

# Enneagram Type is With Us At Birth: A Reply to Bea Chestnut

by Susan Rhodes

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In an article published in the first edition of *Enneagram Journal*, “Understanding the Development of Personality Type,”<sup>1</sup> author Bea Chestnut describes the parallels she sees between the tripartite enneagram and three stages of early personality development as described in the psychoanalytic literature. She argues that the enneagram and psychoanalysis share a common perspective on the nature of human personality—the idea that personality is the outcome of early conditioning, much of which is negative. The personality that therefore develops is actually false in nature, and as such, gets in the way of both our relationship with other human beings and our relationship with God. She says that understanding the nature of this false personality self and how it develops offers us a way to grow to our full potential.

According to Chestnut, the enneagram delineates the forms that the false self can assume while psychoanalysis<sup>2</sup> demonstrates the mechanism by which the false self develops in the first place. Thus, the enneagram reveals the nine patterns “that get in the way of the creative and free-flowing expression of a person’s real, creative self” (p. 22); psychoanalysis focuses on “the vicissitudes of early childhood relationships and their impact on the child’s development” (p. 24). If we combine these two systems, Chestnut maintains, we can create an integrated model of personality that supports personal growth work, therapeutic intervention, and spiritual transformation.

This is the author’s argument in a nutshell. It is an interesting argument, in that it attempts to account not only for the nature of our enneagram type, but how that type comes to develop in the first place. But as far as I can determine, it is not a new argument. As Chestnut points out, its origins lie in the work of psychiatrist Claudio Naranjo. What Chestnut adds to the mix is the argument that it is possible to establish a relationship between the three enneagram centers and several three-part psychoanalytic theories of personality development. By doing so, we will be able to “gain insight into the essentially dialectical nature of development, gain faith in the accuracy of these models, and enhance the usefulness of the common insights of the different models” (p. 29).

I’m not sure exactly what this means. But I was intrigued enough with the ideas in this article to delve into the psychoanalytic literature and get out my Naranjo books (plus a few others) in order to figure out for myself what intrinsic relationship, if any, exists between psychoanalysis and the enneagram. Realizing that the roots of psychoanalysis are in the 1890s, I also looked at recent empirical research on infant development to see whether the psychoanalytic approach to personality development is compatible with recent research findings on personality development.

In this article, I discuss the nature of psychoanalysis and the implications of adopting a psychoanalytic framework for enneagram work. Essentially, the results of my inquiry convince me that the psychoanalytic approach does indeed have something to contribute to our understanding of human nature and personality. But its contribution is not empirical—that is, it is not the kind of contribution that will enable us to definitively prove anything about human nature, particularly that personality is formed mainly by negative childhood conditioning. Its greatest contribution is to show us a way of thinking that discourages scientific reductionism and the tendency to discount as valueless anything that cannot be measured using the technology of the day.

Thus, psychoanalysis reminds us that the psyche is something complex, layered, and subtle in nature; it is not just a black box, biological computer, or the product of random mutation. To the extent that psychoanalysis gives us an alternative to these kinds of reductionist models, it renders a valuable service.

At the same time, it is also clear to me that the psychoanalytic approach is useful only to the extent that we can distinguish the genuinely insightful bits from the bits that are the product of Freud’s overactive and fearful imagination. So before deciding that psychoanalysis offers the right paradigmatic framework for enneagram work, it’s important to take a close look at what psychoanalytic theory actually says about human nature.

## The Structure of My Argument

Because the article I am critiquing is very detailed and formal in its exposition, my reply is also detailed and formal. I originally thought to reply by submitting it for publication in the *Enneagram Journal*, but that would mean a year's delay. Also, this article would not fit within the prescribed limits (6000 words). So I am publishing it instead here in the *Enneagram Monthly*, in the interests of generating some debate within a month or two after the original article was published.

My article has three parts. In Part I, "Deconstructing Freud," I look at the Freudian world-view, how it has affected the ideas of various psychoanalytic theorists (i.e., those discussed in Chestnut's paper), and how their ideas have now been supplanted by modern research in infant development.

In Part II, "Deconstructing the Freudian Enneagram," I look at how psychoanalysis has influenced the development of the field of enneagram studies, in particular the way we view personality (i.e., as a pathological construct). I show how this process began with the teachings of psychiatrist Claudio Naranjo and the degree to which those teachings have colored our view of the enneagram and, hence, form the basis for many of the ideas expressed in Chestnut's article. I discuss key elements in Chestnut's article in an effort to show why her argument does not succeed. Although I do not agree with her conclusions, I'm glad to have the opportunity to look at the nature and origins of the nine enneagram types, because this is an important topic about which a discussion is long overdue.

In Part III, "The Origins of Type and Type Motivation," I set forth an alternative theory incorporating certain basic assumptions about the nature of the enneagram, enneagram type, and motivation, as delineated below.

### The enneagram:

- *The enneagram is a universal, unbounded system that is constrained only by the limits of the human imagination*
- *The enneagram is not a system that ought to be solely interpreted according to the constraints of any one interpretative framework, including a psychoanalytical framework*
- *Making best use of the enneagram requires us to look at the relationship between the enneagram and many diverse systems of thought*
- *By taking such an approach, we avoid the pitfalls of narrow, negative, and divisive thinking that could retard our ability to mature as a field*

### The enneagram types:

- *Enneagram types are not the same thing as personality types, but are more like a temperament types*
- *These enneagram temperament types are innate (with us from birth)*
- *They play a central role in shaping personality but are not the same thing as personality*

### Motivation and personality formation:

- *Personality is formed by a combination of innate temperament, environmental conditions (but not just parental conditioning), and free will*
- *Although negative experiences in early life can affect the functionality of the personality (i.e., how healthy it becomes), it cannot actually determine its basic structure and function*
- *It is our enneagram type that is the single largest factor which determines our personality, where type is considered to be (a) primordial and archetypal, (b) essentially positive (life-affirming), and (c) with us from birth (if not earlier).*
- *Type motivation is therefore a more elemental than either the need to relieve instinctual tension (Freud's position) or the need for social mirroring and interaction (the Object Relational position)*

\* \* \*

I will unpack these concepts in the pages that follow. Here I will say only that it is for all these reasons that we as a field need to develop our own paradigmatic framework(s). Relying on somebody else's frame of reference (e.g., that of psychoanalysis) imports the biases of another field into our own. (What is worse, it tends to import them as "givens" to be accepted, not hypotheses to be tested.) A fledgling field matures when its practitioners begin to closely examine the assumptions of its borrowed paradigms. That is what I intend to do here.

# Part I: Deconstructing Freud

*Phenomena of normal development can best be understood when elements of the process are somewhat out of kilter.*

– Mahler, *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant* (1975)

This statement by Margaret Mahler—one of the key figures in the Objects Relations psychoanalytic movement—reflects an idea dear to the hearts of many psychoanalysts: that we can understand what is *normal* by looking at what is *abnormal*. This kind of thinking doesn't make a lot of sense—unless, of course, we actually assume that abnormality itself is the norm.

This may sound a little strange, but here's what I mean: if for whatever reason we start out with a basically pessimistic view of human nature, then whenever we look at human behavior and motivation, we will tend to notice what is flawed about it (i.e., what is abnormal) and to ignore (or perhaps just not to notice) what is functioning well. In this way, the “abnormal” actually becomes the norm. And from this point on, there is really no way of ever conceiving of human behavior and motivation as healthy, functional, and genuinely well-meaning.<sup>3</sup>

Pessimistic philosophies about human nature are not just pessimistic—all too often, they are also coldly analytical and intellectually haughty. They reflect a way of thinking that is rigid, ideological, and arrogant. From a discourse analytical point of view, we can recognize this kind of attitude when we see a great deal of reliance on abstruse terminology (including psychoanalytic neologisms), maze-like sentence structures, and passages full of arcane obscurations.

Take for example, the strange designation “Object Relations.” What exactly does it mean? How can an object relate to anything? It didn't make sense to me. It took me quite some time to grasp what sort of object would attract the attention of so many psychoanalysts.

