

The Birth of Tragedy and The Trauma of Birth

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This article examines the early writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and Otto Rank in terms of Harold Bloom's notion of an "anxiety of influence." Like the "strong poets" in Bloom's theory, each of these innovators needed to resolve his ambivalence toward precursors to create new theories and approaches. Nietzsche and Rank are seen as "premature births," thinkers before their time; both went beyond their own early works and attempted self-creation. Through an emphasis on affirmation of life despite death's inevitability, both were able to free themselves creatively. Rank drew from Nietzsche's philosophy and his example in developing an early existential psychotherapy.

Otto Rank's gift to Sigmund Freud on his 70th birthday was an elegant, white, leather-bound edition of the complete works of Friedrich Nietzsche. As both a gift of gratitude and a "defiant reminder of Freud's unacknowledged debt" to Nietzsche (Rudnytsky, 1987, p. 199), Rank's gesture betrays an ambivalence toward precursors that accompanies artistic innovation and creative thought; Harold Bloom (1973) called it an "anxiety of influence." Rank's ambivalence toward Freud, in reminding Freud of his own ambivalence toward Nietzsche, is an interesting parallel to Nietzsche's ambivalence toward Schopenhauer¹ and his subsequent declaration of independence from him in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872/1967).

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¹Nietzsche had other ambivalences, as did Freud and Rank: In addition to Nietzsche's uneasy relationship to Schopenhauer, there is his relationship to Wagner, and for that matter, to Socrates. In addition to Freud's ambivalence toward Nietzsche, there is Freud's ambivalence toward Breuer, Fleiss, and several of his followers within the circle of founders of psychoanalysis. And, of course, along with Rank's ambivalence toward Freud, there is Rank's ambivalence toward Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. The focus of this article, however, is on Nietzsche's influence on Freud and Nietzsche's and Freud's influence on Rank.

The impact on the psyche of the discovery that every new world of thought is already inhabited can be profound; it can have a stifling effect on the developing sense of self. Alternatively, it can be the source of a necessary and healthy perspective on the limits even of creativity. Everything depends on the reaction to this realization. As Nietzsche exemplifies, and as Rank understood, it is necessary for the artist (meaning every creative person) to overcome past influences—including one's own past. As Rank noted, a still further risk to the original artist is that his or her own work may become an inhibiting, mocking double, subverting the full expression of the self (cf. Wadlington, 2001). The challenge to the artist who would strive for originality is immense.

Throughout the history of modern art, at least until postmodernism with its emphasis on appropriation and pastiche, originality has been seen as the *sine qua non* of creativity. To have one's thought or work regarded as derivative of another's is to be "only" an imitator or a slave to artistic tradition or style. Despite the fact that the creative process often involves experimentation with new combinations of existing elements, at its extreme the conceit of the creative person is that every creation must be a *creatio ex nihilo*, a new work that arrives in the world, establishes a new style, and changes the nature of our perception. Each of the individuals to be discussed here—Nietzsche, Freud, and Rank—was an innovator who faced the daunting task of creating a radically new approach to life. Nietzsche's philosophy, Freud's psychoanalysis, and Rank's will therapy emerged from the deep self-reflection and self-analysis of these three strong personalities and each is the product of a difficult struggle to go beyond powerful precursors, whose genius was not easily overlooked.

THE ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE

Genius is a Romantic notion that still resonates for us; it captures the sense that certain individuals rise above the rest of us by virtue of, especially, imaginative talent. Because their abilities seem beyond our comprehension, we make extreme attributions to them; thus geniuses appear to have arrived on the scene spontaneously and perhaps even supernaturally. Geniuses easily become objects of our admiration and awe, and that awe, according to Bloom (1973), frequently feeds the inhibition and anxiety experienced by other, younger, imaginative artists, preventing further creative action. Great works of the past, in any field of creative endeavor, send chills up our spines. In *The Anxiety of Influence*, Bloom captured that feeling in an epigram, a quotation from another of Nietzsche's precursors and influences, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who said, "In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts; they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty" (p. 48). Be-

cause we see ourselves in others we cannot deny having intellectual parentage, and that can be a stifling realization.

