

Melanie Klein by Professor Richard Wollheim (transcript of BBC broadcast).
Broadcast on BBC Radio 3, 12th July 1983.

MELANIE KLEIN

by

Richard Wollheim

Prof. J. Sandler: I remember her as a big woman, and I think probably two or three times as big as she was.

Dr H Segal: One of the things that struck me most was an enormous capacity; I think of it almost in terms of volume, she had an enormous devotion to work and yet there was always room for more.

Mrs Marion Milner: I think up to then probably I had been a bit frightened of her, she was a very impressive personality and she disagreed, and when I looked up I thought – she looks like a vulture looking out of a thundercloud, the way she brought down her eyes, and I wasn't ever frightened of her again.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: Melanie Klein was and is a highly controversial figure. When in the autumn of 1960 she died in a London Hospital at the age of 78, she could claim to have made a larger and more original contribution to the new science of psycho-analysis than anyone except its founder, Sigmund Freud. To her associates and followers this contribution represented a major amplification and a major enrichment of Freud's ideas. To her critics and opponents her contributions seemed a regrettable departure from the standards and methods of Freud. Prime amongst those critics was his own daughter, Anna Freud.

Melanie Klein was born in Vienna in 1882, the youngest child of Moriz Reizes, a medical practitioner, who had emancipated himself from the constraints of Jewish Orthodoxy. The Reizes household was cultivated and liberal; the most bitter family row she could remember was one between her father and her brother over the relative merits of Goethe and Schiller. She wanted to become a doctor, but she got engaged early and the two years she had at University she spent studying humanities. In later life she deeply regretted not having had a medical education. In 1903 she got married, and her husband's work – Arthur Klein was an industrial chemist – took them to live in small provincial towns in Slovakia and Silesia. She missed the intellectual life of Vienna and her marriage was not happy. When in 1910 the Kleins moved to Budapest, Melanie discovered the writings of Freud and she sought analysis with Sándor Ferenczi, one of Freud's earliest associates.

Ferenczi suggested that she should start analysing children, which was quite a new idea. Freud of course based a lot of his ideas about the adult mind on a brilliant

reconstruction of the mental life of a child, but the reconstruction was made from adult material.

He didn't analyse children. In the famous "Little Hans" case of 1909 he had supervised the analysis of a five-year-old boy, but the analysis itself was carried out by the boy's father with Freud's daily instructions, if it can be called an analysis, for the treatment of Little Hans lacked something that Freud was to think of as partially definitive of psycho-analysis as opposed to other forms of therapy: this feature was the transference. In the really early days Freud had thought of psycho-analysis as the talking cure; the patient talked away his or her symptoms by recalling their origins. Soon, however, he saw the inadequacy of this view; he came to see how progress in the analysis depends on a special kind of interaction between the patient and the analyst. Central to this is the way in which the patient re-experiences, but now directed on to the analyst, his oldest fears, desires, and anxieties. This is the transference and it is this that is absent from the Little Hans case.

Mrs Klein then took the advice Ferenczi gave her and began analysing children. The decision had far-reaching consequences both for her and for psycho-analysis. However, an intellectually more significant influence upon Mrs Klein and Ferenczi was Karl Abraham, whom she met in 1920. The following year, her marriage now collapsed, she moved to Berlin, which was where Abraham worked, and there she set up a psycho-analytic practice for both adults and children. Abraham, the ablest and most astute of Freud's immediate circle, soon recognised her exceptional gift. In a letter to Freud he wrote of, "The amazing insight into infantile and instinctual life which a case of hers had achieved." The importance of Abraham in her life was immense. He was her teacher, in 1924 he became her analyst, and he was also what a historian of the movement has called 'her protector'. But why on earth did Mrs Klein stand in need of a protector? The answer lay in the technique that Mrs Klein already used to analyse children. Elliott Jaques, a psycho-analyst and close collaborator with Mrs Klein in the 1950s recalls how she used to talk about this period.

ELLIOTT JAQUES: She went to Berlin, met Abraham, talked to Abraham about the possibilities of child-analysis; Abraham encouraged her and she stated, untutored and a student, that you analyse children by using analysis of transference and that you analyse infant sexuality, and she just took this for granted. There was Freud, Freud said so, Abraham was clear about this, and she went ahead. She then found herself being severely strictureed by the other analysts in Berlin for what she was doing. Horrified by the fact that she was analysing infant sexuality in these young children, because Hug Helmuth was working by and large using educational procedures with children at that time. She protests that at the time she was naïve because she was just using ordinary Freudian methodology, but she was enormously grateful to Abraham both because he protected her right to do this and at the same time protected her against the criticisms of the Berlin Society.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: Mrs Klein had mastered Freud's theories, she had studied his case histories, she had read his papers on technique, and she then proceeded to analyse children, very young children, in just the way he said analysis should be carried out. The only difference was she substituted child play for the adult dreams and free associations: the famous play technique. Then she interpreted the material without any reticence, making undisguised reference to the child's sexual and aggressive impulses, and she allowed the transference to develop freely. Some years later in a footnote that he added to "An Autobiographical Study", Freud wrote of the

powerful momentum that had been given to child analysis by, “The work of Mrs Klein and of my daughter, Anna Freud”. What Freud didn’t mention was the collision course on which these two women were set from the very beginning.

