

Melanie Klein, the woman who developed a theory that emphasized the nurturing and loving relationship between parent and child, had neither a nurturant nor a loving relationship to her own daughter Melitta. The rift between mother and daughter began early. Melitta was the oldest of three children born to parents who did not particularly like one another. When Melitta was 15, her parents separated, and Melitta blamed her mother for this separation and for the divorce that followed. As Melitta matured, her relationship with her mother became more acrimonious.

After Melitta received a medical degree, underwent a personal analysis, and presented scholarly papers to the British Psycho-Analytical Society, she was officially a member of that society, professionally equal to her mother.

Her analyst, Edward Glover, was a bitter rival of Melanie Klein. Glover, who encouraged Melitta's independence, was at least indirectly responsible for Melitta's virulent attacks on her mother. The animosity between mother and daughter became even more intense when Melitta married Walter Schmideberg, another analyst who strongly opposed Klein and who openly supported Anna Freud, Klein's most bitter rival.

Despite being a full member of the British Psycho-Analytical Society, Melitta Schmideberg felt that her mother saw her as an appendage, not a colleague. In a strongly worded letter to her mother in the summer of 1934, Melitta wrote:

I hope you will . . . also allow me to give you some advice. . . . I am very different from you. I already told you years ago that nothing causes a worse reaction in me than trying to force feelings into me—it is the surest way to kill all feelings. . . . I am now grown up and must be independent. I have my own life, my husband. (Quoted in Grosskurth, 1986, p. 199.)

Melitta went on to say that she would no longer relate to her mother in the neurotic manner of her younger years. She now had a shared profession with her mother and insisted that she be treated as an equal.

The story of Melanie Klein and her daughter takes on a new perspective in light of the emphasis that object relations theory places on the importance of the mother-child relationship.

Overview of Object Relations Theory

The **object relations theory** of Melanie Klein was built on careful observations of young children. In contrast to Freud, who emphasized the first 4 to 6 years of life, Klein stressed the importance of the first 4 to 6 *months* after birth. She insisted that the infant's drives (hunger, sex, and so forth) are directed to an object—a breast, a penis, a vagina, and so on. According to Klein, the child's relation to the breast is fundamental and serves as a prototype for later relations to whole objects, such as mother and father. The very early tendency of infants to relate to partial objects gives their experiences an unrealistic or fantasy-like quality that affects all later interpersonal relations. Thus, Klein's ideas tend to shift the focus of psychoanalytic theory from organically based stages of development to the role of early fantasy in the formation of interpersonal relationships.

In addition to Klein, other theorists have speculated on the importance of a child's early experiences with the mother. Margaret Mahler believed that children's

sense of identity rests on a three-step relationship with their mother. First, infants have basic needs cared for by their mother; next, they develop a safe symbiotic relationship with an all-powerful mother; and finally, they emerge from their mother's protective circle and establish their separate individuality. Heinz Kohut theorized that children develop a sense of self during early infancy when parents and others treat them as if they had an individualized sense of identity. John Bowlby investigated infants' attachment to their mother as well as the negative consequences of being separated from their mother. Mary Ainsworth and her colleagues developed a technique for measuring the type of attachment style an infant develops toward its caregiver.

Biography of Melanie Klein

Melanie Reizes Klein was born March 30, 1882, in Vienna, Austria. The youngest of four children born to Dr. Moriz Reizes and his second wife, Libussa Deutsch Reizes, Klein believed that her birth was unplanned—a belief that led to feelings of being rejected by her parents. She felt especially distant to her father, who favored his oldest daughter, Emilie (Sayers, 1991). By the time Melanie was born, her father had long since rebelled against his early Orthodox Jewish training and had ceased to practice any religion. As a consequence, Klein grew up in a family that was neither proreligious nor antireligious.

