SYNOPSIS OF AN OBJECT-RELATIONS THEORY
OF THE PERSONALITY

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In response to many requests I have prepared
the following brief synopsis of the theoretical
views I have expounded over the last twenty
years. (See bibliography.)

(1) An ego is present from birth.
(2) Libido is a function of the ego.
(3) There is no death instinct; and aggression
is a reaction to frustration or deprivation.
(4) Since libido is a function of the ego and
aggression is a reaction to frustration or
deprivation, there is no such thing as an
‘id’.
(5) The ego, and therefore libido, is funda-
mentally object-seeking.
(6) The earliest and original form of anxiety,
as experienced by the child, is separation-
someone.
(7) Internalization of the object is a defensive
measure originally adopted by the child to
deal with his original object (the mother
and her breast) in so far as it is unsatisfying.
(8) Internalization of the object is not just a
product of a phantasy of incorporating the
object orally, but is a distinct psychological
process.
(9) Two aspects of the internalized object, viz.
its exciting and its frustrating aspects, are
split off from the main core of the object
and repressed by the ego.
(10) Thus there come to be constituted two re-
pressed internal objects, viz. the exciting
(or libidinal) object and the rejecting (or
antilibidinal) object.
(11) The main core of the internalized object,
which is not repressed, is described as the
ideal object or ego-ideal.
(12) Owing to the fact that the exciting (libidinal)
and rejecting (anti-libidinal) objects are
both cathexed by the original ego, these
objects carry into repression with them parts
of the ego by which they are cathexed,
leaving the central core of the ego (central
ego) unrepressed, but acting as the agent of
repression.
(13) The resulting internal situation is one in
which the original ego is split into three
egos—a central (conscious) ego attached to
the ideal object (ego-ideal), a repressed
libidinal ego attached to the exciting (or
libidinal) object, and a repressed anti-
libidinal ego attached to the rejecting (or
antilibidinal) object.
(14) This internal situation represents a basic
schizoid position which is more funda-
mental than the depressive position de-
scribed by Melanie Klein.
(15) The antilibidinal ego, in virtue of its
attachment to the rejecting (antilibidinal)
object, adopts an uncompromisingly hos-
tile attitude to the libidinal ego, and thus
has the effect of powerfully reinforcing
the repression of the libidinal ego by the central
ego.
(16) What Freud described as the ‘superego’
is really a complex structure comprising
(a) the ideal object or ego-ideal, (b) the
antilibidinal ego, and (c) the rejection (or
antilibidinal) object.
(17) These considerations form the basis of a
theory of the personality conceived in terms
of object-relations, in contrast to one con-
ceived in terms of instincts and their vicissitudes.

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