For Anna Freud, child analysis was essentially directive or educational; it should aim at strengthening the child’s super-ego; it should avoid sexual material at least until the analyst made friends with the child; and it should be careful to avoid interfering with the child’s relations with its parents. Melanie Klein thought that most of these fears were unreal because they were based on a confusion between the child’s relations with its actual parents, which anyhow are beyond the reach of the analysis, and the child’s relations with its fantasised parents with which the analysis deals.

Betty Joseph, a psycho-analyst very interested in child analysis, looks back on it.

BETTY JOSEPH: Working with children in this way implied analysing anxieties and fears, not reassuring the child; trying to understand what prevented the child from learning and discovering about life, not educating him. It seems as if she had no idea how new some of these ideas were.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: It was in London that Melanie Klein’s ideas were watched with most sympathy. In May 1925, Ernest Jones, then President of the British Psycho-Analytical Society and an intimate of Freud’s, took up an offer of Mrs Klein’s to come over to London and lecture on child analysis. She came; she lectured in the house of Dr Adrian Stephen, Virginia Woolf’s brother. The next year Abraham died suddenly at the age of 48 and Mrs Klein moved permanently to England. Ernest Jones played a crucial part in the move, as his widow recalls.

MRS ERNEST JONES [Katharina Jones]: He believed greatly in her, he liked her work very much and got her here really; he also liked her as a person, which not everybody did because she had very decided views, you see, and that made people contradict her. I always liked her as a person.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: Besides child analysis there were other topics of common interest between Mrs Klein and the British psycho-analysts; early factors in development, anxiety, symbolism, female sexuality. Mrs Klein established a psycho-analytic practice in London, she re-analysed some analysts and she analysed some of their children. The Jones’s sent her their children.

MRS ERNEST JONES [Katharina Jones]: She came here and she had nobody, and my husband sending her our two children, you see, made quite a difference to her, and then when people heard that Ernest had sent his children they sent their own I suppose and, as she also analysed grown-ups, I don’t think she had much difficulty in making a living.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: She read papers to the Society, she became involved in its administration, she extended her practice, and by 1929 she was a training analyst. Her influence penetrated the whole British psycho-analytic movement. Among her early supporters were Ernest Jones, Edward Glover, Joan Riviere, Barbara Low and Susan Isaacs, and in view of later fights and the accusations that sprang out of them, it is right to emphasise that the ascendancy that Mrs Klein established for herself by the early 1930s came about without any degree of

organisation, formal or informal. It was due entirely to the originality of her ideas and somewhat to the strength of her personality.

In 1931 William Gillespie came back from Vienna where he had gone in the belief that the most natural place to study psycho-analysis was the city of its origin. However, on his return to London he was very forcefully struck by a sense of identity, which had crept over British psycho-analysis.

DR WILLIAM GILLESPIE: At first I went to see Ernest Jones, and the first question he asked me which really shook me a bit was – Why did you go to Vienna instead of London? – which astonished me because I thought Vienna was where psycho-analysis was mainly to be found. I can see now that what he meant was, ‘why did you go and study Viennese psycho-analysis instead of coming and studying London psycho-analysis?’ It took me quite a long time to discover the difference, which was very considerable.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: But about this time a young medical student came from Harvard for psycho-analytic training; he had to choose between Germany and England and he chose England. Then he saw what he called the big wigs of the subject – Jones and Glover. They sent him to Melanie Klein, of whom he had never heard. His name was Clifford Scott, and the account he gives of analysis with Mrs Klein catches the improvisatory character that analysis still retained.

