Most divergences from traditional psychoanalytic theory have taken as their starting point a rejection or, at least, a reformulation of Freudian instinct theory. While the positing of the dynamic unconscious and the principles of psychic determinism and overdetermination are the most familiar central features of Freudian theory, I believe that Bowlby (1969) is correct in observing that Freud's instinct or drive theory is at the heart of his metapsychology. While the former principles are acceptable to an analyst of almost any persuasion, it is drive theory that is distinctly Freudian and constitutes the groundwork for many other psychoanalytic concepts—for example, anxiety, defense, primary process functioning. It is no wonder that historically, acceptance or rejection of instinct theory has served as the main criterion for defining apostasy from Freudian psychoanalysis. Criticism of instinct theory was, and still is, taken by many to constitute a rejection of the biological, of man's instinctual heritage, of that which, more than anything else, differentiated Freudian from the presumably more superficial neo-Freudian interpersonal and cultural schools of psychoanalysis. I will try to show that this view is mistaken. I will also try to show that traditional Freudian theory, in particular instinct theory, does not deal adequately with object relations.

It will be useful first to remind ourselves of the manner in which the issue of object relations is dealt with in traditional theory. Freudian instinct theory is one of those all-embracing motivational theories of human behavior in which all behavior—the cognitive, interpersonal, social, etc.—is seen to be, directly or indirectly, in the service of and an expression of presumably basic or primary drives. In such theories, all behavior either serves to gratify these primary drives or other drives which have secondarily developed in association with the so-called primary drives.

I think it can be shown that this formulation derives directly from the quasi-Darwinist assumption that behavior is to be understood in terms of its survival function. This is more apparent in early Freud when he posited essentially self-preservative (e.g., hunger) and species preservative (e.g., sex) instincts. Although later Freud spoke mainly of sexual and aggressive instincts, the essence of the early evolutionary idea was never relinquished. Since for Freud, drive gratification and discharge of excitation are essentially synonymous, another way of stating the proposition that all behavior is in the service of drive gratification is to say that the basic tendency of the organism is immediate discharge of excitation. That Freud viewed this tendency as having survival value is made apparent with his assumption that excitation, if left undischarged or permitted to reach an excessively high level, can damage the organism. Indeed, excessive excitation is viewed as the basic psychic danger facing the organism—an idea formulated in the “Project” and never relinquished by Freud (1887–1902)—and various means of avoiding this danger comprise much human behavior. While external stimulation can contribute to excessive excitation, it is mainly instinctual tensions which constitute the major source of such danger. This is so because in contrast to external stimulation, one cannot physically flee from internally generated tensions. In any case, the natural tendency of the organism is to seek immediate discharge. What makes this impossible are essentially physical reality and social reality, that is, civilization.

That immediate discharge is not possible has enormous consequences for personality development and behavior. According to Freudian theory, the impossibility of immediate discharge “forces” the development of thinking and other ego functions, and generates commerce with and interest in objects in the world. That is, were one to live in a science fiction world in which wishing would, indeed, make it so, one would never develop functions other than wishing nor would one develop object relations. Consider as an example of this view Freud’s (1900) speculation that the young infant, after receiving gratification of its hunger, attempts to establish wish fulfillment through hallucination of the breast when experiencing hunger once again (“the establishment of a perceptual identity along the short path
of regression”). Freud observes that it is only because this pathway does not remove the tensions of hunger that it must yield to more realistic, albeit more delayed and indirect, means of discharge. Stated very clearly in Freud’s writings is the proposition that were it not for the imposed delays and frustrations of reality, thinking and other ego functions mediating reality would never develop. For Freud, thinking is only a detour or roundabout means to drive gratification made necessary by the nature of reality. As he puts it, despite hallucinatory activity, “satisfaction does not follow; the need persists” and hence, this forces the psychic apparatus “to seek out other patterns which lead eventually to the desired perceptual identity being established from the direction of the external world” (p. 605). However, Freud observes that it is only because this pathway leads eventually to the desired perceptual identity being established by the external world—all this activity of thought merely constitutes a roundabout path to wish-fulfillment which has been made necessary by experience. Thought is after all nothing but a substitute for a hallucinating wish . . . .” (pp. 605–606). And even after reality testing and thoughts develop, it continues to be true, according to Freud, that nothing but a wish can set our mental apparatus at work.4

What can be said of thinking can also be said of an interest in objects and of object relations in general. Were drive gratification possible without objects (that is, were hallucination of the breast and its equivalents successful in achieving satisfaction), one would develop neither an interest in objects nor object relations. But given the nature of reality, one is forced to overcome what Freud calls the “primal hatred” of objects and look to them for drive gratification. Hence, their significance lies mainly in their role as “the thing in regard to which or through which the instinct is able to achieve its aim” (Freud, 1915a, p. 122).

