

guilt. For Klein, each of us struggles with the deep terrors of annihilation (paranoid anxiety) and utter abandonment (depressive anxiety).

The issues that created the early divergence between Melanie Klein and Anna Freud around the accessibility of the child's mind to analytic interpretation have had remarkable staying power. Klein came to regard the adult mind in the same way she understood the child's—as beset with deep, psychotic-like terrors, as unstable, dynamic, and fluid, and as always responsive to “deep” analytic interpretations. The ego psychological tradition (which we traced in chapter 2) is based on a view of the adult mind as highly structured and stable, stratified by layers of ego capacities and defenses. According to the ego psychologists, for adults in analysis, deep interpretations of intrapsychic conflict can come only from layer-by-layer interpretive work, from the surface down. The Kleinians tend to view ego psychology as concerned with shallow dimensions of emotional life. The ego psychologists tend to view the Kleinians as wildly interpretive, overwhelming patients with concepts they cannot possibly understand or use (Greenson, 1974). It is only in the last several years that there has appeared the beginning of a rapprochement between contemporary Kleinian authors and some American writers who have emerged from the ego psychology tradition (Schafer, 1994).

Klein's most important and abiding contribution to the development of psychoanalytic thought was her depiction of what she termed the “paranoid-schizoid” and “depressive” positions. To grasp what Klein meant by these two positions requires an appreciation of several basic features of her theory. So let us consider a piece of clinical experience and the way it might be understood in Kleinian terms, particularly with respect to the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions.

THE PARANOID-SCHIZOID POSITION

After several years in analysis, Rachel, a waitress in her mid-twenties, recalled with great vividness an experience, not thought about for years, that had dominated both her waking and dream life as a child. As far back as she could remember, she had felt tormented by two vivid and intense images and their relationship to each other. She couldn't remember whether these images had begun as parts of a dream and then had been taken up in her waking fantasy, or whether they had begun as a daydream and infiltrated her dream life. The first image was of tiny, extremely delicate flowers. The second image was of enormous humanlike figures, menacing, without features, composed entirely of feces. The two images were bound together in a way she did not understand but felt compelled somehow to

resolve. She would think of the flowers and then the shit people, then the flowers, then the shit people.

The images were as opposite as could be imagined, yet Rachel felt they belonged together. She wanted them to merge, to be integrated in some fashion, but she couldn't figure out how to do it. It was as if there were a magnetic force drawing them together, but an even more powerful force, as with magnets of the same pole, keeping them apart. Central to her sense of the impossibility of their merger was her dread that such an integration would result in the destruction of the delicate, vulnerable flowers; they would be submerged and buried forever under the massive, ominous shit people. The longing to merge these two images would return again and again with great urgency, both in her waking and in her dream life, but she could never resolve the tension posed by their intense polarity.

The drama of these images became a central, organizing theme of Rachel's analysis and came to be understood as containing and representing a great deal of information about the structure of her subjective world. She had had an absolutely wretched childhood, beginning with a sequence of experiences that would likely have completely crushed someone with less native intelligence and resourcefulness.

Rachel's father had died during her first year of life and her mother became progressively physically and mentally debilitated and unable to care for her. Rachel was raised by a cousin of her mother's in a rural area. This surrogate mother was striking in her inconsistency. She took care of Rachel and sometimes seemed affectionate toward her; at other times she would turn on her in a vicious, paranoid fashion. There was ample evidence in Rachel's memories to suggest that this surrogate mother suffered from a schizophrenic condition. The woman's husband, a chronic alcoholic, provided little refuge; he was at times emotionally available and caring but more often remote or simply absent from the home.

In her analysis, Rachel began to realize that the two images, the flowers and the shit people, were so important because they represented in a collapsed but extremely vivid way the experiential quality of her life, especially her childhood, but her adult life as well. It was as if she had two very different kinds of experiences, and they had virtually nothing to do with each other.

A good deal of the time, she felt a dark, ominous heaviness about herself and other people. She felt she was filled with ugly destructiveness, a hate that was directed toward everyone, including herself, that knew no bounds, that, if unleashed, would destroy both herself and those around her. In this shit world, other people were experienced as being menacing and hateful toward her as well. Everything was clear and consistent. No relief, no

escape was possible. There were no surprises. The hatred she felt in the world outside herself was deeply connected to her experience of her own inner nature.

