

Essentials of Kleinian theory

Klein significantly contributed to the refinement of psychoanalytic aesthetics, although she did not actually develop a fully articulated theory of her own as such. She was interested in art and literature and, like Freud, drew on them for the exegesis of her clinical theory, and three of her earlier papers were specifically devoted to the analysis of artistic and creative themes.

At the same time, these foreshadowed what were to be some of her most important concepts: the depressive position (1930) and her account of the inner world and unconscious phantasy. However, as will be shown in the next chapter, it was her pupil Hanna Segal (Klein's main expositor) who first developed a systematic theory of creativity and aesthetics based on Klein's insights. Another important exponent of Kleinian aesthetics was the art critic and historian Adrian Stokes. He was also an analysand of Klein, and successfully integrated Klein's account of infantile experience into his aesthetic criticism. It was largely through the work of Segal and Stokes that Kleinian aesthetics became fully established as a coherent approach to the visual arts and, as we shall explore further in this study, has continued to influence a number of philosophers, writers, and academics.

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Segal divides Klein's work into three main phases. The first phase, spanning the years from 1921 to 1932, laid the foundations of child analysis, tracing the Oedipus complex and superego to early developmental roots. The second phase led to the formulation of the concept of the "depressive position" and the manic defences, described in Klein's papers "A contribution to the psychogenesis of the manic depressive states" (1934) and "Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states" (1940). The third phase was concerned with the earliest stage, which she called the "paranoid-schizoid position", mainly formulated in her paper "Notes on some schizoid mechanisms" (1946) and in her book, *Envy and Gratitude* (1988b). In this chapter I shall explore how Klein's model evolved from Freudian theory, in order to see in what way it laid the foundations for a fuller theory of aesthetics. After a summary of some of the political disruptions and upheavals that formed the background to her achievements in the British School, I shall focus on the ideas formulated since 1930 that have been significant for the understanding of art and creativity. These are the related concepts of symbol formation; unconscious phantasy and the inner world, her theory of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, and the theory of innate envy. Although I have separated these elements, they are, of course, closely interlinked and it is inevitable that any discussion of them will involve some repetition.

The Kleinian development

In September 1926, Melanie Klein moved from Berlin to settle in London at the behest of Ernest Jones, who was the president of the British Psychoanalytical Society at the time. In the year preceding her journey to Britain, Klein had suffered the death of her analyst, Karl Abraham, who had provided her with much of the emotional and intellectual support that she needed. The loss of her analyst, combined with the failure of her marriage, were no doubt precipitating factors in Klein's decision to move to Britain.¹ Freud had left the area of child analysis largely unexplored; even his analysis of "Little Hans" had largely been conducted via the boy's father rather than through any real contact with the child. Klein's work, which concentrated on child analysis, had been introduced to the Society

by Alex Strachey a year before and had caused much interest, particularly since this subject was becoming much more active. The analysts Sylvia Payne, Susan Isaacs, and Nina Searle, who were all professionally trained in child education and psychology, had already presented papers to the British Society on the theoretical and technical problems in child analysis, so the time was certainly ripe for Klein's arrival in London.

Klein's first point of departure from classical analysis was her treatment of children's play as the equivalent of adult free association. Through her close study of children's play, usually with little wooden toys, she revealed the presence in very young children of complex systems of phantasy that had not been conceived of before (see the section headed "Unconscious phantasy and the inner world", below). These were sometimes consciously reported but were usually inferred by Klein from the child's play. Naturally, no data were received directly from the children under two years old, but Klein saw good reason to infer systems of unconscious phantasy in the early weeks and months of life. (Here we should distinguish between "phantasy" as distinct from "fantasy". The latter suggests day-dreaming, whim, or caprice, where the former connotes something thought of as deeper, such as imagination or a visionary experience [see Rycroft, 1968b].) Then, in the late 1920s and the early 1930s, Klein began to be more definite about the dating of the origin of neuroses. She took this back in time much earlier than Freud, placing the origins of the Oedipus complex in the earliest months of life (Klein, 1928). If this triadic set of relationships comes so early, it could not have been developed over time in a family setting, as in Freud's account. For Klein, it was much more deeply rooted in infantile psychic functioning and structure.

Klein was very interested in the individual's relation to objects, and it is for this reason that she is called an "object-relations theorist". But she was more interested in early instinctual impulses and their influence on *inner* objects than in the details of how real external objects might contribute to phantasies and to psychopathology in general. Indeed, this came to be one of the focuses of contention with the Independents, and in particular Klein's pupil, the paediatrician, Donald Winnicott, whose "debate" with Klein in 1952 over the status of his concept of the "transitional object" polarized their

respective views on early infantile experience and had profound consequences for their respective accounts of art and creativity. It also led to their parting company.

In 1927, Anna Freud and Klein came to blows over a number of issues, relating particularly to the technique of child analysis. The main difference between the two women concerned their respective views on the feasibility of the psychoanalytic method for treating children and the nature of the therapeutic relationship. Anna Freud believed that the play technique was not the equivalent of adult free association; neither did she regard it as a compulsion to repeat anxiety situations. Because Klein's interpretations of the play could not be confirmed, Anna Freud argued that the early analysis of children was neither appropriate nor possible. Indeed, she thought that probing into a child's unconscious might even aggravate his condition and make him psychologically unstable. Klein, however, was interested in probing these deeper recesses of the mind, and wanted to expose the roots of anxiety rather than just alleviating the symptoms, which she saw as only superficial indicators of the turmoil beneath. Klein fiercely rebutted Anna Freud's criticisms and claimed that the latter's technique was not truly analytic. She also asserted that Anna's method did not expose the Oedipal conflict—surely a devastating attack to make on Freud's daughter! Klein produced a large amount of clinical support for her technique and claimed that interpreting the child's anxiety often cleared it up completely. She felt that her technique was more truly analytical in its stress on the importance of interpreting the transference. Klein was accused by the Anna Freudian camp of making "wild interpretations" of the child's play. This she strongly denied, and insisted that she always had evidence of the link between the figure in the play and the primary object (usually the mother's body) before interpreting. Maybe the criticisms were somewhat justified, however, for, as Kleinian analyst Hinshelwood has noted, in her papers Klein frequently omits to give the actual links that came out in the sessions with patients (Hinshelwood, 1989, pp. 26–27).

The result of these hostile exchanges was a polarization of opinions between the Viennese analysts and those who followed Klein in London. They were a foretaste of the bitter feuds that were to disrupt the British Society in the early 1940s, during what became known as the "Controversial Discussions" (King & Steiner, 1992).

By the mid-1930s, Klein was turning her investigations to the part played by destructiveness—derived from the death instinct—and to the importance of remorse and concern about this in both normal and pathological development. Klein made a great theoretical leap when she introduced the concept of the “depressive position” (Klein, 1935, 1940). This has become a significant part of British psychoanalytic thinking and also in the elaboration of Kleinian aesthetics and the account of creativity. For the first time, Klein distinguished between two kinds of anxiety: paranoiac (later called persecutory) and depressive. This is a fundamental distinction and the beginning of her true metapsychological break from Freud, whose physiological and economic models did not accord with her own ways of seeing development. The Darwinian language of Freud was couched in mechanistic, linear terms. Klein’s reformulation of psychoanalytic models, describing the processes of development in terms of *positions*, rather than in the classical terms of psycho-sexual stages (oral, anal, phallic, genital), was of enormous impact. It implies that the notion of development is a fluid, dynamic, and an ongoing process, oscillating between two ways of relating to objects—the paranoid or the depressive mode. In addition, Klein introduced a new opposition into psychoanalysis: the difference between the relation to a *part-object* and the relation to a *whole-object*.

According to Klein, the depressive position is reached when the infant realizes that his or her love and hate are directed to the same object: the mother and her body. The child begins to experience ambivalence (e.g., the same object can be both loved and hated) and also his own effects upon another object. Klein was the first to point to the importance of the unconscious impulse to repair objects felt to have been damaged by destructive attacks of hate. This is inherent in depressive feeling. Klein believed that anxiety originated in aggression, and she regarded this as fundamentally innate and grounded in the projection of the death instinct outwards from the self. This emphasis on anxiety, internal danger threats, and the workings of the death instinct were to have important consequences for her formulation of the concept of phantasy and also the nature of creativity. Indeed, Klein was to suggest that true artistic and creative activity were both rooted in anxiety and the urge to make good the destructive and sadistic phantasies set in motion by the death

instinct. It was not until just over ten years later that Klein was to turn her interest fully towards schizoid phenomena and developed her account of the “paranoid–schizoid” position (Klein, 1946).

