

A DREAM THAT INTERPRETS ITSELF

Otto Rank

Edited by Robert Kramer

Translated by Gregory C. Richter



KARNAC

firing the mind

Contents

| | |
|--|-------|
| About the author | vii |
| About the editor | ix |
| About the translator | xiii |
| Introduction <i>by Robert Kramer</i> | xv |
| Chronology of Otto Rank's life (1884–1939) and work <i>by Robert Kramer</i> | xxvii |
| A dream that interprets itself <i>by Otto Rank</i> | 1 |
| Index | 84 |

About the author

Otto Rank was an Austrian psychoanalyst, writer, and philosopher. Freud considered Rank to be the most brilliant of his disciples. With access to the master's most intimate thoughts and feelings, Rank contributed two chapters to *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1914. His name would appear below Freud's on the title page for the next fifteen years.

In the wake of Freud's rage against the preoedipal thesis of *The Trauma of Birth* (1924), which proposed the heresy that mothers are just as powerful as fathers, those Rank had trained as analysts in Vienna were required to be re-analysed by Freudians in order to retain their credentials. Co-creator of the psychoanalytic movement with Freud, Rank was now anathema. His enemies in the inner circle, especially Ernest Jones, "fell on him like dogs," said Helene Deutsch, an early analyst.

For almost a century, Rank has been vilified, ignored, or simply forgotten by the psychoanalytic establishment. But with the publication in 1973 of Ernest Becker's Pulitzer-Prize-winning *The Denial of Death*, Rank's fortunes began to change dramatically. Single-handedly, Becker brought Rank back from the dead, making a powerful case that Rank was the most brilliant mind in Freud's circle, with more insight into human nature than even the master himself.

If the twentieth century was Freud's, the twenty-first century, as Becker predicted fifty years ago, is shaping up to be that of Rank, "the brooding genius waiting in the wings," according to Irvin Yalom.

About the editor

Robert Kramer, PhD, is Visiting Professor of Psychology at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest. At ELTE, he teaches Rankian psychotherapy to MA and PhD students. During Spring 2022, he was Professor of Psychoanalysis at ELTE, only the second person in Hungary to hold this title. The first was Sándor Ferenczi.

In addition to teaching at ELTE, he is now designing a leadership development program for the Leadership Academy of the Democracy Institute of Central European University in Budapest. Based on Rank's will therapy, the program will address the leadership needs of Central and Eastern European national and local leaders; politicians; policy experts in public administration and think tanks; and civil society activists who are working to promote democratic change. Concurrently, he is doing the same for Western European leaders at the Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas at the University of Lisbon.

During the academic year 2015–2016, he was the inaugural International Chair of Public Leadership at the National University of Public Service in Budapest, Hungary. In 2016, he resigned his chair due to the corruption of the Orbán regime.

He has published in *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The Times of Israel* (Tel Aviv), and *The New European* (London). He also writes reviews of forthcoming books for *Publishers Weekly* (New York). He edited and introduced Otto Rank's *A Psychology of Difference: The American Lectures* (Princeton University Press, 1996) and co-edited, with E. J. Lieberman, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank: Inside Psychoanalysis* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012). In 2022, he published *The Birth of Relationship Therapy: Carl Rogers Meets Otto Rank* (Psychosozial Press). In 2024, Oxford University Press will publish his book *Otto Rank and the Creation of Modern Psychotherapy*. In 2025, he will edit, introduce, and publish a new translation of Rank's *Will Therapy* for Leuven University Press.

His peer-reviewed articles have appeared in the US, the UK, and, in translation, in Austria, Canada, China, France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Spain. His latest, 'Discovering the Existential Unconscious: Rollo May Encounters Otto Rank' (*The Humanistic Psychologist*, March 2023), was published in translation in Chinese and Russian, and is now being translated into Greek, Turkish, and Hungarian. He serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* (US), founded by Abraham Maslow, and was book review editor of the *Journal of Organizational Change Management* (UK) for over a decade.

Before he moved to Budapest, he was Director of Executive Education for US government leaders at American University (AU)'s School of Public Affairs in Washington, DC. In 2002, he created "Transformative Action Learning," a Rankian leader development process and introduced it into the executive leadership curriculum at AU and at other universities around the world. In 2002, he received the Outstanding Teacher Award at AU. In 2004, he won the Curriculum Innovation Award of the American Society for Public Administration. From 2002 to 2004, he was an elected member of the Board of Directors of the Organizational Behavior Teaching Society for Management Educators, a group of 650 professors in leadership and management education worldwide.

He has lectured on Rank at the 3rd World Congress on Existential Psychology in Athens; Bar Ilan University in Tel Aviv; Sigmund Freud University in Vienna; Corvinus University of Budapest; Central European University (Budapest); George Washington University

(Washington, DC); American University (Washington, DC); the American Psychological Association; the International Psychoanalytical Association (Prague); the Freud Museum in Vienna; University of Lancaster (UK); University of Athens Medical School in Greece; the International Institute of Existential and Humanistic Psychology in Beijing; the Department of Psychiatry at the Universities of Pisa and Florence (Italy); the Colloquium on Intellectual History of European Psychology, La Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (Paris); the William Alanson White Institute in New York; the Indiana Society for Psychoanalytic Thought in Indianapolis; the Existential-Humanistic Institute in San Francisco; and the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work in Philadelphia.