CLIFFORD SCOTT: I began my training with Klein six days a week, 50 minutes each session, and I was under the pressure of getting as much as I could in the couple of years out of the fellowship I had obtained to come to England for training; I was expecting to return to America. But something about the pressure I was under, to get as much as I could as quickly as I could, had something to do with her offering me training during part of her holiday, and I went to the little town in the Black Forest where she was staying in an hotel, and I was staying elsewhere, and I was able to see her twice a day for a month. She of course was a woman, a doctor, a Jewess, and all these problems meant something to me, but we soon began to be able to work together. Sometimes she felt I talked too much, that I didn’t give her a chance to say anything, but she was wanting to give me what understanding she could, and sometimes we had to make a bargain and I would allow her to speak; I’d stop. But as we went on I discovered that, regardless of how much I was learning, a tremendous vista of ignorance opened up, and one felt one was beginning a process that could last forever.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: In talking to me, William Gillespie called 1935 a watershed in Mrs Klein’s career. Her growing influence in the British Society was for the first time checked and from now onwards she had to fight to retain the authority of her ideas. But we must now ask – what were those ideas, what was distinctive about them and what was to prove so controversial about them? The starting point, or fundamental principle, of Mrs Klein’s views is the thesis in general psychology. The thesis is that every feeling, every emotion, every expression of instinct is object-directed, it is directed on something. This, she held, is true of the adult, it is true of the child, it is true of the infant from the moment of birth. Freud didn’t believe this. If we stick to his major line of thinking, Freud’s view was that initially the infant simply feels pleasure and pain, satisfaction and frustration, and gradually learns to attach objects to those feelings. In this way, through these associations, it acquires ways of repeating the pleasurable sensations and of avoiding the painful ones. This way of

thinking, which derives from classical associationist psychology, Mrs Klein totally rejected.

Secondly, Mrs Klein thought the objects towards which the infant is, from the very beginning, directed are not necessarily whole persons like, say, the mother or the father. On the contrary, the earliest objects are what she calls 'part objects', by which she meant parts of the body like the mother's breast or the father's penis, or bits that can be expelled from the body like faeces, or parts of the body seen in a special or transient way like the breast empty of milk, or the penis inside the mother's body. Mrs Klein must have thought of the infant's capacity to represent these objects to itself as innate, or at any rate as something that we are programmed to acquire.

Thirdly, of the infant's objects, whether part objects or whole objects, some are outside the infant or in the world; they are external objects, whereas some aren't: they correspond to external objects, but they are internal objects, and a person's internal objects make up his inner world. Perhaps the best way of thinking about a person's internal objects and their relationship to the external objects to which they correspond, is on the analogy of fictional characters which have prototypes in real life but have been constructed with imagination. For, according to Mrs Klein, internal objects come into existence through introjection, in which an external object is internalised, but at the moment at which it is internalised the external object has had projected on to it the infant's own feelings and emotions. Mrs Klein believed that introjection, or the taking in of figures from the outer world, and projection, or the casting outwards of thoughts and feelings, alternate throughout life and this alternation helps to make us what we are.

The analogy between internal objects and fictional characters is further useful if we think specifically of the fictional characters of our daydreams. For, and this is the fourth point, Mrs Klein held that internal objects have their existence in fantasy. Fantasy is like the daydream, only unconscious. Indeed, Mrs Klein introduces fantasy to account not only for the on-going life of internal objects, but also for their coming into existence. Internal objects come into existence through introjection, and she thought that introjection consists in a fantasy of physically taking in or swallowing an external figure. She wrote: "I do not interpret in terms of internal objects and relationships until I have explicit material showing fantasies of internalising the object in concrete and physical terms." In linking in this way, introjection fantasies of ingestion, Mrs Klein gave one clear sense to Freud's description of introjection as 'psychic cannibalism'.

These four points that I have been making about object-directedness, about part objects versus whole objects, and about the significance of fantasy, are all points about the structure of the mind, about what Freud called 'the mental apparatus'. Mrs Klein also had something to say about what powers or fuels the mental apparatus, about, in other words, the instincts. Alongside sexuality, which is of course so much at the fore in Freud's writings (particularly the earlier ones), she emphasised aggression or hatred, and she treated anxiety as primarily fear of retaliation, fear intensified when the infant projects its aggression on to those it wishes to attack. Now, out of all these materials, Klein started to revise the timing that Freud had proposed for child development. For instance, Freud had located the famous Oedipus complex around the age of five or six. However, Klein postulated a much earlier version which involved part objects rather than whole objects, and in which aggression is very prominent.

Hanna Segal is one of the foremost Kleinian analysts and the author of an outstanding monograph on Klein.

HANNA SEGAL: Klein analysing children discovered that, however small, the child, for instance Rita, who was only 2¾ years old, already displayed a very acute Oedipus complex, that is an acute envy, jealousy, aggression, anxiety, guilt, in relation to the perception of the parental couple. Children seemed to be aware very early on that there was a sexual link between the parents, but they interpret it in terms of their own infantile sexuality. That is, they could imagine the parents as feeding one another, or devouring one another, or exchanging urinary and faecal gratifications. So the idea that babies are made in some form of intercourse between the parents seemed to be very precocious indeed. Now this perception of the parents in intercourse producing envy, jealousy, feelings of being left out, is also very coloured by the child's aggression and projections. That is, if the child has an original idea of parents feeding one another because of the hostile projections, it can easily turn into devouring one another, murdering one another, soiling one another; the basis of something Freud observed himself, that children tend to see the parental intercourse as a sadistic performance.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: However, a more radical change in the developmental story seemed imminent with the introduction of 'the depressive position,' which Mrs Klein formulated in 1935. This was an altogether new concept. Infantile depression begins when, in the second quarter of the first year, the infant can perceive the mother as a whole object and so has to recognise that which it had loved and that which it has hated are parts of the same person. It has, in other words, to recognise its own ambivalence. However, the implications of the depressive position for infantile development had to wait.

