own highly stimulating and insightful theory of zones, modes, and social modalities leaves biology and the id behind, and advances toward a consistently psychodynamic account of the ego as a whole person. It accounts for the fact that, in the end, I find Erikson's account of the ego tremendously enlightening as it is on questions of the social development of ego-identity, unsatisfying and lacking in fundamental depth. He writes:

Between the id and the super-ego, then, the ego dwells. Consistently balancing and warding off the extreme ways of the other two, the ego keeps tuned to the reality of the historical day . . . to safeguard itself the ego employs "defence mechanisms" . . . to arrive at compromises between id-impulses and super-ego compulsions.⁵

In his Foreword he writes:

Psychoanalysis today is implementing the study of the ego, a concept denoting man's capacity to unify his experience and his action in an adaptive manner . . . the study of the ego's roots in social organization.⁶

Erikson here lines up with Hartmann in falling back on the notion of adaptation, although more in a social than a biological context. In Chapter 5 we shall examine Hartmann's theory of adaptation in greater detail in contrast to the ego-development views of Winnicott. Freud's theory of the superego was in fact a study of the way in which the ego is influenced by social organization. There are other things in Erikson that involve a far greater emancipation from the classical biology than that, but I cannot accept his account of the ego attached to a dangerous impersonal bestial id as being adequate to human realities. It shows how tremendous has been the struggle

to disentangle the two elements in Freud's original thought, the physiological and biological impersonal-process theory of id-drives and superego controls, and the personal object-relational thinking that has always been struggling to break free and move on to a new and more adequate conceptualization of human beings in their personal life.

It seems to me that, when we have disentangled the various conflicting elements in Melanie Klein's work, it becomes plain that it was Klein who, though unwittingly, made the great breakthrough. She had no choice but to start with Freud's psychobiological terms and to work with his unique clinical insights. These she developed, continuing to use his terminology, but her own clinical intuition, amounting to genius in her insight into the mental life of little children, broke through to explore new ground. As Segal claims, her work was both an evolution from Freud and a new departure, which called for some new terminology. It is important to clearly demarcate this new departure by comparison with the way others developed Freud's work. Hartmann continued the development of Freud's system-ego concept and remained frankly tied to biology. Erikson, just as consciously as Hartmann, set about the development of an ego-psychology, but along different lines, the "study of the ego's roots in social organization" and the delineation of ego-identities. This was clearly an object-relational study, yet he did not make as clear a break from psychobiology as Sullivan did, and so while having all the materials required, he still did not take the decisive step forward to a fully consistent psychodynamic account of human beings as whole-person egos. He still thinks in terms of an ineradicable internecine strife of structure, in which self-destruction is only avoided by the ego effecting compromises between the id and the superego. There is still no psychodynamic self or whole person. Where Hartmann extends classical psychoanalysis in the direction of general psychology, Erikson extends it in the direction of social anthropology.

From Psychobiology to Object-Relations

Hartmann's tie to the id is at any rate consistent. I think that Erikson's tie to the id, "this impersonal bestial layer" as he calls it, is a radical inconsistency that prevents his theory from becoming a full genuinely personal psychology. Winnicott's research into ego-origins in the mother-infant relationship should have come first, and Erikson's study of ego-conditioning under cultural pressures could have followed logically afterward with greater effect. As it is, his ego-identities have no adequate psychic foundation other than the impossible bestial underpinnings of the Centaur.

But Melanie Klein did something essentially different from either Erikson or Hartmann, which is why I regard Melanie Klein's work as the decisive breakthrough in the development of psychodynamic object-relational thinking. She did not consciously aim at creating an ego-psychology, as Hartmann and Erikson did, and she appears to be every bit as tied to the id and the biology of instincts as Hartmann, and much more so than Erikson; especially when we consider the extraordinary way in which she treats the environment as a very secondary factor in the child's development, which Erikson would never have done. When Hartmann in his *Essays* speaks of "biological solipsism," perhaps he had Melanie Klein's views in mind. But it is just at this point that we sense a divergence from Freud. Freud's structural theory was based on the concepts of the control of instincts (the id) by the ego, under pressure from the external environment which led to the growth of the superego. Hartmann added to the ego the functions of adaptation, in conflict-free areas such as perception and motility etc., in the external world. Melanie Klein's structural theory developed in an entirely different way, eventuating in the concept of an internal psychic world of ego-object relationships.