For twenty-five years, he served in progressively senior positions in the US government, including two years on Vice-President Al Gore's task force to reinvent the federal government and one year as Director of the Innovation University at the US Employment and Training Administration, with a budget of 10 billion dollars and over 1,000 employees. In 1999, he was selected by the US State Department to be a Fulbright Professor in Hungary, and taught leadership and organization development at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. He speaks Hungarian.

Applying Otto Rank's approach to will therapy, he has consulted on leader development to corporate, government, and civil society organizations around the world. Clients include Pfizer Corporation; Boeing Corporation; the World Bank; the European Commission in Brussels and Luxembourg; the European Environmental Agency in Copenhagen; the Prime Minister's Office in Tallinn, Estonia; the National Research University's Higher School of Economics in Moscow and St. Petersburg; the Moscow State University of Pedagogy; the University of Haifa; the Philippine Academy of Development; a large number of agencies of the US Government, including the intelligence community; and the Department of Human Services in the City of Alexandria in the US.

He holds a PhD in leadership, with a specialization in the intellectual history of psychoanalysis, from the George Washington University School of Business and Public Management in Washington, DC.

About the translator

Gregory C. Richter (PhD in Linguistics, University of California San Diego, 1982) taught German and Linguistics at Truman State University, Missouri, from 1983 to 2022. He maintains interests in formal linguistics and in translation theory. His publications include numerous translations from German, and centre on Viennese psychoanalysis. He has produced new renderings of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (2011), *The Future of an Illusion* (2012), and *Civilization and its Discontents* (2015) by Sigmund Freud, all at Broadview Press. He has also produced translations of Otto Rank's *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend* (1992), *Psychology and the Soul* (1998, with E. James Lieberman), and *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (2004, with E. James Lieberman), all at Johns Hopkins University Press. More recently, he served as translator for *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank: Inside Psychoanalysis* (2011, edited by E. James Lieberman and Robert Kramer), Johns Hopkins University Press. Other publications include translations of works in French and Chinese. In the past few years, he has also served as copy editor for two presses—Ex Ophidia Press and Plain Wrapper Press Redux.

Introduction

Robert Kramer

Otto Rank was Sigmund Freud's closest colleague in Vienna during the formative years of psychoanalysis, from 1906 until 1926. In 1907, at age twenty-three, Rank published *The Artist*, the first psychoanalytic book not written by Freud. A year earlier, Freud had hired the precocious Rank to be his secretary, virtually adopting him as a foster son, and paying his way for a PhD in Literature at the University of Vienna.

Grateful for Freud's generosity, Rank responded by publishing a stream of articles and books, advancing psychoanalytic thinking into almost every area of the arts and humanities. Freud would point to Rank's mastery of myth, symbols, art, philosophy, and world literature to show his critics that the validity of psychoanalysis did not hinge on Freud's autobiographical *The Interpretation of Dreams*, which, Freud knew, could not be accepted as scientific evidence (Marinelli & Mayer, 2003).

"His independence of me is greater than it appears," Freud told Jung in 1907; "very young, he has a good head and is thoroughly honest and open" (Lieberman, 1985, p. 98).

Freud was so impressed by Rank's erudition that in 1914 he invited his protégé to contribute two chapters, on poetry and myth, to the second edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams*; thereafter, Rank's name

would appear under Freud's on the title page of the foundational text of psychoanalysis for the next fifteen years.

In 1914, Rank also published *The Double*, an existential study of identity, guilt, narcissism, the fear of death, the soul, and the desire for immortality. Dreams and movies speak a similar language, proposed Rank, who analysed H. H. Ewer's silent film *The Student of Prague*. "It may perhaps turn out," he wrote, becoming the first psychoanalytic movie critic, "that cinematography, which, in numerous ways reminds us of the dream-work, can also express certain psychological facts, which the writer is unable to describe with verbal clarity" (Rank, 1914, p. 4). The immortal soul, according to Rank, was the first "double" of the body. The "double" is a defence against the anxiety of death (*Todesangst*), an idea Rank would expand fifteen years later in *Will Therapy* (1929–1931) into "*Lebensangst*" and "*Todesangst*" (life fear and death fear).

After the Great War, Rank was the second most powerful man in the psychoanalytic movement. Vice-President of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, chief editor of the two leading psychoanalytic journals, *Zeitschrift* and *Imago*, director of Freud's publishing house, the Verlag, and senior training analyst in Vienna after Freud, Otto Rank was officially named by Freud to be his heir-apparent in the early 1920s.

"He is doing all the work," Freud reported to Ernest Jones in 1919, "performing the possible and impossible alike, I dare say, you know him for what he is, the truest, most reliable, most charming of helpers, the column, which is bearing the edifice" (Paskauskas, 1993, p. 353).

Jones, jealous of Rank's closeness to Freud, and terrified of Rank's power to shut down the English-language journals and publications that he spearheaded, took vengeance on Rank in his biography of Freud, published in the late 1950s. Asserting that Rank was never personally close to Freud, and that Rank was "psychotic," he brazenly lied about Rank, who had died in 1939 and could not defend himself (Lieberman & Kramer, 2012). Jones did not label Jung "psychotic," for fear that Jung, then still living, would sue him for libel.