In the meantime, between Klein’s formulation of the depressive position in 1935 and the account of the paranoid–schizoid position in 1946, events in both Klein’s personal life and in Europe were becoming more unstable. When Hitler invaded Austria in 1938 it became unsafe for Jewish analysts to stay in Vienna. So, Jones and the other members of the British Society arranged for thirty-eight Viennese analysts, including Freud and his daughter, to come to London. At this time, the relationship between Klein and her daughter, Melitta, also a member of the British Society, was becoming increasingly hostile. Another trauma Klein faced was the death of her son, Hans, in April 1934; he had apparently fallen from a precipice while out walking. Melitta’s immediate reaction was that it had been suicide, although their brother Eric strongly repudiated this and maintained that Hans’s death was a source of grief to Klein throughout her life. Once again, death and grief had shattered Klein’s world and must have acted as a contributory factor in her preoccupation with the nature of grief, loneliness, mourning, loss, and despair—experiences that formed a gloomy coda to her own private life. For all that, it must be said that she would eventually come to emphasize the power of love over hate, the processes of reparation and the triumph of gratitude over envy.

We get an inkling of the personal experience that underlies her theories expressed in her paper “Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states” (1940). Here she describes how a “Mrs A”, who had suffered the loss of her son, had gone for a walk in the town in the attempt to re-establish old social bonds. Klein describes vividly and poignantly the anxiety and chaos felt by the woman who, feeling overwhelmed by the streets and experiencing them as alien and removed from the flux of life, had retreated into a quiet restaurant. But there she had felt “as if the ceiling were coming down” (Klein 1998a, p. 00) and the only place of security “seemed to be her own house” (*ibid.*, p. 00). The “frightening indifference” of the external world was “reflected in her internal objects” (*ibid.*, p. 00), which had turned persecutory. It is truly a moving piece of writing, one that speaks of lived experience, most poignantly expressed by the feeling that “trust in real goodness had gone” (*ibid.*, p. 00).

Disagreements with the Kleinians and the need for a revision in the constitution in favour of limiting tenure of offices and the possibility of holding multiple offices in the Society precipitated the "Controversial Discussions" in the early 1940s. It was also felt by the analyst John Rickman that the Society was not sufficiently attuned to the public and failed to respond to its needs. A series of meetings was held over eighteen months, and four papers were discussed on the controversial aspects of Klein's theories, including one very important contribution from Isaacs (1948) on the nature of phantasy. Unfortunately, no theoretical agreements were worked out in the Scientific Meetings, and the hoped-for clarification did not materialize. In fact, divergences became even more polarized as a result. Jones resigned in 1944 as president, and Sylvia Payne took over. During the war, the paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott became the representative spokesman for the Society. Although he had aligned himself with the Kleinian Group and supported Klein's position throughout the Discussions, he did his best to remain impartial. In an amusing anecdote which reveals much about Winnicott's personality, the analyst Margaret Little recalls that in the first Scientific Meeting of the "Controversial Discussions" that she attended, there were

bombs dropping every few minutes and people ducking as each crash came. In the middle of the discussion someone I later came to know as D.W. stood up and said, "I should like to point out that there is an air raid going on," and sat down. No notice was taken, and the meeting went on as before!. [Little, 1985, p. 24]

This is certainly an interesting remark from the analyst who was to emphasize in his work the need to acknowledge the realities and pressures of the external world—a position which eventually distanced him from Klein, as we shall explore later in this chapter.

In 1946, the Society agreed to the introduction of two distinct courses to be referred to as "Course A", whose teachers were drawn from both groups (it later became known as the "Middle" or "Independent" Group), and "Course B", which would teach along the lines of Anna Freud, although both courses would be under one training committee that would be responsible for the selection and training of students. Thus, the Society became semi-officially split

into three groups, which still exist today: those loyal to Klein; those loyal to the Classical approach of Anna Freud; and the Independents, who took issue with aspects of both Kleinian and Classical theory and have developed an alternative body of thinking within the British School. (See Rayner, 1990 for a detailed exposition of their differences and similarities.) As stated earlier, my understanding of the "British School" encompasses the Kleinians and a number of those working in Independent territory.

Symbols and symbol formation

Klein's work has contributed to developments in the theory of symbolism both directly, through her work on symbols, and indirectly, through the conceptual implications of her contribution to the theory of early mental states. The papers that establish a new trend in the analysis of symbols were written between 1923 and 1930, when she formulated the main aspects of her technique and metapsychology. Of particular significance are "Early analysis" (1923) and "The importance of symbol-formation in the development of the ego" (1930). Since then, her ideas have been developed by clinicians such as Segal (1952), Milner (1952), Bion (1962), and Rycroft (1962). Klein's work with children on a pre-verbal level was a great step forward in the development of psychoanalysis. She regarded children's play as highly symbolic, expressive of the inner world of phantasy that tinges every aspect of intellectual and emotional life, and equivalent to adult free association, dreams, and symptoms. Klein believed that in their play

children represent symbolically phantasies, wishes and their experiences. Here they are employing the same language, the same archaic, phylogenetically acquired mode of expression as we are familiar with in dreams. We can only fully understand it if we approach it by the method Freud has evolved for unravelling dreams. Symbolism is only a part of it; if we want rightly to comprehend children's play . . . we must take into account not only the symbolism which often appears so clearly in their games, but also the means of representation and the mechanisms employed in dream-work. [Klein, 1988a, p. 134]

Dreams were allowed by Freud as a symbolic alternative to words for the discharge of mental energy—allowed because both words and dreams avoid recourse to muscular action. Klein, however, showed that play was as symbolic as words, even though it involved muscular discharge. Phantasy was not necessarily an alternative method of discharge to bodily action, as Freud had been content to leave it; it was a profoundly important concomitant, if not the mainspring, of the physical discharge of energy. This point is important because it suggests how the muscular activity—the actual physical business involved in much artistic work—can be itself symbolic. Unconscious phantasy has its roots in bodily processes and is inextricable from our corporeality—our physical sensations, bodily processes out of which the ego is formed. This in fact goes back to Freud, who himself suggested that the ego was “first and foremost a body-ego” (1923b).

Klein’s focus on the importance of unconscious phantasy as constituting both the content and mechanism (form) of psychological processes had a profound influence on the developmental study of symbolic processes and the nature of art and creativity. The notion of phantasy as an inherent tendency of the mind, and the idea that symbol formation is a uniquely human achievement, brings Kleinian theory in line with the semiotics and aesthetics of the American pragmatic philosophers, Susanne Langer (1942, 1953, 1967) and Charles S. Peirce. (For a discussion of the relationship between the semiotics of Peirce and the study of creativity in general, see Anderson [1987]. For a specific application of Peirce to the work of the Kleinian analyst, Bion, see Silver [1981].) In the early part of her career, Klein charted the vicissitudes of symbol formation and the causes and effects of defective symbolization, and she showed that from the earliest stages the infant begins to search for symbols in order to relieve himself of painful experiences. The conflicts and persecution in phantasy from primal objects (i.e., the mother’s body) promote a search for new, conflict-free relationships with substitute objects (symbols). Nevertheless, these conflicts tend to follow and often affect the relationship with the substitute symbol, which eventually promotes further search for yet another substitute. Klein described a substitution similar to displacement, which Freud also believed to be one of the underlying factors in dream symbolization. Substitution of one object for

another becomes symbol formation in the narrower sense, when a non-material object of satisfaction is substituted for a physical object of direct bodily gratification.

