

“FLUCTUAT NEC MERGITUR”

or What Happened to Reikian Psychoanalysis?

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Reik, Not To Be Confused With . . .

Ever since I started researching the life and works of Theodor Reik, I have rarely been able to talk about my project to fellow scholars, academic colleagues and intellectual friends without having to correct basic misunderstandings and justify the relevance of my object (and subject) of study. The most common misperception I have encountered in conversations with people on both sides of the Atlantic is nothing less than a case of mistaken identity, whereby my interlocutors would often express a genuine interest in my work, to the point of providing detailed comments on some of my interpretations, until they find out that Reik was not the discoverer of orgone, did not invent the cloudbuster, had not been thrown into jail by the Food and Drug Administration and (slightly more embarrassingly) was never associated with a popular Japanese technique for stress reduction. For some

time I believed that the confusion probably stemmed from my own ambiguous pronunciation of the name, or even from my persistent failure to mention both first name and surname, yet I gradually observed that it reflected a key aspect of my interlocutors' public and cultural awareness. Reik is constantly at risk of being confused with Reich (and occasionally with Reiki), yet Reich is almost never mistaken for Reik. Much more than his namesake, Reich somehow succeeded in leaving an indelible mark on Western cultural history, despite being a less prolific writer, a more idiosyncratic thinker and a less regular contributor to the popular press. In addition, it would seem that the current confusion between the two men has its own history, dating back to a period in time when they were both still alive, so that it should not be judged merely in terms of the unequal legacy of their work. Reviewing *Listening with the Third Ear* (Reik, 1948) in *The New York Times* shortly after it was released, Anthony Bower (1948) pointed out that Theodore (sic) Reik "was a favorite pupil and is still a devoted disciple of Freud" and is "not to be confused with Wilhelm Reich" (p. BR6). In an interview with Bluma Swerdloff conducted on June 7, 1965, Reik himself disclosed that already during the late 1920s, when he taught and practiced in Berlin, he was often confused with Wilhelm Reich (Reik, 1966). Given the fact that Reich was nine years younger than Reik and had by that time only published two books (Reich, 1925, 1927), whereas Reik's output was already gigantic and his name had made the headlines in various parts of the world owing to a widely publicised court-case and the ensuing discussion on "lay-analysis" (Freud, 1926/1959; Leupold-Löwenthal, 1990; Heenen-Wolff, 1990), the original confusion between the two men may

have been largely circumstantial, but it nonetheless set the tone for future mis-identifications.

Why did Bower feel the need to tell his readership about the identity of the author whose book he was reviewing, without providing any details about the person with whom he could possibly be confused? Why does the majority of my interlocutors, regardless of their cultural habitat, remember Wilhelm Reich and his achievements, yet fail to produce even the slightest detail about the life and works of Theodor Reik? For many years, I refused to engage with this question, preferring instead to reiterate my reasons for believing in Reik's lasting significance, and for believing why to ignore him constitutes a major flaw in one's cultural memory. First, I would argue, Theodor Reik was one of Freud's most beloved pupils, in whom he recognized a brilliant scholar and an extraordinarily versatile creative spirit. Freud explicitly advised him to pursue a career as a researcher, and supported him morally, intellectually, financially and politically like no other of his collaborators. Second, Reik's name is inextricably linked to the social and institutional debates on the acceptability of lay-analysis that divided the psychoanalytic community throughout most of the twentieth century. As the founder, in 1948, of the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis (NPAP) he enabled numerous people who had been rejected as trainees by the International Psycho-Analytic Association (IPA), on account of their not having a medical degree, to start their clinical training in psychoanalysis. Third, despite his unflinching loyalty to Freud, Reik did not hesitate to take issue with many of his mentor's ideas, thus developing innovative perspectives on psychoanalytic technique, the history of the Jewish people, the mental economy of masochism, and entering

intellectual territories the founder had only briefly touched upon or had never even approached, such as music, artistic creation and (perhaps most importantly) the unconscious of the analyst.

In presenting these three justifications (others could no doubt be added) for (re-)examining the part played by Reik within and outside the psychoanalytic movement, I have generally echoed opinions formulated by historians of psychoanalysis such as Roazen (1975/1992), Bergmann and Hartman (1976/1990), Ahren and Melchers (1985) and Hale (1995), including some details found in a small handful of biographical sketches, such as those by Gustin (1953), Natterson (1966/1995), Freeman (1971), Alby (1985), Mühlleitner (1992) and Reppen (2002a, 2002b), and drawing on the sparkling insights of the utterly devoted Reik-scholar that is Murray H. Sherman (1965, 1970-71, 1974, 1981-82). I still believe that the aforementioned reasons may legitimize any research project on Reik, yet I am also more convinced that together they will not constitute a sufficiently solid ground for ensuring his intellectual survival outside the psychoanalytic community, and perhaps not even within its professional confines. In fact, the aforementioned reasons were already largely acknowledged during Reik's lifetime, when the Anglo-American climate was much more favourably disposed towards psychoanalysis, and they clearly failed to leave an impression then, since his memory seems barely alive today, even amongst the educated public.