At other times Rachel felt a very different kind of experience, in isolated, circumscribed moments with some of her acquaintances (she had no real friends), and especially when listening to music or reading poetry. The general sense of bleakness and darkness would lift and she would have a warm feeling, both from herself toward the other person and from the other person toward her (the other most often consisted of long-deceased poets and composers). The experiences with poetry and music had a relative consistency to them; they could be evoked by her and seemed to be a reliable basis on which she developed and shaped relationships to poets and composers over time. When these experiences happened in relation to real people, they seemed moving but dangerous, totally unpredictable; it was very important not to anticipate them, long for them, try to make them happen.

The images of the flowers and the shit people were crystallizations of these two pervasive modes in which Rachel's experience was generated, these two strikingly different worlds in which she lived. She longed to bring them together, to lighten the gloom, to have a greater sense of continuity, to feel that positive connections and loving moments could be a consistent feature of her relationships with real, live other people. Yet to do that, to really count on another for something important, to anticipate it, to try to make it happen, risked being disappointed, provoking her explosive rage and hatred. To integrate the two types of experiences risked destroying even the filaments of light that fleetingly relieved her darkness. So it seemed crucial to keep the good experiences separated as far as possible from the bad, the loving feelings from the hatred. It was essential that she experience the moments of connection as arbitrary and circumscribed, having nothing at all to do with the general sense of distance, distrust, and malevolence she experienced between herself and other people.

In Kleinian terms, the nature of these two images and their relationship to each other, central to the personal struggles of this extremely deprived young woman, reflects a universal organization of experience (the paranoid-schizoid position) that we all share in our early months and years—and that we maintain, at least episodically, throughout life. Klein derived her understanding of the ways experiences become organized from Freud's formulations, particularly his concept of instinctual drive and the dual-instinct theory, but she applied Freud's concepts in her own fashion.

As we noted in chapter 1, Freud's idea of instinctual impulse was a borderline concept between the physical and the psychical. He portrayed the

impulse as beginning in an accumulation of substance in somatic tissues, outside the mind, which then generates a psychical tension in the mind, a "demand on the mind for work." "Objects" are "accidentally" discovered in the external world, such as the breast during feeding, which are found to be useful in eliminating the libidinal tension of the drive, and these objects are thereby associatively linked to the impulse.

Klein never departed from the language of Freud's instinct theory. All her contributions derive from and are framed in terms of Freud's postulation of libidinal and aggressive energies as the basic fuel of mind, and the gratification of and defense against libidinal and aggressive impulses as the underlying drama of mental life. Yet Klein's formulations markedly altered these conceptual building blocks.

For Freud, the instinctual impulse was discrete and distinguishable both from the mind from which it demands gratification and from the object to which it becomes serendipitously associated. Klein gradually extended the concept of the impulse on both ends, both in terms of the source from which it arises and in terms of the aim toward which it is directed.

Klein's instinctual impulse, although embedded in bodily experience, was much more complex and personal. She saw libidinal and aggressive impulses not as discrete tensions, but as entire ways of experiencing oneself, as "good" (both loved and loving) or as "bad" (both hated and destructive). Although libido and aggression are expressed in terms of body parts and substances, they are generated by and reflect more complex organizations of experience and senses of self, Klein believed.

For Freud, the *aim* of the impulse was discharge; the object was the accidentally discovered means toward that end. Klein regarded objects as built into the experience of the impulse itself. To experience thirst, even prior to drinking, was to long for, in some vague and inchoate fashion, the object of that thirst. The object of desire was implicit in the experience of desire itself. The libidinal impulse to love and protect contained, embedded within it, an image of a lovable and loving object; the aggressive impulse to hate and destroy contained, embedded within it, an image of a hateful and hating object, Klein believed.

Freud's account of the workings of the structural model conjures up an image of a cohesive and integrated ego, now dealing with a specific libidinal impulse, now dealing with a specific aggressive impulse. Klein's account of early experience conjures up an image of a discontinuous ego, vacillating between a loving orientation toward loving and lovable other people and a hateful orientation toward hating and hateful other people. Rachel's flowers and shit people are not merely vehicles for libidinal and aggressive discharge; they represent more complex relationships between a particular

kind of self and a particular kind of other. Although Klein retained Freud's terminology, her understanding of the basic stuff of mind had shifted, from impulses to relationships, leading to a very different view of the underlying dramas of mental life.