Klein draws on a number of analytic theories to support her theory of symbolization: Ferenczi's idea that identification is the precursor of symbolism, arising out of the baby's endeavour to re-discover in every object his own organs and their functioning; Jones' (1916) view that the pleasure principle allows two very different things to be equated due to a similarity marked by pleasure or interest; and on her own conclusion, reached in 1923, that "symbolism is the foundation of all sublimation and of every talent since it is by way of symbolic equation that things, activities, and interest become the subject of 'libidinal phantasies'" (Klein, 1988a, p. 220). The earliest forms of symbol formation are symbolic equations and identifications. Alongside the libidinal interest, it is the anxiety arising in the early stages of sadism that activates the mechanism of identification. This is because the child wishes to destroy the organs (penis, vagina) standing for the objects (felt to be contained in the mother's body) that later cause him dread. This anxiety spurs him on to equate these organs with other things, and, in turn, these become objects of anxiety. He is impelled to make new and other equations that "form the basis of his interest in the new objects and of symbolism". Klein concludes that not only does symbolism come to be the foundation of all phantasy and sublimation, but, more than that, it is the basis of the subject's relation to the outside world and to reality. So, although in her earlier papers Klein viewed anxiety as an inhibitor of development, during the 1920s she gradually came to believe that development was dependent on the resolution of anxiety, and by the time she published her paper "Infantile anxiety situations" (1929), she saw anxiety as the spur to creative achievement. As the ego develops, a true relation to reality is gradually established. Both ego development and perception of reality depend upon the ego's capacity to withstand the pressure of the earliest anxiety situations; and a certain amount of anxiety is needed for an abundance of symbolic activity and phantasy life (Klein, 1988a, pp. 220–221).

In the paper on symbol development, published just after this, Klein argued that the working-through of anxiety is the precondition of all development. "The importance of symbol-formation in

the development of the ego" (1930) elaborates her embryonic theory of symbol formation (Klein, 1998a, pp. 219–233: this paper articulates core concepts that became the basis of her theory of the paranoid–schizoid position and formed the precursor to her fuller articulation of the concept of projective identification in 1946). Its clinical material begins a new phase, for it is the first published report of the analysis of a psychotic child, and shows that it is possible to make analytic contact and set development in train, even where a child has no speech or manifest emotion and displays only a very primitive kind of symbolism. Klein's paper examines the nature of childhood psychosis, and is an attempt to identify the origins of schizophrenia. She suggests that the ego defends itself from intense anxiety by an excessive expulsion of its sadism, so that there remains no experience of anxiety and no exploration of the world through symbol formation: thus, normal development is halted.

In this paper she describes four-year-old Dick, in whom there was an unusually inhibited ego development. His emotional and intellectual level was comparable to that of a fifteen- to eighteen-month-old child. Dick manifested signs of what we would now call autistic behaviour: adaptation to reality and emotional relations were almost absent, he was devoid of affects, indifferent to the presence or absence of his mother or nurse, and he did not play. Despite criticisms that Klein often overlooked the role of the environment at the expense of the inner world, she took into careful account Dick's environmental situation and family history. This revealed that he had experienced difficulty in accepting the breast very early on, and had almost died of starvation. Apparently, no real love had been shown by his parents or his first nurse. However, his grandmother and the second nurse were caring towards the child, and their influence contributed to his development. He attained better control of his bodily functions, showing a certain amount of ambition and apprehension. But Dick had still failed to make emotional contact with anyone. Klein says that his inhibitions derived from the earliest period of his life, and together with a "constitutional incapacity to tolerate anxiety" (*ibid.*, p. 224), his ego had ceased to develop a phantasy life. He had no interests except "trains, stations and also in door-handles, doors, and the opening and shutting of them" (*ibid.*). Klein interpreted this as relating to the "penetration

of the penis into the mother's body": what had halted symbol formation was the "dread of what would be done to him . . . after he had penetrated into the mother's body" (*ibid.*). His defences against aggression had put a stop to his development as he was rendered incapable of feeling anxiety or aggression at all—this was shown in his eating difficulty and in his inability to grasp sharp implements, like knives and scissors.

The fundamental problem facing Klein was the lack of symbolic material in the start of the analysis—unlike her other patients, Dick was completely indifferent to the toys she provided. Her usual procedure was to refrain from interpreting material until it had found expression in various representations, but with Dick she had to modify her technique. In order to make contact with his unconscious, she set out immediately to activate his repressed anxiety. Klein put two trains side by side, and told him that the larger one was the "Daddy-train" and the smaller one the "Dick-train". He rolled the latter to the window and said "Station". Klein interpreted to him that the station was "mummy", and "Dick is going into mummy". At this point, Dick left the train and shut himself into the space between the outer and inner doors of the room, saying "dark", and ran out again. He repeated this a few more times. Klein was thus able to create a symbolic setting for Dick, so that he could represent his anxieties and aggression. Out of this came a capacity to show interest in his surroundings and also a sense of dependence. Klein had managed to gain access to his unconscious by getting in touch with the very rudimentary symbolic activity he displayed. This resulted in a lowering of latent anxiety, which allowed a certain amount of it to become manifest. As he turned away from his objects of anxiety, he turned his aggressive and epistemophilic impulses towards new ones. His vocabulary enlarged and he made efforts to communicate with others. This case illustrated that even an undeveloped ego, such as Dick's, was adequate for establishing contact with the unconscious, and this established Klein's belief in the possibility of a psychoanalytic treatment of the psychoses.

Although the role of symbol development remained implicit in her work, Klein's interest in it waned as she became more interested in "defining the contents of phantasies, rather than in the nature of the process of their expression" (see Hinshelwood, 1989, p. 430).

Hanna Segal greatly refined Klein's account of symbols. She drew attention to two different kinds of symbolization, the "symbolic equation" and the "symbolic representation", which she came to associate with the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive position, respectively (Segal, 1952, 1957). A very elegant clinical example is given to illustrate the difference between the two kinds of symbol:

Patient A was a schizophrenic in a mental hospital. He was once asked why he had stopped playing the violin since his illness. He replied with some violence, "Why? do you expect me to masturbate in public?" Another patient, B, dreamed one night that he and a young girl were playing a violin duet. He had associations to fiddling, masturbating, etc., from which it emerged clearly that the violin represented a masturbation phantasy of a relation with the girl. [Segal, 1986, p. 49]

Segal points out that, although these two patients seem to use the same symbols in the same situation (the violin representing the male genital and playing with it representing masturbation), the symbols are actually functioning very differently. For A, playing the violin was felt to be the *same* as masturbating, and the anxiety aroused by this halted his playing. For B, playing the violin was an important *sublimation*, and it was only through free-associating to his dream that the meaning of the symbol became clear. In the first case, the violin was felt to *be* the genital (symbolic equation), and in the second, to *represent* it (symbolic representation). It is interesting to note that Ehrenzweig feels that Segal's term "symbolic equation" is "not a very happy choice". With Patient A, "what happens is neither symbolic nor an equation", it is rather that "one thing has pushed itself into the place of another because it refused to be equated with it" (Ehrenzweig, 1967, p. 194). Ehrenzweig believes that the term "symbolic equation" fits better his notion of the "unconscious substructure of creative work where symbol and symbolised object freely interpenetrate without doing each other violence" (*ibid.*).

Segal argues that Jones' (1916) belief that symbols are formed when there is no sublimation is inaccurate; the classical distinction between symbolization and sublimation becomes untenable in the light of Klein's work. This has confirmed that when a desire is given

up because of a conflict and is repressed, it may express itself in a symbolic way, and the object of desire can be replaced by a symbol. Klein's analysis of children's play—a sublimation—showed that this activity expresses unconscious wishes, anxiety, and is developmentally very important. For Freud and Jones, symbolization was an archaic, primitive, essentially regressive phenomenon that led away from reality towards wish fulfilment, under the domination of the pleasure principle. Klein's approach placed a whole new perspective on the matter; now symbolization was regarded as essential to the development of a reality sense.