During her childhood Klein observed both parents working at jobs they did not enjoy. Her father was a physician who struggled to make a living in medicine and eventually was relegated to working as a dental assistant. Her mother ran a shop selling plants and reptiles, a difficult, humiliating, and fearful job for someone who abhorred snakes (H. Segal, 1979). Despite her father's meager income as a doctor, Klein aspired to become a physician.

Klein's early relationships were either unhealthy or ended in tragedy. She felt neglected by her elderly father, whom she saw as cold and distant, and although she loved and idolized her mother, she felt suffocated by her. Klein had a special fondness for her older sister Sidonie, who was 4 years older and who taught Melanie arithmetic and reading. Unfortunately, when Melanie was 4 years old, Sidonie died. In later years, Klein confessed that she never got over grieving for Sidonie (H. Segal, 1992). After her sister's death, Klein became deeply attached to her only brother, Emmanuel, who was nearly 5 years older and who became her close confidant. She idolized her brother, and this infatuation may have contributed to her later difficulties in relating to men. Like Sidonie earlier, Emmanuel tutored Melanie, and his excellent instructions helped her pass the entrance examinations of a reputable preparatory school (Petot, 1990).

When Klein was 18, her father died, but a greater tragedy occurred 2 years later when her beloved brother, Emmanuel, died. Emmanuel's death left Klein devastated. While still in mourning over her brother's death, she married Arthur Klein, an engineer who had been Emmanuel's close friend. Melanie believed that her marriage at age 21 prevented her from becoming a physician, and for the rest of her life, she regretted that she had not reached that goal (Grosskurth, 1986).

Unfortunately, Klein did not have a happy marriage; she dreaded sex and abhorred pregnancy (Grosskurth, 1986). Nevertheless, her marriage to Arthur

produced three children: Melitta, born in 1904; Hans, born in 1907; and Erich, born in 1914. In 1909, the Kleins moved to Budapest, where Arthur had been transferred. There, Klein met Sandor Ferenczi, a member of Freud's inner circle and the person who introduced her into the world of psychoanalysis. When her mother died in 1914, Klein became depressed and entered analysis with Ferenczi, an experience that served as a turning point in her life. That same year she read Freud's *On Dreams* (1901/1953) "and realized immediately that was what I was aiming at, at least during those years when I was so very keen to find out what would satisfy me intellectually and emotionally" (quoted in Grosskurth, 1986, p. 69). At about the same time that she discovered Freud, her youngest child, Erich, was born. Klein was deeply taken by psychoanalysis and trained her son according to Freudian principles. As part of this training, she began to psychoanalyze Erich from the time he was very young. In addition, she also attempted to analyze Melitta and Hans, both of whom eventually went to other analysts. Melitta, who became a psychoanalyst, was analyzed by Karen Horney (see Chapter 6) as well as by others (Grosskurth, 1986). An interesting parallel between Horney and Klein is that Klein later analyzed Horney's two youngest daughters when they were 12 and 9 years old. (Horney's oldest daughter was 14 and refused to be analyzed.) Unlike Melitta's voluntary analysis by Horney, the two Horney children were compelled to attend analytic sessions, not for treatment of any neurotic disorder but as a preventive measure (Quinn, 1987).