1935, the year in which Mrs Klein formulated the depressive position, was also the year of the watershed. In the face of a growing challenge to her ideas she put aside for the time being the task of devising the chronology of infantile development. This challenge came from two sources. The first source of the challenge was growing disagreement within the British psycho-analytic movement, for, as Mrs Klein's researches into the infantile mind reached further and further back into the earliest phase of life, her findings inevitably became more speculative, and this proved too much for a number of analysts who had been going along with her ideas. Both the theory and the application of the theory or the interpretations seemed to them to lose touch with the evidence on which they were based. The theory, as they saw it, went beyond the observed facts of infantile life. The interpretations went beyond the analytic material or the here and now of the session.

Marion Milner, later a distinguished psycho-analyst, but in the 1930s working in child guidance, remembers the misgivings that Mrs Klein's theoretical ideas inspired in her.

MARION MILNER: I heard that there were lectures by Melanie Klein, I think at University College, which I went to; and I was very interested, but I remember thinking – "Well that is very interesting, but what about evidence? I can see that it is difficult to get the evidence for her theories, but I wish she would say something about the concept of evidence" – I remember that as my first thought.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: And William Gillespie was just as sceptical about what he took Kleinian interpretation to be.

WILLIAM GILLESPIE: She implied interpretation in a rather different way from what had been done before. Namely, very bold interpretation very early with what other people would regard as quite insufficient material to base it on. This is important I think in connection with the extension that was made by her and her colleagues of the analytic method to psychosis, because there also you don't get any work very far [sic], unless you make interpretations without having very much to go upon from what the patient gives you.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: But of course reservations like Gillespie's were based on hearsay and it is interesting to have a rather different view from Clifford Scott who testifies to the variety of interpretation that he received from Mrs Klein.

CLIFFORD SCOTT: Some of the critics of Klein consider that she talked too much, but the analyst, of course, is always there to give what understanding he can at the time he thinks it best, and Klein gave short interpretations; she attempted to give understanding in a few words or a sentence or two, but at other times when she and the patient were working with complex sequences of events and complex emotions and complexer [sic] relationships between the emotions, she would take longer. I remember once on a Monday, after a lot of difficult work the previous week, she read me an interpretation that she must have thought about and written the previous weekend, and it was very effective.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: And there was a further aspect to the disagreement within the British psycho-analytic movement, which intensified it. Pearl King, now President of the Society, is a historian of the movement.

PEARL KING: When Melanie Klein came to London she left her daughter behind in Berlin, where she was doing her medical and analytic training. While she was there she met and married Walter Schmideberg, and they both came to London together in about the 1930s. Melitta became a member of the British Society in 1933, and she played a very creative role for many years in the scientific life of the Society. However, as time went on she found herself increasingly displeased with her mother's point of view, and challenged her ideas and opposed her in many scientific meetings. She was joined by Barbara Low and later, in 1935, Edward Glover also started supporting her criticisms of her mother.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: The second source of the challenge to Mrs Klein was the continuing disagreement between the British psycho-analysts and Vienna.

Melanie Klein herself always retained a most intense admiration for Freud, the founder of her science. Hans Thorner, a psycho-analyst who knew her from the late 1930s, confirms this.

HANS THORNER: I think there was no doubt in her that she felt that she was a follower of Freud, and believed in him, and when you read her papers the first three or four pages are full of what Freud used to say and how she worked from him. That was perhaps peculiar with her; that she was so afraid to be different from him.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: She met Freud only twice, in the early 1920s, when he still attended psycho-analytical congresses, but he formed the natural

starting point for all her thinking. However, there was no similar interest, indeed it is arguable that there was no interest at all, taken in her views in Vienna.

WILLIAM GILLESPIE: I spent a year in Vienna, the year 1931. There I started my psycho-analytic training, and I attended various seminars and suchlike things there. The point I am wanting to make is this – that during the entire time I was in Vienna for a year, I never once heard Mrs Klein's name mentioned. I didn't know of her existence till I came to London. In Vienna she was, as far as I can see, simply ignored and not regarded as of much importance.

PROFESOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: There were theoretical differences and also differences of theoretical emphasis between London and Vienna. One important difference was the great weight that Mrs Klein attached to the death instinct and its outward manifestation, that is, aggression. Ironically enough Mrs Klein showed herself here more Freudian than the Freudians, but without a doubt the differences between London and Vienna were exacerbated by the dispute between Melanie Klein and Anna Freud on the subject of child analysis.