Freud always marvelled at Rank's analytical skills and encouraged him, early on, to become the first lay analyst. At age twenty-six, Rank published "A dream that interprets itself" (1910), an interpretation so penetrating that Freud could not praise it too highly. "Perhaps the best example of the interpretation of a dream," rejoiced Freud in

his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, “is the one reported by Otto Rank consisting of two interrelated dreams dreamt by a young girl, which occupy about two pages of print: but their analysis extends to seventy-six pages. So I should need something like a whole term to conduct you through [it]” (1916–1917, p. 185).

This is the first English translation of Rank’s masterpiece of dream interpretation, originally published in 1910 as “Ein Traum, der sich selbst deutet,” in *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen*, 2 (2): 465–540.

After moving to Paris in 1926, in the wake of Freud’s refusal to accept the preoedipal thesis of *The Trauma of Birth*, Rank travelled often to America to see patients and lecture at universities such as Harvard, Yale, the University of Minnesota, Stanford, and the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, where he taught relationship therapy as a professor from 1926 until his death in 1939.

In recent years, there’s been a renaissance of interest in Otto Rank. Brutally attacked by orthodox Freudians like Ernest Jones and Peter Gay for his “anti-oedipal” views, Rank, according to more than one estimate, “will probably turn out to be the best mind that psychoanalysis contributed to intellectual history” (J. Jones, 1960, p. 219).

The Rankian revival began in 1973 with Ernest Becker’s Pulitzer-Prize-winning *The Denial of Death*, a merger of Rank’s post-Freudian writings on “life fear” and “death fear” with the existential thinking of Kierkegaard. “The idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else,” said Becker (1973), “it is a mainspring of human activity—activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny for man” (p. xvii).

“This is the terror,” wrote Becker, summarising his thesis in one heart-stopping sentence, “to have emerged from nothing, to have a name, consciousness of self, deep inner feelings, an excruciating yearning for life and self-expression—and with all this yet to die” (*ibid.*, p. 87). We are born to die. Only the expression of our creativity, argued Becker, drawing on Rank’s writings in *Truth and Reality* (1929), *Will Therapy* (1929–1931), *Psychology and the Soul* (1930), *Modern Education* (1932b), *Art and Artist* (1932a), and *Beyond Psychology* (1941), allows us to transcend death—through the construction of time-defying monuments of

art and culture, whose symbols provide meaning in a terrifying universe, helping us deny death and glimpse, if only faintly, the eternal.

“There’s no substitute for reading Rank,” said Becker (1973), “he is a mine for years of insights and pondering” (p. xii). On the dedication page of *Escape from Evil*, the companion volume to *The Denial of Death*, Becker (1975) wrote: “In memory of Otto Rank, whose thought may well prove to be the rarest gift of Freud’s disciples to the world.”

In 1982, Esther Menaker published the first comprehensive treatment of Rank’s ideas. Rank, she concluded, was the unacknowledged forerunner of intersubjective, relationship, person-centred, existential, and short-term psychotherapies (Menaker, 1982).

In 1985, E. James Lieberman wrote the first full-scale biography of Rank, based on dozens of interviews with those who knew Rank. Following the pioneering research of Paul Roazen (1974), Lieberman uncovered a host of lies in Ernest Jones’s treatment of Rank in his Freud biography. “The truth about Rank himself can scarcely be found in print,” said Lieberman (1985), who was amazed at the abundance of errors concerning Rank’s life and work in the literature of psychoanalysis (p. xv).

After the publication of the landmark studies of Otto Rank by Ernest Becker, Esther Menaker, and E. James Lieberman, previously forgotten or dismissed works by Rank were gradually rediscovered. New readings of Rank now appear regularly, as his therapeutic, cultural, existential, feminist, and spiritual writings are becoming more widely appreciated. For example:

- In 1990, Madelon Sprengnether’s *The Spectral Mother: Freud, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis*, showed how Freud’s refusal to see the preoedipal mother, as illuminated in Rank’s *The Trauma of Birth*, “nearly effaces her”—and all other women—“from the drama of human development” (p. 3).
- In 1995, Matthew Fox, a post-denominational theologian with a large following worldwide, published “Otto Rank on the artistic journey as a spiritual journey, the spiritual journey as an artistic journey,” making a case for Rank as “one of the great spiritual giants of the twentieth century . . . He died a feminist and deeply committed to social justice in 1939. His work, more than any other psychologist’s, provides the appropriate basis for Creation Spirituality” (Fox, 1995, p. 199).

