

**NOTIONS OF ARTIST AS THE HERO**  
**A Nietzschean reading on the Philosophical Relationship of**  
**Otto Rank and Sigmund Freud**

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**Master's Thesis in**  
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## **ABSTRACT**

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The goal of this study is to explore the development of Otto Rank's (1884-1939) philosophy through his shifting conceptions of heroism. The focus is specifically on the notion of Artist as the Hero. The investigation is conducted by performing a comparative study of Rank's thought with that of his two great mentors: Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). The study employs various key concepts of Nietzsche – such as Apollonian / Dionysian dichotomy – to illustrate similarities and differences between Rank and Freud. Nietzsche acts here as a basis for comparison.

This study argues that the psychologies of Rank and Freud – and their gradual divergence – can be seen as two different and unique answers to the challenge of nihilism, as expressed by Nietzsche with his conception of the Death of God and the cultural criticism that entails. It proposes that the notion of Artistic Hero in the philosophies of Rank, Freud and Nietzsche can be seen as a key concept, as they attempt to answer this dilemma.

The study shows how the development of Rank's thought progresses from strict adherence to Freud's ideas to a point where he re-unites again with his early philosophical hero, Nietzsche, the artistic heroism acting as a connecting metaphor. The study elucidates how Rank uses Nietzsche to break away from Freud, and Freud, on the other hand, tries to perform a 'heroic escape' from Nietzsche's influence. In their quest for authenticity and new values, these three thinkers essentially create heroic myths of their own.

Although the psychology of Freud and the philosophy of Nietzsche are well-known in both public and academic spheres, the same cannot be said about Rank, whose ideas still remain unknown and obscure to most. In its own small way, this study aims to rectify this situation by exploring 'Rankian' ideas. There is an added dynamism that comes from juxtaposing Rank's thought with Nietzsche and Freud's.

**Keywords:** Otto Rank, Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, Heroism, Nihilism, Psychoanalysis, Philosophy of Art.

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## **CHAPTER OUTLINE:**

### **1. Introduction: Death of God and the Heroic Response**

The purpose of this chapter is to first describe the great problem of nihilism Nietzsche saw to be threatening Western civilization. This was a crisis of meaning, which resulted from the decline of traditional, essentially religious and metaphysical, values. There was a need for new kind of heroism and new kinds of values. I outline how early psychoanalysis – and the psychologies of Freud and Rank with their notions of heroism – can be seen as attempts to respond to the challenge Nietzsche posed. This Chapter outlines briefly the historical and philosophical context for the study and gives reasons why these particular thinkers are chosen to be juxtaposed and analysed together. I also introduce the notions of 'anxiety of influence' and heroic escape, which will act as a conceptual tools to understand the dynamics between Nietzsche, Freud and Rank.

### **2. Heroic Artist: Artistic Creation as an antidote to Nihilism in Nietzsche's thought**

The main reference text from Nietzsche here is *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), though his later conceptions of Art and Heroism are also explored. In this work we are introduced to the dichotomy of Apollonian and Dionysian forces and Tragedy as the ultimate form of art. The chapter explores the idea that by viewing life through aesthetic angle and life as a work of art one can transcend the abyss of nihilism, brought about by the decline of traditional and metaphysical values. The notion of Artistic hero is being introduced. Rank allies with early Nietzsche in viewing art as a potent vehicle through which man is able to create meaning for life. Later, in his more 'positivistic' writings, Nietzsche does not hold such a positive view of the redeeming power of art, but condemns his early views as somewhat fanciful. Final period of Nietzsche sees departing from strict adherence to scientific positivism and seeking meaning, again, from art and aesthetic perspective.