When I finally figured it out, it turned out to be a lot less arcane than I thought. As one writer notes, “‘Object’ is the unfortunate term psychoanalysts use to talk about a *person*”<sup>4</sup> [italics mine].

So what is the study of “object relations”? Simply the study of human relationships. Or put more formally: “Object relations theory is a modern adaptation of psychoanalytic theory that places less emphasis on the drives of aggression and sexuality as motivational forces and more emphasis on human relationships as the primary motivational force in life.”<sup>5</sup>

Psychoanalysis is full of terms like “object relations”—terms that seem to obscure as much as they reveal. It is one of the more tiresome features of the psychoanalytic

approach. Even so, with a bit of perseverance, it is possible to penetrate the obscurations—to put psychoanalysis “on the couch” and see what is really there.

Once we do, what do we find? We find a philosophy of the psyche that combines brilliance with blindness, depth with danger. While it can at times pierce the densest veil of the deep psyche, it can also create in its adherents an unhealthy obsession with the darker aspects of human nature, a morbid fascination with all that appears to be pathological about human nature. We see this in Sigmund Freud and many of his followers—we see it in the way they talk, the way they write, and the kind of counsel they offer. When we listen to what they see, we see people in the grip of a negative fascination that keeps them constantly churned up. Their habitual preoccupation with negativity is not surprising, since we tend to become whatever we attend to—especially if we attend to it for a long time.

This is why focusing too much (and for too long) on what is wrong about human nature is a hazardous business. As a Sufi teacher once said to me, “Only great men like Jung can go deeply into the unconscious; for most of us, it's enough simply to open the door and give it a brief glance.” When even a Sufi master takes heed, the rest of us should certainly pause to consider what it really means to mine the unconscious depths. Otherwise, we may be in danger of becoming lost in the darkness, trapped in a maze of negativity and suspicion.

This is what happened to Sigmund Freud. Freud was a brilliant theoretician but a man sorely lacking in psychological balance. He was not a happy person, and he projected his own lack of contentment onto human nature in general, developing a theory of the psyche steeped in negativity, suspicion, and even paranoia. After several prominent theorists (i.e., Adler, Stekel, and Jung) broke with Freud, a secret cabal of loyalists was organized on Freud's behalf whose work it was to make sure that no more sheep strayed from the fold.<sup>6</sup>

Freud's obsession with loyalty and desire to punish the disloyal is not surprising, since he has most often been typed by enneagrammers as a Six with a Five wing. If we were to try to assess his mental health using Riso & Hudson's nine-level scheme, I doubt that Freud would come out as a mentally healthy Six—his mentality is better described by words associated with the lower three

levels: intensely anxious, over-reactive, and potentially hysterical.<sup>7</sup> This doesn't take away from his intellectual brilliance but it can make us question which aspects of Freud's theory are genuinely useful and which aspects are too colored by his paranoid imagination to be useful to the rest of us.

When we go to separate the wheat from the chaff, it's not an easy task. How can we determine which elements of psychoanalysis are useful and which ones are not? How do we know which school of thought is actually the "right" one? There are so many of them, each with a unique interpretation on how to work with the approach that originated with Freud (and each one disavowing the work of other schools).

Some of these schools—such as Classical Psychoanalysis, Object Relations, Self Psychology, and Ego Psychology—retain so many elements of the original theory that we think of them as similar in nature (despite the fact that they tend to fight bitterly with one another about their areas of disagreement); these are the schools that we call "Freudian" or "neo-Freudian." Other approaches—e.g., Analytical Psychology (Carl Jung), Archetypal Psychology (James Hillman), and various intersubjective paradigms (e.g., Robert Sokolow's; see discussion below)—have diverged sufficiently from Freud's original vision that they really seem like philosophies in their own right. But these latter approaches can also be thought of as psychoanalytic in that they retain the key Freudian idea that there is not just a conscious self, but an unconscious aspect to the psyche, and that the unconscious aspect plays a very significant role that should not be ignored.

It is this idea that *there is a hidden part of ourselves in need of discovery* that psychoanalysis and the enneagram have in common, the idea that—when it comes to the psyche—"what we see is not what we get." The problem with the classical psychoanalysis (the purely Freudian strain) is that this hidden part of the psyche (the id) is thought to be inherently chaotic and violent, and thus in need of either suppression or (at best) sublimation. Jung found a way to redeem the unconscious, by postulating the idea that this seemingly chaotic energy is not inherently destructive, but is actually the *prima materia* that can spiritually transform us once we know how to use it. And Jung tells us how to do this, as well, in his discussions about the animus/anima, the shadow self, individuation, and alchemical transformation.

But the Jungian approach rests upon the understanding that human consciousness has a transcendent component—it is more than the produce of biological drives. Freud has no such understanding; he was an atheist who despised religion. Thus, although he promoted the idea of a "talking cure," we may well ask what kind of cure he

is really talking about. If his cure has no way to integrate the most primal aspects of the psyche, then to what extent can it actually promote psychological well-being?

These are the kinds of issues that inevitably arise when we closely examine the foundations of psychoanalytic theory. Thus, if we who study the enneagram are interested in determining how psychoanalysis can inform our study, we cannot avoid looking at them.

So for the remainder of Part I, we'll focus on psychoanalysis—what it is, and—more importantly—what it is *not*. The next section focuses on psychoanalytic theory in general and on the four theorists whose theories Bea Chestnut discusses in her article: Margaret Mahler, Melanie Klein, Thomas Ogden, and Heinz Kohut. Then we'll look at recent research findings on infant cognition and perception, demonstrating how these findings basically demolish psychoanalytically-motivated theories of personality development. We'll end by considering what, if anything, psychoanalysis does have to offer the field of enneagram studies.

### Psychoanalysis as a Movement

Psychoanalysis is a philosophy and methodology developed by Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939) to account for and treat human psychopathology.<sup>8</sup> The fact that psychoanalysis was *from the beginning* oriented toward psychopathology should alert us to the idea that it is not likely, in its original form, to provide an adequate account of normal personality and personality development (unless, as I said above, we equate pathology with normalcy). This does not mean that Freud has nothing useful to tell us, but it does mean that we need to be careful when evaluating his ideas.

While it has a well-developed body of theory, psychoanalysis is not a scientific discipline in the empirical sense, because—from a scientific point of view—its theory has always been considerably more elaborated than its verification procedures. This is the major reason why psychoanalysts receive their training at psychoanalytic institutes, not at departments of research psychology—because psychoanalysis does not meet the scientific requirements of the latter field. It is also why its ideas have had more impact on literary theory and art than on mainstream psychology.

This is not to denigrate the contribution of psychoanalysis or Freud himself. Freud was a visionary thinker who pioneered a new way of conceptualizing the psyche. Whether we agree with his ideas or not, it is hard not to be impressed by the sheer scope and depth of his work.<sup>9</sup>

When Freud first set forth his ideas on human nature and personality development, they were controversial and thus widely-rejected both by his medical colleagues and

the public at large. It is easy to see how a Victorian culture intent on repressing any thought of sexuality or other unwanted psychic material would try to hush up the work of a man like Freud (and indeed, why he might have felt compelled to do this work). It is also easy to see why—as those Victorian ideals began to crumble—people would look in new directions for answers to the question, “What makes human beings the way they are?”

As people began to search for answers, the ideas of Freud—while still regarded as provocative and even scandalous—began to have a certain appeal, especially among intellectuals. They talked about those ideas and wrote articles. Gradually, the more understandable (and less scandalous) of his ideas became not only accepted by the public, but part of the popular imagination—concepts like the existence of the unconscious or the idea that painful memories can be repressed. They began to be perceived as “givens.”

However, this shift in perception took place around 1910 to the mid-1930s. This was still a time when the discipline of psychology was new and standards for verification of major theories were not well-established. Thus, the transition from public skepticism to public acceptance did not occur because the claims of psychoanalysts were in any way scientifically validated. It occurred because it told a fascinating story that eventually captured the mind of the public.