Klein separated from her husband in 1919 but did not obtain a divorce for several years. After the separation, she established a psychoanalytic practice in Berlin and made her first contributions to the psychoanalytic literature with a paper dealing with her analysis of Erich, who was not identified as her son until long after Klein's death (Grosskurth, 1998). Not completely satisfied with her own analysis by Ferenczi, she ended the relationship and began an analysis with Karl Abraham, another member of Freud's inner circle. After only 14 months, however, Klein experienced another tragedy when Abraham died. At this point of her life, Klein decided to begin a self-analysis, one that continued for the remainder of her life. Before 1919, psychoanalysts, including Freud, based their theories of child development on their therapeutic work with *adults*. Freud's only case study of a child was Little Hans, a boy whom he saw as a patient only once. Melanie Klein changed that situation by psychoanalyzing children directly. Her work with very young children, including her own, convinced her that children internalize both positive and negative feelings toward their mother and that they develop a superego much earlier than Freud had believed. Her slight divergence from standard psychoanalytic theory brought much criticism from her colleagues in Berlin, causing her to feel increasingly uncomfortable in that city. Then, in 1926, Ernest Jones invited her to London to analyze his children and to deliver a series of lectures on child analysis. These lectures later resulted in her first book, *The Psycho-Analysis of Children* (Klein, 1932). In 1927, she took up permanent residency in England, remaining there until her death on September 22, 1960. On the day of her memorial service, her daughter Melitta delivered a final posthumous insult by giving a professional lecture wearing flamboyant red boots, which scandalized many in her audience (Grosskurth, 1986).

Klein's years in London were marked by division and controversy. Although she continued to regard herself as a Freudian, neither Freud nor his daughter Anna accepted her emphasis on the importance of very early childhood or her analytic technique with children. Her differences with Anna Freud began while the Freuds were still living in Vienna, but they climaxed after Anna moved with her father and mother to London in 1938. Before the arrival of Anna Freud, the English school of psychoanalysis was steadily becoming the "Kleinian School," and Klein's battles were limited mostly to those with her daughter, Melitta, and these battles were both fierce and personal.

In 1934, Klein's older son, Hans, was killed in a fall. Melitta, who had recently moved to London with her psychoanalyst husband, Walter Schmideberg, maintained that her brother had committed suicide, and she blamed her mother for his death. During that same year, Melitta began an analysis with Edward Glover, one of Klein's rivals in the British Society. Klein and her daughter then became even more personally estranged and professionally antagonistic, and Melitta maintained her animosity even after her mother's death.

Although Melitta Schmideberg was not a supporter of Anna Freud, her persistent antagonism toward Klein increased the difficulties of Klein's struggle with Anna Freud, who never recognized the possibility of analyzing young children (King & Steiner, 1991; Mitchell & Black, 1995). The friction between Klein and Anna Freud never abated, with each side claiming to be more "Freudian" than the other (Hughes, 1989). Finally, in 1946 the British Society accepted three training procedures—the traditional one of Melanie Klein, the one advocated by Anna Freud, and a Middle Group that accepted neither training school but was more eclectic in its approach. By such a division, the British Society remained intact, albeit with an uneasy alliance.

Introduction to Object Relations Theory

Object relations theory is an offspring of Freud's instinct theory, but it differs from its ancestor in at least three general ways. First, object relations theory places less emphasis on biologically based drives and more importance on consistent patterns of interpersonal relationships. Second, as opposed to Freud's rather paternalistic theory that emphasizes the power and control of the father, object relations theory tends to be more maternal, stressing the intimacy and nurturing of the mother. Third, object relations theorists generally see human contact and relatedness—not sexual pleasure—as the prime motive of human behavior.

More specifically, however, the concept of object relations has many meanings, just as there are many object relations theorists. This chapter concentrates primarily on Melanie Klein's work, but it also briefly discusses the theories of Margaret S. Mahler, Heinz Kohut, John Bowlby, and Mary Ainsworth. In general, Mahler's work was concerned with the infant's struggle to gain autonomy and a sense of self; Kohut's, with the formation of the self; Bowlby's, with the stages of separation anxiety; and Ainsworth's, with styles of attachment.

If Klein is the mother of object relations theory, then Freud himself is the father. Recall from Chapter 2 that Freud (1915/1957a) believed instincts or drives have an *impetus*, a *source*, an *aim*, and an *object*, with the latter two having the

Please Mark These “True” or “False” as They Apply to You.