Klein regarded an infant as an arena for an internal struggle between what at first were conceived of as the life and death instincts, sex and aggression, from the very start, quite apart

from environmental influences. This ruthless inner drama then becomes projected onto the outer world, as the infant's brain and sensory organs develop the capacity to discern external objects. This means that the infant is never able to experience real objects in any truly objective way, and the way he does experience them depends more on his own innate make-up than on their real attitude and behavior to him. Basically, what he sees in his environment, is what he reads into it, mainly from his own internal terror of his own threatening death instinct. Segal tells us that "the death instinct is projected into the breast." This is then reintprojected, so that his experience of the outer world simply serves to magnify his impressions and double his anxieties on account of the internal dangers arising out of his permanently split nature. When Melanie Klein finally added an innate biologically determined constitutional envy to the infant's handicaps for any approach to reasonable and friendly objectivity in personal relationships, she seems to have left the environment with no real role to play at all. This makes her views appear to be so utterly incompatible with the outlook, not only of Sullivan, Horney, Fromm, and Clara Thompson but also of Erikson, Hartmann, and a whole range of American psychoanalysts, and no less incompatible with Fairbairn, Winnicott, and so many British analysts, that it is not surprising that it has aroused so much opposition. This has not been confined by any means to Anna Freud, Edward Glover, and the more avowedly classical analysts. If the environment plays such a minor and secondary role, it is little more than a mirror to reflect back to the baby its already existing internal conflicts. Hanna Segal explicitly says that the environment "confirms" (that is, it does not originate) the baby's primary anxieties and inner conflicts. It would seem then that such a theory could have little to contribute to object-relational thinking. There could be, one would think, no genuine object-relationships, when the objects-world seems to be of so little primary and intrinsic value.

From Psychobiology to Object-Relations

Freud himself did not discount the environment in that way.

All this is true enough, but nevertheless it does not account for the whole of Melanie Klein's views. The more one surveys her theory as a whole, the more one gets the impression of a strange mixture of incompatible elements. One thing is clear that Melanie Klein explored much deeper into the mental life of tiny children than Freud had the opportunity to do. For this reason, she went beyond Freud's "father-dominated theory" and opened the way for the exploration of the mother's role in the baby's life. Furthermore, Melanie Klein did not take over Freud's instinct theory in the same way that Hartmann did. Hartmann made the distinction between what he called "Freud's clinical theory of sex and aggression" and his quite different "biological mysticism of Eros and Thanatos." Hartmann pursued Freud's clinical theory, although it is really more physiological than clinical, the theory of id-drives calling for an ego-control apparatus, and over and above that a system-ego operating its own techniques of adaptation to the outer world. Melanie Klein, on the other hand, took over Freud's biological mysticism of Eros and Thanatos, and saw human life as an intense hidden dramatic tragedy, a psychodynamic and fearful struggle between the forces of love and death inherent in the baby's constitutional make-up. Quite clearly, in Klein's estimation, the death instinct overshadows the love or life instinct, and is the true and ultimate source of persecutory and all other forms of anxiety.