However, the story which captured the public imagination is only the tip of a very big iceberg. The general public know about some aspects of Freud’s theory, there are countless intricacies (some would say the complications) of the theory remained largely unknown to people outside of the psychoanalytic community. Even the nature of the psychoanalytic community itself has remained largely unknown to those outside of it. In fact, what we might term the psychoanalytic community is not really a community—it is simply a way of referring to people using a diverse (and ever-diverging) collection of theories based in some way on the work of Sigmund Freud. The psychoanalytic “community” has always been rife with conflict, intolerant of dissenters, and quick to ostracize anyone who is foolish enough to depart from the party line. Carl Jung was the first such victim; many others followed—e.g., Otto Rank, Alfred Adler, and Sandor Ferenczi, just to mention a few.

The more successful and charismatic of these ostracized theorists went on to form their own schools, in which schisms inevitably developed, leading to new rounds of consolidation of the faithful and exclusion of the heretical. Books on the history of psychoanalytic movement contain frequent references to psychoanalysts modifying or disguising their views in order to avoid censure from

the Freudian establishment.<sup>10,11</sup> Former psychoanalyst Jeffrey Masson talks about the impossibility, during psychoanalytic training, of criticizing one’s training analyst if one wants to obtain the credentials necessary to practice psychoanalysis, even for conduct that most people would consider unethical.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, it comes as no surprise that there is no unified theory of personality development upon which most psychoanalysts agree. There are instead sharply-divided opinions about the nature of infant motivation, personality development, and the etiology of psychopathology whose very proponents (e.g., Anna Freud and Melanie Klein) have historically engaged in acrimonious and protracted debates over the finer points of analytic theory in a sort of modern version of the medieval “how-many-angels-can-stand-on-a-pinhead” disputes.<sup>13</sup>

So we need to know not only how psychoanalysis can enhance our understanding of the enneagram, but to which specific ideas, schools, or theorists do we look for that understanding? Even the four theorists cited by Chestnut do not have identical views on personality development, as we shall see below. On what basis do we decide whose ideas are the best?

### Neo-Freudian Theories of Infant Development

In her analysis, Bea Chestnut focuses mainly on Objects Relations theorists, a group that places particular emphasis on the need for social bonding as a motivation behind the development of ego and personality.<sup>14</sup> However, the idea that infants were particularly motivated by the desire to bond was not Freud’s position.

**Sigmund Freud.** From Freud’s perspective, infants at birth were said to be pure “id” or unconsciousness (which is why the earliest period of life was so often characterized as autistic by the next generation of psychoanalytic theorists.)

In Freud’s eyes, the id served as the basis for personality development. His theory is synopsized as follows:

*The id, present at birth, is the foundation of personality containing all of the instincts and receiving its energy from bodily processes. Id operates according to the pleasure principle, meaning it avoids pain and seeks pleasure using two processes—reflex actions and primary process. Reflexes are inborn actions that reduce discomfort immediately, like a sneeze. Primary process is very simply forming a wish-fulfilling image [i.e., a fantasy] of what is desired. For example, if you were hungry you might start imagining your favorite meal. Imagining of course will not satisfy hunger, or most other needs, and the ego develops to deal with reality and satisfy the id’s demands because the id cannot tell the difference between what exists in reality and what is in the mind.*<sup>15</sup>

This theory is usually referred to as the “two-drive”

theory (in reference to the idea that the id employs two drives—primitive bodily reflexes and fantasy—to reduce psychic tension). From this perspective, infants are born in a largely undifferentiated state Freud saw as socially unresponsive and narcissistic (likening it to the world of the chick inside an egg), an observation that caused psychoanalyst Margaret Mahler to designate it as “autistic”.<sup>16</sup> Gradually, as the infant develops, he was thought to gradually emerge from this autistic shell, although how and why this came to pass was the topic of many heated disputes among psychoanalysts. (Freud felt it was to satisfy his inner instinctual drives while Object Relations theorists such as Mahler and Klein were focused more on the infant’s need to interact with significant others.)

**Melanie Klein (1882 – 1960).** Klein is considered the actual founder of the Object Relations school. Because so many accounts of object relations are extremely abstruse, it was difficult for me to understand the nature of the Kleinian approach until I read the following explanation in [www.cliffnotes.com](http://www.cliffnotes.com) (!): *In...object-relations theory, the infant interacts with the mother, mostly during times of eye contact and breast-feeding. The infant then internalizes an image of the mother—good or bad—that may or may not be representative of how the mother truly is.*

In the same article, the author also explains that the phrase “object relations” comes from the idea that the infant bonds to an object (e.g., the breast), not a person like the mother, because he doesn’t yet know what a person is.

Like many other reference to Kleinian psychoanalysis, this one is extremely sanitized. However, with persistence, it is possible to uncover accounts that make it clear that Klein regarded the psychological world of the young infant as extraordinarily full of violent impulses that have as their object the source of the infant’s anger and frustration—e.g., the “bad breast” and that to which it is attached (the mother), whom he simultaneously envies and seeks to destroy.<sup>17</sup>

This sense of impotent rage occurs during the first phase of Klein’s two-phase theory of infant personality development—the paranoid-schizoid position—in which feelings of destructive rage feature prominently, especially in mentally ill infants (who were Klein’s primary focus). During the second phase in development—the depressive position—these feelings of rage gradually give way to guilt and shame (in reaction to the destructive impulses of the earlier position). Problems encountered by infants at each of these positions were said by Klein to be the cause of mental illness in adults. (These phases were never actually seen as cut-and-dried stages, which is why Klein was later in life to see them as oscillating states, and to concede that

even neonates could experience both.)<sup>18</sup>

The recurring theme in Klein’s writings is that infants are consumed by negative passions that arise out of the death instinct. (At first, following Freud, she believed it to be anxiety, but later saw envy as the primary motivating factor).<sup>19</sup> The result is a shockingly negative portrayal of infant life.

For example, according to Scharff, in *Self-Hatred in Psychoanalysis* (2002), “the infant Klein describes is haunted by the death instinct, terrified of its potential for self-annihilation and terrified of the resulting aggression against its objects...according to Klein, deflecting the death instinct...is the infant’s most urgent task” (p. 26).<sup>20</sup> Gedo (1999) notes that “Klein actually based her system on the alleged self-destructiveness of the human organism” (p. 70).<sup>21</sup>

Other accounts are equally bleak. One author notes that, for Melanie Klein, “psychic life starts with the vivid destruction of an object, the chaotic ruin of what ought to have been a nurturing environment. Out of a nightmare of terror and outright war emerges the melancholic child fully aware of its responsibility for destroying a world and doubled up with loss and guilt.”<sup>22</sup> Another characterization: “In the Freudian tradition, she [Klein] saw the psychic world of infant and child as filled with primitive and savage conflict, murderous and cannibalistic tendencies.”<sup>23</sup>

When we hear somebody speak of the inner life of infants in this way, we have to ask ourselves what is motivating the speaker (rather than the infant). It’s not surprising to hear that Klein was a life-long depressive with what can only be called “the mother from hell.” Her marriage failed and of her three children, one died young (a possible suicide) and another (who grew up to be an analyst) became her bitter life-long enemy. The fact that Klein came to see envy as the destructive force motivating the infant (and also conceptualized the idea of negative introjection), can’t help but making me think that she is a prime example of a brilliant but none-too-well-adjusted enneagrammatic Type 4.

As Klein’s biographer said of her, “Captivated by the concept of the unconscious, she followed its seductive lure into speculative depths from which even Freud had retreated.”<sup>24</sup>

**Thomas Ogden.** Ogden is a more recent and lesser-known theorist than Klein, who (inspired by the ideas of Esther Bick, Donald Meltzer, and Frances Tustin),<sup>25</sup> postulated the need for a more primitive state of psychic development (preceding Klein’s Paranoid-Schizoid position), which he called the autistic-contiguous position, which “is understood as a sensory-dominated, pre-

symbolic area of experience in which the most primitive form of meaning is generated on the basis of the organization of sensory impressions, particularly at the skin surface” (p. 4).<sup>26</sup>

Notice how this definition effectively ignores everything about the infant except their sensory experience—and this in 1989, when there was plenty of research showing that infants were capable of much more than experiencing skin sensations.

