

Truth & Reality

Steve Nyberg, graduate student Adelphi University; e-mail icelandspar AT aol.com

"How many times do we hear nowadays the expression, 'I cannot understand what is going on,' indicating that our conception of the human being is insufficient to account for something which must be human after all, but which we have to consider 'irrational' because it does not fit into our rational scheme of things" (Rank, *Beyond Psychology* 1941, p.14). Before the end of his therapeutic career, Freud "fought for and about his rational ideas" (*BP*, 272). Freud also had help. "As a matter of fact, Freud's psychological system, which was supposed to be the result of scientific empiricism, has been received and taken up as an ideology fought for and against with a zeal only comparable to that shown in religious wars" (*BP*, 272).

"As it is, Freud's causal interpretation of the analytic situation as repetition (chiefly in recollection) of the past---instead of an emphasis on it as a new experience in the present---amounts to a denial of all personal autonomy in favor of the strictest possible determinism" (*BP*, 278). One needs to go beyond Freudian psychology. Otto Rank was the first to take us there! He writes, "Yet this, our 'beyond psychology,' does not mean a simple acceptance of the modern emphasis on other factors, such as economics, politics or technique, determining human behavior. It is an emphasis upon the dynamic forces governing life and human behavior, in a word, the irrational; whereas our present psychology is conceived of as a rational explanation of human behavior, at best, a rationalization of the irrational but not an acceptance of it as an essential driving force" (*BP*, 23).

Otto Rank presents a "new vision of the therapeutic process" (*Truth and Reality*, 1929, p.ix [Jessie Taft, ed. & tr.]) Like the therapist, the patient (now consumer), "would like to possess creative power positively also" (*TR*, 112). This creative power involves a "continuous rebuilding or building anew" (112). Knowledge is a form of experience because, like experience, it is used in the "continuous rebuilding or building anew" (112). The experienced patient (or consumer) wants and needs knowledge! In folklore, the hero is typically, "the unhappy finder of truth" (85). Let the reader also take the risk! Truth is "subjective," "an emotion" (77), an "inner experience," a knowing that "opposes the uncertainty of reality" (93). "Truth is an inner actuality in contrast to the outer truth of the senses, the so-called reality" (47). "Truth is accordingly a psychological problem" (77).

Regarding sex, "Thus we find the sexual impulse of man developing in two different directions, according to which the power of sex over the individual is accepted and submitted to or resisted by way of will-ful control. This latter attitude distinguishes civilized man from his primitive ancestors because it also leads to the achievements of human culture---not, however, without man's growing need to submit to the coercion of sex through the yielding love-emotion" (*BP*, 234). In fact, Rank notes that sex leads to a social point of view. "The individual's inner resistance to the biological sex urge, insofar as it does not serve the aim of purely personal pleasure, must be taken as the starting point of any investigation of social behavior. With all his astonishing regulations of the sexual life, primitive man was actually creating a sexual self, that is to say, he set man-made sexuality as against natural sex" (213).

The Dangers of Psychohistory

Rank notes three of mankind's "age old prejudices" (*BP*, 187). "The first prejudice, namely, that the sexual act is necessarily pleasurable, is obviously contradicted by nature herself. We have only to look at the animal kingdom to be convinced that as a rule it is a painful struggle, to be avoided, if possible; one which the human being had to idealize in order to accept it at all. Closely related to this widespread illusion is another assumption taken for granted, that every human being wants to live as long as possible, or for that matter wants to live at all. To risk death, or even to seek it, is not necessarily an unbiological gesture. There are people who want to die, without justifiably being diagnosed as 'suicidal.' Especially when death comes suddenly and painlessly, it need not represent an escape but can be real deliverance, particularly when one's life has been fulfilled or is to be fulfilled by dying. Last, but not least, is the prejudice which includes all others, namely, that everyone's happiness is the same. For this assumption causes us to designate as 'neurotic' any other whose ideas of happiness do not coincide with ours. Herein lies the greatest sin of psychology: that it sets up absolute standards derived from a rational interpretation of one prevailing type by which to judge not only our fellow men but also to interpret personalities and behavior of the past" (*BP*, 188).

Continuing with the number 3, Rank notes 3 ages of man, 3 world views, and 3 types of people: "In the sphere of consciousness we see these various levels of development toward ideal formation comprehended in three formulae which correspond to three different ages, world views and human types. The first is the Apollonian, know thyself; the second the Dionysian, be thyself; the third the Critique of Reason, 'determine thyself from thyself' (Kant). The first rests on likeness to others and leads in the sense of the Greek mentality to the acceptance of the universal ideal; know thyself in order to improve thyself (in terms of universal norms). It is therefore not knowledge for the sake of self, but knowledge for the goal of adaptation. The second principle in contrast to the first repudiates likeness and the improvement based on it, as it demands the acceptance of what one is anyway. In contrast to the principle of the Delphic Apollo, I have designated it as Dionysian because, in contrast to adaptation, it leads to ecstatic-orgiastic destruction. The true self, if it is unchained in Dionysian fashion, is not only anti-social, but also unethical and therefore the human being goes to pieces on it. Here comes in the Kantian 'Determine thyself from thyself' in the sense of a true self knowledge and simultaneously an actual self creation as the first constructive phase of the problem" (*TR*, 119-120).

"We see at once in these three types, which represent a line of development, the relation to reality and to the fellow man is different" (*TR*, 113). The truth and reality of it all is, "The individual must live through for himself all stages of his evolution. That cannot be avoided and should not be, for just this living through and fighting through constitute the valuable, the constructive, the creative which does not inhibit the will but strenghtens and develops it" (*TR*, 109). The artist falls into type 3: The spiritually creative type which I have characterized as 'artist,' lives in constant conflict. The artist solves it for himself and others since he transposes the will affirmation creatively into knowledge" (*TR*, 67). The artist, like the therapist, "possesses creative power positively" (*BP*, 162).