This fundamental and innate conflict becomes observable, she held, in the infant's fantasy life as soon as it is developed enough to achieve clear expression, and we must remember that in clinical work with very small children, she found this internal fantasy world already well developed in children of between two and three years of age. This is not a matter of theory, but of verifiable, and now already verified, clinical fact, and it must begin to develop much earlier to be so complex by the fourth year of life. It is, moreover, an internal

world in which the child is living in fantasied and highly emotion-laden relationships with a great variety of good and bad objects that turn out ultimately to be mental images of parts or aspects of parents. At the most primitive level they are part-objects, breast or penis images, and later on they develop into whole-objects that are in a variety of ways good or bad in the infant's experience. *Life now is viewed, in this internal world of fantasy and feeling, as a matter of ego-object relationships.* This may seem surprising in view of the fact that the Kleinian metapsychology only allows a secondary role to the external world. The infant can never experience the outer world directly, but only through the medium of the projection of its own innate death instinct, and its fear of and struggle against it. These internal bad objects first come into being as an introjection of the projected version of the infant's own innate badness and destructiveness, and they have now become worked up in its experience into parent images. Thus the external object world is forced on us again by the highly personal and psychodynamic nature of the infant's internal fantasy world. The fact is that, whatsoever the tortuous theoretical means, in Melanie Klein we find the term "ego" correlated not now so much with the term "id" as in Hartmann and Freud, but more and more with the term "object."

Klein's use of the term "id" appears to endorse Freud's instinct theory, but Freud's instincts do relate directly to external objects. Hanna Segal states, "Instincts are by definition object-seeking," which had already been explicitly stated in those words by Fairbairn (in order, however, to stress that their aim was not pleasure, but the object that gives pleasure). But in Kleinian metapsychology, instincts are lost in the dim primitive mists of the mystic forces of Eros and Thanatos warring inside the infant, irrespective of what goes on outside. They have, in fact, by making use of the outer world, now become transmuted into internal objects. Kleinian instincts are primitive forces locked in combat inside the infant's

From Psychobiology to Object-Relations

nature. The child's first love-object is its own primitive ego, in primary narcissism. Naturally, we have to remember that at birth there is no ego in a conscious sense, but there is a psychic self with ego-potential, out of which the sense of self-hood can gradually grow. For Klein, its entire psychic life is essentially bound up with itself, and out of this internal life consisting essentially of a hostile tension between two contradictory forces, a pattern world is created into which the child's experience of the external world is fitted. What seems to be by far the most important element in this solipsistic theory is that the child's first anxiety concerns its first hate-object. This is its own death instinct, which aims to bring about the organism's return to the inorganic state. The child could have no reason for projecting its love or life instinct, if such a phenomenon is conceivable. But if it is conceivable, it would most certainly have good reason to "project its death instinct," which threatens it with psychic destruction. It is only at this point that the Kleinian scheme finds it necessary to have an external environment into which this dangerous internal component can be extruded by the defensive illusion of projection. And now, the die is cast, the existence of external objects has been admitted and proven to be indispensable. They are indispensable because the infant is supposed to need them to project its death instinct into them, beginning with the mother's breast. But they are also inescapable, for they now constitute a real external threat that the infant has no real means of dealing with physically. It can only try to deal with it inside its own mental life again. The bad breast, now seen as containing a frightful destructive force, is introjected, and this death instinct now turns up inside no longer as an instinct but as an object, literally so perceived and fantasied. Because of her conception of the wholly internal origin of the active psychic life of the baby, Melanie Klein has to use external objects, and external object-relations, as a means of giving concrete expression to these theoretical primary

forces and their hypothesized internal relations. What emerges as of first importance in all of this is not the more than dubious metapsychology of this biological mysticism but the way in which Klein brings to the front the highly important defensive procedures of projection and introjection that are certainly clinically verifiable facts; and then, of even greater importance, the fact that she has now interpreted the essence of the psychic life of the incipient person in fully ego-object relational terms. It is true that external objects are, apparently, valued not as objects in themselves but as receptacles for projection. However, the result comes to much the same thing in the end, namely the development of an inner world of fantasy that is actually object-relational, and is a counterpart of the ego's relations with the world of real objects that form its physical environment, centered in the mother. This is the real core of Melanie Klein's work. By a very devious and quite unnecessary theoretical route, based on hypotheses that hardly any other analysts but Kleinians accept, she arrived at the fundamental truth that human nature is object-relational in its very essence, at its innermost heart. This goes beyond all biological theories and is pure psychodynamics. Her much greater stress on projection and introjection in therapeutic analysis is a statement of the interaction of the two worlds, internal and external, in which all human beings live, so that finally the external world wins back the reality and importance that was denied it at the start.