For the Viennese, Anna Freud's technique with children was the orthodoxy, and on this issue Freud gave his daughter, on whom he was heavily dependent by this period, his total, some would say his blind, support. Someone who knew the Freuds well was Mrs Ernest Jones.

MRS ERNEST JONES [Katharina Jones]: They all followed Anna Freud, you see, who analysed children, and that is why Freud did not take much notice of Melanie Klein, because his daughter did that work and it was quite natural, he was very human, that he believed in his daughter and didn't like any competition, so to say.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: Roger Money-Kyrle, who was in the extraordinary position of having been analysed both by Freud and by Melanie Klein, as well as briefly by Ernest Jones, put it like this.

ROGER MONEY-KYRLE: What I always thought – he was always very, very devoted to Anna – and he felt it his first duty to protect her in every possible way he could.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: Money-Kyrle went to see Freud after Freud came to London and he remembers what Freud said.

ROGER MONEY-KYRLE: I think the impression he gave, I can't remember the exact words, was, some people were too much influenced by Frau Klein's ideas, that's all. He was a very careful man you know, Freud. He knew also I was a Kleinian.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: In an effort to resolve the differences between London and Vienna, a series of exchange lectures was organised in 1935 and 1936, but the crucial event was the Anschluss in 1938, when Hitler marched into Austria and it was no longer safe for either Jews or psycho-analysts to remain in Vienna. The greater part of the Viennese Society, including Freud and his daughter, escaped to London; they were made members of the British Society, and the Wednesday Scientific Meetings of the Society took the place of the Wednesday meetings in Vienna that Freud had instituted as far back as 1902. The Viennese needed in effect a club, and this is what the British Society provided, but in doing so it also provided an arena for increasingly heated discussion.

WILLIAM GILLESPIE: For a time we had a very large number of Viennese analysts among us. Then things really got much more controversial because they thought that Mrs Klein's techniques were really not psycho-analysis, and that she had really gone right off the rails, that she was a deviationist rather than a developer of psycho-analysis.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: In 1939 War broke out, and it brought a temporary peace to the affairs of the British Psycho-analytical Society. Mrs Klein moved to Scotland, to Pitlochry, others to the country in England, and some were involved in war work, and about half the Viennese analysts went to the United States.

Melanie Klein returned to London in late 1941, and so did some of her associates, and the Scientific Meetings once again became disputations. Disagreement about Mrs Klein's ideas was only one source of contention. There was also mounting feeling about the way in which power in the Society had fallen into a very few hands, and the indifference of the Society to the needs and concerns of the public, though the two issues, theoretical and political, cut across one another. Over the next two or three years the rules of the Society about office were changed, and a big effort was made, which struck some as Utopian and others as cynical, to resolve the outstanding theoretical differences. This took the form of the so-called Controversial Discussions, which occurred between January 1943 and June 1944, and which probably only intensified disagreement and further polarised the Society. Finally, and this was the really significant achievement, compromise was reached on the training of analysts, even though it did mean that much of the teaching had to be divided into two.

Melanie Klein could now return to the development of her own ideas. She was to spend the years following the war trying to weld together the various elements of her thinking, some old, some new, some yet to be formulated, into a chronology of mental development that would satisfy her; a chronology that would stand comparison with, and extend backward in time to that which Freud had produced. But by now her own situation had considerably changed. She was the leader of a powerful and well-organised group, and there was no return to the more easy-going days of the 1920s and early 1930s.

PEARL KING: Any disagreement with her theories now came to be considered as evidence of disloyalty to her. Previous of her supporters, who did not continue to see eye-to-eye with all her theories, were dropped or withdrew from membership of her group. As some of them were training analysts, any student in analysis with any of them also ceased to be considered a member of the Kleinian group. Whereas during the 1940s the controversies had been mainly contained among members, now they became argued and acted out among students to the detriment of their pleasure in their training.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: Jo Sandler, now Freud Professor of Psycho-analysis in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, was a young student, as it were in the other camp. He has described how it struck him.

JO SANDLER: My own analyst was on the other side and in public at times they would quarrel, and this was of course a very exciting, but also a very disturbing thing for a young analyst-to-be in analysis with one of the people involved.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: And William Gillespie testifies to the kind of splinter group politics to which all this led.