Klein portrayed the infant's experience as composed of two sharply polarized states, dramatically contrasting in both conceptual organization and emotional tone. The paradigmatic images of these states involve the infant at the breast. In one state, the infant feels bathed with love. A "good breast," filled with a wondrous nutriment and transforming love, infuses him with life-sustaining milk and envelops him in loving protection. He in turn loves the "good breast" and is deeply grateful for its protective ministrations. At other times, the infant feels persecuted and in pain. His belly is empty, and his hunger is attacking him from within. The "bad breast," hateful and malevolent, has fed him bad milk, which is now poisoning him from within, then abandoned him. He hates the "bad breast" and is filled with intensely destructive retaliatory fantasies.

It is important to keep in mind that this account, written in adult language, makes assumptions about the experiences of preverbal infants; it attempts to cross a boundary that we can never fully cross. Klein and her collaborators always assumed that what they were depicting in more or less clear verbal terms referred to experiences in the child that were likely to be neither clear nor verbal, but amorphous and phantasmagoric, at some distance from what adults are able to remember or experience themselves.

The divided world Klein depicted was seen as being formed long before any capacity for reality-testing of any sort. The infant believes that his fantasies, both loving and hateful, have powerful actual impact on the objects of those fantasies: his love for the "good breast" a protective and restorative effect, his hatred for the "bad breast" an annihilating destructiveness. It is precisely because of the omnipotence with which the child experiences his impulses that this world is an extremely dangerous place and the stakes are always very high.

Emotional equanimity in this earliest organization of experience depends on the child's ability to keep these two worlds separate. For the good breast to be a safe refuge, it must be clearly distinguishable from the malevolence of the bad breast. The child's rages against the bad breast, played out in powerful fantasies of destroying it, are experienced by the child as real, doing actual damage. It is crucial that the destructive rages be contained in the relationship to the bad object. Any confusion between the bad object and the good object could result in an annihilation of the latter, which would be catastrophic, because the demise of the good breast would leave the child without protection or refuge from the malevolence of the bad breast.

Klein termed this first organization of experience the *paranoid-schizoid position*. *Paranoid* refers to the central persecutory anxiety, the fear of invasive malevolence, coming from the outside. The shit people threaten to overrun and contaminate all goodness, both in the flowers and in Rachel's love for the flowers. *Schizoid* refers to the central defense: *splitting*, the vigilant separation of the loving and loved good breast from the hating and hated bad breast. It is urgently necessary for Rachel to keep the flowers clear of the shit people and to segregate her hatred, directed toward the latter, from her love, protectively preserving the flowers.

Why *position*? Freud had delineated a progression of psychosexual "stages" centered on different libidinal aims unfolding in a maturational sequence. Klein proposed an organization of experience (of both external reality and inner reality) and a stance vis-à-vis the world. The bifurcated world of good and bad was not a developmental phase to be traversed. It was a fundamental form for patterning experience and a strategy for locating oneself, or, more accurately, different versions of oneself, in relation to various types of others.

Klein derived the paranoid-schizoid position from the urgent necessity to defend against the persecutory anxieties generated by the death instinct. All other major psychoanalytic theorists besides Klein treated Freud's notion of a death instinct as a biological, quasi-mythological speculation, but Klein built it into the center of her theorizing. Drawing on her work with disturbed children and psychotic patients, she portrayed the newborn's state of mind in terms of anxiety about imminent annihilation, deriving from a sense of the raw, self-directed destructive force of his own aggression. The most immediate and persistent problem throughout life becomes the need to escape this paranoid anxiety, this sense that one's very existence is endangered.

The beleaguered primitive ego projects a portion of the self-directed impulses outside the boundaries of the self, thereby creating the "bad breast." It is somewhat less dangerous to feel that malevolence is located outside oneself, in an object from which one can escape, than inside oneself, from which there is no escape. Some of the remaining portion of the aggressive drive is redirected toward this malevolent external object. Thus a relationship to the original bad object has been created from the destructive force of the death instinct for the purpose of containing the threats posed by that instinct. There is a malevolent breast trying to destroy me, and I am trying to escape from and also destroy that bad breast.