In addition, Ogden’s idea of adding a third position that is said to correspond with the infant’s earliest experiences clearly flies in the face of Klein’s ideas. Klein did not hypothesize a time in early life when the infant was incapable of seeing themselves as separate from the mother. As noted above, unlike Mahler, Klein never really developed a formal stage theory of infant personality development, which is why it was possible for her to shift with relative ease into the viewpoint that the both of her positions—the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive—could be present at birth.

**Margaret Mahler (1897 – 1985).** Of a more optimistic demeanor than Klein, Mahler took a definite interest in developing a theory of personality development that would incorporate both aspects of Freud’s ideas about early infancy (e.g., the idea of a self-absorbed stage at birth) and the Object Relations idea that infants are driven from birth to seek social interaction with “objects” (i.e., significant others). Her original three-phase theory of personality development shown in Table 1.

During Phase 1 and 2 (lasting from birth to about the age of 4 or 5 months), the infant is said to remain relatively undifferentiated from the mother. During Phase 3—what Mahler conceived to be the real beginning of psychological life—the infant begins to move away from the mother, *differentiating* himself from her, *practicing*

new motor skills and developing a sometimes-exuberant sense of independence, and eventually developing a sense of *rapprochement* with the conflict of needing mother but wanting autonomy. The last subphase is *individuality*, which develops when the child develops “emotional object constancy” (i.e., the permanent sense of being independent of the mother) and continues throughout life.<sup>27</sup>

The problem with this theory, as we shall see, is that it relies quite heavily on a traditional Freudian model of infancy, where there is no differentiation in the young infant.

**Heinz Kohut (1913 – 1981).** Focusing on the role of narcissism in child development, Kohut focuses on the tension between the (normal) grandiosity of the developing infant who is full of “wants” and their idealized image of the parent who can do no wrong. Thus, the developing child must choose between his own wants and what their parents expect of him. Children that do not receive sufficient attention from parents are said to be the root of narcissistic personality disorders in adulthood.

He believed that children (and actually, everybody else) need to be *mirrored* (to be given approval) by significant (*idealized*) others; later, he conceived of the idea that it was possible and desirable to develop a sense of *twinsip* with others, the sense of identification with a larger group or whole (what an anthropologist might term *kinship*).<sup>28</sup>

Kohut’s work can be difficult to interpret, because his ideas were often obscure and were ever-evolving, right up until his death in 1981.<sup>29</sup> But one thing is clear: his main emphasis was on delineating the relationship between client and therapist, rather than developing a model of infant personality development.

**Mahler and Kohut.** In an analysis comparing Mahler’s and Kohut’s respective ideas on infant development, Shane & Shane (1989)<sup>30</sup> report that in the early 1970s, Mahler wrote Kohut asking him how he thought their approaches differed. At the time, Kohut was circumspect, writing back that he saw them as “digging from different directions into the same area of the mountain.” However, when speaking with Shane & Shane almost a decade later, he indicated that he had changed his mind about the possibility of ever reconciling their respective approaches. This was because, Kohut “never did posit a phase in which there is no psychological connection whatsoever to the outside world or to important others” (p. 6).<sup>31</sup> Also, by 1977, Kohut had definitively decided against the idea of speculating about the inner state of the pre-symbolic infant because recent breakthroughs in infant research were beginning to show that many of

**Table 1.**  
**Mahler’s Stage of Personality Development\***

- Phase 1: Normal Autism (c. 0 – 2 mos.)
- Phase 2: Normal Symbiosis (c. 2 – 4 mos.)
- Phase 3: Separation/Individuation
  - Differentiation (c. 4 – 10 mos.)
  - Practicing (c. 10 mos. – 15 mos.)
  - Rapprochement (c. 16 mos. – 24 mos.)
  - Individuality (24 mos. – throughout life)

\* There is considerable variability in stage length; the ranges given are an estimate.

ideas of theorists such as Freud, Klein, and Mahler were disconfirmed by infant research, in which the young was clearly emerging as “active, engaged, and intent upon communication.”<sup>32</sup>

This emerging picture of the young infant is in direct conflict with Freud’s (and Mahler’s) idea of the infant who comes into the world in “solipsistic isolation” for whom fantasy is primary and reality is secondary: “Current infant researchers hold that the infant’s capacity for fantasy and defense formation, attributed by Mahler to the two-month-old, only originates at the age of 18 months, when the infant has achieved symbolic thought.” Thus, the authors observe that “Mahler’s deep fealty to Freud seem to have locked her into a mode inconsistent with current developmental observations” (p. 6).

The authors are also skeptical about the way that Mahler interprets the way that infants check back with the mother during what Mahler terms the “practicing” period (c. 10-15 mos.): they note that where Mahler sees the infant as experiencing separation anxiety (experiencing fear because he is insecure about his relationship with the mother), Kohut sees him as returning to gain strength from a already-existing mother-child bond.<sup>33</sup>

**Klein and Mahler.** All Object Relations theorists focus on the interaction between mother and child, but differ in their interpretation of the roles played by each. In the case of Melanie Klein and Margaret Mahler, they differ in that Klein views the child as full of violent and aggressive tendencies whereas Mahler in no way attributes blame to the child. In the updated version of Mahler, Pine & Bergman’s work (2000), the authors state that “it is our strong conviction that the child’s fresh and pliable adaptive capacity, and his need for adaptation (in order to gain satisfaction), is far greater than that of the mother, whose personality, with all its patterns of character and defense, is firmly and often rigidly set.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, while the Kleinian view emphasizes the child’s destructive and even violent tendencies towards the mother, the Mahlerian view focuses more on maternal inadequacy as a potential source of pathology.

Also, as mentioned above, unlike Mahler, Klein did not postulate anything like a period of “normal autism.” For her, differentiation was present at birth. However, perhaps the two can be reconciled to some degree, in that shortly before her death, Mahler actually gave up the notion that infants experience anything like a period of normal autism at birth.<sup>35</sup> To her credit, in a conversation with colleague Daniel Stern in 1983, she says that the initial phase of development “might well have been called ‘awakening’ ” in light of recent research findings.<sup>36</sup>

It doesn’t take much analysis to see that the idea of

awakening is very different from that of autism.

**Comparison of Development Theories.** When focusing on personality development, it is easier to compare either Klein or Kohut to Mahler than to one another, because **Mahler** is the only theorist who really tried to develop a detailed stage theory to account for personality development. **Klein’s** theory is much sketchier. Although Klein initially saw the neonatal period as paranoid-schizoid in nature, she later came to the conclusion that neonates could experience either of her positions. Note also that even initially, she never called her positions either phases or stages, and was not willing even at the start to give timelines for how long infants remained in each position.

**Ogden** was not a contemporary of Klein’s; his writings were published about three decades after her death in 1960. Thus, his effort to resurrect Klein’s unmodified (i.e., two-positional) theory in 1989—plus add a third position that Klein herself would never have posited—seem a bit bizarre (given what was going on in infant research) unless we realize that Ogden is not interested in this kind of reconciliation. He seems to be interested in positing such a position primarily because of its potential usefulness as a therapeutic tool for psychoanalysts rather than its use as a literal description of what takes place during infancy. And in his books, he seems to be speaking to readers who have a similar world-view (a view in which the Oedipus complex is taken as a “given,” for example). However, his lack of interest in looking at his ideas in light of the current research findings makes it hard to take his ideas seriously from a scholarly point of view.