This has repercussions for their respective approaches to art and creativity. The classical view of symbols led to the view that art—a symbolic activity *par excellence*—was a wish-fulfilment and had little to do with ego development and the establishment of a reality sense. For Freud, the artist is distinguished from the neurotic in that he somehow finds a way back to reality in spite of his creative activity, whereas for Klein and Segal, it is through his creative capacity that the artist is able to establish a harmony between the inner and outer world. While Freud regarded the source of the artist's creative capacity as somewhat of a mystery, the Kleinian view places it firmly within the context of fundamental developmental processes that establish a rich, communicative phantasy life and a realistic relationship to the external world. In "The function of dreams", Segal summarizes her account of the relationship between symbolization and development:

When projective identification is in ascendance and the ego is identified and confused with the object, then the symbol, a creation of the ego, becomes identified and confused with the thing symbolised . . . giving rise to concrete thinking. Only when separation and separateness are accepted [in the working-through of the depressive position] does the symbol become a representation of the object rather than being equated with the object. [1986, p. 90]

To Jones' (1916) formulation that "only what is repressed needs to be symbolised" (p. 00, Segal adds that "only what is *adequately mourned* can be adequately symbolised". The capacity for non-concrete symbol formation is thus seen as an achievement of the ego that underlies the formation of phantasy, dreams, play, art, and

all varieties of intellectual and creative achievement. Segal makes the point that successful artists “combine an enormous capacity for symbolic use of the material to express their unconscious phantasies with a most acute sense of the real characteristics of the material they use” (p. 00)—a point developed in the aesthetics of the art historian Stokes (see Chapter Three). She adds that “failing that second capacity they could not have used it effectively to convey the symbolic meaning they wished to embody” (p. 00). Her account characterizes the relationship between the ego and the object (in this case, the artist and his material) as one of working-through the depressive position. In this view, the thing symbolized and the object representing the thing symbolized are clearly separate and there is an acknowledgement of the object’s qualities and a respect for its independent existence.

Unconscious phantasy and the inner world

Hanna Segal points out that “Freud’s discovery of unconscious thoughts underlying hysterical symptoms can be seen as the equivalent to the discovery of unconscious phantasy” (1991, p. 16). His view that hysterical symptoms are not attached to actual memories but to phantasies erected on the basis of memories illustrates the importance Freud attached to fantasy and its role in structuring past experiences. (See his analysis of the “Wolf Man”, 1918b; and “Dora”, 1905e.) When he abandoned the seduction hypothesis in the late 1890s, sexual fantasies replaced sexual experience in his revised account of hysteria. But it was not until his “Formulations on the two principles of mental functioning” (1911b) that he tried to find a place for fantasy in his mental apparatus:

In the psychology which is founded on psycho-analysis we have become accustomed to taking as our starting point the unconscious mental processes [. . .] We consider these to be the older, primary processes, the residues of a phase of development in which they were the only kind of mental process. The governing purpose obeyed by these primary processes is easy to recognise; it is described as the pleasure–unpleasure principle or more shortly, the pleasure principle . . . [*ibid.*, pp. 218–219, 222]

With the introduction of the reality principle, one species of thought activity was split off; it was kept free from reality testing and remained subordinated to the pleasure principle alone. This activity is phantasying, which begins already in children's play, and later, continued as daydreaming, abandons dependence on real objects.

Even though Freud affirmed that there could be a species of phantasy that never became conscious at all, it did not hold centre stage for him as it did for Klein. Klein believed that phantasy and instinctual life were inseparable, bound up with introjective and projective mechanisms, together with the love and hate impulses, which she saw as operating from the very start of life. Unconscious phantasies are not the same as daydreams (though they are related to them), but are an activity of the mind that occurs on deep unconscious levels and accompanies every impulse experienced by the infant. In "Our adult world and its roots in infancy" (1959), one of Klein's more accessible papers, written for a wider audience, she outlines her view of unconscious phantasy and how it is inextricable from the notion of an inner world. The phantasy of orally incorporating an object (introjection) and expelling an object (projection) are closely bound up with the infant's capacity to project emotions (love and hate) on to the mother, making her into a good, as well as a hostile, dangerous object. Klein gives the example of a hungry baby who temporarily deals with his hunger by hallucinating the satisfaction of being given the breast, and being held and loved by the mother. But she adds that the unconscious phantasy also takes the opposite form of being deprived and persecuted by the breast, which refuses to give this satisfaction. The mechanisms of introjection and projection (mental processes grounded in instinctual life) are part of the infant's phantasies, which "help to mould his impression of his surroundings; and by introjection this changed picture of the external world influences what goes on in his mind" (1988b, p. 250). In this way, an inner world is constructed that is also a reflection of the external one. Unconscious phantasy does not only refer to the *content* of psychic experience, it also refers to the actual *mechanism* (the interaction of projection and introjection) that structures our inner life. Although rooted in infancy, this is not only an infantile process. It continues throughout every stage of life, and though it is modified in the course of maturation, it never loses its

importance for the individual's relation to the world around him. Phantasies—becoming more elaborate and referring to a wider variety of objects and situations—continue throughout development and accompany all activities. Indeed, Klein stresses that “the influence of unconscious phantasy on art, on scientific work, and on the activities of every-day life cannot be overrated” (*ibid.*, p. 251).

The concept of unconscious phantasy received its most rigorous conceptual and philosophical elaboration through the work of Susan Isaacs, a staunch supporter of Klein. In “The nature and function of phantasy” (1948), read to the British Society during the “Controversial Discussions”, Isaacs succinctly expressed the kernel of the theory thus: “phantasy is the primary content of unconscious mental processes” (*ibid.*, p. 81: for an account of the profound impact of these heated discussions on the politics and structure of the British Society, see King and Steiner, 1992). Where Freud saw phantasy occupying the vague frontier between the mental and the somatic, Isaacs stressed the non-physicality of instinct. Phantasy could then be seen as

the mental corollary, the psychical representative of instinct . . . there is no impulse, no instinctual urge or response that is not experienced as unconscious phantasy [. . .] A phantasy represents the particular content of the urges or feelings (for example, wishes, fears, anxieties, triumphs, love or sorrow) dominating the mind at the moment. [Isaacs, 1948, pp. 81–82]

Klein believed that the operation of an instinct is expressed and represented in mental life by the phantasy of the satisfaction of that instinct by an appropriate object. Since instincts are active from birth, some primitive phantasy life is assumed to operate from the very beginning. Phantasies derive from two main sources. Primary phantasies are innate and wholly unconscious; they include knowledge of the nipple and mouth, innately conceived by the newborn for sucking. Isaacs anticipates a common objection to this view of an innate phantasy activity:

It has sometimes been suggested that unconscious phantasies such as that of “tearing to bits” would not arise in the child's mind before he had gained the conscious knowledge that tearing a person to bits would mean killing him or her. Such a view does not

meet the case. It overlooks the fact that such knowledge is inherent in bodily impulses as a vehicle of instinct, in the aim of instinct, in the excitation of the organ, i.e. in this case, the mouth. [*ibid.*, pp. 93–94]

Second, she tells us that phantasies are largely of somatic origin, and an unconscious phantasy is a belief (conscious or unconscious) in the activity of concretely felt “internal objects”.

This is a difficult concept to grasp, and one that underpins all Kleinian thinking. According to the theory, a somatic sensation brings along with it a mental experience that is interpreted as a relationship with an object that wishes to cause that sensation, and is loved or hated by the subject according to whether the object is well-meaning or has evil intentions (i.e., pleasant or unpleasant sensations). Thus, the unpleasant sensation is mentally represented as a relationship with a “bad” object that intends to attack the subject. For example, a baby who is hungry will experience unpleasant hunger pangs in his stomach. This will become mentally represented by the baby feeling a persecuting object actually in his stomach that wants to hurt him. (This is reflected in our language: for example, in the colloquialisms, “hunger is gnawing at me” and “having butterflies in the stomach”. However, although we often use this kind of concrete description, the knowledge that our hunger is related to a bodily state is not suspended.) Conversely, when the infant is fed, his experience is of an object, which we can identify as the mother or her milk, but which the infant identifies as an object in his tummy, kindly disposed to cause pleasant sensations. After the feed, the fullness contributes to the blissful phantasy in which a wonderful, all-satisfying object is contained within. Through the phantasy of projection, the “bad” object is externalized, and through the phantasy of introjection, the “good” object is internalized. These defences relate to bodily processes in which substances (milk, faeces) pass through the ego boundaries. For example, the expulsion of excrement gives rise to bodily sensations that are interpreted as objects passing out of the internal world into the external. At a later stage, however, phantasy is less connected with bodily sensations, and with the onset of the “depressive position” (described below), the internal world becomes populated with more symbolic, rather than concretely felt objects.