Whereas Freud's theory was basically physiological and biological, I do not think that Klein's theory is in any genuine sense biological at all; it is philosophical, and more like a revealed religious belief than a scientific theory in its basic assumptions. Everything in life for Klein is dominated and overshadowed by the mighty and mysterious forces of life and death, creation and destruction, locked in perpetual struggle in the depths of our unconscious psychic experience, and constituting our very nature as persons. Of the two, it is the death

instinct that steals the limelight all the time in Kleinian metapsychology. Nevertheless, in therapeutic work, this theory facilitated the recognition of actual and new clinical facts. It is a highly psychodynamic theory, which led Melanie Klein to see and interpret in a peculiarly vivid way, the extraordinary extent to which infants, from the very beginning of postnatal life, develop in terms of the good and bad object-relationships that remain always associated, through projection and introjection, with the varieties of parental handling to which they are subjected. Her theory is confused because it inextricably blends the old and the new. Klein's original acceptance of Freud's theory seduced her into believing that her own insights were just a development of his views, and she perpetuated his biological terminology, thus distorting the significance of what she saw in her clinical experience. She claimed to trace Freud's Oedipus complex back into earlier ages than he himself had recognized. In truth she did something more important. Freud's Oedipus complex was itself the first clear expression of the fact that our adult personality operates over the top, so to speak, of a still surviving childhood life that centers in the conflicts of good and bad internal-object relations, in which the infant's first problems with parents, and especially the mother, become enshrined. Klein did trace this to a far deeper level than would have been possible for Freud to do, while he was struggling with creating the very beginnings of psychoanalysis. Her work was an evolution from, and also a departure from and a development beyond, Freud. What she really did was to display the internal psychic life of small children not as a seething cauldron of instincts or id-drives but as a highly personal inner world of ego-object relationships, finding expression in the child's fantasy-life in ways that were *felt* even before they could be *pictured* or *thought*. These could come to conscious expression in play and dreams, and be disguised in symptoms and in disturbed behavior-relations to real people in everyday living.

The study of the person-ego in object relations comes to be the real heart of Melanie Klein's work, however much it may be disguised by theories, many of which I for one find it quite impossible to accept.

The clearest proof that this is the really important thing in Klein's work can be shown by considering her treatment of the problem of stages of development. Freud's view of the stages of development was rigidly determined by the physiological factor of successive phases of instinct maturation, oral, anal, phallic (or preadolescent genital), and mature genital. Even so, Fairbairn regarded the anal phase as an artifact created by obsessive mothering, rather than a natural developmental phase. But these were all regarded as stages in the development of the sexual instinct. Libido was the basic sexual energy, and each of these organic zones was regarded as possessing its own inherent libidinal drive for the pleasure of de-tensioning. Infantile sexuality was oral, anal, or phallic; genital libido was mature or adult sexuality. As both Erikson and Fairbairn show, this is too simple and rigid to cover the real complex facts of individual development, although it was a valuable hypothesis as a starting point for investigation. This we shall consider further in the next chapter. For the moment we are concerned with Melanie Klein, and she on the face of it accepted Freud's scheme. All of us, of course, come across oral, anal, and genital clinical phenomena, and it would be odd indeed if the intense curiosity of the small child about everything in the complex fascinating world all around him did not also fasten on these highly obtrusive phenomena of his own bodily make-up, especially since they are so often apt to attract the wrong, disapproving kind of attention from anxious parents. But to recognize all this and the part that it plays in the emotional development of the personality is not the same thing as accepting Freud's theory that personality-development is dominated by a fixed timetable of biological instinctive maturational stages, oral, anal, and genital. Melanie Klein's

From Psychobiology to Object-Relations

pages are strewn with clinical observations of oral, anal, and genital material, and I would think that she was the first to make the highly important observation that children's sexual games do them no harm, provided that some disturbed child does not import aggression to the games.

