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Review of : *Otto Rank:
A Psychology of Difference
—The American Lectures*
(edited by Robert Kramer)

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OTTO RANK: A PSYCHOLOGY OF DIFFERENCE—THE AMERICAN LECTURES. Edited by *Robert Kramer*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, 296 pp., \$39.50.

How many of us, considering ourselves scholars of psychoanalysis, have disregarded "little Rank," the first lay analyst? We might say, "Oh, he strayed from the essence of analysis, was dismissed, and then deteriorated mentally. I understand his writings are obscure. I haven't gotten around to them yet." With Robert Kramer's scholarly, well-indexed, and meticulous presentation of Otto Rank's American lectures, we can "sit in the audience" and "hear" twenty-two clear and evocative lectures delivered between 1924 and 1938. Kramer's footnotes succinctly summarize all of Rank's most important writings. Rank's voice is stunningly modern, his thinking generally clear and innovative. Even after losing collegial support first from Vienna and then from the American psychoanalytic community, he is not vindictive. Rank exhorts analysts to monitor closely their shifting affect states in every session. He introduces the concept of separation anxiety. Assert-

ing that the ambivalent preoedipal relationship with the mother lies at the heart of transference, he is in fact the first person to use the term *preoedipal*. He defines object relations theory. He focuses on projection and identification and their roles in neurosis and creativity, well before Melanie Klein wrote on these subjects.

Rank is a feminist. "If we investigate or analyze modern psychology and especially psychoanalysis, its outstanding representative, we can clearly see that it is in essence man-made: that is to say, man has projected his own psychology into the woman and into the child" (1938, p. 271). "The construction and development of the ego from the beginning takes place under influence of the object relationship, and, in turn, the ego has an influence upon the object relationship. The relationship is mutual. Secondly, this primal object relationship refers only to the mother and not, as in the Oedipus situation, to both parents" (1926, p. 100). "The real formation of the ego takes place under the influence of the mother in the pre-Oedipal phase, and what we call psychologically the ego is only a secondary sediment of the original relation to the mother, who in her turn, at the beginning, is taken as a part of the ego" (1926, p. 102). "Normally, the Oedipus situation is brought about in such a way that the child, in this transition phase, displaces the image of the interfering mother onto the father, the mother thereby winning again her original role as libido object, while the father becomes exclusively the representative of the social restrictions of the outer world" (1926, p. 101). "When [Freud] recently deprived woman even of a superego, which embraces the higher ethical and social abilities, he quite overlooked the enormous share the mother and the child's relation to her have on the development of the ego and its higher capacities" (1926, p. 101). Why is Rank so rarely acknowledged in the current literature on women and psychoanalysis?

In 1929, at Yale, he said, "I think I have a particular right to talk about [psychoanalysis], since I grew up, as it were, with the whole psychoanalytic movement. I first got in touch with Freud in 1905 and then began to study psychoanalysis under his guidance. I have been with him and with the psychoanalytic movement for about twenty years. Not only have I watched the whole movement from inside, as it were behind the curtain, but I also took an active part in it. For more than ten years, I was editor of the psychoanalytic journals [*Imago* and *Zeitschrift*] and secretary of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. For several years I was vice-president of the society. Maybe, sometime

after I have retired, I will write a history of the psychoanalytic movement . . ." (1929, pp. 240–241).

This was not to be. Ten years later, on October 31, 1939, one month after Freud received a fatal injection of morphine, Otto Rank died in New York, having suffered an overwhelming infection secondary to agranulocytosis, this a reaction to sulfanilimide prescribed for a renal infection. He was fifty-five years old, having married for the second time just three months earlier, with plans to move to California and to write. He had published thirteen books. His first, *The Artist* (Rank 1907), he had presented to Freud in manuscript in 1905, his introduction to "the Professor."

The year 1924 was pivotal: he and Sandor Ferenczi had published *The Development of Psychoanalysis* and were horrified by the hostility it generated in their colleagues. Freud had looked to them to develop psychoanalytic technique, while he would focus on its theory. They expected congratulations but instead were ostracized. *The Trauma of Birth*, published that same year, met with a similar response. Outrage centered on Rank's proposal that the analyst set a termination date rather early in the work, and then focus on the implications of this inexorably approaching dissolution of the treatment tie. Rank found himself terminated. In April 1926 he moved to Paris to start a new practice, having severed his ties to medical psychoanalysis and the Secret Committee. Between 1926 and 1935 he settled permanently in New York. Readers will find Kramer's comprehensive chronology at the front of the book especially useful.

In 1930, at the First International Congress on Mental Hygiene, held in Washington, D.C., in a speech printed in this volume in its entirety, he said, "I am no psychiatrist, no social worker, no psychoanalyst, not even an ordinary psychologist—and to tell you the truth I am glad of it. . . . [T]he scientific side to human behavior and personality problems is not only insufficient but leaves out the most essential part: namely, the human side. . . . What helps is not intellectual knowledge but human understanding, which is emotional and hence cannot be schematized." At the meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association held in conjunction with the conference, he was stripped of his honorary membership, after A. A. Brill had moved and Harry Stack Sullivan had seconded this action. Kramer notes, "As far as U.S. psychoanalysis was concerned, Rank was dead" (p. 227). Perhaps today psychoanalysts will find in Rank a thinker well ahead of his time,

remarkably different from his contemporaries, but not so different from current psychoanalytic practitioners.