To live in a world filled only with malevolence would be intolerable, so the infant also quickly projects loving impulses contained in primary narcissism out into the external world, thereby creating the "good breast." Some of the remaining portion of the libidinal drive is redirected toward

this loving external object. Thus a relationship to the original good object has been created from the loving force of the libidinal instinct to serve as a counterpart to and refuge from the threat of the bad object. There is a malevolent breast trying to destroy me, and I hate and try to destroy the bad breast. There is also a good breast that loves me and protects me and which I in turn love and protect.

In this account generated by Klein's original formulations, the flowers and the shit people would be understood as projective derivatives of constitutional libidinal and aggressive drives themselves. The environment, although secondary in such a perspective, is not unimportant, for good parenting can soothe persecutory anxieties, thereby diminishing paranoid fears of bad objects and strengthening the relationship to good objects. The malevolence of the paranoid-schizoid position begins with constitutional aggression; a good environment can ameliorate its terrors. In Klein's original view, the power of the shit people reflects a constitutionally strong aggressive drive; the environmental deprivations were unable to provide the necessary taming of destructiveness and the strengthening of the fragile libidinal resources represented by the flowers.³

THE DEPRESSIVE POSITION

There is an inherent tendency toward integration in the patterning of experience, Klein felt, that encourages in the infant a sense of a whole object, neither all good nor all bad, but sometimes good and sometimes bad. The good breast and the bad breast begin to be understood not as separate and incompatible experiences, but as different features of the mother as a more complex other, with a subjectivity of her own.

Much is gained in the movement from the experience of others as split into good and bad to the experience of others as whole objects. Paranoid anxiety diminishes; one's pain and frustration are not caused by pure malevolence and evil, but by fallibility and inconsistency. As the threat of persecution abates, the necessity for the vigilance of splitting is reduced; the infant experiences herself as more durable, less in danger of being crushed or contaminated by external or internal forces.

Yet the gains inherent in the movement out of the paranoid-schizoid position are accompanied by new and different terrors. The central problem in life, according to Klein, is the management and containment of aggression. In the paranoid-schizoid position, aggression is contained in the hateful relationship with the bad breast, safely distanced from the loving relationship to the good breast. As the infant begins to draw together the experiences of goodness and badness into an ambivalent (both loving and hating) relation-

ship to a whole object, the equanimity that the paranoid-schizoid position provides is shattered. The whole mother who disappoints or fails the infant, generating the pain of longing, frustration, desperation, is destroyed in the infant's hateful fantasies, not just the purely evil bad breast (with the good breast remaining untouched and protected). The whole object (both the external mother and the corresponding internal whole object) now destroyed in the infant's rageful fantasies is the singular provider of goodness as well as frustration. In destroying the frustrating whole object, the infant eliminates her protector and refuge, depopulating her world and annihilating her own insides. Klein termed the intense terror and guilt generated by the damage done to the child's loved objects by her own destructiveness *depressive anxiety* and the organization of experience in which the child relates with both love and hate toward whole objects the *depressive position*.

In the paranoid-schizoid position, the problem of inherent human destructiveness is resolved through projection, resulting in an ominous sense of persecution, danger from others. In the more integrated, more developmentally advanced depressive position, the powerful force of inherent human destructiveness creates a dread of the impact of the child's own rage on those she loves. Klein portrayed the state of the infant following a fantasy of rageful destruction toward the frustrating mother as one of deep remorse. The frustrating whole object who has been destroyed is also the loved object toward whom the child feels deep gratitude and concern. Out of that love and concern, reparative fantasies (deriving from libidinal instincts) are generated, in a desperate effort to heal the damage, to make the mother whole once again.

The child's belief in her own capacity for reparation is crucial to the ability to sustain the depressive position. To be able to keep her objects whole, the child has to believe that her love is stronger than her hate, that she can undo the ravages of her destructiveness. Klein saw the constitutional balance between libidinal and aggressive drives as crucial. (Later theorists, including D. W. Winnicott, stressed the importance of an actual mother who survives the infant's destructiveness, who returns and holds the infant's experience together.) In the best of circumstances, the cycles of loving, frustration, hateful destruction, and reparation deepen the child's ability to remain related to whole objects, to feel that her reparative capacities can balance and compensate for her destructiveness.