Bloom (1973) challenges the commonplace assumption that the history of art and literature (or any creative endeavor) has a benign influence on the artist. To the contrary, Bloom's idea is that the precursor, the "strong poet" (p. 5) or creative genius who has gone before, is an inhibiting influence who must be overcome for an artist to speak with his or her own voice. This overcoming often involves radical revision of the precursor's work, made possible by the new artist's misappropriation or misreading of the previous work. The anxiety felt by the creative artist arises from the realization that he is "not the originator of his own works; that he has, so to speak, come too late onto the scene. Because every son, or daughter, for that matter, must inevitably arrive after the parent, a tragedy built into the creative process is, in Nietzsche's words, the tragedy of 'belatedness'" (Bloom, 1975, p. 83).

Bloom's seemingly original contribution to literary theory is not without its own precursors. Bloom (1973) considers Nietzsche, a "prophet of the antithetical," and Freud, an investigator of ambivalence, as "prime influences" on his theory (p. 8). Bloom, however, thinks Nietzsche and Freud "underestimated poets and poetry" (p. 8) but that Rank showed "a greater awareness of the artist's fight against art" (p. 9). Rank had titled one of the chapters of *Art and Artist* (1932/1968) "The Artist's Fight with Art." In it he described what he called the "double attitude of the personal artist to the prevailing art-ideology, which, on the one hand, he uses for the justification of his individual creativity, but, on the other, opposes with all the vigour of his personality" (p. 365). If Rank was an influence on Bloom, he was one who apparently was not misread.

MISREADING AND MISUSE

The kind of misreading to which Bloom (1973) refers, functions "so as to clear imaginative space" (p.5) for new creation. Misreading is the way an artist who has been frozen in awe of his or her precursors thaws and begins to move independently. Misreading, in this sense, is fundamentally different from disrespect that drives distortion and spiteful misuse of an earlier author's work. Nietzsche is a case in point. Historically his ideas have been maliciously misused; as a consequence he has a reputation as an enigmatic figure and has been called, at times, a madman, a Nazi, and The Antichrist. But despite the ambivalence it engenders, and the *ad hominem* attack it elicits, and because his work has also been loved and revered by some, Nietzsche's thought has survived, and is recurrently relevant to psychologists interested in an existential approach.

Rank, like Nietzsche, has been widely misunderstood. Kainer and Kainer (1984) applied Bloom's notion to the misapprehension or distortion of his work by

later thinkers such as Erich Fromm. Fromm, they contend, mistakenly believed that Rank had unintentionally developed views of “truth, external reality, and dependency ... [that] ... bore a close link with fascist philosophy” (p. 173). What Fromm achieved, according to Kainer and Kainer, was to attribute to Rank some of the pessimism and determinism Rank previously challenged in Freud, as well as the “Schopenhaurian view of will as evil that Rank had detached himself from” (p. 174). In another attempt to reread Rank, Kainer and Gourevitch (1983) challenged the reductive psychobiographical method of Stolorow and Atwood (1976), who saw Rank’s separation from Freud in pathological terms as narcissistic and archaically grandiose. There is no question there is a certain conceit in the presumption to originality but Kainer and Gourevich successfully distinguished between a pathologizing view of this conceit as megalomaniacal and a view that it demonstrates healthy self-creation. They understood Rank’s idea of creative will in positive terms, not just as a deviation and rebellion against Freud, but as a striving toward individuation.

DEATH AND IMMORTALITY

As a young man interested in artists and their creations, Rank immersed himself in Nietzsche’s work. What Rank was able to appropriate from Nietzsche and make his own, was a “profound understanding of the ‘tragedy of the creative man’” (Kainer & Gourevitch, 1983, p. 539), a grasp of the difficulty of achieving originality, and an apprehension of the inevitability that a truly original work is not likely to be understood in the creator’s lifetime. The “artist-type” in Rank owes much to Nietzsche’s “overman” (cf. Wadlington, 2001); both share this tragic awareness of the difficulty of overcoming the past, including one’s own past. As both Nietzsche and Rank understood, the past often appears as “fate,” seeming to obviate the feeling of independent will. But both thought *beyond* the belief in the past as fate. Nietzsche spoke of becoming one’s own fate and Rank of creative willing even in the face of death and limitation. What Nietzsche, and Rank, who appropriated from him, possessed was an existential appreciation for the necessity of living fully *in spite of* death and *in spite of* the past as a predetermining cause and fate. “Every poet,” according to Bloom (1973), “begins ... by rebelling more strongly against the consciousness of death’s necessity than all other men and women do” (p. 10). There are two crucial tasks for creative types: forgetting dead poets and not becoming a forgotten dead poet.