When it comes, however, to the delineation of the stages of development, we find the center of interest shifting from the oral, anal, and genital scheme based on the idea of stages of instinct-maturation, and focusing on an entirely new scheme based on the idea of the quality of ego-experience in object-relations. This is a theory of two fundamental object-relational positions that the infant has to reach and adjust to in his emotional development *vis-à-vis* his mother in the first place, and thereafter in all personal relationships. Melanie Klein calls them positions because they are not just transitional stages through which the infant passes and grows out of and leaves completely behind. They are, in fact, a description of the two major problem positions in which the child finds himself as he tries to work out his relationships with the object world, beginning with the mother. Klein calls them the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive position. She originally spoke only of the paranoid and the depressive positions, but later acknowledged specifically that Fairbairn's work had introduced her to widen paranoid to paranoid-schizoid. It seems to me, however, that schizoid position is a third and separate concept. In the schizoid position the infant is withdrawn from object-relations. In the paranoid position, the infant is *in* relationship but feels persecuted by his objects. In the depressive position he has overcome these difficulties and has become able to enter more fully into whole-object relationships, only to be exposed to *guilt and depression* over the discovery that he can hurt those he has become capable of loving. We cannot regard these as three totally independent, clear-cut successive stages. There are overlaps and oscillations among all three of them. But in definitely bad mother-infant relationships, we

must suppose that the infant will begin first to feel persecuted, then withdrawn into an attempted mental escape, then oscillating between these two reactions, and finally, if possible, growing beyond them to ambivalent relationships bringing guilt and depression.

Nothing more completely nonbiological and object-relational could be conceived, and it is a tremendous advance on Freud's scheme. Oral, anal, and genital phenomena now appear to be variations of symptoms, as emotional problems fasten onto one or another bodily organ to find bodily discharge in the conversion hysteria process. Klein's scheme is more fundamentally important than Erikson's highly interesting interpretation of Freud's scheme, in terms of modes of relationship rather than merely physical zones. I think, however, that both Klein's and Erikson's schemes are necessary, for Klein's scheme relates to the laying down of the basic possibilities of personal relationships within the first six months of life, and that determines how the child reacts in the more varied and incidental oral, anal, genital, and many other kinds of situations throughout the rest of childhood. Erikson's examination of all that appears to me to be of the highest value and to be fully object-relational. I have found these two schemes, taken together, along with Fairbairn's views of maturing from infantile dependence to adult dependence, form a valuable picture of the emotional vicissitudes that human beings encounter throughout life. They present a complex but fully object-relational schema.

Perhaps I have said enough to show why I regard Melanie Klein's work as constituting the decisive turning point in the emancipation of object-relational thinking from its imprisonment in the early classic psychobiology. I do not think she herself viewed her work in that way; that would hardly have been possible while she was in the thick of the struggle to clarify her new ideas. I do not think her present-day disciples see it that way, although they are aware that she did break

From Psychobiology to Object-Relations

new ground. Nevertheless, I believe this is how the history of psychoanalysis will finally see it, as the emergence of psychodynamic thinking out of physiodynamic thinking. As I have shown in Chapter 1, I am sure this is far more than just a domestic issue inside psychoanalysis. It involves the whole cultural and human problem of our age; that the study of human beings as persons involves science itself in moving into new territory where its traditional concepts and methods are no longer adequate, and a new area of scientific research comes into being, that of psychodynamics. The acceptance of this position must provide the intellectual basis for a more solid recognition of the rights of human beings as individual persons not to be "pushed around" by either scientific or political theorists, or educators.