- In 1996, Esther Menaker published *Separation, Will and Creativity: The Wisdom of Otto Rank*, the capstone of her decades of studying Rank and applying his thinking to intersubjective psychoanalysis, empathic relationships, spirituality, and women's issues.
- In 1996, Princeton University Press published my edited collection of Rank's American lectures, entitled *A Psychology of Difference*, a series of twenty-two talks delivered by Rank from 1924 to 1937 at universities such as Yale, Stanford, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work.
- In *A Meeting of Minds: Mutuality in Psychoanalysis*, Lewis Aron (1996) concluded that, along with Ferenczi, Rank "anticipated many of the distinguishing marks of contemporary relational theories" (p. 183).
- Over the span of a dozen years, Johns Hopkins University Press published English translations by E. James Lieberman and Gregory C. Richter of Rank's *Incest Theme in Literature and Legend* (in 1992 [1912]); *Psychology and the Soul* (in 1998 [1930]); and the second edition, previously untranslated, of Rank's *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (in 2004 [1922]).
- In 1998, Marina Leitner published a book-length study in German entitled *Freud, Rank und die Folgen* ("Freud, Rank and the consequences"), showing why the conflict between Freud and Rank over *The Trauma of Birth* was a pivotal event in the history of psychoanalysis.
- In 1998, Ludwig Janus edited a special issue of the German psychoanalytic journal *psychosozial* devoted to rediscovering the value of Otto Rank's ideas for psychoanalysis. Along with numerous publications on Rank's innovations as a therapist, Janus has been at the forefront of promoting prenatal and perinatal psychology for medicine, just as Peter Sloterdijk (1998), the most famous living philosopher in Germany after Jürgen Habermas, has made us aware of the cultural and symbolic "micro-sphere" of the womb.
- In *Reading Psychoanalysis: Freud, Rank, Ferenczi, Groddeck*, Peter Rudnytsky (2002) confirmed that Rank was the first object-relations theorist and therapist, a conclusion he had already reached a decade earlier (Rudnytsky, 1991) in *The Psychoanalytic Vocation: Rank, Winnicott, and the Legacy of Freud*.
- In 2002, Matthew Fox published *Creativity: Where the Divine and Human Meet*, which drew on Rank's *Art and Artist* to explore how

- the expression of our creative will can promote ecumenism, ecological, and social justice, and a rebirth of the cosmological wisdom of the ancients. “To allow creativity its appropriate place in our lives and our culture, our education and our family relationships,” said Fox (2002), “is to allow healing to happen at a profound level” (p. 9).
- In 2006, the French psychoanalytic journal *Le Coq-Héron*, under the editorship of Judith Dupont, literary heir of Sándor Ferenczi, published a special issue with the title, “Otto Rank, l’accoucheur du sujet” (“Otto Rank, midwife of the subject”).
 - In 2008, Cnaan, Dichter, and Draine published the first history of the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, showing Rank’s lasting influence on the leading American school of social work. Penn’s ideas on relationship therapy have been accepted by all schools of social work worldwide.
 - In 2008, the philosopher Maxine Sheets-Johnstone published *The Roots of Morality*, which explored Rank’s argument that “immortality ideologies” are our abiding response to the painful riddle of death. For Rank, as for Ernest Becker, history is a succession of immortality ideologies, beginning with belief in the soul. Sheets-Johnstone compared Rank’s writings on the universality of soul-belief, introduced first in *The Double* and expanded later in *Psychology and the Soul*, with the thinking of three major Western philosophers—René Descartes, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Derrida.
 - In a 2010 study of Rank’s *Will Therapy*, Dan Merkur observed in *Contemporary Psychoanalytic Studies, Volume 11*, that “the rehabilitation of Rank’s reputation and technical innovations within psychoanalysis awaited the rise in the 1980s of the American school of relational psychoanalysis” (p. 53).
 - In 2012, Johns Hopkins University Press published *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank: Inside Psychoanalysis*, edited by me and E. James Lieberman, correcting fabrications by Ernest Jones, Rank’s bitter rival for leadership of the psychoanalytic movement in the early 1920s, in Jones’s Freud biography.
 - In 2012, Francisco Obaid published a comprehensive account in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (which had dismissed Rank’s ideas for almost a century) of the debate between Freud and Rank over the relationship between anxiety and birth.

- In 2012, under the guest editorship of Judith Dupont, a special issue of *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, entitled “Recognizing Otto Rank, an innovator,” was devoted to Rank’s life and work.
- In 2013, in *The Psychoanalytic Review*, Rosemary Balsam showed that Rank, as an early feminist, was the first male analyst to see “childbirth as a central bodily female experience” (p. 713).
- In 2015, in *Psychoanalyse im Widerspruch*, I published the first comprehensive account of why Freud banished Rank.
- In 2016, in *The Psychoanalytic Review*, Daniel Sullivan published the first study of Rank’s psychology of emotions.
- In 2017, Mark Griffiths published *The Challenge of Existential Social Work*, which highlighted Rank’s lasting legacy for social work worldwide, beginning with the relationship therapy introduced in the late 1920s by Rank and Jessie Taft at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work.
- In 2017, in *Psychoanalyse im Widerspruch*, Ludwig Janus published Phoebe Crosby’s account of her analysis with Rank in 1927.
- In 2018, Susan Lanzoni published *Empathy: A History*, showing how Ferenczi and Rank’s advocacy of empathic understanding (*Einfühlung*) helped shape the client-centred practices of Taft and Carl Rogers.
- In 2023, in *The Humanistic Psychologist*, I published the first comprehensive account of Rank’s influence on Rollo May (1958), the founder of existential therapy in America. An American mid-Westerner, Rollo May, I wrote, “brought a darkly tragic Rankian awareness of the existential unconscious into the conformist, anti-intellectual consciousness of America.”
- In 2024, with Oxford University Press, I will publish *Otto Rank and the Creation of Modern Psychotherapy*, arguing that Rank, through his impact on Carl Rogers, Rollo May, and Irvin Yalom, is the creator of twenty-first-century psychotherapy. “I became infected with Rankian ideas,” said Rogers, the most influential American psychotherapist of the twentieth century. “I have long considered Otto Rank to be *the* great unacknowledged genius in Freud’s circle,” said Rollo May, a leading American psychotherapist and public intellectual during the second half of the twentieth century. “I gasped at his prescience, when reading his works,” said Irvin Yalom, the world’s most famous existential psychotherapist, “especially his books,

Will Therapy and Truth and Reality.” If the twentieth century was the century of Freud, then the twenty-first is shaping up to be the century of Rank.