Freud’s (1914) discussion of narcissism also makes clear his belief that we only reluctantly cathect objects. Thus, according to Freud, there is “an original libidinal cathexis of the ego, part of which cathexis is later yielded up to objects, but which fundamentally persists and is related to the object-cathexes much as the body of a protoplasmic animalcule is related to the pseudopodia which it puts out” (p. 58). Later in the same essay, Freud speaks of the neurotic’s ego as being depleted by “excessive object-cathexes.” In other words, the original narcissistic reluctance to cathect objects is fundamental and persists throughout life; and further, object investment always entails the potential danger of ego depletion.

The Freudian account of the formation of interpersonal attachments follows directly from the general conception of the role and function of objects. The essential nature and origin of the interpersonal or of object relations is also to be understood in terms of Freud’s instinct theory. A child’s attachment to his mother (and, by implication, the later attachment to each other) is explained primarily in terms of the latter’s role in providing experiences of instinctual gratification. As Freud (1940a) puts it, “love has its origins in attachment to the satisfied need for nourishment” (p. 188). On a more general level, the bases for the child’s attachment to mother lie primarily in her role in preventing excessive stimulation that would accrue from the build-up of instinctual drive tensions and, as a corollary of this role, as exciter of erotogenic zones (or, to use one of Freud’s more dramatic terms, as “seducer”). Although, as Bowlby (1969) points out, one can find passages in Freud’s writings which point to the primary, autonomous nature of early infant-mother object relations, his general writings and the logic of his instinct theory explain the child’s attachment to mother in terms of the latter’s role in providing instinctual gratifications.

To the extent that interpersonal attachment is seen as deriving its force from its association with instinctual gratification, the former is given a secondary, derived status in Freudian theory which thereby serves as an example of what Bowlby (1969) calls a “secondary drive” or, in traditional learning theory, the so-called “primary drives”) is seen as primary, the biological core of personality, while the interpersonal and social are seen as the secondary, derived, overlain aspects of personality.

This conception of the object relational as derived from and secondary to the basic instincts is exemplified, for example, by Spitz’s (1960) explanation of his findings on maternal deprivation. Because these findings have been so frequently cited to show the devastating developmental effects of lack of early mothering, even when the more obvious bodily needs (hunger, thirst, shelter) are met, it is easy to overlook the fact that Spitz’s own interpretations of his findings were formulated rather strictly within the terms of Freudian instinct theory. That is, Spitz attributes part of the effects of maternal separation to the fact that the loss of the love object interrupts the discharge of both the libidinal and aggressive drives. He states specifically: “... I have to stress once again that in the emotional interchanges with the love object both the libidinal and the aggressive drives find their discharge. The loss of the love object interrupts the discharge of both
drives” (p. 90). In other words, it is not the loss of the love object per se that is so harmful, but the fact that the loss takes away opportunities for discharge of libidinal and aggressive drives. Clearly implied in this formulation is the idea that the damming up of libidinal and aggressive drive energies is the primary mechanism responsible for the extreme effects on development attendant upon maternal separation. This is as clear-cut a hydraulic model as one is likely to come upon in recent psychoanalytic formulations. It is also illustrative of how the data on early object relations are interpreted from the point of view of Freudian instinct theory. From this perspective, objects and object relations are important primarily as means and vehicles for discharge of libidinal and aggressive drives. In this regard, the former, indeed, have a secondary and derived status.

