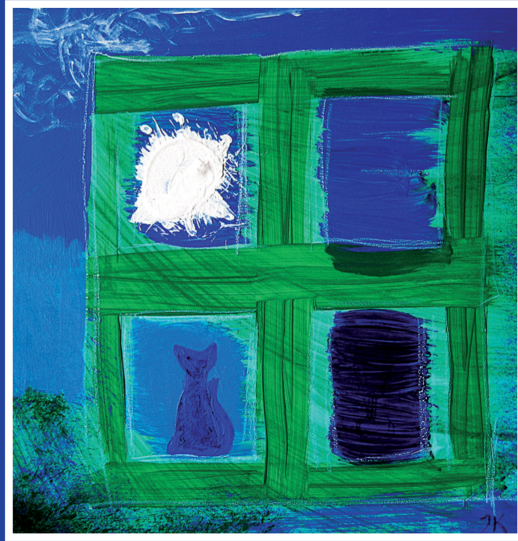


THE MATRIX OF THE MIND

Object Relations and the
Psychoanalytic Dialogue



THOMAS H. OGDEN

The Matrix of the Mind

Other Books by Thomas H. Ogden

**Projective Identification and
Psychotherapeutic Technique (1982)**

The Primitive Edge of Experience (1989)

The Matrix of the Mind

Object Relations and
the Psychoanalytic Dialogue

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To my wife, Sandra



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Preface

If it had been possible to do so, this volume would have been written in a form in which several themes are presented simultaneously and in dynamic tension with one another. Despite the unavoidable linearity of the book, I hope that I have managed to capture something of the nature of the coexistence of primitive and mature aspects of experience—for example, the dialectical relationship between the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive states of being and the simultaneity of the infant's experience of being at one with and separate from the mother. I would like to suggest that each time the text begins to elaborate a linear conception of the relationship between these ideas, the reader attempt to re-cast these ideas in his own mind in a form that preserves a sense of the simultaneity of diverse dimensions of experience. In such a form, elements do not simply lead to or succeed one another; rather, there is a coexistence of irresolvably different elements that have entered into a relationship of evolving, mutually enriching negations of one another.

T.H.O.
San Francisco, CA
September 10, 1989



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I am grateful to Dr. Bryce Boyer for all that he has taught me about the art, the discipline, and the courage involved in treating very disturbed patients. The seminars I have taught with him have been a great source of pleasure for me.

As will become clear in the course of this book, I believe that ideas are formed and developed dialectically. I am indebted to the supervisees with whom I have worked, and the members of the various seminars that I have led on object relations theory, for helping to create a series of generative dialogues that shaped the ideas discussed in this volume.



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————— 1 —————

The Psychoanalytic Dialogue

*We die with the dying:
See, they depart, and we go with them.
We are born with the dead:
See, they return, and bring us with them.*

—T. S. Eliot, Four Quartets

This book is offered as an act of interpretation. Different psychoanalytic perspectives are much like different languages. Despite the extensive overlap of semantic content of the written texts of different languages, each language creates meaning that cannot be generated by the other languages now spoken or preserved in written form. The interpreter is not merely a passive carrier of information from one person to another; he is the active preserver and creator of meaning as well as the retriever of the alienated. As such, the interpreter safeguards the fullness of human discourse.

Psychoanalysis, both as a therapeutic process and as a set of ideas, develops in the form of a discourse between

subjects, each interpreting his own productions and those of the other. Speaking for the moment about psychoanalysis as a theory (or, more accurately, a set of theories), each important contribution provides a degree of resolution for a theoretical or clinical problem, and in so doing creates a new epistemologic dilemma. A subsequent contribution no longer addresses the same issue that an earlier contribution has addressed, for that problem no longer exists; it has been forever altered. The more significant the contribution, the more radically (and interestingly) the epistemologic problem is transformed.