Even in the best of circumstances, however, this is not a static and conclusive solution. In Klein's view, we are all subject, in unconscious (and sometimes conscious) fantasy, to intense rageful destructiveness toward others, whom we experience as the source of all frustration, disappointment, physical and psychic pain. That perpetual destructiveness toward

loved others represents a continual source of depressive anxiety and guilt and an unending need to make reparation. At especially difficult times, the destructiveness becomes too great, threatening to wipe out the entire object world, with no survivors. At those points, a retreat to the paranoid-schizoid position provides temporary security. The frustrating other is now experienced not as a whole object, but as a bad object. There is a good object somewhere else who would not cause such pain. The child's destructiveness is now once again contained in the relationship to the evil object, and she can rest (temporarily) secure that there are good objects out there that are safe from the destructiveness of her rage.

What is so problematic about the depressive position is the irreplaceability of the whole object, which creates what the infant experiences as her abject dependence on it. An alternative solution to the pain of depressive anxiety is the *manic defense*, in which the uniqueness of the loved object and hence one's dependence on it are magically denied. Who needs this other person anyway? Mothers/fathers/lovers are easy to come by; they're all the same, with no unique features. In the blurring of the distinctiveness of the other into a general category, one regains a sense of solace, necessarily temporary and illusory, for one's intense, helpless dependency and a sense of power over one's objects.

Klein portrays the state of relative mental health not as a developmental plateau to be reached and held but as a position continually lost and regained. Because love and hate are both perpetually generated in experience, depressive anxiety is a constant and central feature of human existence. At times of great loss, rejection, frustration, there are inevitable retreats into the security provided by the splitting of the paranoid-schizoid position and the manic defense.

In less than ideal circumstances, the child experiences her rage as more powerful than her reparative love. The integration of love and hate toward a sometimes loving and sometimes hating other cannot be sustained. The shit people will overwhelm and bury the delicate flowers. Despite the persecutory horrors of the paranoid-schizoid position, the splitting provides the only possibility of sustaining any pockets of love and security. For these people, good and evil are clearly separate. They have a few friends (sometimes only in fantasy) who are all good, and enemies who are thoroughly evil. When friends disappoint, they are instantly revealed as evil and as having been evil all along. Relationships with trusted allies cannot be clouded by even the shadow of a doubt because such doubt opens the door to inevitable and inexorable contamination.

The flowers and the shit people can be integrated only if Rachel can

believe that the flowers will emerge from underneath the shit. Only a belief in one's reparative capacities, the belief that one's love can survive one's destructiveness, makes possible the integration of love and hate into richer and more complex relatedness. Love in the paranoid-schizoid position is pure but brittle and thin. Love in the depressive position, tempered through cycles of destructive hatred and reparation, is deeper, more real, more resilient; but it requires the belief that the shit will fertilize new and stronger growth rather than bury all signs of life.

The following dream of a patient in psychoanalysis might be considered as representing the transition from a more or less stable paranoid-schizoid organization into the capacity to tolerate depressive anxiety. This middle-aged man had been married for over a decade to a woman he idolized and never fought with, although he had constant battles with bosses and other figures in his life he felt were malevolent and out to get him. He idealized his analyst as well; occasional flare-ups of intense rage, precipitated by some sense of betrayal by the analyst, were quickly forgotten, and the analyst was reestablished as a wholly benign and wonderful figure. The week before he reported the dream, several years into the analysis and following many months of interpretations concerning his tendency to split his love and hate, he reported with considerable excitement the first real fight he had ever had with his wife. "I completely lost my temple—I mean my temper," he said. This is the dream:

I am wandering around in an old house that has a great sense of familiarity about it. I notice a room hidden between two floors that I realize I haven't been in for a long, long time. As I enter I notice a large fish tank with beautiful and exotic tropical fish. I remember that I had set up and stocked this tank many years before, but had forgotten about it. Amazingly, the fish had survived and actually flourished. I was very excited and thought that they must be very hungry after all these years. I reached for what I took to be a box of fish food on a shelf nearby and began sprinkling it into the water. The fish suddenly started looking sick. I looked closely at the box and realized that it was a box of salt crystals. These were freshwater fish, and the salt was deadly for them. I began frantically running around trying to do something to save them. I saw another tank with water nearby. I began scooping the fish up and transferring them to the other tank. Some of them looked dead; some of them looked like they might survive. It was hard to tell how it would turn out, and I awoke in a state of great anxiety.