### **3. Artist as the Hero in Freud's Psychology**

The chapter starts off by offering a critical look at Freud's biography, as presented by Freud and his biographers, and analysing it as an archetypal hero myth, which adheres to reality only partly. From there, the focus shifts to Freud's conceptions of art and the artist. It is found out that his view's on heroism co-incided closely with 'early Rank', who of course had derived much of his ideas from Freud at the time. Though at times entertaining romantic notions of the artist, Freud does not assign such grand functions to art as Nietzsche and Rank. He defines art as a distinctly human phenomena wherein one sublimates his sexual, libidinal, energies into a works of culture. The last part of the chapter combines the themes of the biographical heromyth and Freud's aesthetics, by outlining the proposition that in practice Freud was creating meaning for his life through his psychoanalytic enterprise and writings, which were also works of literature and art with a rich mythological content. It is suggested that Freud, through his self-created heroic myth, adhered to Nietzsche's dictum about making one's life into a work of art.

### **4. Artist as the Hero in the Thought of Otto Rank**

The chapter explores first the biographical and philosophical development of Otto Rank from his early Nietzschean beginnings into a ground-breaking freudian theorist, and then – after a painful break-up with Freud – returning back to his 'Nietzschean roots', where he outlines his own unique brand of psychology. Rank's thought is being divided into three periods here: The early freudian period, the transition-period and the later post-freudian period. All periods are being explored with the notion of Artistic Hero held in a specific focus.

When exploring Rank's early freudian period, the main text being explored is *the Birth of the Myth of the Hero*, as it also exemplifies well Rank's freudian period. Artistic works are here mainly viewed as an expression of infantile – oedipal – sentiments. *Trauma of Birth* (1924) is the key text for the transition period, where Rank starts his departure from classical psychoanalytic theory. *Art and the Artist* (1932), *Truth and Reality* (1929) and *Psychology and the Soul* (1930) are the main sources for the final post-freudian period. In the post-freudian period, Rank essentially views art as an 'immortality-project' – an attempt to escape and transcend our mortality.

## **5. Comparisons and Conclusions**

In the final chapter, the main ideas of the previous chapters are briefly revisited and brought together: We are now able to summarize the notions of heroism that these thinkers used and adhered to, in their attempts to tackle the problem of nihilism. We can also say that in what way the Nietzschean conceptions can highlight the differences between post-freudian Rank and Freud. We can now attempt to give an tentative answer to the question we posed: Can Artistic Heroism, life lived as an work of art, be seen as workable answer to the problem of meaninglessness, which Nietzsche so forcefully articulated? A special focus is put on Rank's ideas on the matter.

# 1. INTRODUCTION: HEROIC RESPONSE TO THE DEATH OF GOD AND THE CHALLENGE OF NIHILISM

***The Intention of the Study:*** We will explore the Nietzschean conceptions of a hero, primarily that of the Artist-as-the-Hero, which can be seen as Nietzsche's suggested solution to the problem of nihilism. His conceptions are then used as a tool to highlight similarities and differences in the thought of Otto Rank and Sigmund Freud. Nietzsche acts as the basis for comparisons. The hypothesis is that through Nietzschean heroic notions, we can highlight some primary differences between Rank's and Freud's philosophies. These differences, in connection with personal affairs, drove these two men apart. The notion of an Artist-as-the-Hero and the question about heroic, secular life runs through the work as the conceptual spine and a source of comparisons. The hero is defined as the subject who responds to the challenge of nihilism, while in the chapters of this study various creative strategies – or modes of heroic action - are being introduced.

## 1.1 Nietzsche, Rank and Freud - Three thinkers entwined

One logical way to get started would be to ask the following: Why choose these three thinkers – Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Otto Rank (1884-1939) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) – as the subject of this study? What are the connections there? And why to examine Rank's and Freud's thinking through Nietzschean lenses? After all, there already exists some informative studies examining the relationship between the philosophies of Freud's and Nietzsche. *Nietzsche and Depth Psychology* (1999), by Golomb, Lehner & Santiniello et al. and *Nietzsche's Presence in Freud's life* (1995) by Ronald Lehrer, to name a few. Although much fewer in number, there also exist studies of the relationship between Rank and Freud – which examine how their philosophies compare. James Lieberman's Rank biography *Acts of Will* (1985), and the collection of *The Letters of Freud and Rank: Inside Psychoanalysis* (2012) are notable works in this category. Rank's relationship to Nietzsche has not been the topic of a book per se, but it has been explored by Rank-biographers such as Lieberman (1985) and Jessie Taft (1958). So, why add more pages to this pile?