WILLIAM GILLESPIE: I was quite close to Mrs Klein, I mean I was a fairly close friend of hers really, and she confided in me, and she asked my advice about how to get more seats and that sort of thing, you know, was it a good plan to put up two candidates or would they cancel each other out.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: Friends of Mrs Klein say she quite enjoyed the intrigue, even though she would very much rather that it didn't have to happen. But why did it? To some it must seem incredible that a response to scientific disagreement should be conducted as political intrigue. But what this overlooks is the crucial part played in the transmission of psycho-analytic theory by the way in which the analyst is trained: the training analysis. And training analysis brings us back to institutions, organisations, committees, ensuring a fair balance of power. Add to this that Mrs Klein had a rather sombre view for the future of psycho-analysis, indeed of its chance of having one. She once said to me that she thought that the outlook for psycho-analysis was bleak, given the total rejection of it in the German-speaking world and the total acceptance of it in the United States. She didn't know which was worse.

It was against this background that Mrs Klein returned to the task of constructing a chronology for infantile development. Freud's chronology consisted of a succession of phases, each of which was dominated by a zone of the body, the current source of pleasure and satisfaction. So Freud identified the oral, the anal, the phallic and the genital phases. Freud's chronology was primarily, and in essence remained, the chronology of instinct or impulse. Later Freud tried to attach to its different phases corresponding stages in the development of the ego. However, in producing her chronology Mrs Klein from the outset associated to changes in instinct corresponding changes in the nature of the anxiety that the infant experienced, in the defences to which it resorted, and in the way in which it perceived the external world. She identified two positions – she preferred the word 'position' to 'phase' because it suggested greater fluidity, and she called them 'the paranoid-schizoid position' and 'the depressive position', terms which mean not that the infant is psychotic but only that the fixation points of psychosis lie in infancy.

Common to both positions is the rhythm of projection and introjection. In the first or paranoid-schizoid position the infant perceives the world as made up of part objects; these part objects satisfy or frustrate it. By projecting on to those which satisfy it, its good feelings, and on to those which frustrate it, its bad feelings, it now experiences the world as either utterly ideal or overwhelmingly frightening, and this arouses in it acute anxiety of a persecutory kind, either on account of the bad objects or on behalf of the good objects. The characteristic defences that it employs at this stage are: splitting, or keeping the ideal and bad apart; omnipotent denial, or annihilating the bad in fantasy; and a new mechanism which Mrs Klein called 'projective identification', which evolves out of projection. Hanna Segal explains.

HANNA SEGAL: In projective identification the subject in fantasy splits off and projects into his object unwanted parts of himself. These projected parts are sometimes represented also by products, like urine or faeces, and that in fantasy the object controls it, possesses it, and the object may become identified with them. Not only the parts, but the whole of oneself may in fantasy be projected into the object, and then the subject lives in a fantasy of being the object, taking over the object's

identity. Such fantasies for instance underlie grandiose delusions like being Napoleon or Christ. Good parts of the self as well as bad ones may be projected in idealisation or in an attempt at reparation, and that of course depletes the ego of its own capacities of love and goodness.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: The second or depressive position sets in, as we have already seen, when the infant is able to integrate the part objects it perceives into whole objects, and so has awareness of its ambivalence forced upon it. This elicits from it remorse and grief, or depressive anxiety. Now, if it is able to tolerate depression, then this mobilises reparative wishes or the desire to restore the loved object in reality or symbolically. If, however, depressive anxiety proves intolerable, the infant characteristically resorts to the manic defence, in which it rejects both the pain that it feels and any need to feel pain: it denies its dependence on the good or loved object.

Increasingly Mrs Klein came to think of the successful working-through of the depressive position, which she also believed is never complete, as the source of everything that was stable and mature in the individual, and her associates and followers developed these ideas. Then, in 1957, at the age of 75, Melanie Klein produced a small book on the scale of an essay, which made a radically new contribution to the theory of the instincts. The book, which she called "Envy and Gratitude" proposed envy as one of the most primitive and fundamental emotions, and it completed Mrs Klein's three large conceptual innovations; the depressive position, projective identification, and now envy.

The conceptualisation of envy, like that of the depressive position, aroused a lot of opposition at the time and it cost her some important followers. Envy arises, according to Mrs Klein, in earliest infancy; it is directed at part objects and in the first instance the feeding breast.

HANNA SEGAL: The experience of being loved, cared for, fed, stirs in the infant two kinds of feelings. One is love, gratification; the basis of gratitude. The other is rage at the discovery that the source of life, love and goodness lies outside oneself. The rage which makes the infant want to attack, destroy, spoil an object which is so full of enviable qualities. This concept of early envy is very close to Freud's concept of primary narcissism and narcissistic rage, the difference being that in Freud's views [sic] there is no awareness of the object early on. There is a long phase of primary narcissism, and then upon the discovery of the external object there is a narcissistic rage, which makes Freud say that hatred of the object is older than love. In Klein's view there is a perception of the feeding, caring object from the beginning, and she sees narcissism as a defence against envy. Envy is one of the most despairing feelings because it attacks what one loves, desires and needs most.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: One of the most important applications of envy was to the psycho-analytic process itself. Freud had talked of the negative therapeutic reaction, when every time a patient makes some progress in analysis, he then tries to undo it, and this can be seen as envy. Betty Joseph makes the point.