Unlike Ogden, **Kohut** was quite hesitant to put forth a theory of infant personality development that could not be reconciled with infant research, which is why he avoiding direct comment on Mahler’s theory in the early 1970s and later renounced it entirely. He did see infancy as a period of primary (normal) narcissism (self-centeredness) which could gradually fade in infants who received appropriate mirroring, and who thus became able to look up to (idealize) other people around them and develop a broader sense of kinship (i.e., twinship) that extends beyond one-on-one relationships. However, Kohut did not develop a sequential model of infant personality development based on these needs—like Ogden, his primary interest was to show their importance for helping clients in a therapeutic setting.

**Conclusions.** Although author Bea Chestnut posits three psychoanalytic theories of infant development that

can be meaningfully linked using the enneagram of personality, *only one of the three clearly meets the requirements for such a theory*—that of Margaret Mahler. The other two theories discussed by Chestnut were never put forth as objective theories of infant personality development by their originators, and even if they were, both are really too fragmentary to serve as a theoretical foundation for future study. Even a brief perusal of the psychoanalytic literature reveals the truth of this assertion.

Now if we look solely at Mahler's work, we discover that although her well-known monograph on infant personality development was published in 1975, her ideas on personality development originated decades earlier, when she was observing mainly psychotic infants, not normal infants.<sup>37</sup> These observations shaped her thinking, so that when she decided to develop a theory of normal personality development, the theory she developed was based on pathogenic assumptions. This is unfortunately common in psychoanalytic theory, because the very *raison d'être* of psychoanalysis is to uncover the causal factors that create mental disturbance, so that it can later be healed via the talking cure.

However, the desire to determine such causal factors has often led psychoanalytic theorists such as Mahler and Klein to make inferential leaps about the internal state of the infant that can only be characterized as wildly imaginative. Such observations, which some have termed "adultomorphic," (i.e., revealing more about the adult than the child) are typically impossible to verify (which is why they have been so easy to refute using empirical methods).

Thus, the stickiest problem for those who would defend Mahler's position on infant development is to reconcile recent research on infant competency with the Mahler/Freud position that infants are undifferentiated at birth. This is a problem that not even Mahler's collaborators, Fred Pine and Anni Bergman, have been able to adequately address (see below), leading Bergman to admit in the most recent edition of Mahler's *magnum opus* that "infant research has now shown how mother and baby are separate entities from the beginning."<sup>38</sup>

Thus, although Mahler's theory may have seemed plausible many decades ago, it is clearly not plausible now. It would thus be a poor foundation upon which to base any sort of attempt to develop a joint psychoanalytic-enneagram model of personality development.

**Implications.** In researching this topic, I discovered that one of the problems in assessing theories of infant personality development is that much of Freudian theory is based on the notion that the personality pathologies that we see in adulthood necessarily reflect how people get "stuck (i.e., fixated) at an earlier stage of normal per-

sonality development, normally sometime during the first three years.

Thus, most neo-Freudian psychoanalysts feel compelled to account for all adult pathologies on the basis of arrested development in infancy or early childhood. Linking adult pathology to childhood trauma gives them a way to justify their treatment approach.

However, as it happens, scientific research is rapidly undermining these theoretical foundations, making them hard to justify on scientific grounds. So therapists are left with a conundrum: how to reconcile their therapeutic method with a theory that can stand up to scientific scrutiny (or that at least is not directly contradicted by scientific research). Many of them may think that if the method works, then the theory behind it has to be sound. So they reason backwards, looking for some way to shore up questionable theories.

However, there are other, better ways to reconcile practice with theory that do not lead us down such a path—notably, the approach of seeing therapy from an intersubjective perspective (a perspective which does not require us to prove that the way we experience reality requires objective verification). This is an approach that is congruent with the teachings of the enneagram, because it is based on the idea that there is no one "right" way of viewing something, but only subjective interpretations based on different points of view. The key in a therapeutic relationship is thus finding a good "match" between the perspectives of therapist and client.

I will touch on this idea again later in Part I and discuss it in greater depth in Part II. I just wanted to bring the issue up at this point in order to introduce the idea that taking an intersubjective approach may be a good way to avoid the need to continually adjust one's theory to justify one's practice.

### **Advances in Infant Research**

In this section, I want to briefly touch upon the nature of the infant research to which I have been alluding, focusing particularly on its impact on Freudian ideas about infant consciousness and personality development. Freud always took the position that his ideas were not just plausible, but objectively correct, and this has been the position he unfortunately bequeathed to his followers. In recent decades, this has made their position difficult to maintain. As science develops more and better tools for assessing human consciousness, theories that are too elaborated and speculative become hard to defend.

Ironically, it is the very vividness and imaginative quality of Freud's theory that made it so popular in the first place. His was a powerful theory with many interesting and then-novel ideas, which is why it so seized the pub-

lic imagination during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the problem with an over-elaborated theory is that it is very easy to empirically reject—if only one part of it is disproven, the entire theory is called into question. And this is what has been happening to Freudian and neo-Freudian theory, especially in the last few decades.

This has created a bit of a problem in our culture, because so many of Freud's ideas have become so thoroughly enmeshed in the popular culture. Of course, some of them were too unpleasant or outlandish to become accepted by anyone outside of psychoanalytic circles (e.g., the idea that the sex drive is our most basic motivation, that Oedipus/Electra complexes are what motivate young children, the idea that little girls have penis envy). Others, like the concept of the unconscious, have been widely accepted (at least provisionally) as a useful explanation for phenomena that are otherwise hard to explain (e.g., the existence of dreams, especially vivid dreams).

The idea that babies are not quite human (i.e., that they are “all id”) is somewhere in between, but was greatly bolstered by the rise of behaviorism in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, which put forth the notion that infants were a *tabula rasa* upon which parents could write. Of course, in the last few decades, this idea that babies are born undifferentiated has come under fire, so much so that it is a theory that no serious researcher would entertain. Starting in the 1950s, studies were being done that demonstrated that even neonates are both cognitively differentiated and socially responsive. By 1973, there were enough of these studies to enable the publication of a 1314-page book containing 202 studies supporting the idea of infant competency.<sup>39</sup> In the face of this burgeoning body of research, even Margaret Mahler came to renounce the idea of the undifferentiated infant before her death in 1985.<sup>40</sup>

We see just how much things have changed by the comments in the 2000 edition of *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant*, authored by Pine, Bergman, and Mahler, the monograph originally published by Mahler, Pine, and Bergman in 1975. In the later edition, the authors admit that “we know that our procedures are subject to serious criticism...and indeed we are quite capable of leveling those criticisms at ourselves. In particular we are well aware of our problems of evidence, of establishing, if not proof, at least approximations to it” (p. 17).

The same year that Mahler died, 1985, the well-respected psychoanalytic researcher theorist Daniel Stern ruefully reflected on just how different our theorized notions about infancy can be from the actual reality of infant behavior. This comment was made in response to the ever-expanding body of research demonstrating that even small babies exhibit curiosity, perceptual preferences, interest in cognitive novelty, and pleasure in mastery.<sup>41</sup>

As Wyly (1997) notes, early researchers—assuming a passive, essentially “autistic” infant—confined their assessments to such things as neurological responses, postural control, skin color, respiration, and reflex ability:

*Infants have not always been thought of as competent beings. In 1890, William James, the well-known American psychologist, said that infants experience the world as “blooming, buzzing confusion,” whereas the behaviorist J. B. Watson...described infants as passive creatures who needed experience to shape their minds. These views of infant incompetence persisted until the 1950s, when scientists began to identify a rich array of infant abilities.*<sup>42</sup>

It was 1972 when developmental psychologists Steven Friedman and Peter Vietze published an article entitled, “The Competent Infant”, in which they noted that long-accepted notion that an infant lived in an undifferentiated state was no longer defensible: “Today's infant is a highly receptive and actively responsive organism whose sensory-perceptual and learning capabilities are just beginning to be experimentally investigated and understood” (p. 314).<sup>43</sup>

By the time Wyly wrote her article in 1997, the trickle of research on infant development had become a flood, leading her to summarize the state of infant research as follows:

*Currently, infancy is conceptualized as a unique period of development. Infants have social skills and individual temperaments. For example, shortly after birth, newborns become both quiet and alert in response to their caregiver's voice or face. Later, they engage in turn-taking interactions, including playing games with their caregivers. Very early in life, they imitate facial gestures and differentiate between facial expressions of joy, sadness, and anger. They learn, remember, and problem solve. In fact, they process information in sophisticated ways. They communicate pleasure and displeasure at birth and in two short years learn a language—something we adults have a difficult time doing! All of their senses are present at birth, and they use them to organize incoming information from their environment* (p. 2).