In summary then, according to Freudian theory, we would develop neither an interest in objects nor object relations nor reality-testing ego functions were objects not necessary for drive gratification and were immediate gratification possible (as exemplified, for example, in hallucination of the breast). But, given the nature of reality, immediate gratification is not possible and objects are necessary, as are planning and detour methods of gratification. Hence, we are forced to have commerce with objects. But the nature of that commerce—of object relations—is one in which our interest in and relationship with objects continues to be directly or indirectly linked to their use in and relevance for drive gratification.

There is now a great deal of evidence indicating that Freud’s “anaclitic” model of infant-mother attachment and the general conception of the basis for object relations offered by traditional theory is incorrect. The most well known such evidence is provided by Harlow’s (1958) studies on “the nature of love.”

The dissatisfaction with “secondary drive” explanations (which it should be noted, includes the “anaclitic” model) of the interpersonal led to the now classic Harlow (1958) studies which showed rather decisively that the infant monkey’s attachment to its surrogate mother was not derived from or secondary to the latter’s association with reduction of so-called primary drives (i.e., hunger, thirst). Rather such attachment seemed to be based on the autonomous need for what Harlow called “contact comfort.” Infant monkeys were taken from their natural mothers at birth and were raised by artificial wire and terrycloth surrogate mothers. Harlow reasoned that if the infant monkey’s attachment to its mother were secondarily derived from the association of mother with reduction of “primary” drives, then the infant monkey would become attached to whichever surrogate mother re-

duced the primary drives of hunger and thirst. Instead the infant monkey developed an attachment to the (terrycloth) surrogate mother providing “contact comfort” even when a different surrogate (wire) mother satisfied its so-called “primary” drives.

It is important to keep in mind that the surrogate mothers to whom the infant monkeys became attached did not simply serve the function of dispensing “contact comfort” analogously to the surrogate mothers who dispensed milk, but were also clung to and provided a security base in situations of novelty and experienced danger. In other words, while the infant monkeys would go to the milk-dispensing wire mothers when they were hungry, they showed a generalized attachment to the terrycloth mother and clung to “her” when they needed comforting and security.

These findings present serious challenges to “homeostatic drive reduction” models of attachment and, if one can generalize from infant monkeys to infant humans, they also present serious challenges to the traditional “anaclitic” model of attachment. If attachment to an object is derived from its role in drive gratification, why didn’t the infant monkeys become attached to the milk-dispensing mother who provided gratification more closely fitting a drive discharge model than the “contact comfort” gratification provided by the terrycloth mother?

The fact that the infant becomes attached to the provider of “contact comfort” rather than to the provider of milk reveals something important about the nature of attachment. It suggests that infants are genetically predisposed to become attached to an entity with certain characteristics, prominent among which is the capacity to provide “contact comfort.” It is likely that this early need for “contact comfort” and predisposition to become attached to the provider of “contact comfort” forms the basis for and is a precursor to later contact and object relational needs which become increasingly psychological in nature—for example, the need for empathic responses from the mothering figure. In short, rather than being secondary or “anaclitic,” there is an independent genetic basis for the development of attachment and object relations.

Of course, in the natural environment, the feeding, caring, and “contact comfort” functions are carried out together by one and the same person or animal, and indeed, much “contact comfort” is provided through and during feeding and caring. Undoubtedly, this strengthens the infant’s attachment to mother and thus has survival value. What the Harlow study shows, however, through an experimental separation of these functions, is that the main “carrier” of
attachment is the “contact comfort” rather than the feeding function. Some thought suggests that this too is highly adaptive. For the capacity to provide “contact comfort” is a quality integral to and shared by all members of the species, thus virtually guaranteeing attachment to some member of the species. This becomes increasingly important beyond infancy when peer relationships and mating considerations become relevant. “Contact comfort” as a primary vehicle for attachment constitutes a wider base for and guarantees a wider range of attachments than does feeding. Insofar as the wider base and wider range of attachment facilitate peer relationships and mating, they have obvious adaptive and selective value for the species. (For example, animals incapable of establishing peer affectional attachments are less likely to pass on their genotypes).

It is important to note that monkeys raised without mother, but with peers, do not seem to show any of the major developmental disturbances shown by monkeys raised by artificial surrogate mothers (i.e., wire and terrycloth mothers) or in isolation. By contrast, monkeys reared with their biological mothers, but denied any contact with age mates, are markedly inadequate in their social repertoires (Alexander and Harlow, 1965).