The past impinges on the present. The reminder that our thoughts are not original, that we have ancestors, teaches us that all things die and that only through artistic rebirth can death be overcome. Both Nietzsche and Rank rejected a pessimistic view and asserted that original art and thought must arise out of an affirming, a saying “yes” to life, and that the achievement of immortality, through the creation

of lasting works, is the only recourse for the creative individual, in the face of the overwhelming reality of death.

PREMATURITY AND BELATEDNESS

A philosopher of dysynchrony and untimeliness (cf. Kaufmann, 1974b, p. 10), Nietzsche attempted to avoid precursors by creating himself. Rank, emulating Nietzsche, likewise attempted to give birth to himself—to will himself into existence. However, as Kainer and Kainer (1984) note, the task is greater than merely overcoming precursors. Once a creative individual in any field has successfully separated from the dominant influences of the past, he or she faces the “necessity of being split off ... from the mainstream of thought” (p. 176), of being alone, alienated, and potentially misunderstood. In addition to the “belatedness” Bloom considers, we must also speak of “prematurity.” Nietzsche (1882/1974), in fact, addresses his readers, along with himself, as “premature births” (p. 346). His famous madman, announcing the death of God, realized that he had “come too early” (p.182).

Like Nietzsche, Rank was ahead of his time. The psychoanalytic world of the early 20th century was not ready for his early therapeutic innovations and his conception of the creative will to immortality. The prematurity of Rank’s thought has historically led to its neglect, a fact that comes to light occasionally, in brief flashes, when one glimpses Rankian ideas that have been assimilated into the mainstream of psychology. It may be possible, however, to recognize some of the important origins of what we now call existential psychology in the early independent works of these two authors.

THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY

The Birth of Tragedy was Friedrich Nietzsche’s first book. Published in 1872, when he was 27, this book was and remains, in the words of translator Walter Kaufman, “one of the most suggestive and influential studies of tragedy ever written” (in Nietzsche, 1872/1967, p. 3). Although written by the young Nietzsche, a precocious philology professor, it gives a preview of the later Nietzsche’s more fully developed Romanticism and perspectivism.

The Birth of Tragedy represents a return to original sources—a *ricorso* in Vico’s (1744/1968) terms—an attempt to go back in time to the original words, sounds, and movements of the ancient Greeks. A reconciliation of art and philosophy, it is both rhapsodic and dialectical. It shows Nietzsche’s capacity for both immersion in and perspective on a topic. In this book, Nietzsche attempts to counter the one-sided, idealized view of art as representation, with an appreciation for

art's unconscious and irrational sources. To visualize what Nietzsche called the Apollonian, we need only think of the pristine white marble and human proportions of an ancient Greek temple or sculpture (although more recently art historians remind us that such temples were often brightly painted and statues clothed!). A visualization of what Nietzsche called *Dionysian* might include an image of a festive occasion, satyrs, and the imbibing of wine. In contrast to the rational, Apollonian view of art as embodying "restraint, measure, ... [and] ... harmony" (Kaufmann, in Nietzsche, 1872/1967, p. 9), Nietzsche reminds us of the powerful Dionysian spirit of music and dance that lies beneath. He intuitively grasped the origins of tragedy in the choral dance and song of the Dithyramb ("a community of unconscious actors" p. 64). He understood that tragedy arises out of the satiric but that there is a necessary tension between the two. Tragedy needs comedy; to be endured by an audience, every tragedy must be relieved by a satiric, comic episode that follows.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche (1872/1967) penetrates to the core of the tragic sense of life, confronting the harsh reality that despite life's efforts to prevail, death always overcomes. In his words, "man now sees everywhere only the horror or absurdity of existence" (p. 60). This is the very realization reached by Schopenhauer which was the genesis of his pessimistic view that the tragic spirit leads to resignation. But here, by separating himself from his precursor, Nietzsche is able to achieve his deepest existential insight. Nietzsche sees art as "a saving sorceress, expert at healing" (p. 60). In the dithyrambic chorus of the Greeks he sees the mythopoetic power for transforming horror and sorrow into humor and song. Thus, in the words of Kaufmann, "from tragedy Nietzsche learns that one can affirm life as sublime, beautiful, and joyous in spite of all suffering and cruelty." (Kaufmann, in Nietzsche, 1872/1967, p. 11). This notion of living fully and artfully in spite of the inevitability of limitation, endings, and death is central to Nietzsche's aesthetic: Art is not just representational, it is transformative of the spirit! Art is necessary, said Nietzsche, "lest we perish through the truth" (1901/1968, p. 435).