- Over the last two decades, Hans-Jürgen Wirth, founder of Psychosozial-Verlag, has published five German-language works by Rank: *Kunst und Künstler* (in 2000 [1932a]), which originally appeared only in English (as *Art and Artist* in 1932); three volumes of *Technik der Psychoanalyse* (in 2006), the last two of which were published in English as *Will Therapy* in 1936; and *Das Trauma der Geburt* (in 2007). Wirth’s German edition of the Freud–Rank letters was published in 2014, and a French translation, under the direction of Judith Dupont, appeared shortly thereafter. Other translations are now in preparation.

References

- Aron, L. (1996). *A Meeting of Minds: Mutuality in Psychoanalysis*. Hillsdale: The Analytic Press.
- Balsam, R. H. (2013). Freud, females, childbirth and dissidence: Margarite Hilferding, Karen Horney and Otto Rank. *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 100: 695–716.
- Balsam, R. H. (2016). The war on women in psychoanalytic theory: Past to present. In: C. Lamont, R. A. King, S. Abrams, P. M. Brinich, & R. Knight (Eds.), *The War Against Women in Psychoanalytic Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 83–107.
- Becker, E. (1973). *The Denial of Death*, with a foreword by Sam Keen. New York: The Free Press (1997 paperback edition).
- Becker, E. (1975). *Escape from Evil*. New York: The Free Press.
- Cnaan, R. A., Dichter, M. E., & Draine, J. (2008). *A Century of Social Work and Social Welfare at Penn*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Crosby, P., & Janus, L. (2017). Eine Analyse bei Otto Rank. *Forum der Psychoanalyse: Zeitschrift für psychodynamische Theorie und Praxis*, 33: 447–457.
- Dupont, J. (Ed.) (2006). Otto Rank, l’accoucheur du sujet. *Le Coq-Héron*, 187: 1–79.
- Dupont, J. (Ed.) (2012). Recognizing Otto Rank, an innovator. *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 72: 315–417.

- Fox, M. (1995). Otto Rank on the artistic journey as a spiritual journey, the spiritual journey as an artistic journey. In: M. Fox, *Wrestling with the Prophets: Essays on Creation Spirituality and Everyday Life*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, pp. 199–242.
- Fox, M. (2002). *Creativity: Where the Divine and the Human Meet*. New York: Jeremy Tarcher/Putnam.
- Freud, S. (1916–1917). *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. In: *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*. London: Hogarth.
- Griffiths, M. (2017). *The Challenges of Existential Social Work*. New York: Red Globe Press.
- Janus, L. (Ed.) (1998). Die Wiederentdeckung Otto Ranks für die Psychoanalyse. *Psychosozial*, 73, 21(III): 1–168.
- Jones, J. (1960). Otto Rank: A forgotten heresy. *Commentary*, 30: 219–229.
- Kramer, R. (2015). “I am boiling with rage”: Why did Freud banish Rank? *Psychoanalyse im Widerspruch*, 53: 31–44.
- Kramer, R. (2023). Discovering the existential unconscious: Rollo May encounters Otto Rank. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 51(1): 15–35.
- Kramer, R. (2024). *Otto Rank and the Creation of Modern Psychotherapy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lanzoni, S. (2018). *Empathy: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Leitner, M. (1998). *Freud, Rank und die Folgen: ein Schlüsselkonflikt für die Psychoanalyse*. Vienna: Turia + Kant.
- Lieberman, E. J. (1985). *Acts of Will: The Life and Work of Otto Rank*. New York: The Free Press. See also: E. J. Lieberman, *Otto Rank: Leben und Werk*. Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2014 (2nd edn.).
- Lieberman, E. J., & Kramer, R. (2012). *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank: Inside Psychoanalysis*. Trans. G. C. Richter. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. See also: *Sigmund Freud und Otto Rank: Ihre Beziehung im Spiegel des Briefwechsels 1906–1925*. Eds. E. J. Lieberman & R. Kramer. Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2014.
- Marinelli, L., & Mayer, A. (2003). *Dreaming by the Book: Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams and the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*. Trans. S. Fairfield. New York: Other Press.
- Menaker, E. (1982). *Otto Rank: A Rediscovered Legacy*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Menaker, E. (1996). *Separation, Will and Creativity: The Wisdom of Otto Rank*. New York: Jason Aronson.