I suggest that the reader begin with Kramer's forty-five-page biographical chapter, and then read the Yale Lecture (pp. 240–250) the first impromptu lecture given by Rank in the United States. (E. James Lieberman's *Acts of Will: The Life and Work of Otto Rank*, published in 1985, provides further orientation to Rank's life and work.) From there, I would suggest the book be read in the chronological order established by Kramer. He divides the lectures into four sections, each bearing an epigraph by Rank: (1) The trauma of birth: "A much stronger repression than even infantile sexuality"; (2) Exploring the dark continent of maternal power: "The 'bad mother' Freud has never seen"; (3) From projection and identification to self-determination: "Emotions are the center and real sphere of psychology"; and (4) Toward a theory of relationship and relativity: "I am no longer trying to prove Freud was wrong and I right."

The first few lectures, clear but hardly groundbreaking, orient the audience to psychoanalysis. He refers to Freud as the "tender and loving foster mother" of Breuer's and Bertha Pappenheim's endangered discovery of the talking cure (1924, p. 52). Rank then discusses how he came to write *The Trauma of Birth*. We see how he got into difficulty: "When I started new cases with the understanding that the end phase of analysis is actually a reproduction of birth, I soon noticed that patients, indeed of both sexes, from the very beginning took the analyst in their deepest unconscious, without any exception as a libidinal substitute for the mother" (1924, p. 79). He became so convinced by his theory that he began treatments with preconceived expectations and the assumption that all analyses center on the biological event of birth.

Rank persuasively argues in Lecture 4 that physicians should learn psychoanalytic principles in the course of their medical education. "Every possibility in man of acquiring knowledge, even as every capacity of his psychical apparatus in general, reaches only so far as consciously to recognize—or rather re-recognize—what in the outer world man himself originally unconsciously projected into it" (1924, p. 92).

Lectures 11 and 12, remarkably original, delineate the centrality of guilt and shame. Rank defines affect as "pathologically intensified feeling that energetically demands an outlet" (1927, p. 153). He focuses on the beleaguered individual's sense of not belonging, the dread of this felt truth being discovered, and thus the frantic efforts at secrecy

that only enhance the neurotic's alienation. As Rank develops the therapeutic implications of these ideas, he emerges as far more optimistic than Freud.

Any self psychologist will find Lectures 13 and 14, "The Significance of the Love Life" and "Social Adaptation and Creativity," both given in 1927, especially prescient. In differentiating the analytic relationship from a love relationship, Rank says, "The patient projects much more, I would say almost exclusively, at least in the first phase of analysis. In the same phase, also almost exclusively, the analyst has to confine himself to identification in order to understand the patient, and, so to say, feel one with him. As soon as the patient feels this identification emotionally, he begins on his side to identify himself with the analyst. In other words, he can only identify when he feels in the other something kindred, identical—the identification on the part of the analyst necessary for understanding the patient" (1927, p. 177). Did his writings directly inspire Kohut?

The last lecture is perhaps the collection's most provocative. It contains unsubstantiated generalizations and debatable pronouncements, for example: "The actual analytical procedure of all three therapies [Freud's, Adler's, and Jung's], with the exception of a few technical variations, is essentially the same. It consists in the main of interpreting the patient's material on the basis of the analyst's social philosophy as expressed in his psychological theory. Hence, theory and therapy in all these schools of psychology are one and the same thing: that is to say, the therapy consists in a mere learning of and believing in the theory; in other words, it is essentially an intellectual process" (1938, p. 267). He discusses the forces of impulse, inhibition, and will. He stresses the uniqueness of each person's will. This final lecture, given on February 5, 1938, twenty months before Rank's death, closes on a prophetic note: "Not until we know where [our] deep-rooted resistance against acceptance of the 'facts of life' comes from will we be able to understand the child, primitive man, and subsequently mankind. The discovery of these deep-seated human motives will be the beginning of a new era in psychology" (p. 273).

Rank's ideas have been respectfully taught in schools of social work, largely in consequence of the efforts of Jessie Taft (1958) and Virginia Robinson (1974, 1978) at the Pennsylvania School of Social Work in Philadelphia. Ernest Becker's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Denial of Death* (1973), prompted a revival of scholarly interest in Rank. Current

teachers within psychoanalytic training programs who have spoken and written about Rank include the nonagenarian Esther Menaker (1982), still teaching, and Baltimore analyst Riva Novey (1983).

One is left wondering how psychoanalysis might have evolved in the United States had Rank's approach found acceptance in a widening range of theory and practice. How would he have contributed to psychoanalytic theory and practice had he not been ostracized? Would analyses today be significantly shorter? Would analytic treatment have found a regular place in medical training and in the university training of humanists in general? Would the current burgeoning role of women in the profession have occurred sooner? And will we, in the second century of our profession, acknowledge the contributions of this creative and heroic man, perhaps even including some of these lectures in institute courses on the history and evolution of our profession? Often in these lectures, Rank seems to plead with Freud to try seeing things from his perspective, so that they might renew their dialogue. Perhaps today's psychoanalytic scholars will take up this challenge.

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