Monkeys raised with peers but without mothers exhibit intense attachment to one another (Harlow, 1969)—a pattern which strikingly parallels the description of six children who had been thrown together in concentration camps at ages ranging from a few months to one year. At the time they became known to Freud and Dann (1951) they had been together continuously in a variety of concentration camps for over two years. They had formed intense attachments to one another, showed great sensitivity to one another’s attitudes and feelings, and shared all possessions. They displayed a strong in-group feeling and initially responded to adult caretakers with either disregard or verbal and physical attacks. Most important in the present context, these children did not show the degree and kind of gross pathology which, according to most current psychodynamic theories, an absence of maternal rearing should inevitably produce. Freud and Dann observe that these children “were neither deficient, delinquent nor psychotic” (p. 514).

The importance of the peer affectional system in development and its possible limited substitutability for the maternal relationship highlights, in still another way, the autonomous basis for object relations and casts further doubt on the assumption that interpersonal attachments are secondarily derived from the gratification of so-called primary drives. If early attachment were primarily a function of gratification of the hunger drive, one would be hard put to account for the strength of the peer affectional system. Quite obviously, the young rely on peers, not for feeding, but for object relational needs which are quite independent of feeding.

All the evidence, from research and observations on humans and infra-human behavior, overwhelmingly supports the idea of a primary and autonomous attachment instinctual system relatively independent of the hunger drive and of sex and aggression. As described by Bowlby (1969) and others, it is a system comprising such behavioral components as smiling, vocalizing, sucking, soothability, a readiness to respond to objects with certain specific features, and, as the work of Harlow (1958) shows, a need for “contact comfort.” In all species in which attachment between infant and mother develops, the mother exhibits caretaking behavior reciprocal to the infant’s attachment responses (Bowlby, 1969). There is no evidence at all that these attachment responses are wholly dependent upon or entirely built up from the gratification of other needs (although, of course, attachment to mother can be strengthened by these gratifications).

Elements of the infant’s attachment behavioral repertoire (that is, components of the attachment behavioral system) appear at birth across practically all members of the species. They all facilitate the “predictable outcome” of proximity to and contact with the caregiver either through signaling responses (e.g., crying, smiling) which elicit complementary responses from the caregiver or through active behaviors (e.g., sucking, clasping) which directly accomplish proximity and contact.

Stern (1980), a prominent researcher in the field of infant-mother interactions, concludes that there is now sufficient evidence indicating “that powerful relationships are not forged by feeding in comparison to experiential sharing and complementing. It is perhaps time to suggest that the experience of being hungry, getting fed, and going blissfully to sleep, even when associated with a particular person, does not lead to subjective intimacy with the feeding person unless accompanied by subject-object complementing and state sharing” (p. 37). This position can be contrasted with the classical psychoanalytic one which assumes “that powerful and first 'anaclitic' relation to the mother, i.e., a phase in which the pleasurable sensations derived from the gratification of major needs are instrumental in determining which person in the external world is selected for libidinal cathexis” (A. Freud, 1960, p. 55). (This contrast is particularly clear when one con-
That the denial of tactile stimulation is a critical aspect in the effects of maternal deprivation is shown by the finding that maternally deprived pups who were stroked vigorously on the back and head for two hours with a moist camel hair brush (which is similar to the mother’s grooming) did not show the usual decline in ODC activity. Shanberg and Kuhn relate these findings to the report that tactile stimulation of premature babies increased their weight gain significantly over controls (White and LaBarba, 1976).

The ideas that an interest in objects must overcome a fundamental narcissistic tendency and “primal hatred,” that it is an outcome of the failure of primary process attempts at direct discharge (as in hallucination of the breast), and that it is generally dependent on the vicissitudes of instinctual gratification are also refuted by the growing evidence that infants are stimulus-seeking organisms and that their selective preferences for certain stimulus configurations are autonomous, inborn, natural propensities which appear at birth or shortly after birth.

It has been demonstrated that infants will even interrupt feeding in order to look at a novel or interesting stimulus (Emde and Robinson, 1979). The young infant is capable of orienting visually to the source of a sound. Among other abilities, he can recognize in one modality an object he has experienced in another modality (tactile). He can match events showing the same temporal structure and can match intensities of a stimulus experienced in two different modalities.