By 2004, the idea of the “competent infant” was so well-accepted in the neonatal research community that it had become the dominant paradigm in infant research (for proof, see the Harvard University review of *The Infant's World*, by Philippe Rochat).<sup>44</sup> And in the Forward to *The Amazing Infant* (2007), by Tiffany Field, Michael Lewis, echoing Wyly, notes that “research in infancy...in the latter half of the twentieth century, put to rest William James' claim that the...very young infant was a mass of confusion, with poorly developed senses” (p. vi).

## How Psychoanalysis Resists Science

Where does this leave the psychoanalytic approach

to personality development? Well, it depends upon the theorist. However, when I researched this topic, I discovered that, on the whole, the psychoanalytic scholarly literature seems (to whatever extent possible) to ignore, deemphasize, or mischaracterize the empirical findings of research psychology.

Many articles, heavy with almost-impenetrable jargon, busy themselves with case studies and/or focus on aspects of theory that cannot be directly attacked empirically, either because they are overly-vague, overly-general, half-truthful, or discussed as though they are supported by legitimate findings.

For example, in a monograph on the theorized boundaries of the self, Gabbard & Lester (1995) try to show how the findings of researchers renowned for their pioneering work in infant research can be cited in a way that suggest that they support an Object-relational view of infant development:

*As Andrew Meltzoff and Keith Moore (1992) suggested, young infants differentiate and develop an identity from early experiences of affect transmission between infant and caregiver. Some of these intermodal exchanges of affect, similar to those communicated in a developmental state from the pre-object-relatedness period, are eventually revived in analysis<sup>45</sup> (p. 43).*

This passage makes it sound like Meltzoff & Moore not only acknowledge the role of “nurture” in personality development, but emphasize it (in preference to other influences, such as genetic or developmental factors). In addition, because of the way the passage is constructed, the reader is invited to think that Meltzoff & Moore might also go along with the Gabbard & Lester’s idea that psychoanalysis is an effective methodology for eliciting the recall of interactions that took place during early infancy. Using such an approach allows the unscientific psychoanalytic approach to ride on the coattails of legitimate researchers like Meltzoff & Moore.

In addition, the second sentence (besides being heavily loaded with jargon) refers to the “pre-object-relatedness period” as though it is an empirically-established fact. However, this description sounds precisely like Freud’s autistic state, Mahler’s two pre-Separation/Individual stages or Ogden’s “autistic/contiguous” position—constructs that have been shown to lack scientific backing. (It’s not that these authors are not free to present this idea, they most certainly are—but if they do, they must describe it as a theory or proposal, not to try to “sneak it in” by speaking about it as though it were an established fact.)

Elsewhere, the authors discuss Mahler’s work with infants, characterizing her interpretations of infant development as reflecting “well-defined periods during the first 3 to [?]years of life,” in which the infant starts out exper-

riencing a “sense of merger...with the mother.” They do point out that Stern (1985) has vigorously argued that such a concept is “pathomorphic and retrospective” but they counter this proposal with one by Fred Pine (1990), one of Mahler’s original (1975) co-authors: “Although the infant may be aware of self and other as separate entities during alert, wakeful periods, there are moments of merger experiences, most notably when the infant falls asleep and melts into the mother’s body” (p. 8).

This is a weak argument, indeed! The idea that infants are alert while awake and “merged with mother” when asleep may well be true, but it is (a) empirically unprovable and (b) unsupportive of Freud’s claim that babies lack the ability to meaningfully interact with others.

I could cite other examples like this; they are not in short supply. It is a rare author who is willing to take the bull by the horns and actually confront the fact that, when it comes to personality development, psychoanalysis is just plain wrong. Those who value psychoanalysis as a field need to come to grips with this fact if they are to have any hope of gaining any sort of scientific or scholarly credibility.

### Resurrecting Psychoanalysis

The “don’t-bother-me-with-the-facts” attitude I saw reflected in too much of the literature on infant research lends credence to the frequent charge that psychoanalysis as a field is insular, narcissistic, and even cult-like.

However, after much research, I did encounter the writings of Robert Stolorow and his colleagues, who frankly acknowledge the idea that research on infant development has empirically disproven some of the most cherished psychoanalytic notions about personality development.

In Stolorow, Brandchaft & Atwood (1995), the authors observe that “there is now increasing evidence that the autism of adult schizophrenic patients has no counterpart in infancy. The postulation of an autistic phase or of an undifferentiated phase is not supported by the accumulating evidence.” Citing Stern (see above), they comment that “consistent with the findings from the infancy literature is the hypothesis that the infant alternatives between periods of oneness with its mothers...and periods of disengagement...Both patterns are characteristic of the young infant; neither is primary or a precondition for the other” (p. 31 in *Psychoanalytic Treatment*<sup>46</sup>).

Stolorow et al. resolve the problem of conflicting paradigms by adopting the position that psychoanalysis is in essence intersubjective, rather than objective, in nature:

*We do not believe that the analyst possesses any “objective” knowledge of the patient’s life or of human development and human psychological functioning. What the analyst possesses is a subjective frame of reference of his own, deriving from*

*a multiplicity of sources and formative experiences, through which he attempts to organize the analytic data into a set of coherent themes and interrelationships* (p. 6).

In this way, Stolorow and his colleagues find a way to live with the incongruity of discovering that much of the earlier theory on infant development has been empirically disproven in the objective sense. Their approach enables them to benefit from whatever psychoanalytic ideas seem useful for their work without having to defend their status as empirical realities.

In a 2005 interview, Stolorow calls the philosophy of psychoanalysis “a mess” and said that his recent books represented his effort to clean it up. His idea is that psychoanalysis is not the kind of approach that was ever really designed to look at reality in a literal sense, which is why it has been so easily refuted by empirical science. A more appropriate goal is to look at patients’ experiences “in their own right, rather than being distortions of an external reality that the analyst ‘knows.’”

Interestingly, the patients to whom Stolorow refers are not people with minor symptoms, but psychotics. Thus, what he proposes is using psychoanalysis to better understand the nature of psychotic states without necessarily seeing them as inferior, deviant, or bad. In other words, one of his aims seems to be “de-pathologize pathology.”<sup>47</sup>

This is an interesting idea, if we consider the fact that what we call pathology is by definition simply something that deviates from the norm. It is not uncommon for people who have experienced unusual states of consciousness to see them characterized by others (e.g., psychiatrists) as mentally ill (and thus in serious need of therapy to fix the psyche). This was the experience of Suzanne Segal, who spent years trying to find a mental health professional who would explain to her why she had completely lost her sense of “me-ness.” Everybody she consulted was puzzled by her case, because she seemed to function well enough in life and thus did not seem to rate a DSM diagnosis. It was only when she finally talked with several spiritual teachers (including Andrew Cohen) that she got a different sort of answer: they all confirmed that she was actually in a high state of spiritual consciousness and simply needed to reconcile herself to the idea of living without a sense of self.

Another case that comes to mind is documented in the book *Sonrise*, a father’s account of how he helped his two-year-old autistic son regain the ability to function normally simply by attentively sitting with him and empathetically mirroring his behavior for 8–10 hours a day (an approach that Heinz Kohut would appreciate).<sup>48</sup> Another case concerns a young medical student (and meditator) who did something similar with a catatonic woman, being present with her without expectation for about a

day and a half. The woman slowly began to respond to his presence; however, the student’s superiors were not happy with his breaching of the rules (even though it was his day off) and soon terminated the experiment.