- Merkur, D. (2010). Otto Rank's *Will Therapy*. In: D. Merkur (Ed.), *Contemporary Psychoanalytic Studies: Explorations of the Psychoanalytic Mystics* (Vol. 11, pp. 53–70). Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.
- Obaid, F. P. (2012). Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank: Debates and confrontations about anxiety and birth. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 93: 449–471.
- Paskauskas, R. A. (Ed.) (1993). *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones, 1908–1939*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rank, O. (1910). “Ein Traum, der sich selbst deutet,” *Jahrbuch für Psychoanalytische und Psychopathologische Forschungen*, 2 (2): 465–540.
- Rank, O. (1912). *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend: Fundamentals of a Psychology of Literary Creation*. Trans. G. C. Richter. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Rank, O. (1914). *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*. Trans. H. Tucker. London: Maresfield Library, 1989.
- Rank, O. (1922). *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero: A Psychological Exploration of Myth*. Expanded and updated edition. Trans. G. C. Richter & E. J. Lieberman. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- Rank, O. (1924). *The Trauma of Birth*. New York: Dover, 1993. See also: O. Rank, *Das Trauma der Geburt und seine Bedeutung für die Psychoanalyse*. Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2007.
- Rank, O. (1926–1931). *Technik der Psychoanalyse, I–III*. Eds. L. Janus & H.-J. Wirth. Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2006.
- Rank, O. (1927–1928). *Genetische Psychologie, Vols. I–II*. Leipzig and Vienna: Deuticke.
- Rank, O. (1929). *Truth and Reality*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1978.
- Rank, O. (1930). *Psychology and the Soul: A Study of the Origin, Conceptual Evolution and Nature of the Soul*. Trans. G. C. Richter & E. J. Lieberman. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
- Rank, O. (1932a). *Art and Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development*. Trans. C. Atkinson. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. See also: O. Rank, *Kunst und Künstler: Studien zur Genese und Entwicklung des Schaffensdranges*. Ed. H. Wirth. Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2000.
- Rank, O. (1932b). *Modern Education*. Trans. M. Moxon. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Rank, O. (1936). *Will Therapy: An Analysis of the Therapeutic Process in Terms of Relationship*. Trans. J. Taft. New York: W. W. Norton, 1978. [Translation

- of *Technik der Psychoanalyse, II: Die analytische Reaktion in ihren konstruktiven Elementen*. Leipzig and Vienna: Deuticke, 1929; and *Technik der Psychoanalyse, III: Die Analyse des Analytikers und seiner Rolle in der Gesamtsituation*. Leipzig and Vienna: Deuticke, 1931.
- Rank, O. (1941). *Beyond Psychology*. New York: Dover, 1958.
- Rank, O. (1996). *A Psychology of Difference: The American Lectures*. Ed. R. Kramer, with a foreword by Rollo May. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Roazen, P. (1974). *Freud and His Followers*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Rudnytsky, P. L. (1991). *The Psychoanalytic Vocation: Rank, Winnicott, and the Legacy of Freud*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Rudnytsky, P. L. (2002). *Reading Psychoanalysis: Freud, Rank, Ferenczi, Groddeck*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Sheets-Johnstone, M. (2008). *The Roots of Morality*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Sloterdijk, P. (1998). *Sphären I: Blasen. Mikrosphärologie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag. See also: P. Sloterdijk (2011). *Bubbles: Spheres, Vol. I: Microspherology*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
- Sprengnether, M. (1990). *The Spectral Mother: Freud, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Sullivan, D. (2016). Person–environment merge and separation: Otto Rank’s psychology of emotion. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 103: 743–770.

Chronology of Otto Rank's life (1884–1939) and work

Robert Kramer

- 1884 Born in Vienna, 22 April.
- 1905 Sends Freud a manuscript entitled *The Artist*, using the word *artist* in as comprehensive a sense as Freud had used the word *sexuality*.
- 1906 Accepts Freud's offer to be secretary of the fledgling Vienna Psychoanalytical Society, the first paid position in the movement; is virtually adopted by Freud as a "foster son"; and is asked by Freud to devote himself to the non-medical side of psychoanalysis, becoming the first lay analyst in the world.
- 1907 Publishes *The Artist*, the first psychoanalytic work not written by Freud.
- 1909 Publishes *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, with a section on the "family romance" contributed by Freud.
- 1911 Helps Freud edit and revise the third edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams*.
- 1911 Publishes *The Lohengrin Saga*, for which he later receives a PhD from the University of Vienna, the first dissertation ever published on a psychoanalytic theme.

- 1912 Publishes *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend: Fundamentals of a Psychology of Literary Creation*, a 685-page study of the Oedipus complex throughout world literature.
- 1912 Becomes the youngest ring holder of the Secret Committee—Abraham, Ferenczi, Sachs, Jones (and later, Eitingon)—formed by Freud as a Politburo to defend the cause against “heretics” like Adler and Jung.
- 1912 Co-founds and serves as the main editor of *Imago* and *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*, the two leading journals of the cause.
- 1913 Publishes, with Sachs, *The Significance of Psychoanalysis for the Mental Sciences*.
- 1914 Contributes two chapters, on literature and myth, to the fourth edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, his name now appearing (until 1929) below Freud’s on the title page.
- 1914 Publishes *The Double*, an existential study of identity, guilt, narcissism, the fear of death, the soul, and the desire for immortality.
- 1916–1918 Serves as editor-in-chief of *Krakauer Zeitung*, the official army newspaper in Poland.
- 1918 Marries Tola Minzer, twenty-three, in Poland.
- 1919 Returns to Vienna to edit *Imago* and *Internationale Zeitschrift* and is asked by Freud to become director of Verlag, the newly created international psychoanalytic publishing house, and Vice-President of the Vienna Psychoanalytical Society.
- 1919 Begins full-time practice as a lay analyst and conducts training analyses for visiting American psychiatrists.
- 1919 Helene, his only child, is born.
- 1922 Is designated by Freud to be his heir.
- 1922–1923 Drafts with Ferenczi, now his best friend, *The Development of Psychoanalysis*, which advocates the curative effect of the “here-and-now” emotional experience (*Erlebnis*) between analyst and patient over intellectual understanding (*Einsicht*) of the infantile past via interpretations offered by a neutral analyst.