For this paper, I have decided not to make an attempt at tackling the contemporary state of cultural and professional neglect in which Reik's contributions have fallen, whether by revisiting and re-enforcing the hackneyed reasons for his importance, or by formulating supplementary

motives for rehabilitating his work. At best, my decision may appear as fatalistic; at worst, it will probably be perceived as evidence that even Reik-scholars no longer believe in the possibility of rescuing their subject from the archives of oblivion. The truth is, however, that it takes more than an academic publication to modify the mnemonic landscape of Western intellectual culture. Putting Reik back on the map, carving out a new niche for his works in the twenty-first century, is not what can and should be done in the pages of a scholarly article, however wide its distribution and however many people are expected to read it. Taking this idea to heart, I have therefore decided to adopt a different, and perhaps much more challenging approach, by re-activating the questions that I have deliberately avoided for such a long time. Why does Reik not live on in Western culture? Why does he no longer exercise the type of influence (and fascination) that other figures in the history of psychoanalysis, who were less famous and less prolific during their lifetimes, such as Melanie Klein, Wilfred R. Bion, Jacques Lacan and, indeed, Wilhelm Reich, still very much and even increasingly enjoy? Why is there no such thing as Reikian psychoanalysis?

Six suppositions and their refutation

In order to formulate a plausible answer to these questions, I shall engage in a *reductio ad absurdum*, charting six propositions and demonstrating that there is sufficient evidence to discard each of these statements as either nonsensical, inconsistent or impossible, from which I then anticipate a more

valid assertion to emerge. Here are the six propositions: 1. Whatever else he may have brought by way of cultural heritage and symbolic capital, Theodor Reik possessed neither the persona nor the charisma that could inspire people to carry the weight of his intellectual influence into the twenty-first century; 2. On the whole, Reik's style of exposition was too confessional and anecdotal for his works to constitute a sufficient theoretical basis for the development of a new (Reikian) psychoanalytic tradition; 3. Troubled by a pervasive (and largely unresolved) guilt-complex and a high degree of moral masochism, Reik did not seek to publicize his accomplishments, generally shunning the limelight and preferring to live the life of an intellectual hermit; 4. Unlike many other pupils of Freud, Reik was too loyal to his mentor to develop a new theory of psychoanalytic technique, and therefore missed out on the opportunity to establish a new psychoanalytic tradition; 5. Reik's theoretical and practical influence as a scholar and psychoanalyst never followed an ascending curve because of his recurrent rejection from the official psychoanalytic bodies; 6. Reik himself did not undertake sufficient institutional initiatives to guarantee the maintenance, dissemination and development of his ideas.

As far as the first proposition is concerned, all of the public documents, private correspondence and personal memoirs about Reik that I have been able to consult over the years bear witness to the fact that his environment perceived him as an extraordinarily erudite, unusually engaging and strangely captivating man, whose discursive blend of brilliant observations, sharp witticisms and cynical one-liners managed to bemuse and inspire generations of listeners, the young as well as the old. Reflecting upon his first encounters

with Reik at a series of psychoanalytic seminars, Murray H. Sherman (1974) concedes that he “was inordinately difficult to approach in any personal way, despite the fact that there was a quality of immediate and penetrating intimacy to his being” (p. viii). This ostensible contradiction in the man’s professional attitude, Sherman argues, actually reflected a more fundamental, dynamic co-existence of seemingly incompatible lives. The life Reik wrote about with so much candour in his books was by no means the life he led with his wife and children, nor was it the life he showed to his colleagues and students. And if it was an account of his internal life, it only ever represented a series of carefully crafted fragments of his great public confession (Reik, 1949), behind which there was still a more secretive, private life that was not deemed suitable for publication.

All of the people (former students, patients, trainees, supervisees and collaborators) I have interviewed over the years about their personal recollections of Reik confirmed that he was a multi-dimensional man, a complex character, impossible to pin down, or as Erika Freeman (1971) put it: “a simple man in a complicated way” (p. 5). Yet precisely for these reasons, he seems to have succeeded in attracting a great deal of interest, curiosity and fascination. The popular science writer Harold M. Green (1999) recalls that when he attended Adelphi University as an undergraduate in 1959, he met Theodor Reik at a graduate psychology colloquium and was instantly struck by his charismatic delivery—without notes but with a heavy Viennese accent—and his ability to cultivate a certain stage presence. The young man was so enthralled by the performance that he decided to visit the psychoanalyst in his Manhattan apartment, which subsequently led to an

exchange of letters, from which Green (s.d.) concluded that his correspondent was both “very modest” and that “he was a person of great warmth and sincerity, whose words of encouragement to the writer as a young student, are recalled with gratitude” (p. 1). In a contemplative memoir of his various encounters with Reik, Donald M. Kaplan (1968) even drew special attention to the enchanting qualities of his voice: “[I]t is high-pitched. It is also powerful . . . And his voice is almost lush with expressiveness, partly a Viennese trait, partly the result of an individually cultivated oratorical habit. His voice always wants to achieve something larger than conversation. Even his whispers have a timbre that delivers more than mere intimacy” (p. 56).