1. T F It's very important to me to please other people.
2. T F When I feel distressed, I seek out an emotionally strong person to tell my troubles to.
3. T F I prefer routine more than change.
4. T F I enjoy being in a powerful leadership position.
5. T F I believe in and follow the advice: “Do unto others before they can do unto me.”
6. T F I enjoy being the life of the party.
7. T F It's very important to me to be recognized for my accomplishments.
8. T F I enjoy seeing the achievements of my friends.
9. T F I usually end relationships when they begin to get too close.
10. T F It's very difficult for me to overlook my own mistakes and personal flaws.

These questions represent 10 important needs proposed by Karen Horney. We discuss these items in the section on neurotic needs. Please know that marking an item in the direction of neurotic needs does not indicate that you are emotionally unstable or driven by neurotic needs.

Overview of Psychoanalytic Social Theory

The **psychoanalytic social theory** of Karen Horney (pronounced Horn-eye) was built on the assumption that social and cultural conditions, especially childhood experiences, are largely responsible for shaping personality. People who do not have their needs for love and affection satisfied during childhood develop *basic hostility* toward their parents and, as a consequence, suffer from *basic anxiety*. Horney theorized that people combat basic anxiety by adopting one of three fundamental styles of relating to others: (1) moving toward people, (2) moving against people, or (3) moving away from people. Normal individuals may use any of these modes of relating to other people, but neurotics are compelled to rigidly rely on only one. Their compulsive behavior generates a basic *intrapsychic conflict* that may take the form of either an idealized self-image or self-hatred. The idealized self-image is expressed as (1) neurotic search for glory, (2) neurotic claims, or (3) neurotic pride. Self-hatred is expressed as either self-contempt or alienation from self.

Although Horney's writings are concerned mostly with the neurotic personality, many of her ideas can also be applied to normal individuals. This chapter looks at Horney's basic theory of neurosis, compares her ideas to those of Freud, examines her views on feminine psychology, and briefly discusses her ideas on psychotherapy.

As with other personality theorists, Horney's views on personality are a reflection of her life experiences. Bernard Paris (1994) wrote that “Horney's insights were derived from her efforts to relieve her own pain, as well as that of her patients. If her suffering had been less intense, her insights would have

been less profound” (p. xxv). We look now at the life of this often-troubled woman.

Biography of Karen Horney

The biography of Karen Horney has several parallels with the life of Melanie Klein (see Chapter 5). Each was born during the 1880s, the youngest child of a 50-year-old father and his second wife. Each had older siblings who were favored by the parents, and each felt unwanted and unloved. Also, each had wanted to become a physician, but only Horney fulfilled that ambition. Finally, both Horney and Klein engaged in an extended self-analysis—Horney’s, beginning with her diaries from age 13 to 26, continuing with her analysis by Karl Abraham, and culminating with her book *Self-Analysis* (Quinn, 1987).

Karen Danielsen Horney was born in Eilbek, a small town near Hamburg, Germany, on September 15, 1885. She was the only daughter of Berndt (Wackels) Danielsen, a sea captain, and Clothilda van Ronzelen Danielsen, a woman nearly 18 years younger than her husband. The only other child of this marriage was a son, about 4 years older than Karen. However, the old sea captain had been married earlier and had four other children, most of whom were adults by the time Horney was born. The Danielsen family was an unhappy one, in part because Karen’s older half-siblings turned their father against his second wife. Karen felt great hostility toward her stern, devoutly religious father and regarded him as a religious hypocrite. However, she idolized her mother, who both supported and protected her against the stern old sea captain. Nevertheless, Karen was not a happy child. She resented the favored treatment given to her older brother, and in addition, she worried about the bitterness and discord between her parents.

When she was 13, Horney decided to become a physician, but at that time no university in Germany admitted women. By the time she was 16, this situation had changed. So Horney—over the objections of her father, who wanted her to stay home and take care of the household—entered the gymnasium, a school that would lead to a university and then to medical school. On her own for the first time, Karen was to remain independent for the rest of her life. According to Paris (1994), however, Horney’s independence was mostly superficial. On a deeper level, she retained a compulsive need to merge with a great man. This morbid dependency, which typically included idealization and fear of inciting angry rejection, haunted Horney during her relationships with a series of men.