Nietzsche's preface to the 1886 edition of *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872/1967), written when he was 41, and called "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," is a remarkable work in itself, and according to Kaufmann, "one of the finest things he ever wrote" (p. 3). In it Nietzsche offers the sort of honest perspective on himself most of us (as would-be-critics) could only hope to have. With the perspective of 14 years of experience, Nietzsche was able to mock himself, not out of meanness but with humor and true humility.

In his words, *The Birth of Tragedy* was "a first book ... in every bad sense of that label ... [a] book marked by every defect of youth." And he goes on, "badly written, ponderous, embarrassing, image-mad and image-confused, sentimental, ... uneven in tempo ... very convinced and therefore disdainful of proof ... a book for

initiates" (1872/1967, p. 19). Here Nietzsche separated himself from his own previous work that had become an inhibiting precursor.

Every artists' work is both an embarrassment and a source of pride. Like our children, our works have the power to hurt us deeply as well as bring us joy. Nietzsche's perspectivism, so apparent in this self-criticism, is a necessary complement to his romantic aestheticism (Nehamas, 1995). In satirizing himself, Nietzsche showed himself ready to relinquish his awe of Schopenhauer, of Socrates, and of himself. In his later work, Nietzsche "became increasingly aware of the necessity for a disciple to leave behind his erstwhile master and follow himself" (Rudnytsky, 1987, p. 221). At the conclusion of the first part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche (1883/1978) puts these words into the mouth of Zarathustra, the great teacher, who cautions his followers:

One repays a teacher badly if one remains nothing but a pupil. And why do you not want to pluck at my wreath?

You revere me; but what if your reverence tumbles one day? Beware lest a statue slay you (p. 78).

Zarathustra, the exemplar of self-discovery, encourages those who wish to learn to reach for their own truths rather than seeking "the way." To those who inquire, he says "This is *my* way; where is yours?" (p. 195).

THE TRAUMA OF BIRTH

Nietzsche's originality and penetrating honesty proved daunting to Freud, for whom it evoked an anxious ambivalence. He said that Nietzsche had reached a "more penetrating knowledge of himself than any other man who ever lived or was ever likely to live" (Jones, 1955, p. 344). Freud (1914/1957) also claimed, however, to have "denied ... [himself] ... the very great pleasure of reading the works of Nietzsche, with the deliberate object of not being hampered in working out the impressions received in psychoanalysis by any sort of anticipatory ideas" (p. 15–16). It was this seeming contradiction that Rank's gift to Freud of Nietzsche's collected works dramatizes. Among Freud's protégés, no one understood Nietzsche as deeply as Rank, the first "lay analyst" (Freud, 1926/1959) and one of the first to develop what we would now call an existential-humanistic psychotherapy. But Rank has been misunderstood and what is needed is a *revaluation*, to use Nietzsche's term, of Rank's psychology.

The Trauma of Birth (Rank, 1924/1993) is more important historically than conceptually. The book established birth as "the prototype for all anxiety" (Lieberman, 1985, p. 221) and shifted the emphasis from the patient's father transference to the

relationship with the mother (p. 222) but, in doing so, because it challenged the primacy of the Oedipal, it led to a rupture in Rank's relationship with Freud that was never to be repaired. It is far from Rank's best work and it lacked the kind of critical perspective and distance we saw in Nietzsche's self-evaluation. *The Trauma of Birth* was an awkward attempt to squeeze a vast and encyclopedic cross-cultural knowledge of literary and artistic iconology into the narrow container of psychoanalytic theory. It was contrived in its effort to translate the mythopoetic into the reductive scientific language of psychoanalysis. Rank was too much under the influence of Freud to consciously and willingly separate from his mentor and surrogate father. Rank, Freud's designated ambassador to and from the world of folklore, myth, literature, and art, was too scientific, too justificational, too psychoanalytic for his own good, and too unable to see the irony of his own symbolic birth. "*The Trauma of Birth* was praised, criticized, misunderstood, and finally, ignored after Rank's break with orthodox analysis" (Lieberman, in Rank, 1924/1993, p. x). After an initially warm reception (Freud had only read parts of it), Rank was hurt—his narcissism wounded—by the intensity of Freud's criticism. When he recovered, he went on, fortunately, to develop his own unique approach.