BETTY JOSEPH: Once a patient is capable, or indeed any of us are capable, of valuing something good in what is going on, the difficulty is that they cannot bear their own valuing, they cannot bear noticing the goodness of what is going on, and will do

everything in their power either to undermine it or not to notice it or in some way or another to wipe it out.

RICHARD WOLLHEIM: Two criticisms are standardly brought against Mrs Klein's account of infantile development. The first is that the account makes everything too early, and at crucial points it ascribes to the infant psychology that it just couldn't have.

JO SANDLER: What I have in mind in particular are the assumptions like the ability of the child to think in causal terms, to think of the consequences of his acts. Another assumption I think that I would question would be that the child can differentiate between self and non-self, between me and not-me, very early on in his life. I think Mrs Klein's theory really demands such an assumption. When she speaks of the mechanism of projection, for example, she'll speak of the child getting rid of parts of himself, and putting them into the mother. That would mean, I think, that we have to assume that the child is aware of a boundary between himself and the mother, and can feel relief by getting rid of something, by pushing it over the boundary.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: The second criticism is that Mrs Klein neglected the infant's environment or its relations with the actual parents, and it found all the determinants of development either in constitutional factors or in the life of fantasy.

PEARL KING: I always got the impression that she was very concerned with what went on inside the child's mind, and therefore inside the patient's mind, but rather ignored and perhaps even withdrew from thinking about the relationship between the child and its parents; and there were many of us in the Society who felt that she underestimated the pathological impact on a child of an ill parent.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: In fact both these criticisms raise even more complex issues than they seem to. In the first place, there are the facts of the matter, which are very hard of access. Secondly, there is a very difficult question – What is legitimate vocabulary for describing or reconstructing the early mind, and precisely what any such description or reconstruction commits one to. And, thirdly, there is the question (if we are dealing with criticism) of what Mrs Klein actually said or did. Certainly there emerges from Mrs Klein's writing, taken as a whole, a picture of the infant and of the infantile within the adult that is strikingly original, in many ways sombre, but also irradiated by the power of love and gratitude. In an overall way her picture differs a great deal from the worldlier, more pessimistic vision of Freud's. With her, aggression is more destructive, it is true, but love is an original force, which it is not with Freud. I discussed this with Ronald Britton, Psycho-analyst and Child Psychiatrist.

RONALD BRITTON: It always seems to me that Melanie Klein had a very powerful belief in the implicit nature of love and object love, and therefore, taking it as a given, doesn't seem, like Freud, to feel the need to explain its existence. Freud seems to feel the need to derive love, to explain it, but he never seems to feel the same need to derive attachment to reality, or a sense of reality, which was obviously very powerful in him and again I think he takes as a given.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: Elliott Jaques recalls how Mrs Klein's insistence on the positive element pervaded all her clinical work.

ELLIOTT JAQUES: Mrs Klein is very commonly criticised for having a very negativistic picture of human motivation, that it is all destructiveness, all paranoia, all primal envy. In fact it's not the case. Her emphasis was always on conflict; conflict between good impulses and bad impulses, conflict between love and profound destructiveness, conflict between envy and gratitude. This comes through in her clinical work, and in supervision – for example, where something that she would take up with you over and over again would be opportunities to show you that you had missed evidences of loving, positive impulses in a child, and this she was always extremely critical of. She laid great emphasis on the clinician's finding, making sure that you were always in contact with, the patient's good, loving, constructive impulses, because it's around those that the possibilities of making analytic progress would lie.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: And Hanna Segal supports this from her personal experience.

HANNA SEGAL: The main thing that comes to my mind, when I think of the overall experience of my analysis with Mrs Klein, is stability, because of the great rigorousness of her setting and balance. One had the feeling that she never over-interpreted one side or the other; the external was balanced by the internal, the aggressive with the positive, the transference with the current external experiencing, giving an overall feeling of integration and balance.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: How did Mrs Klein arrive at her picture of human nature and what sort of a woman was she? That she was a woman is for Hans Thorner a crucial fact for understanding her particular intellectual development.

HANS THORNER: She introduced into analysis the point of view of the woman. Freud himself was very male-orientated: typical is the central concept of psycho-analysis, of the Oedipus Complex. That is, the relationship of the son to the father and vice versa, and that also comes in all his writings. Now what is going to happen to the daughter and what's going to happen to the mother, which was very little accentuated; and her contribution was that she corrected the balance.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: Without a doubt for Melanie Klein the royal road to her findings was provided by the technique of child analysis, which, as we have seen, she had established so early in her career. Clifford Scott talks of the value this had for her.