In the framework of Klein's concept of the depressive position, this dream expresses the depressive anxiety of someone who is terrified of his own anger and what it might do to those he loves. He tended to split his relationships into purely good and purely bad, thereby sheltering those he loved from his rage, which he greatly feared they would not survive. Only recently had he begun to draw his love and hate together, allowing himself to contain and also express frustration and rage toward those he also loved. This made him feel both very guilty and very anxious; he was confused about his own insides, about which was stronger, his love or his hate. This movement had enriched both his relationships and his sense of his own inner life, but he was terrified that if he abandoned his compulsive idealization of his wife and his analyst, his devotion to his temples, he would not be able to maintain the relationships through love and reparation.

In this reading of the dream, the fish are whole objects, buried in his unconscious experience and long forgotten. He avoids his deep confusion about his capacities to keep his objects alive by a chronic splitting of relationships into the two floors between which the fish are hidden, worshiped idols and hated enemies. He forgets about the delicate fish. Now, after months of interpretive work on this splitting strategy, he relocates a place in his experience where more complex, although fragile, life exists. But his very recognition of a different sort of object, a love for another who is not godlike but extremely vulnerable, brings him face to face with a terror about his own capacity to sustain and nurture love. Will his destructiveness (although unintended) annihilate his objects, or will he be able to repair the damage he has done? The verdict is still out at the end of the dream (and remained out for many more months of analysis).

SEXUALITY

The difference between Klein's vision and Freud's, from which she began, is nowhere as clear as in the realm of sexuality, the centerpiece of Freud's theories of development and psychopathology. In Freud's framework, sexuality concerns pleasure, power, and fear. For the woman, sexual intercourse, on the deepest unconscious levels, is seen as providing possession of the father's penis in compensation for the narcissistic wound of her own sense of castration. She longs to become pregnant as a sign of possession of the father and of her missing penis, and of triumph over the rival, the mother. For the man, sexual intercourse, on the deepest unconscious levels, is seen as being experienced as the ultimate possession of the mother, a triumph over the father, proof that he has not been castrated for his sexual

ambitions. To make a woman pregnant is a demonstration of his uncensored, potent status.

In Klein's framework, sexuality is about love, destructiveness, and reparation. Men and women are seen as deeply concerned about the balance between their own ability to love and to hate, about their capacity to keep their objects alive, both their relationships to others as real objects and their internal objects, their inner sense of goodness and vitality. Klein viewed sexual intercourse as a highly dramatic arena in which both one's impact on the other and the quality of one's own essence are exposed and on the line. The ability to arouse and satisfy the other represents one's own reparative capacities; to give enjoyment and pleasure suggests that one's love is stronger than one's hate. The ability to be aroused and satisfied by the other suggests that one is alive, that one's internal objects are flourishing.

Pregnancy is tremendously important in this framework not as a symbolic equivalent of the penis or potency, but as a reflection of the state of one's internal object world. Fertility, both for the man and for the woman, suggests inner vitality, an internal experience that has been kept alive and flourishing. Infertility, both for the man and for the woman, is seen as arousing fears not of castration but of inner deadness, the failure of love to repair and sustain important connections with others, the inability of the self to maintain vital and nourishing relationships. For Freud, artistic creativity was a sublimated form of bodily pleasures. For Klein, both artistic creativity and bodily pleasures were arenas in which the central human struggle between love, hate, and reparation is played out.

ENVY

One of Klein's most important concepts, envy was introduced relatively late in her life but became an important feature in the development of Kleinian thought after her death.

Klein's understanding of envy is best grasped by comparing envy to greed. The infant at the breast, as is typical for Klein, provides the prototype. Infants, as Klein portrayed them, are intensely needy creatures. They feel abjectly dependent on the breast for nourishment, safety, and pleasure. The infant experiences the breast itself, Klein imagined, as extraordinarily plentiful and powerful. In more suspicious moments, the infant thinks of the breast as hoarding its wonderful substance, good milk, for itself, enjoying its power over the infant, rather than allowing the infant continual and total access to its resources.⁴

Oral greed is one response to the infant's helplessness at the breast. He is