Both public and private reminiscences of Theodor Reik indicate that he possessed all the necessary attributes to warrant a huge, enthusiastic following: an unrivalled, yet lightly carried erudition, an imposing personal presence, a sparkling sense of humour, and an unfathomable, mysterious mindset. Combined with his psychoanalytic credentials—unreservedly supported by Freud (1938/1952), yet equally unreservedly refused by the official institutions—these attributes should have ensured if not the creation of Reikian psychoanalysis, at least the widespread survival of his personal and intellectual influence. Conversely, if his influence has waned over the past fifty years or so, this can hardly be explained with reference to Reik’s lack of lustre as an intellectual and psychoanalyst.

Perhaps the problem, then, lies with Reik’s peculiar confessional style, which characterizes many of his works published during the 1950s and 60s. In his review of *Listening with the Third Ear*, Bower (1948) already pointed out that the book displays “a certain breeziness of manner” and that “some

chapter headings [are] suggestive of Dale Carnegie rather than of anything more profound” (p. BR6). The comment was carefully airbrushed from the review when the publishers used it as a promotional blurb for the book’s subsequent editions, yet Reik’s roving (and some would no doubt say “rambling”) approach to his materials may very well have been a significant asset for ensuring public success. His books were often announced with great pump and circumstance in major newspapers and considered sufficiently solid, yet not too serious to be serialized, anthologized and digested. In his most popular books, such as *Listening with the Third Ear* (1948), *Fragment of a Great Confession* (1949), *The Secret Self* (1952) and *The Haunting Melody* (1953), Reik’s style is decisively and deliberately non-linear. The author moves between self-disclosure, scholarly exposition and literary criticism, whereby the entire process is driven by an untameable drive towards introspection, which may at best be appreciated as authentic and at worst be condemned as infuriatingly self-indulgent.

Murray H. Sherman (1970-71) has defined Reik’s style as anecdotal, yet I would prefer to call it rhapsodic, partly because this term captures the meandering musicality of the events from which he so often took his own intellectual inspiration, partly because it renders the ecstatic and impassioned voice with which he presented his ideas. Reik’s anecdotes, whether taken from his nostalgic recollections of Freud or from simple everyday happenings in his immediate environment (as a father, husband or psychoanalyst), are never an end in themselves, but always serve to illustrate personal experiences of wonder, astonishment and surprise. And if these experiences

crystallize in an aphorism or a psychoanalytic “*bon mot*”, it is not so much the product that counts, but the source that has generated it.

In this sense, Reik was never a teacher in the conventional meaning of the word. Of course, he lectured extensively in Vienna, Berlin, The Hague, New York and various other places and (as I have indicated above) to great acclaim, but his lectures, which also formed the basis for some of his earlier works, such as *Geständniszwang und Strafbedürfnis* (Reik, 1925) and *Dogma und Zwangsidee* (Reik, 1927a), rarely contained a systematic exposition of knowledge. Although during his Austrian, German and Dutch periods Reik was in a sense more rigorous and “academic” than during his American years, his was nonetheless already an exuberant, floating mind, or as Robert Lindner (1953) described it: “[A] wide-roving intellect, unafraid, and denying that there are any limits to inquiry” (p. vii). This is presumably also the mind that Freud tried to appease during one of his meetings with Reik on the Ringstraße, when he famously told his pupil not to disperse his “intellectual energy on too many different subjects” (Reik, 1952, p. 3).

Reik was a relentless soul-searcher rather than an expositor of ideas. Yet many people, including psychoanalytic practitioners, found this trait to be particularly appropriate as a point of entry into the subject matter of psychoanalysis. Reproducing Reik’s confessional style, Martin Grotjahn (1968) expressed his indebtedness as follows: “The writings of Sigmund Freud introduced me to psychoanalysis. The works of Theodor Reik showed me how to be an analyst. Freud gave me knowledge, Reik gave me courage” (p. 27). So, if anything, the frankness with which Reik disclosed the workings of his own mind and their impact on the psychoanalytic treatment in a series

of scattered musings and reflections actually helped in the public dissemination and professional consolidation of his name as a worthy successor of Freud. The fact that Reik did not attempt to systematize psychoanalysis, as Fenichel (1945) had done in *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis*, but chose to rely instead on the circuitous path through his own mind may have made it more difficult for his readers to delineate a Reikian theory of psychoanalysis, but it also encouraged many of them to commend the author as a psychoanalyst working and writing in the true spirit of Freud.

Could it be, then, that Reik's own unresolved guilt-complex and his moral masochism were responsible for the gradual erasure of his name from Western cultural memory? Could it be that Reik himself was unconsciously displeased with his (minor) celebrity status, and actively refused to see his name being associated with a new psychoanalytic tradition? Could it be, even, that his regular confusion with Reich satisfied his unconscious desire to be marginalized, ignored and humbled? In the opening chapter of his *Fragment of a Great Confession* (1949) Reik situated the origin of his own guilt-complex in the circumstances surrounding the death of his father. On the evening of June 16, 1906, the seriously ailing Max Reik was being attended by two medical doctors, who ordered the youngest son of the family to run to the nearest pharmacy in order to obtain campher for a potentially life-saving injection. Theodor ran as quickly as his legs would take him, yet when he arrived back at the family home his father had already passed away, which elicited the guilt-ridden question: "Could I have saved father's life if I had run more quickly?" (p. 12). During the following weeks, the eighteen-year-old Reik was tormented by self-reproaches, repentance and a need for punishment,