- 1923 Is informed, immediately after diagnosis, of Freud's life-threatening cancer of the jaw.
- 1924 Publishes, with Ferenzci, *The Development of Psychoanalysis*, criticising the "fanaticism for interpreting" among analysts: "the actual analytic task," they say, "was neglected."
- 1924 Publishes *The Trauma of Birth*, coining the term "pre-oedipal" and claiming that the "ambivalent" preoedipal relationship between mother and child is the heart of transference, thereby relegating fear and love of the oedipal father to a secondary place.
- 1924 Sails for the United States in April and lectures on his preoedipal theory before the American Psychoanalytic Association and other audiences.
- 1924 From the United States, in an August letter, denies Freud's charge that he has "excluded the father; naturally that is not the case and absolutely cannot be, it would be nonsense. I have only attempted to give him the correct place."
- 1925 Confesses in January to an oedipal neurosis, "occasioned by the dangerous illness of the Professor," after a soul-baring *Erlebnis* therapy in December 1924 with Freud, who forgives him.
- 1925 At a seminar for the New York Psychoanalytic Society, insists, "The only real new viewpoint in [my] contribution [is] the concept of the pre-Oedipus level."
- 1926 Recants his oedipal neurosis, resigns from his editorial and administrative positions, and moves to Paris in April to start a new practice, severing all ties with medical psychoanalysis and the Secret Committee.
- 1926 Delivers a series of lectures before the New York School of Social Work, based on Volume 1 of his forthcoming work, *Genetische Psychologie* (1927), whose opening sentence reads: "This book is a direct continuation ... of my new vision in psychoanalytic theory and therapy."
- 1926 In his New York lectures, accuses Freud of repressing the role of the powerful will of the preoedipal mother: "The 'bad mother' he has never seen, but only the later displacement of her to the father, who therefore plays such an

- omnipotent part in his theory ... The 'strict mother' thus forms the real nucleus of the super-ego."
- 1927 Delivers a series of lectures before the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, based on Volume 2 of his forthcoming work, *Genetische Psychologie* (1928).
- 1927 In a lecture at the University of Pennsylvania, announces that he is no longer "going back" to the preoedipal mother: many neurotics belong to the "creative type" but "have failed in the formation and development of their own personality"; they are, in essence, failed artists.
- 1927 In other University of Pennsylvania lectures, defines love in terms of the I-Thou relationship: "The love of the Thou ... places a value on one's own I. Love abolishes egoism, it merges the self in the other to find it again enriched in one's own I ... One can really only love the one who accepts our own self as it is, indeed will not have it otherwise than it is, and whose self we accept as it is."
In the same lecture, defines guilt as a "special emotion," lying on "the boundary line ... between the severing and uniting feelings; [therefore,] it is also the most important representative of the relation between inner and outer, I and Thou, the Self and the World."
- 1929–1931 Delivers another series of lectures at the University of Pennsylvania based on two books published in English as *Will Therapy* and *Truth and Reality*, claiming that "the real I, or self with its own power, the will, is left out" of psychoanalysis, but stressing repeatedly that "will and guilt are the two complementary sides of one and the same phenomenon"— which he calls the will-guilt problem.
- 1929–1931 Reframing Freud's "economic" metaphor of drive, asserts in *Will Therapy* that the neurotic (or *artiste manqué*) "bribes" life itself—for which we all have to "pay" with death: because of extreme guilt and anxiety, the neurotic hurls a "Big No" at the consciousness of living, refusing the loan, life, in order to escape payment of the debt, death.
- 1930 Publishes *Seelenglaube und Psychologie*, drawing on Bohr's "theory of complementarity" and Heisenberg's

- “uncertainty principle” to demonstrate that quantum physics has proved that the human being “simply lies beyond lawfulness, and cannot be fully comprehended or explained by the causality either of natural or social science”—or “the cause” of psychoanalysis.
- 1930 In a Washington, DC lecture, attended by a large international audience, says that while he has stopped calling himself a psychoanalyst, “I am no longer trying to prove that Freud was wrong and I am right ... It is not a question of whose interpretation is correct—because there is no such thing as *the* interpretation or only *one* psychological truth.”
- 1930 Is removed by the American Psychoanalytic Association from its list of honorary members, immediately after the Washington, DC lecture, on a motion by President A. A. Brill, seconded by Vice-President Harry Stack Sullivan: re-analysis of his analysands by Freudians is required for them to retain membership in the American Psychoanalytic Association.
- 1932 Publishes *Art and Artist*, showing that only the “human creative impulse” can constructively harmonise “the fundamental dualism” of life and death, a dualism Rank explores along many lines: the wish for—and fear of—separation, the wish for—and fear of—union, the oscillation between life *Angst* and death *Angst*, independence and dependence, I and Thou, and, most importantly, the “will-guilt problem.”
- 1932 Publishes *Modern Education*, concluding that “psychoanalysis is as conservative as it appeared revolutionary; for its founder is a rebellious son who defends paternal authority, a revolutionary who, from fear of his own rebellious son-ego, took refuge in the security of the father role.”
- 1935 Moves from Paris, where he analyses Anaïs Nin, Henry Miller, and many other writers and artists, to New York and continues practising psychotherapy and lecturing in the United States.
- 1936 Meets a young Carl Rogers during a three-day workshop in Rochester, NY, and influences him to abandon Freudian