British object relations theory represents a diverse collection of contributions to the psychoanalytic discourse and has altered the character of the epistemologic problems presently accessible for psychoanalytic consideration. In this volume several pivotal ideas emerging from the work of the British school will be discussed, primarily concepts introduced by Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, and, in a more limited way, Ronald Fairbairn and Wilfred Bion. I do not attempt to survey or synthesize the contributions of these analysts; rather, my aim is to clarify, critique, and interpret, and in the process to generate new analytic understandings. Even though I will discuss individual concepts and groups of concepts contributed by members of the British school, I hope to convey something of the movement of thought underlying the unusually generative discourse in which these ideas were developed. The contributions to the psychoanalytic dialogue upon which I will focus were made in the period between 1925 and the early 1970s. That discourse is over, and I will not attempt to reconstruct it historically. My rendering of Klein, Winnicott, Fairbairn, Bion, and others is not an effort to replicate the thinking of these analysts, since the moment in the dialogue at which their contributions were

made has passed. All that can be alive at present is our own capacity for interpretation, and it is toward that end that I will devote my efforts.

Both in the analytic dialogue (between analyst and analysand) and in the psychoanalytic discourse (among analytic thinkers), each act of interpretation preserves the original (experience or idea) while simultaneously generating new meanings and understandings of oneself and the other. Unless the original is preserved through language and in conscious and unconscious memory, we are trapped in a never-ending present upon which we cannot reflect and from which we cannot learn. The isolation of a portion of either the analytic dialogue between patient and analysand, or the analytic discourse among analytic thinkers results in individual or cultural self-alienation. It is not that a part of the past disappears; that cannot happen, because the past is immutable. We can, however, isolate ourselves from our history. History differs from the past in that the past is simply a collection of events, while history is a creation reflecting our conscious and unconscious memory of, our personal and collective rendering of, our distortions of, our interpretations of, the past. By isolating ourselves from the history of the dialogue that has preceded us and, in a sense, has created us in the present, we become less able to recognize and understand ourselves fully through the symbols, the meanings, the ideas, the feelings, the art, and the work that we create. To the extent that we isolate ourselves from a portion of the discourse, we are deadened, because to that same degree, we do not exist for ourselves (i.e., self-reflectively). A principal goal of clinical psychoanalysis is the progressive recapturing of self-alienated personal experience, isolated from the intrapersonal and interpersonal discourse, a process that allows the analysand to

more fully recognize and understand who he is, and who he is becoming. In the retrieval of the alienated, the analysand becomes more fully alive as a subjective, historical human being. He becomes more capable of engaging in a fuller (less self-alienated) intrapersonal as well as interpersonal dialogue. He becomes less fearful of that which he formerly isolated from himself and, to that extent, becomes more free.

My goal in the present volume is to contribute to the retrieval of the alienated through my own acts of interpretation of ideas introduced by Klein, Winnicott, Fairbairn, and Bion. The contributions of these analysts to a large extent have been isolated from the worldwide psychoanalytic dialogue, leading to a depleting form of self-alienation in psychoanalytic thinking (see Jacoby [1983] for a discussion of the ahistorical character of American psychoanalysis over the past forty years).

The first portion of this volume re-interprets facets of the work of Melanie Klein. In the initial chapter on Klein (Chapter 2), a study of the Kleinian conception of fantasy is used as a vehicle for exploring psychoanalytic instinct theory as a theory of meaning. I will propose that Chomsky's concept of linguistic deep structure provides a useful analog for the understanding of the Kleinian conception of "phylogenetic inheritance of ideas." Instinct theory is viewed not as a theory of inherited, preformed ideas but, rather, as a theory of inborn, organizing codes (associated with the life and death instincts) by which perception is organized and meanings are attached to experience in a highly determined way.