yet instead of procrastinating and sacrificing his career-prospects he immersed himself with unstoppable zeal into the works of Goethe, reading all of the 133 volumes of the so-called Sophien-edition of the complete works—and then some (p. 17). One does not need to be a psychoanalyst to surmise that when Reik met Freud a couple of years later the bond between the two men must have quickly acquired the characteristics of a father-son relationship. In *Fragment of a Great Confession* (1949) Reik himself confessed that at the time of Freud's death, "the admired man . . . had become a father substitute" (p. 15). Yet in his relationship with this "admired man", Reik was also presented with an opportunity to satisfy his need for punishment. As he put it in the introduction to the publication of his selected correspondence with Freud: "I considered it inappropriate to omit Freud's critical comments on my own shortcomings and weaknesses. Whenever he had to make critical remarks, he did it with such obvious benevolence and in such a form that he almost never hurt my feelings" (Reik, 1956/1974, p. 629-630). Unsurprisingly, perhaps, when Freud died in 1939, Reik reacted to it in the same way as to the death of his father. Having been unable to complete his lengthy study of masochism (Reik, 1940/1941) before Freud's death, he once again felt that he had failed to realize the great hopes and expectations with which he had been invested (Reik, 1949, p. 15).

In light of Reik's personal drama, which he himself placed under the aegis of an obsessional neurosis (Reik, 1949, p. 13), it would be easy to regard all his major works as symptomatic continuations of an unresolved guilt-complex. Their pervasive themes of guilt, crime, ritual, (need for) punishment, compulsion to confess and masochism, which were almost

invariably presented in a shamelessly self-centred style, and released into the world as a relentless series of thought processes, may already indicate that through his writings Reik simply repeated the same devastating unconscious conflict that had fundamentally altered his life when he was eighteen years old. Yet instead of compensating for the harrowing self-reproaches by devoting himself frantically to reading, it would seem that he subsequently addressed the lingering feelings of guilt by devoting himself with an almost superhuman industriousness to writing about the very themes that had prompted his zeal in the first place.

Would it be too far-fetched, then, to argue that Theodor Reik himself could have secretly contributed, in an act of unconscious self-sabotage, to the gradual erasure of his intellectual legacy? The idea is definitely an attractive one, yet I nonetheless believe that it is too much based on a one-dimensional portrait of Reik's character. The persistent need for punishment represents only one side of Reik's pervasive guilt-complex, the other (and less often acknowledged) side being an equally persistent need to be loved. Late in life, Reik (1963) devoted an entire book to this topic, mainly consisting of epigrams and aphorisms, but his own need to be loved, which regularly translated itself into an ardent desire for recognition, often appeared in the margins of his confessional volumes, and can also be gauged from private correspondence.

After dedicating his *Fragments of a Great Confession* (1949) to the memory of Sigmund Freud, Reik started his book with a remarkable quotation from Goethe: "We love only the individual; hence our enjoyment of all public self-expressions, confessions, memoirs, letters and anecdotes, even of

unimportant persons. The question whether one may write one's autobiography is most inappropriate. I consider him who does it the most courteous of all men. So long as one communicates one's life experiences, it matters not what motives propel him" (p. ix). One may argue that Reik was trying to justify his 500-page (fragment of a) confession to his readership, here, by presenting it with the seal of approval from a literary genius, yet in doing so he also demonstrated to himself that as a confessional writer he was insured with the love of his (and his father's) most beloved poet.

Shortly after Reik arrived in the United States, he delivered a manuscript entitled "Better to have Loved and Lost" to Columbia University Press, offering the publishers letters of recommendation from Freud, Thomas Mann and Albert Einstein as endorsements of the value of his work, in order to persuade them to proceed with publication (Reik, 1941b). When Anna Freud visited New York in 1950 for a series of lectures, Reik wrote to her apologizing for the fact that he was unable to attend her presentation on account of his break with the New York Psychoanalytic Institute, yet at the same time asking her to spare fifteen minutes of her time for a private meeting (Reik, 1950). After Reik had shot to fame during the 1950s, his sixty-fifth and seventieth birthdays were celebrated in true Hollywood style, with announcements being sent to major newspapers and popular magazines such as *The New Yorker*, and numerous press cards being released for the scientific conference part of the programme (Nelson, 1958).

Doubts could probably be raised as to whether these types of actions and events constitute good enough proof of Reik's need to be loved, yet they could hardly be regarded as the outpourings of a guilt-ridden character.

Already during his European years, but especially after his emigration to the US, Reik enjoyed a great deal of public success as a psychoanalyst, writer and lecturer, and there is no evidence that he did not enjoy it. If anything, he seemed keen to obtain, sustain and promote the recognition from colleagues, students and the public at large, so that the assertion that his gradual disappearance from the spotlight could be due to his own moral masochism and ongoing self-sabotage cannot really be upheld.