CLIFFORD SCOTT: Melanie Klein discovered, in giving the same time and the same attention to children, seeing them in a setting where they could play, that they revealed as much of their difficulties, of their anxieties and guilts, about their joys and their hates and their griefs, as adults did by talking.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: When she was in Pitlochry in the first half of the war, Mrs Klein analysed a ten-year-old boy. Richard came to analysis because of mounting anxiety and depression, afraid of other children, of illness, of going out alone, and he was constantly anxious about his parents. Because the analysis lasted only four months, and because at this period she had the necessary leisure, Mrs Klein kept copious notes on each session. About 15 years later she composed out of these notes a book designed to illustrate her technique. The "Narrative of a Child Analysis" is a work unique in the literature of psycho-analysis, compelling and with a drama that unfolds on three distinct levels. There is the drama between analyst and young

patient, there is there drama of the child and his parents, external and internal, and there is the drama of the war, with battles in the air and at sea which dominate the boy's fantasies. The book records 93 sessions, as far as possible in the words of the protagonists. It described the boy's play and it shows 74 drawings. Mrs Klein added notes indicating where her views had changed. Two things emerge very clearly from reading "The Narrative of a Child Analysis": an unflagging attention to detail and an utter absorption in clinical work. These are the characteristics of the woman herself, and they gave her something of the intensity of an artist. Hans Thorner recalls how the interest in detail penetrated into unexpected corners of her work.

HANS THORNER: She gave lectures on the technique of psycho-analysis which were quite unique, and she spoke about all the little details, how she arranged treatment; for instance, she was a woman living by herself and she said she thought there ought to be a man in the house, and she had at that time a butler who opened the door. It was not a question of prestige, but she felt there ought to be somebody like this in the house. She also spoke about all the details one never hears about: how to arrange your consulting room, whether you shake hands with the patient or whether not, which was of course for a student extremely valuable.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: The absorption with clinical work was something that Elliott Jaques stressed, and he illustrates how much of her life it pervaded.

ELLIOT JAQUES: I think the outstanding thing for me about her was this total clinical absorption. The most important aspect of our social relations with her was when we had our baby because that made it all very interesting, and that meant tea at Mrs Klein's on Sunday afternoon, when her coffee table would be set out at baby's height with toys on it, not with tea or anything like that; things were set up so that she could watch children at play. These apparently social occasions were of great clinical importance to her. She was personally reticent to the point of secretiveness. She did not want people to know about her personal life; she was quite clear about this and left nothing in her papers that could reveal anything of any significance about her personal life and her earlier personal life. This was quite striking. And again, I think of this as part of this clinical attitude that she had.

HANS THORNER: There was something kind of reticent that she wouldn't like to talk about herself. She was at the end a very lonely person, and she often complained that people were afraid to invite her. She would like to mix with people, but I suppose the idea is the most lonely figure in the world is God Almighty; he has nobody to mix with.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: She had a natural authority, and many years of controversy and a refusal ever to accept compromise, or to tolerate carelessness, could make her seem domineering. The artist Felix Topolski, who was asked to draw Mrs Klein sometime in the 1950s, and who does not disguise his own antipathy to psycho-analysis, was amazed by her.

FELIX TOPOLSKI: She had this grand look and grooming and beauty. If I now recollect she was a large woman, with large face and large features, but all regal indeed, not as our royals, there was great regality – No, regal as we imagine from fables.

ELLIOT JAQUES: I think there was a domineering character. I mean there's no question about that, but it was a very particular kind of domineering quality, in the sense that she felt her ideas were important, she knew they were important, and they were the ideas that were of significance, and you accepted those ideas and worked with her on them or on extending them, or on disproving them, as long as you were working with them, but if you weren't, then there was really not much room for relationship.

PROFESSOR RICHARD WOLLHEIM: I remember I once asked Mrs Klein what she thought of a famous book of the late 1950s, which applied psycho-analytic ideas to the issues of society in a highly speculative way. By way of reply she smiled and said that she had looked up her name in the index and found it missing. All who came close to her admired her beauty – they felt the warmth and vividness of her nature and the charm was very powerful. Betty Joseph wanted to add something.

BETTY JOSEPH: This belongs in a sense to something that many people, when they describe Mrs Klein, say about her. They say: "Well, she had so many interests." Now, while I think it is true, I think the important issue is actually much deeper. I suspect that one of her most striking characteristics was her openness to experience, so that she always seemed to need to experience things very fully. I think that she had this quality not only in relation to living but also in relation to dying, because I well remember at the time of her operation she sent for a number of us individually, and clearly was saying goodbye. It then became clear to each of us in turn, I think, that she knew it was likely that she was not going to live, and she was determined to have the experience of dying and not, as it were, to be cheated of this.

The above documentary on the life and ideas of Melanie Klein was written and presented by Richard Wollheim.

The BBC's producer was Michael Heffernan.