In these pages...

ARE INNOVATORS TROUBLE?

This issue of the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* is dedicated to Otto Rank, an innovator in the field of psychoanalysis, who paid for that with a quite high price. Rank was one of Freud's closest collaborators, a kind of adopted son, as was Ferenczi. They were two very different characters, but it is difficult to talk about one without evoking the other. These two close collaborators of Freud suffered the same rejection by the psychoanalytic community, even if it was probably not always for the same reasons. Although the direction taken by their research was criticized and disapproved of by Freud, he never rejected his two old companions. However, the analytic community banished their work for many decades. One could encounter their names everywhere, in every correspondence, and every history of psychoanalysis, but no psychoanalytic institute has thought it necessary to study their work.

Ferenczi had an indefatigable and obstinate champion, who advocated for his cause, Michael Balint (see Dupont and Moreau Ricaud, 2002a, b, 2003), his patient, pupil, friend and in many ways his successor. As a result, Ferenczi's work is well known and has been published in several languages; an International Society bears his name and studies his work, and seminars and conferences about his work are organized everywhere in the world.

Rank was not so lucky. Those who knew him did love him and appreciated his ideas, but they were not in a position to be able to play such a role. Fifty years were necessary to bring Ferenczi back to the foreground; but it remains our on-going challenge to give Rank the full credit he deserves.

Things do not happen without reason. The history of many innovators and inventors shows that every invention, every innovation can be a challenge to an established balance, a coherent corpus of ideas, often under the care and protection of an institution created for that purpose. This was also the case for the pioneers of psychoanalysis, and for Freud himself. And it may certainly be the same for all those who try to work on its evolution.

In 1910, to meet the demands of Freud, Ferenczi presented a remarkable proposal, the foundation of an International Psychoanalytical Association. Remarkable in many ways, as described in the same paper where he

proposed this foundation he emphasized all the dangers that might impair its functioning: power seeking by some, jealousy between members, all kinds of rigidities and so on ... (Ferenczi, 1911).

This Association completely satisfied all those who considered psychoanalysis to be a coherent science, with an established technique and precise indications, which had to be protected against any intervention likely to disrupt the correct way to think and to practice. But it presented an important difficulty for the inventive minds: Rank and Ferenczi being certainly the most remarkable among them. Both were among those who probably best understood not only the thinking of Freud, but also the freedom of his thinking even if it meant to question some of the ideas of their master. And both paid the price for it. When Ernest Jones, in his monumental biography of Freud (1953, 1955, 1957), disqualified the person and work of both Ferenczi and Rank, because of their supposed mental illness, he was only expressing the complete rejection of both by the psychoanalytic establishment.

Freud was pained by the line of thought of these two men. He criticized their innovations, on the theoretical as well as the technical level, but he never forgot to add (see some of his Correspondences: Freud and Ferenczi, 1908–1914, 1914–1919, 1920–1933; Freud and Jones, 1908–1939; Freud and Rank in Lieberman and Kramer, 2012) that it was always difficult for him to deviate from his own line of thoughts and take into account that of someone else.

Things were especially difficult for Rank. There was a whole series of reasons for that. He had a much more difficult character than Ferenczi. His bad relations with his father, who refused to give Otto a higher education whereas his brother could get one, certainly played their part in that. He was dependent on Freud, not only emotionally, as was Ferenczi, but also financially. It was Freud who sent him to the university. He was paid for the work he did for the Psychoanalytical Association, but Freud also helped him financially when needed. His writings about creativity, arts, myths, and legends were welcomed by all his colleagues, but his major innovating theory, the trauma of birth, sparked controversy. It questioned the nucleus of the Freudian theory, the Oedipus complex. Rank emphasized two subjects that were difficult for Freud: the pre-oedipal stage with the psychic—and not only physical—trauma of separation from the mother, and the whole of the maternal role.

On the other hand, Rank's emotional proximity to Freud and his important administrative position (he was responsible for the psychoanalytic reviews and the *Verlag*), as well as his touchy personality probably brought him hostility and jealousy that some of his colleagues had difficulty overcoming.

A few publishing events contributed to the “rediscovery” of Rank: The groundbreaking work of Paul Roazen (1975): *Freud and his followers*, in which he dedicated Chapter 8 to Otto Rank; a remarkable biography of Rank by James Lieberman (1985): *Acts of Will: The Life and Work of Otto Rank*; and the publication of the American conferences of Rank (1996): *A Psychology of Difference. The American Lectures*, with an introduction by Robert Kramer. Other books and papers were published, some in the 1950s, but it took a long time to really break the silence around Rank and his work. Let us mention a few: *Otto Rank: A Biographical Study Based on Notebooks, Letters, Collected Writings, Therapeutic Achievements and Personal Associations* by Jessie Taft (1958), his follower, and friend, *The Psychology and Psychotherapy of Otto Rank: A Historical and Comparative Introduction* by Fay Berger Karpf (1953), *Otto Rank: A Rediscovered Legacy* by Esther Menaker (1982), and Peter Rudnytsky’s (1991) *The psychoanalytic vocation: Rank, Winnicott, and the legacy of Freud*.

In 2006, the French review *Le Coq-Héron* (éditions Erès) published its number 187 under the title “Otto Rank, l’accoucheur du sujet” [Otto Rank, the midwife of the subject] (Dupont, 2006). And finally, just out, in English, the correspondence between Freud and Rank, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank: Inside Psychoanalysis*, edited by E. James Lieberman and Robert Kramer (2012). One can hope that other translations will follow soon. A French translation exists, ready and waiting for publication.

It is impossible to mention here all the many and substantial papers written about Rank and his work. Let us just quote the 31 issues of the *Journal of the Otto Rank Association* (1967–1983) by diverse writers, including Otto Rank, and other works, many cited by the authors in this Special Issue.

Many authors have used and further developed Rank’s ideas, without mentioning their origin. Melanie Klein furthered our knowledge about the pre-oedipal stage, Winnicott about the maternal role, not to mention the great number of writings about creativity, arts, and myths.

Rank and Ferenczi are not only linked in their lasting rejection by the psychoanalytic community, but they often worked together and wrote a book together, *Entwicklungsziehle der Psychoanalyse* [*Development of Psychoanalysis*], published in German in 1923 [1924]. Both Rank and Ferenczi introduced the theory of object relations and what is called now-a-days “relational therapy”, described by Michael Balint (1951) as a “two-person psychology” replacing the “one-person psychology”, where a therapist observes and tries to understand and enlighten the observed patient, while striving to neutralize everything going on in himself or between the two of them.

In spite of their cooperation and the real friendship between these two men so different in character, Ferenczi accepted and shared in the rejection

of Rank, before he was rejected himself. His emotional dependence on Freud was too strong and he was unable to face his master's disapproval. For Rank, the problem was not the same. He was active in the psychoanalytic movement almost from the beginning, but became a psychoanalyst much later. He needed to win his independence from Freud and from his colleagues whom he sometimes felt were rivals, and so he was often curt, brutal, and lacking tact. One can think that he was rejected as much because of his behaviour as because of his ideas.

Today, we benefit from the work he left us. Thanks to his rich contribution to the psychoanalytic literature, his theoretical innovations, and his technical research and experiments, Otto Rank should certainly recover his rightful place in the psychoanalytical community. Just like all the other pioneers, he was not able to invent everything, or to be successful in everything. But the whole of his work is a powerful incentive towards progress in our field.

Judith Dupont
Guest Editor

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