The possibility that there is no such thing as Reikian psychoanalysis because Reik himself never developed his own psychoanalytic theory and technique may also be refuted. Reik felt that he was very much indebted to the intellectual, moral and financial support of Freud, and his loyalty to “the admired man” was probably greater than that of any other of Freud’s pupils, yet his devotion and allegiance never turned him into a blind, uncritical acolyte. Although he would often find himself contemplating the portrait of Freud that hung above his desk, imagining the figure to come alive and extending his hand to his favourite pupil (Reik, 1940, p. vii), Reik was not too Freudian to be Reikian. He was never so mesmerized by the presence and memory of his substitute father that he was unable to develop his own ideas, in a critical engagement with those that had been advanced by the founder of psychoanalysis. For this reason, it does not make sense to argue that there is no such thing as Reikian psychoanalysis quite simply because it can be collapsed onto Freudian psychoanalysis—Reik’s contributions being insufficiently detached from and therefore lacking in originality relative to the clinical framework and the technical recommendations that Freud himself articulated.

From his first tentative publications, on the love-life of the young Gustave Flaubert (Reik, 1911a, 1911b), Reik made a name for himself within the psychoanalytic community as the undisputed master of applied psychoanalysis. This reputation was no doubt galvanized when in 1918 the international psychoanalytic publishing house, headed by Freud, awarded him the first of a newly created series of annual prizes in applied psychoanalysis for his essay on “The Puberty Rites of Savages” (Reik, 1915-16/1931, 1940, p. 27; Freud, 1919/1955b, p. 269; Abraham & Freud, 1965, pp. 281-282; Wittenberger & Tögel, 1999, pp. 40-44). Yet apart from his many contributions to the psychoanalytic study of art, literature, religion, folklore and mythology, Reik also intermittently published short professional notes and more substantial academic papers on the clinical theory of psychoanalysis and related issues of psychoanalytic technique, such as the analysis of resistance (Reik, 1915/1924), the dynamics of affect (Reik, 1916) and the unconscious scope of forgetfulness (Reik, 1920). During the 1920s, his ideas on the psychoanalytic theory of technique slowly matured, initially leading to the publication of innovative studies on the meaning of silence (Reik, 1927b) and the significance of surprise (Reik, 1929), and finally crystallizing in a key paper at the twelfth international psychoanalytic congress of Wiesbaden in 1932 (Reik, 1933), which Reik himself did not hesitate to announce as “programmatic” (p. 320). This 1932 paper constituted the bedrock for a weighty monograph entitled *Der Überraschte Psychologe* (Reik, 1935), which was translated into English one year later (Reik, 1936), and which was eventually expanded into *Listening with the Third Ear*, the massive volume with which Reik shot to fame at the end of 1940s.

Although he would have felt hard-pressed to concede that he was no longer following the intellectual path cleared by Freud, Reik's ideas in these works were decidedly original, explicitly provocative and fundamentally non-conformist. Arguing that the development of the psychoanalytic treatment can be conceived as a series of surprises on the side of the patient, Reik went on to claim that the analyst too must experience (the effect of) his interpretations as a surprise, because he is essentially compelled to operate with his own unconscious if he wants to reach out into the unconscious of his patients. Reik emphasized that there is no pre-determined route, no "royal road" through a patient's unconscious, which implies that the analyst can only direct the treatment by acknowledging what comes to him from his own unconscious knowledge. With characteristic zeal, Reik vehemently opposed the standardisation of analytic technique and the analyst's "pigeon-holing" of the patient on the basis of a pre-fabricated body of psychoanalytic knowledge. As he put it at the Wiesbaden congress: "[T]he analyst must approach the psychic material with a conscious openness of mind. I hold that this is a *sine qua non* of analytic research. Students of analysis cannot be too strongly warned against setting out to investigate the unconscious psychic processes with any definite ideas of what they will find, ideas probably derived from their conscious theoretical knowledge" (Reik, 1933, p. 327). To achieve this, Reik posited, the analyst must have both the courage to understand the voice of his unconscious and the courage *not* to understand whatever his conscious awareness of psychoanalytic theory may dictate (pp. 332-333).

In this way, Reik dismissed technical rigidity without compromising on clinical rigour. Rallying against all types of analytic formalism, he distanced

himself from the systematic, mechanised clinical procedures and the militant dismantling of the patient's resistances as advocated by Wilhelm Reich in his famous "character analysis" (Reich, 1928; 1933/1945), which he regarded as a view "inspired by an unjustifiable optimism about the extent and depth of our knowledge of the unconscious" (Reik, 1948, p. 442). Unsurprisingly, Reik's critique of standardized measures and general intellectualism within psychoanalysis earned him a reputation as the promoter of a subjective, introspective and conjectural practice, which opposes scientificity and verges on the creation of a pseudo-religious, mystical encounter between the analyst and the patient (Herold, 1939). Yet Reik himself did not want his analytic technique to be described as purely intuitive, given the term's connotations of arbitrariness, whimsicality and randomness. As such, he equally rejected the active technique based on the analyst's own free associations as introduced by Wilhelm Stekel (1938/1950), on account of it being uncritical, anti-rationalist, illogical and virtually para-psychological. Whereas Reich had reduced logos to intelligence, Stekel had abdicated logos altogether (Reik, 1948, pp. 448-449).