In Freud, although his post-1920 ego-analysis prepared the way for a radically new orientation of psychoanalysis, object-relational thinking in his work remained to the end like a tethered race horse, there, but unable to run far from its starting post. In Melanie Klein, object-relational thinking is like a chained eagle, able to soar high above the ground even though it is still chained to it in her own thought. For Klein never intellectually questioned Freud's libido theory, as Erikson did, and thus never pursued the child's development in his social milieu as Erikson did. Nor did she radically question Freud's libido theory in the way Fairbairn did, and so did not make any special contribution to the ego-aspect of object-relations theory. As she presents them, her views appear to be a tremendous development of id psychology. Freud said that in many respects the superego is extremely close to the id, and in Klein's writing id and superego play a more important part than the ego. She did not develop any particular new trend in ego-conceptualization. In reality, however, while the infantile psyche is, for her, a secret arena in which Eros and Thanatos, the life instinct and the death instinct, are in unending warfare; in fact they are transmuted into a loving and

creative ego and a hating and destructive, sadistic superego, an internalized parent as a bad object, imposing the pattern of their conflicts on perceptions of the outer world, in real-life object-relations. We can discard the biological and metapsychological or philosophical-mystical trappings of this theory, and recognize its clinical applicability as a fully psychodynamic and object-relational account of the internal development of the infant psyche. This clarifies all of the dangers of ego-splitting on the way to integrated maturity, as Fairbairn saw and worked out. But this psychodynamic view only becomes fully credible when it is interpreted in terms of the infant's developing relationship with his outer world, and his first significant object, namely his mother. That is what we find in the work of Winnicott.

We must add that only genuine clinical genius, manifested in extraordinarily direct intuitive insights, not only into adults but small children, could have enabled Melanie Klein to develop an essentially object-relational theory on the unpromising basis of apparently biological concepts. But clinical intuition is bound really to be object-relational, for it is a perception of what is going on in the immediate relationship of therapist and patient as two persons together, one of whom has to see correctly how they are relating in order to help the other to see, and so gain the chance to escape from the secret grip of infantile emotion and fantasy. This is what led Freud beyond his beloved neurology into the discovery of transference, Oedipal problems, and the formulation of the superego concept to clarify guilt feelings. It was that side of Freud's work that Klein developed. In spite of her verbal play with ideas of instincts, she was really concerned with good and bad object-relations, love and hate, and guilt and reparation, not with ideas of quantitative gratifications of instinctive drives. There could hardly be a more fully personal object-relational concept than reparation made for hurt of the loved person.

From Psychobiology to Object-Relations

It is all this that leads to the most important element in what is called the technique of specifically Kleinian analysis. I shall discuss the use of this term "technique" of psychoanalysis in the final chapter of this book, but I am concerned here with the work of Klein, and her psychoanalytical method involves a greatly increased emphasis on the interpretation of the transference. For practical purposes, the essence of her work is to be found in (1) her theory of fantasy as the inner world life, which reveals itself as essentially an ego-function of relating to internal objects, good and bad (in spite of Susan Isaacs' explanation of it as the representative of instincts, a highly inadequate view), (2) her theory of stages of developmental positions, as clearly object-relational and psychodynamic, and (3) her increased stress on the use of transference in psychoanalytic therapy. We can be aware of how much her apparent classical orthodoxy and psychobiology hindered the free development of her object-relational thinking, but we do not have either to accept her whole or reject her entirely. Melanie Klein was one of the great creative minds of psychoanalysis, and we can recognize her highly original genius and make full use of her insights as marking a decisive turning point in the development of psychodynamic theory. The Kleinian psychoanalytic technique and psychotherapeutic use of transference is a good subject on which to close our examination of her contribution.

Transference is the phenomenon of the patient involving the therapist, who is part of his outer world, in the conflicts that constitute his inner world, and its analysis reveals the kind of interaction that is going on between his inner and his outer worlds, mainly by projection and introjection. To grasp the psychodynamic nature of Klein's inner world, we may contrast it with the inner world as conceived by Hartmann. For him, the inner world, "interposed between the receptors and the effectors," is simply the capacity to stop and think,