One of the wonders of *The Trauma of Birth* is its appreciation of the pervasiveness and power of birth imagery. Ironically, Rank was better able to see birth symbolism in Nietzsche than in his own work. In a chapter on "Philosophic Speculation," Rank generously acknowledged his debt to Nietzsche and showed his understanding of Nietzsche's struggle to free himself from his philosophical precursor, Socrates. Nietzsche had the utmost admiration for this master of dialectical method, known to us only by his speech and reputation. In Nietzsche's lectures, "Socrates is celebrated as 'the first philosopher of life [Lebensphilosoph]'" (Kaufmann, 1974a, p. 396). Nietzsche thought of him as original. In Socrates, "Thought serves life, while in all previous philosophers life served thought and knowledge" (p. 396). Rank read *The Birth of Tragedy* carefully and certainly saw Nietzsche as he wanted to be seen, as an "artistic Socrates" (Nietzsche, 1967/1872, p. 12). The birth imagery is abundant. Rank remembered that "Socrates himself likened his dialectic therapy of drawing forth thoughts to the practice of midwifery, as he practices it in imitation of his mother who was a midwife" (Rank, 1924/1993, pp. 181–182). Rank's own will therapy was itself a powerful drawing forth of unborn selves.

Rank also read what Nietzsche (1872/1967) said about Socrates' death—that Socrates voluntarily willed his death. In choosing hemlock over exile, Socrates sentenced himself to death, an act "Socrates himself seems to have brought about with perfect awareness and without any natural awe of death" (p. 89). Rank (1924/1993) sees the image of the dying Socrates as that of "the human being freed, through knowledge and reason, from the fear of death" (p. 182). But as Nietzsche understood, and Rank would come to understand, knowledge and rea-

son are not enough. An intellectual overcoming of the birth trauma and the death fear through will, intention, and action is also required. Both Nietzsche and Rank also ultimately saw the necessity of active encounter with the irrational. They recognized the importance of going beyond the belief that mere insight and talk were enough. Both advocated the kind of courage and independence of will that only arises in full conscious engagement with one's mortality, as experienced here and now. Even in *The Trauma of Birth*, were seeds of Rank's existential approach.

Rank moved away from the kind of reductive interpretation of birth trauma he offered in this early book. In time *The Trauma of Birth* changed even Freud's thinking about the source of anxiety but by then Rank had gone beyond an emphasis on birth and was immersed in the development of an independent approach to the therapeutic process. Rank literally moved away from Freud and his followers; he came to The United States and introduced an alternative to psychoanalysis—a present-focused and engaged psychotherapy—to a receptive audience of social workers and psychologists eager for a more time-limited and more client-centered approach. In the meantime, *The Trauma of Birth* came to represent for Rank only painful memories. According to Lieberman (1985), later in his life “Rank told a friend he wished he had never written the book” (p. 221).

Will therapy, Rank's constructive alternative to psychoanalysis, is existential. It emphasizes present-centered awareness, acknowledgement of limitation, and creative seizing of improvisational opportunities. Birth was still important but now it was the healthy separation of client from therapist that took center stage. Therapeutic innovations such as “end-setting” (Rank, 1929/1978, p. 185) were Rank's way to remind the client of his or her own strength of will. Rank encouraged going beyond a stage of bargaining with death. He thought self-stifling and inhibition were ways to postpone death. He believed clients were able to overcome the neurotic hoarding that leads to an unlived life. Rank's will therapy, an active here-and-now approach that deals openly and honestly with termination, is a forerunner of much of what we now call existential psychotherapy.