Keen to underline his unwavering allegiance to Freud, Reik suggested that his position on technique was closer to that of his teacher than any of the other technical doctrines that had been formulated within the bosom of the psychoanalytic community, where scientificity, systematization and intellectualism held pride of place as the quintessential analytic values. Without discarding rationality and firmly convinced of the psychic power of thought and knowledge—on the side of the patient as well as on that of the analyst—Reik drew on Freud's famous precept that an analyst should always

approach a patient as if it is the first one he has ever treated (Freud, 1912/1958a, p. 114; 1933/1964, pp. 173-175), in order to destabilize the analyst's belief in the value of her own conscious knowledge and its systematic application within the clinical setting, for the advancement of the psychoanalytic treatment. The most forceful formulation of this critique appeared again in *Listening with the Third Ear* (1948), which I shall take the liberty to quote at length: "My decided rejection of the conscious ordering, the consistent and systematic discipline, of the analytic process is most certainly not tantamount to a denial of any guiding principle. What I repudiate is the totalitarian claim of the new technique of dealing with resistance, the claim that the planning, rational factor is to be our guide in a psychological phase where it is out of place . . . There is an order governing the unconscious of the patient and the analyst; the analysis obeys the law by which it unfolds. But its order is determined by the reciprocal action of the unconscious . . . In contrast with the systematic and militant type of analysis that is recommended to us, I praise the exclusion on principle of order and compulsion in technique, the absence of a consistent system, the lack of all conscious and rigid arrangement. I confess myself an opponent of every kind of conscious mechanization of analytic technique. This establishment of order and plan that is to be forced upon us corresponds in the inner life to the efforts of so many domestics who do, indeed, tidy our writing tables and ruthlessly make an end of all disorder, but, by their consistent and systematic methods, sweep away or destroy, stupidly and senselessly, the fruits of years of laborious work" (p. 448).

As I pointed out above, Reik's ideas on psychoanalytic technique were original as well as non-conformist. They were original, because despite Freud's intermittent scepticism about the clinical viability of the analyst's acquired knowledge he would never have gone so far as to say that psychoanalysis is a "duologue between one unconscious and another" (Reik, 1933, p. 332). And he is also unlikely to have agreed with Reik's suggestion that in analyzing a patient the analyst must simultaneously be involved in a reciprocal process of self-analysis or, stronger still, that the analyst's self-analysis during the treatment is a necessary precondition for it to progress in a psychoanalytically correct fashion. His ideas were strictly non-conformist, however, because they constituted a radical attack on one of the cardinal aims of the psychoanalytic movement during the 1930s and 40s, especially within the United States: to legitimize psychoanalysis as a scientific theory and practice by systematizing its theoretical knowledge-base and formalizing its clinical procedures.

As a radical non-conformist, Reik must have known that he would always experience difficulty gaining acceptance from his peers, those occupying positions of authority, and the fanatics appointed to safeguard the purity of psychoanalytic doctrine. Yet this institutional *atopia* (and the compelling set of ideas on which it was based), rather than condemning him by definition to the psychoanalytic margins, could have put him into the best possible position for becoming the initiator of a new tradition. It is precisely on account of a similar dissatisfaction with the mechanization of technique within the psychoanalytic establishment that, during the early 1950s, Jacques Lacan started to develop his alternative theory of clinical practice, thereby borrowing

heavily from Reik's critique in *Listening with the Third Ear*, which in his case proved extremely fruitful for the emergence and dissemination of a new psychoanalytic tradition (Lacan 1966/2002; Miller, 1976; Nobus, 2000). Hence, whereas it is simply untrue to say that Reik did not develop a psychoanalytic theory of his own, it seems equally untenable to propose that his work did not give rise to a Reikian psychoanalytic tradition because he failed to secure the support of the psychoanalytic establishment. It is true that Reik was neither particularly welcomed in the Netherlands during the early 1930s (Brecht, Friedrich, Hermanns, Kaminer, & Juelich, 1986, p. 65), nor in the United States in 1938 (Alexander, Eisenstein, & Grotjahn, 1966/1995, p. 259)—a lack of hospitality which has traditionally been attributed to his not having a medical degree, but which may very well have been exacerbated by his analytic non-conformism—but we should not overestimate the disastrous effects of this exclusion and marginalisation on Reik's ability to foster his own psychoanalytic tradition, especially in light of his amazing capacity for defiance in the wake of adversity.

All of this leaves one final explanation, in my *reductio ad absurdum*, as to why Reikian psychoanalysis never materialized: Reik himself did not undertake sufficient (or sufficiently viable) institutional initiatives to guarantee the future of his name as the founder of a psychoanalytic tradition. In this case, the absurdity of the proposition is probably easier to prove than in any of the other cases, because it can be demonstrated on the basis of simple and unambiguous historical facts, rather than complicated interpretive arguments. After having been refused full membership by the New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute in 1938, Reik remained undeterred and