The point is this: to the extent that we “pathologize pathology,” (i.e., making it basically meaningless and without any redeeming value), we tend to perpetuate it and even make it worse (more isolating and distressing). To the extent that we accept it without judgment (much the way that Vipassana meditators accept whatever state they experience), we create a bridge by which to support and affirm one another.

Thus, when the psychoanalytic approach values subjective experience for its own sake, it loses its moralistic stance and becomes a means for exploring alternative worlds without judging or devaluing them.

Stern & Stern (1989) discuss this idea when comparing Mahler vs. Kohut, observing that the truly critical difference between them concerns Mahler’s commitment to the classical view that autonomy is the goal of development with Kohut’s position that dependence on others (i.e., other “selfobjects”) is an experience that we never outgrow (p. 7).

This perspective is also reminiscent of the ideas of James Hillman, the developer of archetypal psychology, an approach which

*relativizes and deliteralizes the ego and focuses on the psyche, or soul, itself and the archaic, the deepest patterns of psychic functioning... Hillman criticizes mainstream psychology as being reductive, materialistic, and literal; they are psychologies without psyche, without soul. Accordingly, Hillman’s oeuvre has been an attempt to restore psyche to its proper place in psychology. Hillman sees the soul at work in imagination, in fantasy, in myth and in metaphor. He also sees soul revealed in psychopathology, in the symptoms of psychological disorders* (Wikipedia).

Hillman himself puts it this way:

*Archetypal psychology... had from its beginning the intention of moving beyond clinical inquiry within the consulting room of psychotherapy by situating itself within the culture of Western imagination. It is a psychology deliberately affiliated with the arts, culture, and the history of ideas, arising as they do from the imagination. [It]... can be seen as a cultural movement part of whose task is the re-visioning of psychology, psychopathology, and psychotherapy”* (p. 9-10).<sup>49</sup>

In both Stolorow and Hillman, we see a deliberate effort to approach psyche in a way that does not require the seeker to empirically justify either his method or conclusions. However, it does require the ability to attentively engage with psyche in ways that are evocative, playful, creative, and unconventional.

Jung’s analytical psychology offers us similar opportu-

nities, although I'm not sure he would have been as enthusiastic as Hillman about seeing pathology from a value-neutral or even positive perspective (after all, for Jung, integrating the Shadow was done to achieve wholeness, not to celebrate "pathological diversity"!)

The point I would like to make is this: that the fact that we can no longer look to psychoanalysis to tell us the nature of an infant's inner life or the course of its personality development does not negate the value of psychoanalysis for other purposes. It does, however, negate its value as a means of supporting the claim that the most basic and enduring elements of our personality are determined by the nature of our interactions with caregivers during infancy.

### Psychoanalysis and the Enneagram

I have spent a fair amount of time (and ink) discussing the status of psychoanalytic personality theories, focusing mainly on the theories discussed by Bea Chestnut in her article. The discussion was lengthy because I wanted to lay a firm foundation for what I am about to do now: to make the claim that her proposal to base our enneagram work of certain psychoanalytical theories of personality development is—to put it bluntly—a losing proposition.

This proposition comes at least 40 years too late, at a time when science has clearly demolished the key premise on which these theories are built: the idea that the human infant begins his life in an essentially autistic state and develops the key structures of personality after birth, whether these develop mostly in response to inner drives (Freud) or to interactions with the primary caregiver (Mahler and Klein).

In her article, Chestnut claims that "psychoanalytic developmental theory [is] the only body of theory in western (*sic*) psychology that addresses in detail how personality develops in childhood" (p. 23). This may be true. But if it is, there is a good reason for this. It's because this body of theory is (and always has been) extraordinarily *overspecified*—that is, its detailed claims about what goes on in the inner mind of the infant (especially what is motivating him) are purely speculative. They are not based on any sort of provable evidence.

This does not necessarily mean these theories were without merit, especially when they were originally developed, because they enabled people in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to consider a potentially useful way to explore personality development, especially pathological personality development. At the time, no one knew why pathology developed, and so it was beneficial to have fairly elaborate theories that attempted to account for this.

But theories are not facts. *Theories are basically stories told by intellectuals.* And psychoanalysis is a story-telling

discipline, par excellence.

However, some psychoanalytic stories are better than others. For example, the story that there is more to us than just the conscious mind—that it is but the tip of a rather large and mostly numinous iceberg—is still a story with tremendous evocative power. It is a compelling story, enriching our lives by making us pause to consider the hidden aspects of the self. But like most stories (i.e., theories), it will not last forever. It has a life cycle that must eventually end (to make way for newer, fresher ideas), just as Newton's theory of physics was eventually displaced by the revolutionary theory of quantum mechanics.

What happened to Newton is what is happening to these elderly psychoanalytic accounts of personality development. They are being rapidly displaced by newer, more empirically justifiable theories. Turn on any PBS program on infant development and you won't hear a word about Melanie Klein or Margaret Mahler. What you will hear is the story of the *competent infant*—the infant who from birth possesses individuality, makes choices, and solves problems. •

Stay tuned for Part II, a look at how Freudian ideas have laid the foundation for viewing the enneagram types as ego pathologies that developed in response to early childhood wounding.....

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1 Chestnut, Bea (2008). "Understanding the Development of Personality Type: Integrating Object Relations Theory and the Enneagram System," *The Enneagram Journal*, 1-1, 22-51.

2 The term "psychoanalytic theory" is a broad one which I use here to keep the article introduction brief. However, the type of theory to which she refers originates in the Object Relations school of psychoanalysis, which is briefly discussed later in the article.

3 It has to be noted that Mahler later changed her opinion about the value of understanding normal development by looking at the abnormal (see p. 587 in Coates, Susan W. (2004). "Bowlby and Mahler: Their Lives and Theories," in *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association (JAPA)*, 52-2, pp. 571-601; also available at <http://www.apsa.org/Portals/1/docs/JAPA/522/Coates-571-601-post.pdf>

4 Hughes, Judith. *From Obstacle to Ally: The Evolution of Psychoanalytic Practice*. Brunner-Routledge: 2004. I should note here that Object Relations theorists would almost certainly say that this definition is simplistic—that it does not do justice to the intricacies of the concept, which can include such things as the good breast, bad breast, aspects of a person, etc. All I can say is that on the whole, I agree with Hughes—and I think that this is an excellent example of the way that psychoana-

lytic theory tends to take relatively straightforward ideas and to complicate them in such a way that the concepts under discussion become obscured rather than clarified. It is true that some concepts are inherently complex and deserve to be discussed in ways that are not overly-reductionist or simplistic. But it is also true that the presence of too many multi-syllabic constructions (big words), neologisms (made-up words), and nominalizations (noun heaps) do not increase the brilliance of one's ideas, only the confusion in one's audience.

5 Source: <http://www.objectrelations.org/orkey.htm>

6 Psychiatrist Harold Blum summarizes this development as follows: "Following the secession of Alfred Adler in June 1911 and the resignation of Wilhelm Stekel from the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society in November 1912, [Ernest] Jones suggested the formation of a secret committee designed, like the Paladins of Charlemagne, "to guard the kingdom and policy of their master." The committee was to be unofficial, informal, and entirely secret and was to remain in close communication with Freud" (p. 8). *American Journal of Psychiatry* Vol. 160 August 2003; available at <http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/reprint/160/8/1395.pdf>

7 See p. 100 in Riso, Don Richard, & Hudson, Russ. *Understanding the Enneagram: the Practical Guide to Personality Types*. Houghton-Mifflin: 2000.

8 It can be argued that psychoanalysis theory is universally applicable, but because of its extreme emphasis on psychopathology—rather than psychological health—this argument can be (and has been) questioned.

9 At the same time, it is hard to ignore some very serious charges leveled at Freud by his critics—charges of data fudging, professional misconduct, and creating a cult of personality; see, e.g., *Unauthorized Freud* (Frederick Crews, ed.), Viking: 1998.

10 E.g., see p. 21 in Mitchell, S.A. & Black, M.J. *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought*. Basic Books: 1995.

