

ESTHER MENAKER

A tribute to one of the preeminent interpreters of Otto Rank, from the Self Psychology web page (see below), slightly edited.

ABOUT ESTHER MENAKER

Born in Bern, Switzerland on September 6th, 1907, she came to the United States when she was three. Esther majored in chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania and completed her master's degree in its social work school, [where Jessie Taft, Rank's friend and translator, was teaching].

In 1930 Esther married William Menaker. The newlyweds pursued psychoanalytic training in Vienna where Esther began a two-year analysis with Anna Freud and William was treated by Helene Deutsch. Both also obtained their doctorates in psychology at the University of Vienna. (Much of their experience in Vienna is recounted in *Appointment in Vienna*, 1989 reprinted as *Misplaced Loyalties* in 1995.)

After settling in New York City in 1934, the Menakers, who had two sons, Michael and Thomas, gradually became major influences on nonmedical psychoanalytic education. As Adjunct Professors in NYU's Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program and helped found the Postdoctoral Program in Psychoanalysis where Esther continues to teach and supervise. She was an early member of the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis.

Writing prolifically in the years that followed, Esther developed her innovative theory of masochism as an adaptive process of the ego. As a student of ethology, Esther coauthored *Ego in Evolution* (1965) with her husband, who died in 1972. A series of papers in which she concentrated on ego identifications as the transmitter of social evolution together with others on masochism and creativity were published in *Masochism and the Emergent Ego* (1979).

In recent years, Esther has hailed the work of Otto Rank in *Otto Rank: A Rediscovered Legacy* (1982), and [*Separation, Will, and Creativity*](#) (1996). She has also embraced self psychological theory. Inspired by Kohut, Esther's recent work *Freedom to Inquire* (1996) emphasizes the empathic stance and the importance of the selfobject.

Esther Menaker died in 2003, at the age of 96. We celebrate her place in the history of psychoanalytic thought and her generous gifts as a scholar, clinician, teacher, and friend.

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Updated March, 2004 by E. James Lieberman