It is valid to question how the concept of unconscious phantasy relates to Freud's theory of the primary and secondary processes. In many ways, the Kleinian concept cuts across the boundaries between these two modes. This has led to criticism from those who wish to uphold the distinction between primary process thinking, characterized by the work of condensation and displacement, as in the logic and symbolism of dreams, and secondary process thinking, which respects the categories of space and time and is essentially linguistic, obeying the rules of formal logic. In Klein's metapsychology, unlike Freud's, unconscious phantasy is a primary, central activity. It is constantly working with *perception*, modifying as well as being modified by it. (This will be emphasized later by Ehrenzweig in his account of creativity.) Phantasies become increasingly complex with intellectual, emotional, and physical development. They are not only manifested in dreams, but underlie the form and the content of thinking, perception, and creativity. This supposes a conception of time and of mental activity that, according to orthodox psychoanalysis, is not supposed to occur in the unconscious, or in the first year of life. To counter these objections, Isaacs quotes passages from Freud that suggest that the view of a psychic apparatus possessing only a primary process is a fiction (see Freud, 1900a), and that some organization of functioning of the unconscious does exist. Isaacs claims that to allow oral wishes in the first year with conscious memory of the experiences—as Anna Freud had described in her writings—but to deny the function of phantasy, is theoretically inconsistent.

An important concept, linked to that of unconscious phantasy, is the idea of the “inner world”. According to Klein, it is

a complex object-world, which is felt by the individual, in deep layers of the unconscious, to be concretely inside himself, and I therefore use the term “internalised objects” and an “inner world”. This inner world consists of innumerable objects taken into the ego, corresponding partly to the multitude of varying aspects, good and bad, in which the parents (and other people) appeared to the child's unconscious mind throughout various stages of his development. Further, they also represent the real people who are continually becoming internalised in a variety of situations provided by the multitude of ever-changing experiences as well as phantasied ones. In addition, all these objects are in the inner world in an infinitely

complex relation both with each other and the self. [1988a, pp. 362–363]

This inner world is, thus, a complex interaction between both inner and outer experience, but Klein stresses that it is the strength of the inner, unconscious phantasies that will determine just how aspects of the external world will become internalized within, or projected from, the psyche. There is a particularly poignant semi-autobiographical essay by Walter Pater that evokes beautifully “that process of brain building by which we are, each one of us, what we are”—the structuring of the child’s inner world that Klein described some half a century later. Pater described how his protagonist, Florian, recaptures memories about his long-forgotten childhood home and the way that the material objects of his past and the feelings associated with them “had actually become a part; inward and outward being woven through and through each other into one inextricable texture” (Pater, 1878 [1898], pp. 147–169). Pater described this process by which “we see inwardly”—in Kleinian terms, it is our inner phantasies informing and structuring our perception of outer objects and creativity. Klein writes in 1940 that when Freud formulated the notion of the superego as an internalization of the child’s identification with the parents during the Oedipal phase, he was describing the notion of an inner world, under the sway of inner figures that represent both parts of the self and objects in the world. However, as we have seen, Klein believed that the superego was formed much earlier than Freud supposed, and that the mechanisms of projection and introjection exist from birth, leading to the “institution inside ourselves of loved and hated objects, who are felt to be ‘good’ and ‘bad’, and who are interrelated with each other and with the self: that is to say, they constitute an inner world” (Klein, 1988a, p. 362). These figures go to make up the superego, which Freud recognized as the voices and the influence of the actual parents established in the ego.

Klein’s concept of the inner world is dramatically illustrated by her 1929 paper, “Infantile anxiety situations reflected in a work of art and the creative impulse”. This is one of the few examples of her own aesthetic judgement at work, albeit motivated to explicate an aspect of her clinical theory. This paper is the first of the three in which Klein discusses artistic material—the other two being “On

identification" (1955), and "Some reflections on the Oresteia" (1963). In it she gives an analysis of Ravel's operetta, *The Magic Word*, based on a Berlin newspaper review of its performance in Vienna. (For a reappraisal of Klein's paper, see Hindle, 2000.) Klein elaborates the dramatic preoccupation of the child's mind; the vivid way in which inner objects, the furniture of the mind, actually become personified and take on a dramatic life of their own. She points out how these inner figures of the child's world form a kind of narrative full of persecutors, feared and attacked, which is enacted on the stage, with an ensuing poignant state of pity. What is particularly striking is Klein's vivid account of the child's world, revealing an intuitive insight into the phantasy life of the child, one that is less apparent in the harsh, terse style of her clinical writings. At the start of the story, a little boy is denied oral gratification by his mother, who tells him that he will "have dry bread and no sugar" in his tea. This leads him to fly into a rage. He becomes aggressive and turns hostile towards objects inside his home: he breaks china, tries to stab a pet squirrel, and then he attempts to wrench the pendulum from the grandfather clock. However, the things he maltreated now take on a persecuting and malevolent life of their own: the armchair refuses to let him sit in it, the stove spits out a shower of sparks at him. The child tries to escape outside but wherever he goes, there are threatening and hostile forces directed towards him—there has been "a rent in the fabric of the world". The whole world of the little boy becomes turbulent, claustrophobic, and terrifyingly confused. However, the boy notices a squirrel that has been bitten; instinctively he takes pity on it and binds the wound. The child whispers the "magic word"—"Mama"—and the whole world changes towards him. All the creatures that have hated him are now kindly disposed towards him. He is restored to the human world of kindness and helping. Even the little animals cannot refrain from themselves calling out, "Mama" (Klein, 1988a, p. 211).

Klein's description of the little boy's world is one of the few instances when we see her actually "interpreting" an artwork; however, as with Freud, psychoanalytic theory takes priority, for she is concerned with the artwork only to the extent that it illustrates her theory of the inner world. But, where Freud (and the psycho-biographers) probably would have tended to interpret the

story in terms of the writer's psychic life, or vice versa, Klein's account focuses on the ongoing psychic dynamics of the world of unconscious phantasy and the importance of the reparative drive for an accurate perception of reality. The focus is less on a piecemeal analysis of individual symbols than on a broader account of how the play itself represents the child's lively inner realm. Through her analysis of the opera, Klein also shows how the inner and the outer worlds are closely meshed: indeed, it would seem that the inner world largely supervenes on the outer realm, for the child's perception of his real mother depends on his capacity to acknowledge the reality of his inner world—in this case, his destructive attacks and aggressive impulses. The urge to restore wholeness brings about a major shift in the child's perception of the world, and in its perception of him.

After her analysis of the operetta, Klein concludes this paper by referring to an article by Karen Michaelis, titled "The empty space", which gives an account of the painter Ruth Kjar, whose painting—according to Klein—symbolized a working through of inner emptiness and depression, enabling the painter to mourn her dead mother. Here, for the first time, we see Klein linking the movement from aggression to the need for restitution (also illustrated by the operetta story), specifically with a process of visual creativity. Before Ruth had begun painting, there had been no evidence of any pronounced creative talent. According to the article, at times she was subject to bouts of depression and despair, described by Michaelis (and quoted by Klein) as follows:

there was only one dark spot in her life. In the midst of the happiness which was natural to her she would suddenly be plunged into the deepest melancholy. A melancholy that was suicidal. If she tried to account for this, she would say something to this effect: "There is an empty space in me, which I can never fill!" [1988a, p. 215]

When a picture was removed from her lounge wall (it belonged to her brother-in-law, who was a professional painter) leaving an empty space, this released a huge wave of depression in Ruth, which, says Michaelis, seemed to coincide with the emptiness within her. However, the day after the picture had been removed, Ruth decided that she would buy some artist's materials, although

she had not the faintest idea of how to use them, so that she could fill the persecuting, empty space on the wall with a something of her own. Apparently, when her husband returned home in the evening, he was confronted by a painting of a life-sized, naked negress, and he found it very hard to believe that it was actually her work! He asked his brother (the painter) to see it for himself, and he thought that it could only have been painted by an experienced painter. According to the article, after this successful first attempt, Ruth went on to paint several other “masterly” pictures and had them exhibited to the critics and the public.