In 1906, she entered the University of Freiburg, becoming one of the first women in Germany to study medicine. There she met Oskar Horney, a political science student. Their relationship began as a friendship, but it eventually became a romantic one. After their marriage in 1909, the couple settled in Berlin, where Oskar, now with a PhD, worked for a coal company and Karen, not yet with an MD, specialized in psychiatry.

By this time, Freudian psychoanalysis was becoming well established, and Karen Horney became familiar with Freud’s writings. Early in 1910, she began an analysis with Karl Abraham, one of Freud’s close associates and a man who later analyzed Melanie Klein. After Horney’s analysis was terminated, she attended Abraham’s evening seminars, where she became acquainted with other psychoanalysts. By 1917, she had written her first paper on psychoanalysis, “The Technique of

Psychoanalytic Therapy” (Horney, 1917/1968), which reflected the orthodox Freudian view and gave little indication of Horney’s subsequent independent thinking.

The early years of her marriage were filled with many notable personal experiences for Horney. Her father and mother, who were now separated, died within less than a year of each other; she gave birth to three daughters in 5 years; she received her MD degree in 1915 after 5 years of psychoanalysis; and, in her quest for the right man, she had several love affairs (Paris, 1994; Quinn, 1987).

After World War I, the Horneyes lived a prosperous, suburban lifestyle with several servants and a chauffeur. Oskar did well financially while Karen enjoyed a thriving psychiatric practice. This idyllic scene, however, soon ended. The inflation and economic disorder of 1923 cost Oskar his job, and the family was forced to move back to an apartment in Berlin. In 1926, Karen and Oskar separated but did not officially divorce until 1938 (Paris, 1994).

The early years following her separation from Oskar were the most productive of Horney’s life. In addition to seeing patients and caring for her three daughters, she became more involved with writing, teaching, traveling, and lecturing. Her papers now showed important differences with Freudian theory. She believed that culture, not anatomy, was responsible for psychic differences between men and women. When Freud reacted negatively to Horney’s position, she became even more outspoken in her opposition.

In 1932, Horney left Germany for a position as associate director of the newly established Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute. Several factors contributed to her decision to immigrate—the anti-Jewish political climate in Germany (although Horney was not Jewish), increasing opposition to her unorthodox views, and an opportunity to extend her influence beyond Berlin. During the 2 years she spent in Chicago, she met Margaret Mead and John Dollard. In addition, she renewed acquaintances with Erich Fromm and his wife, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, whom she had known in Berlin. During the next 10 years, Horney and Fromm were close friends, greatly influencing one another and eventually becoming lovers (Hornstein, 2000).

After 2 years in Chicago, Horney moved to New York, where she taught at the New School for Social Research. While in New York, she became a member of the Zodiac group that included Fromm, Fromm-Reichmann, and others. Although Horney was a member of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute, she seldom agreed with the established members. Moreover, her book *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (1939) made her the leader of an opposition group. In this book, Horney called for abandoning the instinct theory and placing more emphasis on ego and social influences. In 1941, she resigned from the institute over issues of dogma and orthodoxy and helped form a rival organization—the Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis (AAP). This new group, however, also quickly suffered from internal strife. In 1943, Fromm (whose intimate relationship with Horney had recently ended) and several others resigned from the AAP, leaving that organization without its strongest members. Despite this rift, the association continued, but under a new name—the Karen Horney Psychoanalytic Institute. In 1952, Horney established the Karen Horney Clinic.

In 1950, Horney published her most important work, *Neurosis and Human Growth*. This book sets forth theories that were no longer merely a reaction to Freud but rather were an expression of her own creative and independent thinking. After a short illness, Horney died of cancer on December 4, 1952. She was 65 years old.