to use intellectual judgment to avoid rash action. He is simply describing the psychic function of the intellect, which in fact has other and more creative uses in addition to signaling the red light and the yellow for caution, before it lights up the green for go. For Klein, however, the inner world is a far bigger thing. It is a whole object-relational private world of intense emotional experience, constantly competing with and interfering with our outer world living. Through transference-analysis the patient has the chance to become aware of how his two worlds of experience, inner and outer, are unrealistically confused, and he can slowly grow out of the resulting irrationalities of behavior. What I miss in Kleinian therapy, and what I think is ruled out by the nature of her theory, is any adequate recognition of the fact that analytical psychotherapy involves that the patient must grow out of unrealistic positive and negative transference relations, in which he is seeing his internal fantasied good and bad objects projected into his therapist, by means of discovering what kind of actual relationship is given to him by his therapist as a real person. This involves much more than experienced psychoanalytical interpretation. That paves the way, against the background of the kind of person the analyst actually is, for the patient to grow gradually to an accurate perception of him as a real person in his own right. For this to be possible, the analyst must be a whole real human being with the patient and not just a professional interpreter of the patient's psychic life. Only then can the patient find himself and become a person in his own right.

Melanie Klein's theory may be summed up thus: her inner world revealed in active fantasy as intensely object-relational makes up for the distinctly secondary place accorded to the outer world of real objects. In the strict logic of Kleinian views, the split personality of the infant expresses basically its constitutional nature in which its life or love instinct is per-

manently threatened by its death instinct (aggression, destructiveness, hate, and envy). This internal warfare must begin before birth, in the womb. It in no way reflects the infant's mixed good and bad experiences of external objects in real life. Klein is so occupied with the representations of these hypothetical instincts of fantasied internal good and bad objects that she more or less takes the ego for granted and does not develop any particular ego-psychology. This is the point at which Fairbairn's work develops. But the ego is there in Klein. With the formation of fantasy images, the child enters into his own fantasies and dreams as an ego relating to good and bad objects. For Klein, the origins of this fantasy life exist prior to the infant's experience of real objects, so that as his physical and mental perception of external real objects grows, he sees them through the colored medium of his already formed inner world, where he lives in terror of his death instinct. He does not have actual experience of mother as bad and then develop an internal bad object. He "projects the death instinct into the breast," according to Segal, and whether mother is bad or not, she is bound to be bad to the baby who sees her as carrying his own innate badness. Bad-object experience is overwhelmingly primary for Klein who has then to say that the baby urgently needs to internalize a good breast to counteract it. I cannot see how, on Klein's assumptions, a baby can ever experience a really good breast at all. Even if he does (by projecting his love instinct, which we hear little about), the death instinct must always ruin it. Theoretically, the problem is insoluble because bad-object experience for Klein is primary and ineradicable. In actual therapeutic analysis, however, no doubt the real personal relationship of analyst and patient is more important than theory. What we have in Klein is acute clinical perceptiveness, distorted by preconceived theory. If we leave out the speculative theory, mostly centered on the death instinct, we are left with

the foundations of object-relations theory firmly laid in clinical analysis of the inner world fantasy life, and the transference reactions of the patient to the analyst.

NOTES

1. Hanna Segal, "Melanie Klein's Technique," *Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Forum* 2, no. 3 (1967): 198.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
3. Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton; London: The Hogarth Press, 1964), p. 64.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
7. Hanna Segal, *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein* (London: Heinemann Medical Books, Ltd., 1964), p. 12.

Chapter 4

THE BROADENING THEORETICAL REORIENTATION

ERIK H. ERIKSON AND
W. RONALD D. FAIRBAIRN



I have been dealing with the subject of object-relations theory as the gradual emergence to the forefront of the personal as against the impersonal, or natural science, element in Freud's thought. It is the story of the slow evolution of a new type of scientific thinking, namely psychodynamics. This key to the whole process was recognized by Erikson, when in 1955 he reviewed Freud's letter to Wilhelm Fliess, published as *The Origins of Psychoanalysis*. Erikson commented on the emergence of "a radically new kind of intellectual process, specific for psychoanalytic work and thought." I have regarded Melanie Klein as the important turning point in the story, because she does, although in a confused way, present a major change of emphasis away from organically determined processes, and toward the concentration of attention on psychodynamic object-relations. Freud, working largely alone,