slowly started to gather a small group of people around him for weekly seminars and case-conferences, much like Lacan did during the early 1950s. Primarily composed of non-medical psychotherapists and health care professionals with an interest in psychoanalysis, this group at one point decided to create an official association and training centre for people without a medical degree—although without therefore excluding those who were in the possession of one—wishing to follow a vocational training programme in psychoanalysis. In 1948, this initiative led to the creation of the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis (NPAP), which offered both theoretical and clinical training to candidates with a wide variety of (non-medical) backgrounds (Schwaetzer-Barinbaum, 1953). In 1954, the NPAP, presided by Reik, decided to expand its services by opening a “Mental Hygiene Clinic” on a “nominal fee and free care basis” for impecunious citizens and analytic candidates of restricted financial means (Theodor Reik Mental Hygiene Clinic, 1954). When the clinic finally opened in 1960 under Reik’s directorship, he explained at a press conference that he had been motivated “by one of Freud’s predictions that one day there would be clinics available to those who could not afford costly treatment” (Harrison, 1960), by which he must have had in mind Freud’s projected development of large-scale “free clinics”, at the fifth International Psychoanalytic Congress of Budapest in 1918 (Freud, 1919/1955a; Danto, 2005).

Although much like any other psychoanalytic group, the NPAP experienced a number of internal rifts, eventually leading to the dissension of some of its members and the creation of two new organisations (Reed, 1990)—the Institute for Psychoanalytic Training and Research (IPTAR),

founded in 1958 and a component society of the IPA since 1991, and the New York Freudian Society, founded in 1959 and an IPA component society since 1993—the NPAP continues to operate to the present day in its original spirit of openness and diversity, with the proviso that candidates need to be in the possession of at least a Master’s degree in an academic area of human relations. What was originally referred to as the “Theodor Reik Clinic” is now called the “Theodor Reik Clinical Center for Psychotherapy” (TRCC), and it is one of the two referral services currently in place at the NPAP, with sliding scale fees starting at \$25 per session (and \$20 for eligible full time students).

From 1950, when the NPAP obtained legal status as a training institute under the laws of the State of New York, until his death in 1969, Reik served as President and Honorary President of the organisation he had inspired, stimulating members and trainees with his intellectual presence, and supporting its various activities, not in the least the publication of “The Psychoanalytic Review”, the oldest psychoanalytic journal in English, which the NPAP had succeeded in acquiring in 1958 from the Smith Ely Jelliffe Trust. At the same time, he continued to write more prolifically than ever before, his name regularly appeared in the national newspapers, and his “confessional” books on literature, love, myth, religion and Jewish history were generally well-received by psychoanalytic and non-professional audiences alike. With a low-cost treatment centre carrying his name, a successful professional organisation created by virtue of his personal and intellectual influence, a public persona as a major psychoanalytic scholar, teacher and practitioner, and a steady number of loyal followers, Reik seemed to have possessed everything necessary to establish a new psychoanalytic tradition.

Much like Lacan in Paris during the 1950s and 60s, Reik was regarded by most of his American students as a spiritual guide, and many would have gone out of their way to honour his name, promote his ideas, expand his influence and ensure the preservation of his life, work and legacy in every possible way. So why is there no such thing as Reikian psychoanalysis?

Intellectual and Institutional Independence

The answer to the question that has been haunting this paper for too long now lies, I believe, in an irreducible feature of Reik's personal and professional outlook on psychoanalysis. When he argued during the 1930s and 40s that a psychoanalyst should have the courage not to listen to the voice of conscious reasoning, lending himself instead to the surprising acknowledgement of what he discovers in his own unconscious, Reik knew full well that this type of centripetal, reflexive process of intimate self-exploration could never be taught via any kind of formal-academic transmission of knowledge, but required a lengthy and ongoing journey of personal experience. In other words, he realized that the necessary precondition for someone becoming a psychoanalyst could not be fulfilled by means of the candidate learning the tricks of the trade from a knowledgeable teacher, but could only be satisfied in the closest possible association with oneself, via one's personal experience of psychoanalysis, but also (and perhaps more significantly) via one's constant self-analysis. As he put it in *From Thirty Years with Freud*: "[B]y instruction and demonstration through books, courses, and seminars, only the

technicalities of the psychoanalytic profession can be learned. The most important aspects of *technique* must be experienced. This communicable material is indispensable and basic to the analyst. But that material which must be acquired by experience is decisive for the effective practice of his profession” (Reik, 1940, p. 48).

If readers may recognize, here, some of the reasons given by Freud in “On Beginning the Treatment” (1913/1958b) for restricting his “technical recommendations” to what takes place at the start of the analytic treatment, Reik pointed out that on the question of “the education of the analyst” his opinions were quite different from Freud’s: “He found my views too exacting and had more respect than I for the value of instruction. He admitted, however, that the personal inclinations and talent of the individual were more important than is generally conceded . . . I replied that all instruction and control analysis was in vain if it were offered to individuals who had no innate gift and did not possess that ‘psychic sensitivity’ he had once spoken of” (Reik, 1940, p. 59). It goes without saying that Reik did not doubt that he himself possessed this “psychic sensitivity”, in which he would probably have been supported by Freud, yet he was not at all convinced that the quality was very widespread. Concluding the account of his discussions with Freud concerning the “education of the analyst”, Reik wrote: “We finally agreed that the ideal would be for those who were born psychologists to learn the analytic method and be able to practice it. We have said we have to seek out such ‘born psychologists’ not only in the circle of psychiatrists and neurologists. In my opinion they will be as few and far between there as anywhere else” (Reik, 1940, p. 59).

