TRIBUTE TO THEODOR REIK

Acknowledging the Significance of His Work
Remembering Reik’s 126th Birthday
(May 12, 1888)

It is the breadth of his contributions over a 60-year period that stands out as a most remarkable achievement:

- Theoretical Emphasis: on unconscious processes; unconscious guilt; masochism; need for punishment; compulsion to confess; the need to be loved.
- Technique Contribution: Reik’s work on “Intersubjective processes and the Unconscious: ‘how the minds of the therapist and the patient interact with each other in a profound and unconscious way.’”
- Applied Psychoanalytic Investigations Reik’s inquiries of man’s social and cultural institutions - religion, art, music, literature.
- Major Force in the establishment of non-medical psychoanalytic training and practice in the United States: Creating NPAP; Reik’s efforts and courage in educating the public about psychoanalysis through the publication of his many books (at mid 20th Century) had a significant impact on the social mores of the time.

Evidence of the interest in and value of Reik’s work include:

- Professor Danny Nobus of Brunel University (London) is writing an in-depth biography of Reik. His investigations have provided the following information: Each year, in Europe, several of Reik’s books are reprinted, indicating that there is a reading public interested in Reik’s publications. Also, there are several analysts (whose names we have received) who are engaged in the study of the Reikian perspective.
- A number of researchers and analysts have contacted us regarding the work of Reik. Also, students from China and several European countries have contracted us about Reik.
- Our own Nancy McWilliams has very recently informed us of the profound impact of Reik’s work on her personal and professional development.
- In 2006, Joe Reppen published a special edition of Psychoanalytic Psychology, containing several articles on Reik.
- In June, 2013, Alan Barnett, Editor of The Psychoanalytic Review, published an article on Reik which received considerable attention.
In a recent publication entitled *Intersubjective Processes and the Unconscious* (2011), the author, Laurence Brown, looks at “how the minds of the psychoanalyst and the patient interact with each other in a profound and unconscious way: a concept first described by Freud.” In charting the conceptual origins of the intersubjective approach, the author provides 16 points throughout his text where Reik’s presence and input are evident and of significance. A sample of statements are presented here:

Page 11: Several of Abraham’ analysands (Fleiss, Klein, Reik) have significantly extended our understanding of how the patient and analyst affect each other.
Page 28: Reik appears to be the first analyst to speak of the possibilities for emotional growth in both partners of the analytic dyad.
Page 39: Reik may have been the first to identify what he termed to be “the reciprocal illumination of unconscious happenings.”

Considering the above, it is quite clear that Reik’s contributions are receiving the attention it deserves. His arrival in 1938 was overshadowed for two basic reasons: Reik was not a physician and his subjective approach to analytic treatment was not acceptable to the analytic establishment of the day.

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