The research evidence has also established that very young infants show perceptual discrimination and/or selective preferences for novel visual and auditory stimuli (e.g., Friedman, Bruno, and Vietze, 1974); for one set of geometric features over another (e.g., McCall and Nelson, 1970; Ruff and Birch, 1974); for one set of patterns over another (e.g., Fantz and Fagan, 1975); for intermediate brightness (Hershenson, 1964); for colors (Cohen and Gelber, 1975; Cohen et al., 1971) and for an optimal level of discrepancy from pre-existing stimuli (e.g., Kinney and Kagan, 1976). It is to be noted that insofar as these studies deal with selective preferences (as determined, for example, by visual fixation) the concept of an interest in objects seems particularly appropriate to the phenomena in question.

To summarize the main point, all the evidence taken together indicates that an interest in objects as well as the development of affectional bonds is not simply a derivative or outgrowth of libidinal energies and aims or a consequence of gratification of other needs, but is a critical independent aspect of development which expresses inborn
propensities to establish cognitive and affective links to objects in the world. Apparently, tactile stimulation (and, as other evidence which I have not cited suggests, kinesthetic stimulation) is, early on, an especially critical dimension of objects to which the infant responds. The research evidence also supports the clinical intuitions and formulations of Balint (1937), who argued that "primary object love" more accurately describes the infants' early propensities than Freud's concept of primary narcissism; and those of Fairbairn (1952), who proposed that "libido is primarily object-seeking rather than pleasure-seeking."

**Ego Psychology**

The above findings represent challenges from without to traditional psychoanalytic theory. The last number of years, however, have also witnessed challenges from within.

Within traditional psychoanalytic theory, the idea that all behavior and all psychic functions are derived from and secondary to the basic instincts was first seriously questioned in regard to ego functions. This theme is explicit in the developments of psychoanalytic ego psychology and is most closely associated with the work of Hartmann (1958; 1964). He opened the door to the possibility of considering aspects of behavior, development, and psychic functioning as relatively autonomous from instinctual drive. While important for the development of psychoanalytic theory, this was hardly an empirical discovery; as a substantive statement, it amounted merely to acknowledging and admitting into psychoanalytic theory the phenomena and facts of biological maturation as applied to cognitive functions—phenomena and facts with which biologists, pediatricians, experimental and developmental psychologists were long familiar. After all, isn't the proposition that in an "average expectable environment" certain ego functions will develop relatively independent of conflict and other drive vicissitudes essentially a statement, in psychoanalytic terms, of the phenomenon of maturation? In this sense Hartmann's contribution can be viewed as essentially a politico-theoretical one, for it permitted psychoanalytic theorists who still considered themselves Freudian analysts to view cognitive-ego functions at least somewhat autonomously of instinct gratification and instinct theory. And I say somewhat autonomously because in some of his writings Hartmann has noted that while ego apparatuses may develop along the lines of biological maturation, they nevertheless require the driving force of instincts in order to function and lead to action. This contention will be taken up in a later separate discussion.

However incomplete, what was accomplished in the area of ego functions—the freedom to view them relatively independent of the context of instinct theory—was not accomplished for other areas of behavior and psychic functioning, in particular for the areas of object relations and self. Because cognitive development was not a central point of contention between neo-Freudian and Freudian theorists, it was more "neutral" ground and hence, more susceptible to modification and reformulation. The interpersonal, social and cultural, however, was precisely the battleground between Freudian and neo-Freudian theories and hence, more emotionally charged and more likely to become a central ideological issue. In addition, while a good deal of work had already been done on maturational processes in cognitive development, parallel work on the biological roots of interpersonal and social aspects of behavior came later or, at least, was slower to make a major impact on psychoanalytic thinking. For example, it was not until 1969 that Bowlby's first major work appeared which tried to incorporate into psychoanalytic theory the important findings from ethological studies and other systematic research attesting to the primary biological roots of the interpersonal and social. It was not until 1958 that Harlow reported his classic experiment describing above, in which he tried to show that the infant's attachment to its mother was not secondarily derived from so-called primary drives such as hunger and feeding. And only recently has systematic research on infant-mother interaction been carried out.