11 This pattern is so well-known that it prompted someone to write an extremely funny parody of how one goes about creating a revolutionary new psychiatric treatment (standing on one's head "to increase blood flow to the brain"). The next step is to declare that advanced training is needed to administer the treatment, setting up a 5-year post-graduate institute to train people for this purpose, and blaming any negative outcomes "on the failure to follow the intricacies of the method...or lay professionals who attempt to administer the method without going through the institute program. Of course, after a few years, radical splinter groups espousing heretical ideas would emerge. It is not blood flow to the brain that is healing, they would vehemently insist, but blood

flow away from the feet that is actually responsible for cure. They would develop their own [alternative] radical treatment techniques...I would promptly kick these blasphemers out of my institute and they would start their own training centers." (Hansen, James T. (2002). "Post-Modern Implications for Theoretical Integration of Counseling Approaches." *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 80, 315-321.

12 See pp. 83-86 in Masson, Jeffrey. *Final Analysis: the Making and Unmaking of a Psychoanalyst*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux: 1990. Here Masson describes an incident near the end of his psychoanalytic training in which his training analyst makes the outrageous demand that he be given co-authorship of a paper that Masson was planning to write—a paper based on ideas that were Masson's alone. Otherwise, his psychoanalyst maintains, "I will tell the membership committee that you have not completed your analysis" (p. 84). Such a threat is obviously highly coercive and unethical. But what is even more shocking are Masson's calm reflections that such a state of affairs is common in psychoanalytic training—that in making such demands, his analyst is not all that different from others he has met. (Later, Masson experienced even worse treatment at the hands of his fellow psychoanalysts when he attempted to present his research about Freud's seduction theory; see Chapter 9 for details.)

13 This is not to suggest that Anna Freud had a fully-fledged, multi-stage theory of personality development, such as Mahler's—however, it is to suggest that Freud and other classically-oriented Freudians saw personality development as an outgrowth of Freud's two-drive theory (which posits inner instinctual drives as an early motivator), rather than Klein's Objects Relations approach (which posits the need for social interaction as an early motivator).

14 Actually, I am not sure whether the need is really social or survival-oriented, in that it is the mother who gives the infant what he needs. So what actually motivates the infant's relationship with the mother—is it the desire for love and affection or is it the wish to have its needs met?

15 Source: <http://science.jrank.org/pages/5560/Psychoanalysis-Psychoanalytic-therapy.html>

16 Mahler, Margaret S.; Pine, Fred; & Bergman, Anni. *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant*. Basic Books, 1975.

17 This idea is discussed in connection to Type 4 in Naranjo's *Character and Neurosis* (Gateway: 1994) on pp. 102-103. Of course, for Klein, the impulse towards envy and destruction is not considered to be associated with a particular personality type, but is associated with all infants at a given stage of development. One cannot help

but observe that she believes that what is true for herself (i.e., for her *type*) must be true for all others.

18 Quinodoz, Jean-Michel; & Slotkin, Philip. *The Taming of Solitude: Separation Anxiety in Psychoanalysis*; Tavistock/Routledge : 1993. Here are the authors' comments: "Klein first described the paranoid-schizoid position as preceding the depressive position in the course of development, but later seems to have revised her views, considering that the depressive position could be present from the outset. Nowadays, of course, the concept of 'position' is taken to refer more to instantaneous states of organization of the ego, subject to constant fluctuation, than to an organization having a fixed sequential chronology during the phases of infant development" (p. 64).

19 Klein's authoritative biographer, Phyllis Grosskurth, notes that in the early 1950s, Klein came to see envy as the "basic inborn motivator", and provides Klein's own definition of envy as "the angry feeling that another person possess and enjoys something desirable—the envious impulse being to take it away or to spoil it" (p. 414, *Melanie Klein: Her World and Her Work*. Harvard University Press: 1986/1995). The definition comes from p. 181 in Klein's *Envy and Gratitude*. Tavistock: 1957.

20 Scharff, Jill Savege; & Tsigounis, Stanley A. *Self-Hatred in Psychoanalysis*. Taylor & Francis: 2003.

21 **Gedo, John E.** *The Evolution of Psychoanalysis: Contemporary Theory and Practice*. Other Press: 1999.

22 Source: <http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/elljwp/klein.htm>

23 Source: <http://www.sonoma.edu/users/d/daniels/objectrelations.html> (the home page of psychologist Victor Daniels at Sonoma State University.

24 Grosskurth, op. cit.

25 See p. 43 in Gabbard, Glen O.; and Lester, Eva P. *Boundaries and Boundary Violations in Psychoanalysis*. Basic Books, 1995.

26 Ogden, Thomas. *The Primitive Edge of Experience*. Jason Aronson: 1989.

27 Basic information on Mahler's stages and Kohut's theory can be found in Sharf, Richard S. *Theories of Psychotherapy & Counseling: Concepts and Cases*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Wadsworth: 2000, pp. 38-46.

28 See p. 178 in Goldberg, Arnold. *The Realities of Transference*. Routledge: 1990.

29 For a discussion on, e.g., his vacillating ideas on the nature of twinship and its relationship to mirroring, see pp. 336-337 in Strozier, Charles B. *Heinz Kohut: The Making of a Psychoanalyst*: Other Press, 2004.

30 Shane, Estelle; & Shane, Morton. "Mahler, Kohut, and Infant Research: Some Comparisons," in: *Self-Psychology: Comparisons and Contrasts*. D.W. Detrick and S.P. Detrick, eds. The Analytic Press, 1989, re-

produced online at [www.findingstone.com/professionals/monographs/mahler\\_kohut\\_stern.htm](http://www.findingstone.com/professionals/monographs/mahler_kohut_stern.htm)

31 See also p. 138 in Edward, Joyce; Ruskin, Nathene; & Turrini, Patsy. *Separation/Individuation*. Psychology Press, 1992: "Kohut (1977) stresses that self-object relations occur on all developmental levels and in psychological health as well as in psychological illness throughout the course of life."

32 The author here cite the work of Basch, M. (1983). "Empathetic understanding: a review of the concept and some theoretical considerations. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 31, pp. 101-126.

33 For a similar discussion, see pp. 165-166 in Mitchell & Black (1995), supra.

34 See p. 5 in the most recent edition of Mahler et al., 1975, op. cit. (Pine, Fred; Bergman, Anni; & Mahler, Margaret. *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant: Symbiosis and Individuation*, Basic Books, 2000).

35 Ibid., p. xvi.

36 Stern, Daniel. *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Development*. Basic Books: 1985, p. 235.

37 Pine et al. (2000), p. 6, op. cit.

38 Ibid., p. xvi.

39 Stone, L. Joseph; Smith, Henrietta T.; & Murphy, Lois B. *The Competent Infant*. Basic Books: 1973.

40 This idea is discussed in Coates, S.W. (2004). "John Bowlby and Margaret S. Mahler: Their Lives and Theories," in *Journal of the American Psychoanalytical Association*, 52, 571-601; also available online at <http://www.apsa.org/Portals/1/docs/JAPA/522/Coates-571-601-post.pdf>.

41 Stern, op. cit., p. 238. This is part of an entire chapter that Stern devotes to discussing the devastating impact of infant research on Freudian and neo-Freudian theories of personality development, especially the idea that infants are largely undifferentiated at birth.

42 Wyly, Patricia M. *Infant Assessment*. Westview: 1997.

43 Friedman, Steven; & Vietze, Peter. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 49-4, (Jul., 1972), pp. 314-322.

44 <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog/ROCINF.html>

45 Gabbard & Lester, op. cit.

46 Stolorow, Robert; Brandchaft, Bernard; & Atwood, George E. *Psychoanalytic Treatment: An Inter->>> subjective Approach*. Routledge: 1987/1995.

47 The term "depathologizing pathology" is mine, not theirs.

48 Kaufmann, Barry Neil. *Sonrise: the Miracle Continues*. H.J. Kramer: 1994.

49 Hillman, James, *Archetypal Psychology: a Brief Account*. Spring: 1983/1991.