There is no direct lineage from Rank to contemporary practitioners of this therapeutic art. Rank's approach is more intuitive and experientially rediscoverable than knowable and teachable. Rigorously nondogmatic and determined to avoid the zealotry and elitism he discovered within the Freudian movement, Rank never established a school of his own; instead he developed an approach that requires innovation and spontaneity on the part of the practitioner, no less than on the part of the client. Rank's original contribution to psychology is a timeless art, a highly situational and present-centered psychotherapy addressed to the fundamental existential concern of living fully in spite of death. It is an approach that challenges the client's own anxiety of influence—his or her belief that the past is fate; it simultaneously encourages the therapist to relinquish influence over the client so that the client can give birth to a newly independent self.

THE WOLFMAN DREAM

A famous dream provides insight about influence—particularly about Freud’s influence on Rank and Rank’s ultimate reaction to it. This dream is a familiar one from the psychoanalytic literature: the Wolfman dream from Freud’s case studies (Freud, 1914/1955). The Wolfman was destined to become one of Freud’s most famous offspring—one of his immortal clinical cases. First the dream:

I dreamt that it was night and that I was lying in my bed (my bed stood with its foot toward the window; in front of the window there was a row of old walnut trees. I know it was winter when I had the dream, and night-time.) Suddenly the window opened of its own accord, and I was terrified to see some white wolves sitting on the big walnut tree in front of the window. There were six or seven of them. The wolves were quite white and looked more like foxes or sheep-dogs, for they had big tails like foxes and they had their ears pricked up like dogs when they pay attention to something. In great terror, evidently of being eaten up by the wolves, I screamed and woke up. (in Menaker, 1981, p. 554)

The patient known as The Wolfman had this dream at age 4, then intermittently throughout his life. Freud interpreted and reinterpreted it but perhaps his best-known interpretation has to do with the patient’s castration anxiety, of Oedipal origin, based on a fear of retribution for having witnessed the primal scene.

Esther Menaker, one of the first to bring Rank’s work to a contemporary psychological audience, shows that several years after his *Trauma of Birth*, Rank had another way of understanding it. Rank’s interpretation dramatically illustrates his divergence from Freud and his hard-won understanding of the necessity of overcoming precursors. Menaker (1981) suggests that the retelling of the dream many years after it was dreamt calls for a new interpretation. The dream, she suggests, is best understood in terms of the context where it occurs—not in terms of the past but in the context of the therapeutic relationship, the relationship between patient and analyst, between The Wolfman and Freud.

As Rank correctly understood, the dream “is a communication to Freud” (Menaker, 1981, p. 555). As Menaker notes,

Rank interprets the tree outside the window as a family tree; and indeed there were chestnut trees outside Freud’s office window which a patient lying on the couch would be looking at because the sofa faced the window. On the narrow strip of wall beside the windowframe there hung photographs of Freud’s disciples. These are the wolves sitting on the tree; they are the siblings whom the patient fears, envies, and would like to replace. (p. 555)

Rank’s interpretation is that the dream is about precursors, not only the Wolfman’s but also Rank’s own, and importantly, for him, the dream is a reminder of the im-

portance of attending to the actual therapeutic relationship in the consulting room where it takes place. This “here and now” focus would become central in Rank’s later writing on psychotherapy.

Rank’s immortality is largely and ironically the result of his ambivalent relationship to Freud. Rank is more famous now for his break with Freud and for the biting criticisms to which he was subjected by various “wolves,” than for his innovative later work. In this sense, Rank is a tragic figure, never fully recognized for his individuality and never completely able to outlive his intellectual father. Although 38 years younger than Freud, Rank died just a month after him. But at his death he seemed to have found the kind of ironic perspective he treasured in Nietzsche, for he was heard to say in his last breath, “comical” (Lieberman, 1985, p. 389).

CONCLUSION

To the question of whether the existence of powerful precursors is daunting or stimulating, we must conclude that for Nietzsche and Rank the necessity of going beyond “strong poets” of their time, although painful and awkward, was a spur to creative action and productivity. For both men awe of their intellectual predecessors receded as they, through acts of will and self-determination, developed independent stances. Nietzsche and Rank both needed to put previous works behind them to move on. Nietzsche’s means of doing so was ruthless self-critique; Rank’s was to move away and leave the past behind. For both Nietzsche and Rank, even to have (intellectual) parents was to admit that one is mortal. An acute awareness of the inevitability of death led both, however, not to resignation but to an affirmation of life and further creativity.

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