Former and current members of the NPAP might be reluctant to admit it, but there is a good chance that Reik was disappointed about the lack of 'born psychologists' in his own circle, partly because there is no reason to believe that the NPAP had a better strategy for identifying and recruiting them than other professional organisations, partly because the organisation itself tended to put a high emphasis on formal training at the expense of "personal experience". And whereas Reik pursued his endless journey of self-discovery, publishing the results in an ever more rapid succession of "confessional" volumes, his students and colleagues rarely if ever attempted to do the same, preferring instead the more anonymous discourse that is characteristic of scholarly, academic papers. If we take into account the fact that at the end of *Listening with the Third Ear* Reik designated the fundamental analytic quality of being able to acknowledge the voice of one's own unconscious as 'moral courage' (Reik, 1948, p. 493), he may even have felt from time to time that his own pupils lacked the necessary fibre to engage in psychoanalytic practice, especially if 'moral courage' is measured by the extent to which they were willing and able to probe their own souls and share the results with the general public. I can only speculate, here, about Reik's perception of his own organisation and its members, and none of the people who worked under Reik ever disclosed feelings to me of having been disowned and abandoned by their spiritual leader, yet in comparing Reik's own ideas about the 'education of the analyst' with the structure and practice of the NPAP during the 1950s and 60s I believe I can reasonably infer that Reik could have had sufficient reasons for being deeply dissatisfied with his own creation. To this I can add that I have always found it extremely surprising to learn that on

November 23, 1962, notably during the heyday of the NPAP and the Theodor Reik Clinic, Reik agreed to donate fifty photographs in his personal collection—a relatively valueless, yet nonetheless important historical document—to the New York Psychoanalytic Institute (Pacella, n.d.), thus depriving his own institution of a sample of his legacy, and transferring it to the organisation who had severely jeopardized his clinical reputation and his social status in the United States by refusing to accept him as a full member. Would it be too far-fetched to interpret this act as a clear sign of Reik’s profound discontent with the way in which things had developed in the NPAP? If it was not an act of institutional revolt or personal disloyalty, would it be too far-fetched to interpret it as a symbolic gesture of intellectual detachment from his own group of people?

It is quite unlikely, however, that Reik would have felt more comfortable seeing his ideas develop into a proper psychoanalytic tradition within a differently structured training organisation. I believe this would not only have been the case owing to the formalisation of training that any vocational institution favours, but also because of the shared doctrinal allegiance of its members which conditions the sustainability of the professional organisation as such. Indeed, Reik not only argued that the analyst needs to be endowed with moral courage in order to experience the shock of his own unconscious thoughts, and use these surprises to the benefit of the analytic process, but also that he should develop a strong sense of intellectual independence. As he put it in *Listening with the Third Ear*: “The training of analysts should be directed less toward the acquisition of practical and theoretical knowledge than the extension of intellectual independence. It is not so much a question

of acquiring technical ability as inner truthfulness” (Reik, 1948, p. 493). In May 1956, Reik extended this precept to the entire domain of psychoanalysis as a visionary reflection upon the conditions of its future, yet he somehow failed to appreciate the awkward compatibility between the intellectual independence of the discipline and that of its members (Reik, 1957). Time and again, it has been shown that psychoanalytic organisations do not appreciate intellectual independence, or only tolerate small deviations from the accepted internal doctrine, the more so as they experience the need to emphasize their institutional independence from other disciplines and practices, or from rival psychoanalytic organisations. Thus, if Reikian psychoanalysis is fundamentally predicated upon the analyst’s intellectual independence, the development of a school or tradition that celebrates this value can only lead to an internal contradiction. If the NPAP have consistently refrained from putting their training under the aegis of Reikian psychoanalysis—although this may have been exactly what Reik intimated during the 1950s and what also encouraged him to commit the aforementioned act—it is therefore paradoxically a tribute to their spiritual guide, and probably the most Reikian decision they could have taken. For if one can only be a true Reikian by being radically independent, the implication is that one should also “confess” one’s independence from Reik. One can only be a Reikian by not being a follower, which also entails not being a follower of Reik.

In 1958, the NPAP celebration committee responsible for preparing Reik’s seventieth birthday party pondered the idea of placing the picture of their president in the memento above the caption “*Fluctuat nec mergitur*” (it is tossed by the waves, but does not sink) (Nelson, 1958a), the famous device

of the City of Paris which Freud had also chosen as an epigraph for his history of the psychoanalytic movement (1914/1957). For some reason, Reik's picture eventually appeared without the motto (Coleman, 1958), yet I believe that it would still offer a perfect heading for the contemporary status of Reik's legacy in the Western world. Constantly confused with Reich, and sometimes even crushed between Reich and Reiki, Reik definitely tosses, but he does not sink, simply because his "moral courage" and his fierce intellectual independence, so laboriously won at the expense of settling his personal debts towards his mentor, continue to live on in many professional quarters, psychoanalytic and other. There may be no such thing as Reikian psychoanalysis, but it is paradoxically by virtue of this absence within the psychoanalytic field, and the fact that many professionals are still willing not to commit themselves as thinking beings to the authoritative knowledge produced and enforced by a psychoanalytic school, that Reik's outlook on psychoanalysis survives.

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