A reinterpretation of Kleinian instinct theory serves to provide a fresh understanding of the monumental significance of Freud's instinct theory. Freud's contribution is not a static text but, rather, a set of ideas that is con-

stantly evolving and being transformed in the context of the subsequent dialogue. We take it for granted that one cannot understand Klein without understanding Freud; I believe that it is also true that one cannot fully understand Freud without understanding Klein. Freud was aware that his writing contained more meaning than he himself recognized. It was for this reason that he rarely revised his earlier papers; rather, he allowed them to stand as they were and added ideas he developed later in the form of footnotes to the original text. In that way, he hoped to avoid inadvertently obfuscating the truth of the earlier version, which he was concerned he would lose as his thinking "progressed."

Kleinian theory dwells heavily on the nature of primitive mental contents, but this most explicit level of Klein's thinking often obscures the implicit theory of biological structure as the organizing container for the ideational and affective contents of mind. In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, the Kleinian conceptions of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions are interpreted as conceptions of states of being. Entry into these positions represents the transition from the purely biological to psychological experience (the paranoid-schizoid position) and from the impersonal-psychological to subjective experience (the depressive position). The distinctive states of being associated with each of these positions together (in a dialectical interplay similar to that between the conscious and unconscious mind, but not divided along lines of consciousness) constitute enduring, fundamental components of all subsequent psychological states.

A series of clinical vignettes is presented in Chapter 5 that focus upon patients who are involved in making a transition from a predominantly paranoid-schizoid mode of organizing experience to a depressive mode of organiz-

ing experience. It is of central clinical importance that the therapist be able to recognize and understand the nature of this transition, since his understanding of this shift in the patient's mode of organizing experience powerfully influences the way the therapist listens, how he intervenes, and how he understands the patient's response to his intervention.

In Chapter 6, the development of the concept of internal object relations is traced through the work of Freud, Abraham, Klein, Fairbairn, Winnicott, and Bion. Fairbairn's revision of Freud and Klein constitutes a critical advance in the development of object relations theory. I propose in this chapter that internal object relations be thought of as paired, split-off, and repressed aspects of ego. These paired aspects of self (the internal object relationship) are viewed not simply as self and object representations, but as paired suborganizations of personality capable of semi-autonomously generating experience.

This discussion of the concept of internal object relations represents an exploration of one side—the object or content side—of a dialectical relationship between the container and the contained, a relationship between psychological-interpersonal space and its mental contents. As such, this chapter prepares the way for a study of the work of Donald Winnicott, whose work is devoted to the study of the other side—the container side—of this dialectical pair.

In the final three chapters, I seek to clarify, interpret, and extend aspects of the work of Donald Winnicott, including his conception of the development of the mother-infant. The work of both Freud and Klein focused on the nature of psychological contents, functions and structures and their intrapsychic and interpersonal (e.g.,

transferential) manifestations. Winnicott expanded the field of psychoanalytic exploration to include a study of the development of the space in which mental contents, functions, and structures, as well as interpersonal relations, exist.

In Chapters 8 and 9, Winnicott's concept of potential space is discussed in terms of a series of dialectical relationships between reality and fantasy, me and not-me, symbol and symbolized, etc., each pole creating, preserving, and negating its opposite. This concept is perhaps the most important of Winnicott's contributions to psychoanalysis and at the same time the most elusive of his ideas. Potential space is not initially an intrapsychic space, for there is not yet an individual psyche in early infancy; rather, it is at first an interpersonal space created jointly by mother and infant. It is in this space that the individual infant "begins to be" (Winnicott, 1967a) and later learns to play, dream, work, and to create and interpret his symbols. Failure to create or maintain this dialectical process leads to forms of psychopathology that include the experiencing of one's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions as things in themselves; the foreclosure of imagination; fetishistic object usage; and a failure to attach meaning to experience.

Emerging from the dialogue that constitutes object relations theory are important contributions to a psychoanalytic conceptualization of mental contents (e.g., the concept of preconceptions of objects [psychological deep structure], the concept of internal object relations, the notion of the discovery of the externality of objects). But beyond this is the understanding developed in this portion of the psychoanalytic dialogue that mental contents exist in a psychological space that is at first almost entirely

interpersonal, only later evolving into a personal internal environment. It is the dialectical interplay of our mental contents and the personal and interpersonal psychological space in which they are lived that constitutes the matrix of the mind.