Klein reflects on the meaning of the “empty space” within Ruth, connecting it with the feeling that there was something lacking inside her body. Klein relates this inner emptiness to what she had defined in her earlier (1929) paper, as the “most profound anxiety experienced by girls . . . equivalent of castration anxiety in boys”. According to her theory, the little girl’s sadistic wish to rob her mother of all the good things inside (father’s penis, mother’s babies) and to destroy the mother herself gives rise to the anxiety that the mother will retaliate and rob the little girl of the good things inside her body (especially phantasied children), and she fears that her body will be damaged and destroyed by mother’s retaliatory attacks. In seeking an illustration for these ideas, Klein looks at the kinds of pictures that Ruth felt compelled to paint after the first picture of the negress. It is significant that they were all portraits of women—her sister, her mother, and also one of an old woman. Klein quotes Michaelis’s description of these last two portraits, first the old woman and then the one of her mother:

And now Ruth cannot stop. The next picture represents an old woman, bearing the mark of years and disillusionment. Her skin is wrinkled, her hair faded, her gentle tired eyes are troubled. She gazes before her with a disconsolate resignation of old age, with a look that seems to say: “Do not trouble me any more. My time is so nearly at an end!”

This is not the impression we receive from Ruth’s latest piece of work—the portrait of her Irish-Canadian mother. This lady has a long time before her before she must put her lips to the cup of renunciation. Slim, imperious, challenging, she stands there with a moonlight-coloured shawl draped over her shoulders; she has the

effect of a magnificent woman of primitive times, who could engage in combat with the children of the desert with her naked hands. What a chin! What force there is in her haughty gaze! The blank space has been filled. [Klein, 1988a, p. 217]

Michaelis's verdict implies that, through the painting of her mother, not only has the "empty space" of the canvas been filled, but also Ruth's inner emptiness (depression) has been worked through via the act of painting.

Klein regards it as obvious that the desire to make reparation, to make good the injury psychologically done to the mother as well as to restore herself, was at the root of Ruth's compelling urge to paint. Klein interprets that Ruth's picture of the frail old woman expressed "the primary, sadistic desire to destroy" her mother; "to see her old, worn out, marred" is also the cause of her need to represent her in full possession of her strength and beauty. By doing so, says Klein, "the daughter can allay her own anxiety and can endeavour to restore her mother and make her new through her portrait". Klein also adds that she has found in her analysis of children, "when the representation of destructive wishes is succeeded by an expression of reactive tendencies, we constantly find that drawing and painting are used as means to *restore* people" (*ibid.*, p. 218, my italic).

Klein's "Infantile anxiety situations" is a very significant paper, both from a clinical perspective and in terms of laying the foundation for a Kleinian aesthetic, as later taken up by Segal and others. For the first time she connects creativity with deep early anxieties, construing the urge to create as arising from the impulse to restore and repair the injured object after a destructive attack. She also looks specifically at visual creativity for the first time and at its relationship to depression and the desire for reparation. A few years later, this idea was to have a significant place in her theory of the depressive position, foreshadowing further formulations. For example, the observation that, in development, fear of an attacking mother gives way to fear of losing a real, loving mother, anticipates exactly Klein's later account of the change in anxiety content from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position. Through her analysis of Ravel's operetta and the artist Ruth Kjär, Klein was able to make connections between aggression, depression, and the

ensuing desire for repairing a world damaged by one's own hostility. She demonstrates how a work of art can vividly depict the dynamics of the inner world and unconscious phantasy without recourse to knowledge (which may be either implied or empirical) of the artist's history. When greater attention is paid to the relationship between inner and outer realms, together with the implications of the child's sadistic and aggressive attacks directed to the mother's body, psychoanalytic criticism does not have to concern itself with unlocking the mysteries of the artist's psyche, nor does it have to regard the artwork as if it were a network of symbols waiting to be deciphered. The concept of the inner world remains a major theme in Klein's work, and lies at the heart of a Kleinian approach to art and aesthetics. Indeed, as Hinshelwood emphasizes, "art is an other world, and . . . it is the internal world described by Melanie Klein" (1989, p. 434).

The paranoid-schizoid and the depressive positions

As early as three months old, the child begins to recognize that the bad mother who frustrates him, and whom he has destroyed in phantasy many times, is also the good mother who tenderly meets his needs. It is this recognition that good and bad object are actually one that lies at the heart of what Klein calls the "depressive position" (Klein, 1935). By helping to alleviate the intensity of paranoid anxiety, loving parents may help this integrative process along. Nevertheless, Klein seems to understand the internal integration of the good and bad parental imagos as a normal developmental sequence, driven by the child's increasing cognitive maturity rather than by environmental factors. The depressive position involves both fear and concern regarding the fate of those whom the child has destroyed in phantasy. (It should be noted that while Klein, in her attempt to maintain continuity with Freud and Abraham, sometimes used the term position as though it were equivalent to a developmental stage, this is actually not the case. Her term "position" implies a psychological state of affairs, or relationship to objects, that can be returned to at any time.) The child attempts to resolve his depressive anxiety through reparation: the mother and others are repaired through restorative phantasies, and actions that symbolize

love and reparation. If depressive anxiety is strong enough, it might lead the child to employ defences characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position, such as splitting the mother once again into good and bad. By making mother bad, the child avoids his own guilt and depressive anxiety—these arising from the feeling that he has destroyed what he loves and needs.

The task of the child in the depressive position is to establish a solid relationship with good internal objects. On this foundation the rest of the ego is built. If the child fails to do this, he will be permanently vulnerable to depressive illness. New, more sophisticated defences emerge with the depressive position. In the paranoid-schizoid stage, the primary defences against persecutors are the splitting of good and bad objects, idealization, and violent expulsion, associated with projective identification. The depressive position entails the emergence of manic defences, particularly in its earliest stages. As Segal notes, dependence on the object and ambivalence are denied: the object is controlled omnipotently in phantasy and treated with either triumph or contempt, so that its loss is not so painful or frightening (Segal, 1973, p. 80). Sometimes, Klein refers to this as “manic reparation”. This must be distinguished from reparation proper, which is not a defence against paranoid-schizoid and depressive anxieties, but, rather, expresses genuine concern for the object *qua* object. Whereas paranoid anxiety involves fear of destruction by persecutors, depressive anxiety fears for the fate of others—real and imagined—in the face of the child’s own aggression and hate. As a result of his hostility, the child fears that he has damaged and destroyed all that is good in the world, as well as within himself. The child attempts to lessen guilt and anxiety through phantasies and actions, directed primarily towards the mother, that are restorative in nature. The child tries to recreate the other it has destroyed, first by phantasies of omnipotent reparation, later by affectionate and healing gestures towards real others, constituting the drive towards creative effort.

The kinds of depressive anxiety experienced by the child change as the depressive position is worked through. At the early stages of the depressive position, the love and concern for others seems primarily motivated by fear that the phantasied destruction of the good objects will also destroy the self. However, the concern for the fate of the object soon comes to reflect a genuine concern for the

object as a separate entity, which Klein sees as stemming from the child's gratitude for the love it has received from his mother. The loss of a loved person is an experience that can reactivate early depressive anxiety later in life. (In her biography of Klein, Grosskurth [1987, pp. 215–216] observes that the sudden death of Klein's eldest son, Hans, in 1933, probably contributed to her interest in mourning and depression.) Freud argues that the work of mourning consists of reality testing in which the mourner comes to accept that the loved one is no longer there, but that life is still worth living. Klein adds a further perspective: the loss of a loved external object reactivates earlier depressive anxieties, in which the mourner fears he will lose his good internal objects as well. The mourner thus finds himself confronted with a catastrophic double loss, in which the threatened loss of his good internal objects leaves him exposed again to primitive paranoid fears of persecution. The reality testing that Freud talks of must be enlarged to include the vicissitudes of the inner world in order to determine if one's inner objects are secure and complete, even if the external ones have gone. If the mourner has worked through his original depressive position sufficiently well to do this, the experience of mourning can be of psychological benefit. In normal mourning, Klein says

the individual is reinstating his actually lost loved object; but he is also at the same time re-establishing inside himself his first loved objects—ultimately the “good” parents—whom, when the actual loss occurred, he felt in danger of losing as well. It is by reinstating inside himself the “good” parents as well as the recently lost person, and by rebuilding his inner world, which was disintegrated and in danger, that he overcomes his grief, regains security, and achieves true harmony and peace. [1988a [1940], p. 369]

Although the paranoid–schizoid position precedes the depressive position, these positions actually coexist, or rather alternate, throughout life. Even quite normal individuals may show an ego organization characteristic of the paranoid–schizoid position when confronted with stress and loss, a manifestation that is not the same as regression to a previous developmental stage. Thus, one is not necessarily diagnosing a serious mental disorder by saying that an individual is operating in a paranoid–schizoid way, even though the emergence of a full-blown paranoid–schizoid position in an

adult could be classed as a psychosis. In fact, Klein seems to have changed her view on the “positions” as time went by, as Meltzer points out. Where she had written of overcoming the depressive position, her later work emphasizes its attainment or preservation (Meltzer, 1978, pp. 10–11). This change of emphasis captures the essence of the depressive position more clearly. It is a developmental achievement that must be defended and regained throughout life, because stress, as well as depression itself, reinforce and activate the paranoid–schizoid defences.