It is an interesting historical note that paralleling the emergence of psychoanalytic ego psychology were similar developments within academic psychology. Indeed, Harlow's classic experiment was designed to counter the idea that all behavior serves to gratify so-called primary drives or satisfy motives and aims which have been secondarily derived from these drives, a basic assumption not only of Freudian theory, but of learning theory as formulated by Hull (1943) and later by Dollard and Miller (1950). Similar to Freudian theory, Hullian learning theory was also one of those all-embracing motivational theories, ostensibly derived from evolutionary theory, in which all behavior is held to be motivated by drive-reduction. This view, which dominated American learning theory, came under challenge at about the same time as the emergence of ego psychology and, although concerned mainly with animal behavior, on grounds similar to those presented by the ego psychologists. Animals were shown to exhibit, for example, curiosity and exploratory behavior—the animal version of
ego functions—quite independently of the so-called primary drives (e.g., Barnett, 1958; Berlyne, 1960; Butler, 1965).

An Overview of Recent Developments in Psychoanalysis

As I will elaborate on later, whatever the modifications in traditional psychoanalytic theory represented by ego psychology, they were and were intended to be entirely consistent with the basic id-ego structural model of Freudian theory. In this sense, they did not constitute a critical challenge to the basic assumptions of traditional theory. The same, however, cannot be said of more recent findings and formulations which, as Modell (1975) has noted, raise basic difficulties for some core aspects of Freudian theory. The core of these challenges is that certain critical issues and features of personality development and of psychopathology, having to do with object relations and self, do not easily fit the basic id-ego model of traditional theory. For example, the descriptions of psychological development which have appeared most meaningful to many recent clinicians and theorists are not those having to do with psychosexual development, but accounts that focus on such dimensions as self-other differentiation, the move from symbiosis to separation-individuation, and degree of self-cohesiveness. The increasing interest in these dimensions has been prompted, not only by observations of children and of mother-child interactions, but also by a recent preoccupation with certain classes of pathology—mainly, borderline conditions, narcissistic personality disorders, and schizoid personalities—which do not seem to center on the usual intrapsychic id-ego oedipal conflicts, but on pre-oedipal problems of self-cohesiveness and of separation-individuation.

The next few chapters will take up these challenges from within. Broadly speaking, they fall into one of four different categories. In the first category, the response consists mainly of an attempt to preserve traditional instinct theory and combine it with a recognition of the importance of object relations and of self. This approach is exemplified by the work of Mahler (1968; 1975). (It is also represented by Kernberg [1975; 1976] and Jacobson [1964], whose work will not be covered here). In this approach, while greater recognition is given to issues of object relations and of self, the assumption continues to be made that development in these areas is somehow linked with and contingent upon the vicissitudes of instinctual unfolding and gratification.

Object Relations and Freudian Instinct Theory

The second category can be called a two-factor theory and is exemplified by the early writings of Kohut (1971) and the work of Modell. Psychoanalytic theorists who represent this point of view seem to accept both instinct theory and a psychology of object relations and self, with each theoretical perspective presumably appropriate to a different set of phenomena (e.g., narcissistic personality disorders versus neurotic “structural conflicts”).

A third response entails an outright rejection of Freudian instinct theory and a thoroughgoing replacement of it by a psychology of object relations and of self. This approach is exemplified by Fairbairn (1952), Guntrip (1969) and, I believe, G. S. Klein (1976). It is also represented by Kohut's (1977) later writings and that of his followers.

A residual fourth category is reserved for Gedo's (1979) epigenetic hierarchical theory which bears certain similarities to both Kohut's and Klein's formulations.

Finally, I will take up the work of Weiss, Sampson and their colleagues (Horowitz et al., 1975; Sampson, 1982; Sampson et al., 1972; Sampson et al., 1976; Sampson and Weiss, 1977; Sampson, H., Weiss, and Gassner, 1977; Weiss, 1952, 1971, 1982; Weiss et al., 1977; Weiss et al., 1980) which does not fit any of the above categories, but which is sufficiently challenging to traditional ideas and of sufficient interest to warrant inclusion. As will be seen, the approach of this group can be characterized as an updated and sophisticated ego psychology.