— 2 —

*Instinct, Phantasy, and
Psychological Deep
Structure in the Work of
Melanie Klein*

*If you are applying psychoanalytic treatment to children
you should meet Melanie Klein. . . . She is saying some
things that may or may not be true, and you must find out
for yourself for you will not get what Melanie Klein teaches
in my analysis with you.*

*—Communication by James Strachey to his analysts and
Donald Winnicott*

Although a significant proportion of the world's analysts are Kleinian analysts, a serious consideration of the work of Melanie Klein has not been a major part of the dialogue that constitutes American psychoanalytic thinking. Too often, when Klein's theory is considered, it is scrutinized only long enough to be dismissed on the basis of one

“untenable” idea or another, such as Klein’s conception of the death instinct, her developmental timetable, or her theory of technique.

Although I am not a Kleinian and have profound disagreements with many aspects of her work, my aim is to present Klein’s thinking in a light that may account for the important influence her ideas have had on the development of psychoanalytic thought outside the United States. In particular, Klein has had a powerful influence on the development of British object relations theory, as much through the rejection of her ideas as by their acceptance. The work of Winnicott, Fairbairn, Guntrip, and Balint must in large part be understood as a reaction to Kleinian theory. Klein’s ideas and the reaction against them constitute a good deal of the dialogue underlying the development of object relations theory. The dynamics of this dialogue are incomprehensible if one has never embraced Klein’s ideas for even a moment. One must understand Kleinian theory in order to move beyond it.

The Concept of Phantasy

In discussing Klein, one must begin with the concept of phantasy, for this is the hub of the mind-body system she envisions. Phantasy¹ for Klein (1952a) is the psychic

¹English analysts, particularly the Kleinians, have tended to use the *ph* spelling of phantasy. Isaacs (1952) felt that the *ph* spelling connotes more of the unconscious dimension of the idea, whereas fantasy with an *f* should be used to refer to the more conscious, daydream level of this group of mental activities. Non-Kleinian, American analysts have never employed this distinction. Although Strachey in the Standard Edition uses the *ph* spelling of phantasy exclusively, American analysts have used only the *f* spelling. In this volume, I will use the spelling adopted by the analyst whose work is under discussion.

representation of instinct. Instinct itself is a biological entity, and so phantasy is the psychic representation of one's biology. Instinct must undergo some type of transformation in order to generate "mental corollaries" (Isaacs, 1952)—i.e., phantasies. The functional unit of the mind that is responsible for this transformation is the id. Instincts, as part of one's biology, are present from birth, and the id performs its transformational function from the beginning. The newborn infant's world at the outset is a bodily world, and phantasy represents the infant's attempt to transform somatic events into a mental form. Even into adulthood, phantasy never loses its connection with the body. Phantasy content is always ultimately traceable to thoughts and feelings about the workings and contents of one's own body in relation to the workings and contents of the body of the other.

Klein's conception of instinct derives from Freud's (1905) definition of instinct as "the demand made [by the body] upon the mind for work" (p. 168). For Klein, the body's "demand" has information encoded in it that the mind (specifically, the id) as receiver transforms into psychic phenomena with specific contents.

A great part of that which makes up one's inherited constitution appears on a psychological plane through the operation of the instincts. Does this mean that the infant inherits thoughts, and thinks those thoughts from the beginning? This would clearly be an untenable psychological theory. Unfortunately, it is very often at this juncture that Kleinian theory is dismissed as absurd. Many analysts see little point in pursuing a theory that evolves from the assumptions that the infant is born with ideas that do not derive from experience and that the infant can think at birth in ways that Piaget has shown are not possible until much later in development. Before discarding the whole system of Kleinian thought on these grounds, however, it

is worthwhile to listen carefully to the language of the Kleinians to see if such apparently untenable ideas make sense from any perspective.