Klein did not fully elaborate her views on the paranoid–schizoid position until 1946, eleven years after her formulation of the depressive position, even though she placed it as developmentally a prior phase. Klein characterizes the earliest organization of the defences as the “paranoid–schizoid position” in order to stress both the way in which the young child’s fears take the form of phantasies of persecution and the way he defends against persecution by splitting, a schizoid phenomenon. Through splitting, the child attempts to defend against the dangers of bad objects (that is, phantasies) by keeping these images separate and isolated from the self and the good objects. Ronald Fairbairn, an “Independent” psychoanalyst working in Scotland, had used the term “schizoid position” in 1941 to describe the way in which the infant’s ego splits almost at birth into loving (idealizing) and hating (persecutory) aspects (Fairbairn, 1952, pp. 28–58). Earlier, Klein herself had written of the way in which aggression is split off from love and experienced as paranoia. In 1946 she linked Fairbairn’s phrase with her own, calling the earliest developmental stage the “paranoid–schizoid position” in order to stress the co-existence of splitting and persecutory anxiety, one that stems from the operation of the death instinct. Freud had argued that while the infant may experience anxiety, he does not and cannot fear death, because he does not yet have an ego. Klein argued, however, that there is sufficient ego at birth for the child to fear death, which it experiences as a fear of disintegration in the face of its own hatred: “The terror of disintegration and total annihilation is the deepest fear stirred by the operation of the death instinct within” (Segal, 1981, p. 116).

To defend against this anxiety, the infant projects the death instinct outward. However, since even the youngest infant is capable of primitive phantasies involving various part-object relation-

ships, this projection creates a hostile externalized object—the “bad breast”—that seeks to destroy the infant. Much of Klein’s work with adults sought to reactivate, and subsequently to integrate, incredibly primitive images, such as the phantasies of Mr B, “in whose phantasies the bad breast bites, penetrates and soils”—a projection of Mr B’s own sadism. What Mr B had in fact done was to project not merely his anxieties and impulses, but also aggressive parts of his own body into the bad object, which then came back to haunt him (*ibid.*, p. 119). Here is the foundation of the process that Klein called “projective identification”. The object is wounded by an aggressive thrusting into the object of a part of the self that was felt as bad. It is this part of the self that comes back to attack the self in the paranoid–schizoid position. Projective identification, however, also has its benign aspects, notably developed in the work of Bion and Segal, who emphasize its importance in the development of the capacity to think and communicate. As we shall see below, this mechanism plays an important role in creative and aesthetic experience.

In the paranoid–schizoid position, the infant projects outward not only his own aggression but also his primitive love, which, through interaction with unconscious phantasy, creates a good object—what Klein calls the “good breast”. Here we see the source of what is at once valuable, yet also very problematic, in Klein. The real parents and their reactions to the infant, whether loving or frustrating, have relatively little to do with this process. According to her theory, the bad breast and good breast, rather than being primarily responses to parental frustration and love, are generated internally. The aim of the infantile ego at this stage is to introject and identify with its ideal object, while keeping the bad objects away via a continuous process of projection and externalization. Segal notes that while the good object is usually perceived to be whole and intact, the bad object is fragmented into a series of persecutors. This is partly because the bad object represents externalized parts of the ego fragmented under the pressure of the death instinct, and partly because the oral sadism directed against the bad object leads to the bad object being seen as bitten into small bits (*ibid.*, p. 117). The infant’s foremost anxiety at this stage is that his persecutors will destroy him and his good object. The primary defence is not so much projection (already used to create good and bad objects

and externalize them) but splitting and idealization, in which the infant holds the good and bad objects rigidly apart, as though they exist in separate psychic worlds that never touch. Idealization reinforces this splitting process, in which the good breast is seen to be all good, and sometimes all powerful, so that he can provide secure protection against the persecutors (in the form of a manic, omnipotent defence).

Though fixation at the paranoid–schizoid stage is characteristic of schizophrenia and other severe emotional disorders, it should not be seen as primarily pathological, but as a crucial step in emotional development by which the infant learns to overcome his fear of disintegration by introjecting and identifying with the good breast. Splitting, in this sense, is an absolutely essential step in learning to differentiate good from bad. Primal splitting and idealization require a delicate balancing. In the case of too little, the child is unable to protect himself from his own aggression and lives in constant anxiety that his bad objects will overcome his good ones and destroy the self. Too much separation, however, will prevent the good and bad objects from ever being seen as one, an insight—the result of normal development—that is the foundation of the depressive position, and (according to Kleinian theory) of all creative and artistic endeavour.

Innate envy

In *Envy and Gratitude* (1988b) Klein approaches the problem of creativity from a new angle. Here she posits that the first object experienced as manifesting creativity is the feeding breast, and she also describes the detrimental effect of excessive envy on creativity. If the anxiety associated with the paranoid–schizoid position is not too great, one will naturally enter the depressive position. However, it is not merely anxiety but also envy that stands as a barrier to the integrative process associated with the depressive position. Indeed, Klein is the first psychoanalyst to make envy a key psychoanalytic concept. For Klein, it is an oral- and anal-sadistic expression of the death instinct and has a constitutional basis.

Klein cites Crabb's *English Synonyms* in her distinction between envy and jealousy, where "jealousy fears to lose what it has; envy

is pained at seeing another have that which it wants for itself". Klein adds that the jealous person wants to exclude another from the source of good, as occurs with the Oedipus conflict, for example. Envy is also distinguished from greed, where the latter is "an impetuous and insatiable craving, exceeding what the subject needs and what the object is able and willing to give". At the unconscious level, greed is accompanied with phantasies of scooping out and devouring the breast—i.e., destructive introjection. Envy seeks not only to rob in this way, but also to put bad parts of the self into the mother, in order to spoil and destroy her: in "the deepest sense this means destroying her creativeness" (Klein, 1988b, p. 180). Frequently it does so out of sheer spite, for if the envious person cannot have all the good himself, then no one else shall have it either. In this case, envy serves a defensive function. If the good is destroyed, then there is no reason to feel the discomfort of envy. Shakespeare's Iago is a good example of the envious personality at its most psychopathic extreme. His cruel pursuit of the progressive downfall of Othello, Cassio, Desdemona, and other innocent third parties, is motivated purely from his hatred and resentment of their goodness. Iago says of Cassio, that he has a "daily beauty in his life / That makes me ugly" (Shakespeare, *Othello*, 5.1. ??). The innate quality of envy is pointed out by Iago's wife, Emilia, who says that there are some who are "not ever jealous for the cause / But jealous for they are jealous: 'tis a monster / Begot upon itself, born on itself" (*ibid.*, 3. 4. ??). Iago's spiteful plan to blacken Desdemona's purity, turning "her virtue into pitch" (2. 3. ??, is an excellent example of the desire to spoil an object because of its goodness. Indeed, he wishes to pervert her "goodness", by creating out of it "the net / That shall enmesh 'em all" (2. 3. ??).

Envy is very depleting, because it drains the world of its goodness. Too much of it interferes with the primal split between the good and bad breast, and the building up of a good object becomes virtually impossible, in that even the good is spoiled and devalued precisely because it is good. The individual is left isolated in a world of persecutors with no good objects to rely on, around which to consolidate the ego. Likewise, Iago does not trust anyone: he suspects that he has been cuckolded by Othello; he does not trust his wife, and he feels threatened by Cassio's position of authority. Iago thus has no "good inner object" with which he can identify. All

goodness perceived in others is regarded as alien and persecuting, and it is because he cannot possess their goodness that he actively seeks its destruction.