- technique for “client-centred” and “relationship” therapy. Shortly thereafter, Rogers becomes the first humanistic psychotherapist in the US. “I became infected with Rankian ideas,” Rogers says.
- 1936 Through his analyst Harry Bone (who trained with Rank in Paris), Rollo May studies Rank’s writings on love and will and, shortly thereafter, becomes the first existential psychotherapist in the US. “I have long considered Otto Rank to be *the* great unacknowledged genius in Freud’s circle,” attests May in his foreword to *A Psychology of Difference* (published in 1996), a collection of twenty-two lectures that Rank delivered from 1924 to 1938 at universities throughout America, including Yale, Stanford, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work.
- 1937–1939 Drafts *Beyond Psychology* (published posthumously in 1941), advocating a “psychology of difference” as opposed to Freud’s “psychology of likeness.”
- 1939 Divorces Tola Rank and marries Estelle Buel, his secretary, in July.
- 1939 Dies in New York from a reaction to an injection of a sulfa (antibacterial) drug, on 31 October—one month after Freud’s death in London, from an injection of morphine by his personal physician, on 23 September, the Jewish Day of Atonement.
- 1941 *Beyond Psychology* is published posthumously by friends of Rank.
- 1992 Gregory C. Richter translates and publishes Rank’s 1912 edition of *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend: Fundamentals of a Psychology of Literary Creation*.
- 1996 Robert Kramer writes a forty-three-page introduction to Rank’s *A Psychology of Difference: The American Lectures*.
- 1998 E. J. Lieberman and Gregory C. Richter translate and publish Rank’s 1930 book *Seelenglaube und Psychologie* under the title *Psychology and the Soul: A Study of the Origin, Conceptual Evolution, and Nature of the Soul*.

- 2012 E. J. Lieberman and Robert Kramer edit and publish *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank: Inside Psychoanalysis*, translated by Gregory C. Richter.
- 2024 Robert Kramer edits, introduces, and publishes Rank's "Ein Traum, der sich selbst deutet," translated by Gregory C. Richter.

A DREAM THAT INTERPRETS ITSELF

Otto Rank

Truly the fabric of mental fleece
Resembles a weaver's masterpiece,
Where a thousand threads one treadle throws,
Where fly the shuttles hither and thither.
Unseen the threads are knit together.
And an infinite combination grows.

(Goethe, *Faust*, lines 1922–1927)

The technique of psychoanalysis

A young woman of my acquaintance, not a neurotic, who had heard of my interest in the problem of dreams, related to me a “poetical dream, as beautiful as a fairy tale,” and half-jokingly asked me to test on it my skills of interpretation.

When dream analyses are undertaken in this way, without any therapeutic purpose (in the case of neurotics) or with a purely theoretical purpose (in the case of one's own dreams), the conditions are usually so unfavourable that the results almost never have sufficient evidential value or meaning for scientific use.

In this case, too, in requesting an interpretation of her dream, the dreamer had no practical theoretical interest and no theoretical scientific interest.

Rather, beyond admiration of the really beautiful dream imagery, she expected my admission that it was uninterpretable; at most, she expected an interpretation along the lines of ordinary popular superstition, telling her of her future good fortune.

As for myself, when confronted with this attractive but rather purposeless task, I felt no desire to increase by one the number of impeccable dream analyses appearing in the psychoanalytic literature by presenting an analysis characterised mainly by its defects and incompleteness.

Despite these limitations, the following dream analysis proved worthy of publication here: due to an unusual and remarkable circumstance, it is to be preferred over similar amateur attempts.

The dream that provides the topic for this article has, in fact, the special characteristic of allowing its real meaning to show through almost undisguised, providing us quite openly with a portion of the interpretation that would otherwise require laborious psychoanalytic work.

In order to show the special sense in which this is meant, and how far such a view is theoretically justified, we will need to go more deeply into some of the essential points in the technique of dream analysis established by Freud.

As is well known, besides the remembered “manifest dream content,” Freud distinguishes the “latent dream thoughts,” which are identified through analytic work. It is only through the latent dream thoughts that the dream characteristics of the manifest dream content, violently disputed as they are, and especially the most important one, wish fulfilment, have validity.

It is then appropriate and fully in accord with psychological circumstances to divide the “latent” dream content into two groups: the unconscious proper, overlaid by other mental material, and thus deeply hidden from the dreamer; and second, the other group of dream thoughts, more easily accessible to the conscious faculties, which we may think of as located in that mental region described in dream theory as the preconscious (Freud, 1909a, p. 334).

Within limits, these two sources of material, not sharply distinguished in practice, can be separated without difficulty during