In her classic paper on phantasy, Isaacs (1952) writes,

It has sometimes been suggested that unconscious phantasies such as that of "tearing [the breast] to bits" would not arise in the child's mind before he had gained the conscious knowledge that tearing a person to bits would mean killing him or her. Such a view does not meet the case. It overlooks the fact that such knowledge is *inherent* in bodily impulses as a vehicle of instinct, in the *aim* of instinct, in the excitation of the organ, i.e. in this case, the mouth.

The phantasy that his passionate impulses will destroy the breast does not require the infant to have actually seen objects eaten up and destroyed, and then to have come to the conclusion that he could do it too. This aim, this relation to the object, is inherent in the character and direction of the impulse itself and in its related affects. (pp. 93-94)

Isaacs is proposing here that the idea of tearing an object to bits is not learned but, rather, is intrinsic to the aim of the instinct. Klein makes the same point when she attributes the infant's knowledge of the breast before it is encountered to "phylogenetic inheritance" (1952a, p. 117 fn.). In this conception of instinct, the Kleinians have expanded the concept of aim from Freud's (1905, 1915a) original usage, in which the aim of an instinct was the discharge of tension. Isaacs's usage is not incompatible with Freud's but it goes beyond his to state that the aim of the instinct in any given instance is characterized by a specific type of object relatedness that includes specific

affective and ideational qualities not dependent on actual experience with objects.

Psychological Deep Structure

If the infant is not born with thoughts, how does he come by this "knowledge" of objects if not by experience? The Kleinians do not offer an answer to the question beyond the notion of "phylogenetic inheritance" (Klein, 1952c), but I believe that an answer might be provided by analogy with Chomsky's (1957, 1968) concept of linguistic deep structure. Infants are not born knowing French, English, Russian, or any other language, but given an ordinary environment and ordinary constitutional endowment, each infant learns at least one of the languages now spoken on this planet. It is simply not possible, according to Chomsky, for a human being to deduce and operationalize the grammatical structure of language without a pre-existing system with which to select from and organize the mass of sounds to which one is exposed. Chomsky refers to this system, this code, as the "deep structure" of language. The individual does not have to, nor could he, create a grammar. The infant is born with a code that is built into the mode of functioning of his perceptual, cognitive, and motor apparatuses that will determine that he will organize sensory data and render them linguistically meaningful in a highly specific way. In other words, the infant will organize auditory stimuli in a way that is determined by the inborn code.

The assumption underlying Chomsky's concept of deep structure is that human beings do not randomly organize experience. Nothing is perceived absolutely freshly, i.e., free of preconceptions, preexisting schemata, preexisting systems for organizing that which is perceived.

Meaning cannot be generated absolutely *de novo*. Very similar understandings of the processing of experience in terms of inherent structures have been developed by Jakobson and de Saussure in the field of linguistics, Levi-Strauss in the field of anthropology, and Piaget in the field of developmental psychology.

To begin with a basic example of an inherent system of organizing perception, human color perception is not simply a matter of passively receiving sensory data and converting those data into visual experience. The primary colors, perceived as discrete differentiated groupings, are the products of a preexisting schema by which one organizes into groups certain portions of the continuous range of wavelengths of light (Bornstein, 1975). The groupings of wavelengths that we call colors are both arbitrary and universal among human beings and are the product of the way in which we organize the continuous spectrum of wavelengths, each wavelength differing from the next one by a fixed quantity of energy. We all divide the spectrum in precisely the same way (in the absence of color blindness) because of a preexisting biological schema that we use to organize our perceptions.

Similarly, our organization of sounds into phonemes (the basic units of sound from which words are constructed) is not a matter of passive reception of an existing external order. The distinction between the phonemes "ba" and "pa," for example, is not a quality of the stimuli themselves. Rather, it is built into our system of organizing stimuli. The human being is incapable of perceiving any sound as existing between these two phonemes (Eimas, 1975).

The shapes and shadings composing the human face are preferentially discernible by the infant on the basis of constitutionally determined modes of organizing perception (Stern, 1983). Again, we organize visual data into