Klein makes the point that envy is probably the worst of all emotions because it destroys all sources of creativity and value both in the self and in the world. It also disrupts the process of reparation, associated with the depressive position. Because envy hates goodness, the envious person does not feel guilt at aggressive impulses directed towards the good object. It is thus at odds with the task of restoring the object to wholeness, since doing so would only enhance envy by reinforcing the recognition that the good lies outside the self. As a result, the child destroys his good objects and loses the ability to distinguish between what is good and what is bad. This heightens feelings of persecution; thus, envy bars the successful working through of the depressive position, as well as the strengthening of the ego. Excessive envy produces a vicious circle: the more the good object inside is spoiled, the more depleted the ego feels, and this, in turn, increases envy even more. Perhaps the most ironic expression of envy occurs in what is called the "negative therapeutic reaction". In this situation, patients are unable to accept the help of the analyst because they see the analyst as having something good to offer. It is as though the patient must stay ill in order to deny that the analyst and his interpretations have any use.

Envy's effect on the creative capacities of the individual and on the capacity to experience aesthetic pleasure has implications not only for the production of art, but also for art criticism. Klein writes that:

My psychoanalytic experience has shown me that envy of creativeness is a fundamental element in the disturbance of the creative process. To spoil and destroy the initial source of goodness soon leads to destroying and attacking the babies that the mother contains and results in the good object being turned into a hostile, critical and envious one. The super-ego figure on which strong envy has been projected becomes particularly persecutory and interferes with thought processes and every productive activity, ultimately with creativeness.

The envious and destructive attitude towards the breast underlies destructive criticism which is often described as "biting" and

“pernicious”. It is particularly creativeness which comes the object of these attacks [. . .] Constructive criticism has different sources, it aims at helping the other person and furthering his work. Sometimes it derives from a strong identification with the person whose work is under discussion. Maternal or fatherly attitudes may also enter, and often a confidence in one’s own creativeness counteracts envy. [Klein, 1988b, p. 202]

We will see later, in the work of Bion and Meltzer, that envy of one’s own creativity, and also envy of the created work itself, may be a significant factor in artistic inhibition and appreciation. Klein’s theory of envy has also helped to illuminate the vicissitudes of critical practice—both from the point of view of the artist as his own critic, and also the consequences of envy for the perception and evaluation of the art-object. Roger Money-Kyrle has drawn attention to the function of envy in both artist and critic. He believed that artistic activity is never completely free from envy, both of other artists’ achievements and of the creative parts of the self. It may be a powerful spur to personal achievement, as well as a potential source of persecutory anxieties that inhibit or impede success. He writes that

Since no one . . . is wholly free from envy, the internal saboteur is never wholly absent. If present only in a small degree, it may act as a spur; and I think that, even when too strong to be directly opposed, it can sometimes be cheated. There are, for example, over-modest artists who disclaim the creative originality which their work in fact displays. The price they pay for their success is that they must never admit or enjoy it; for if they did, it would desert them. More often, however, the presence of a powerful saboteur inside results in failure. And if, as seems likely, people seldom attempt success in art unless they are aware of some technical ability, most failure probably spring more from attacks of inverted envy than from lack of potential skill. [Money-Kyrle, 1961, p. 116]

Likewise, for a “full and correct perception of a work of art”, the critic should not “belittle what he envied, or go to the opposite extreme of over-idealising it”. Klein’s theory of envy (and gratitude) has also been of significance in the aesthetics of philosopher, Richard Wollheim, who concludes, however, that “it goes without saying that we shall not find powerful chronic envy within the orbit

of art. Envy of such order makes creativity impossible" (Wollheim, 1987, pp. 231–232).

Overview of Klein's contribution

In short, Klein's development of Freud's metapsychology enabled great leaps to take place in both clinical theory and in psychoanalytic aesthetics. Klein's and Segal's accounts of the processes of symbol formation and unconscious phantasy reach deep into the heart of the meaning of meaning itself. In addition, Klein's account of the inner world enriched the language of classical psychoanalysis and elaborated the way in which psychic functioning, ostensibly the world of the imagination, structures our relationship to the external world. The implication of this inner world was to assign it the concrete significance of a place, the space where meaning is generated—and the prototype of this space is the child's perceptions (i.e. phantasies about) the mother's body. This was to be of great importance in the aesthetics of both Stokes and Wollheim.

In his essentially neuro-physiological account of the mind, Freud did not find a place for the inner world, and this prevented him from coming very close to the nature of mental health, for his Darwinian model of the mind could only address itself to mental illness and the causal factors implicated in this. Freud also had difficulty, because of his basic mechanistic model, in thinking of emotionality as being central to mental life, and had no language that could effectively describe the nuances of affective experience. As with symbols, Freud could only think of emotionality in a Darwinian way, as a relic of primitive forms of communication, and therefore tended to confuse the experience of emotion with its communication, thus treating it as an indicator of mental functioning rather than as a function itself—akin to a noisy "ghost-in-the-machine".

Klein's work gave an entirely new significance to the concept of phantasy: that unconscious phantasies were transactions actually taking place in the internal world—a communication not only between inner and outer, but a negotiation between inner objects, too. This also gave a new meaning to dreams, which could not be viewed merely as a process for allaying tension in order to preserve

sleep (Freud, 1900a). In Klein's view, dreams could be regarded as part of a dream life that was going on all the time, awake or asleep, effectively cutting through the primary–secondary process distinction and revising the relationship between conscious and unconscious modes of functioning. In many ways, unconscious phantasy can be regarded as “dreaming while awake”. In effect, this transformed psychoanalysis from its status as a Baconian science aiming at explanations leading to absolute truths and laws into a Platonic account, which is essentially a descriptive approach, attempting to observe and describe phenomena that were infinite in their possibilities because they were essentially imaginative and not just neuro-chemical elements of “mental energy” within the brain.

Klein also elevated Freudian psychoanalysis into a Manichean account of the mind where there is an ongoing battle between the psychic forces of love and hate, life and death, fragmentation and integration, the vicissitudes of the struggle in the inner world between the “good breast” and the “bad breast”, all of which structure the developing ego and have profound consequences for adult life. This transformed psychoanalysis into a model that could approach the social and organizational relationships not just intrapsychically (literally, the “gang in the mind”) but also in terms of the external world. It was Bion (1961, 1970) who was to extend this aspect of Klein's thinking most fully. More recently, Alford (1990) has attempted to link Kleinian insights with the critical social theory of the Frankfurt School.

Throughout this chapter, I have tried to show the importance Klein gave to the attainment of the depressive position and its relationship to earlier, more primitive mental states characterized by paranoid–schizoid defences and phantasies. I have suggested that a large part of Klein's preoccupation with depression, loss, persecution, and envy, was greatly bound up with her own traumatic experiences and the hostilities she encountered in both her personal and in her professional life. However, her most powerful theme, throughout her writings, teaches us that adult life cannot flourish without the secure internalization of the depressive position, and the integration and recognition of external reality that this encompasses. Indeed, Klein associated all cultural and creative capacities with the achievement of the depressive position. An awareness of whole, independent objects depends upon the lessening of envious

impulses, accompanied by feelings of gratitude and the capacity for “give and take”. Klein writes that:

enjoyment is always bound up with gratitude; if this gratitude is deeply felt it includes the wish to return goodness received and is thus the basis of generosity. There is always a close connection between being able to accept and to give and both are parts of the relation to the good object and therefore counteract loneliness. Furthermore, the feeling of generosity underlies creativeness and this applies to the infant’s most primitive constructive activities as well as to the constructiveness of the adult. [1988b, p. 310]

The capacity for gratitude in the growing child counterbalances and heals the depleting effects of the impoverishing, envious forces in the psyche. The destructive implications of envy, and the damage it can wreak on the creative and aesthetic capacities, became developed more fully in the later critical writings of Adrian Stokes, as well as British School analysts such as Hanna Segal, Wilfred Bion, Donald Meltzer, and Roger Money-Kyrle. Through their writings, the Kleinian account of innate envy has gradually become established as a significant critical tool in psychoanalytic aesthetics, illuminating the way destructive and depleting forces within the psyche are implicated both intrapsychically in the creative process, and intersubjectively in the dynamics of aesthetic response, including within the practice of art criticism itself.

Note

1. In writing this chapter on Klein, I am indebted to Grosskurth (1986) and to Hughes (1990) for the biographical and historical background. For the clinical perspective, I have drawn on Segal (1973, 1981, 1986, 1991) and Meltzer (1978, 1981).