My justification for the study is, firstly, that while there are volumes of studies on all three thinkers, there is still room for a philosophical study about the specific role that Nietzschean formulations play in Freudian and Rankian thought and their interplay. Nietzschean questions and conceptions do seem to highlight well where Freud and Rank most crucially depart in their thought. Also, Nietzsche's questions can act as a tool to test the existential and pragmatic utility of the psychologies of Rank and Freud. Thirdly, this study focuses specifically on the intertwined notions of heroism and artistic creation. This, to my knowledge, has not been a specific focus of study before.

While there are direct and demonstrable, historical influences between early psychoanalytic theory and Nietzsche's philosophy (for example Lehrer's work does a great job at outlining these connections), Nietzsche's conceptions can also be used in a more creatively interpretative and metaphorical way. David Chapelle's *Nietzsche and Psychoanalysis* (1993) works in this manner. In this study, both types of methods, one focusing dutifully on the history of ideas and their cultural context, and the other as interpreting them metaphorically and philosophically, are being employed.

Out of these three thinkers, Rank is clearly the least well-known figure. However, given his position as Freud's protege and spiritual son who worked side by side with the father of psychoanalysis for over two decades makes him a person of special interest. Rank's early publications earned him a place as one of the key players in the early psychoanalytic movement. He was a pioneer in using the psychoanalytic method to interpret art, myths and literature. In addition to this, Rank and Freud were connected through their close intellectual relationship to Nietzsche. Both were undoubtedly influenced by him. Nietzsche could be claimed to be, in the philosophical sense, a father-figure to them both.

Lastly, one justification for this study could be that there are still fairly few studies where Otto Rank is a central character: His contribution and relevance to the academic discipline of philosophy and psychology, and various psychotherapies that the latter includes within itself, is somewhat contested and murky. At times, Rank is acknowledged as an important precursor for humanistic psychology and object-relations therapy, but more often still finds



his name being omitted when notable figures of psychoanalysis are listed and discussed. The ingenuity of Rank's philosophical contribution was praised in Ernst Becker's Pulitzer-prize winning book *Denial of Death* (1973) wherein one finds a valuable analysis of Rank's post-freudian thinking<sup>1</sup>. In humanistic psychology, Carl Rodgers acknowledged Rank's influence, especially in shaping his thoughts on client-centered therapy (Rodgers 1961, 32). Rollo May, one of the fathers of existential psychotherapy, saw Rank as the single most important figure in paving the way for existential therapy. Psychiatrist Stanislav Grof, one of the most notable figures in transpersonal psychology, cited Rank as a major influence, describing Rank's work as 'humanistic and voluntaristic' as opposed to Freud's 'reductionistic' and 'deterministic' approach (Groff 1985, 170). To summarize, given the depth and originality of his work, one would wish to see more studies and readings into Rank's thought.

## 1.2 Nietzsche's influence on Freud and Rank

Nietzsche's influence on Freud's and Rank's thought and on the early psychoanalytic theory should not be underestimated. If one would have to name any other philosopher, perhaps only Schopenhauer would come close in terms of influence. Both Rank and Freud were impressed by Nietzsche's philosophy, yet their personal reactions differed significantly. Rank admitted his debt and adoration of Nietzsche and referring to him as his "model, leader, and guide". "I virtually bathed in Nietzsche's genius" Rank reminisces (Lieberman 1985, 11). Apparently his studies of Nietzsche only came to a halt when he discovered Freud. Rank was impressed how Nietzsche's focus of exploration was in himself and not in the outer world, as was the case with other philosophers. Contrast this with Freud (Cited in Lieberman 1985, 100) who claimed that "I do not know Nietzsche's work; occasional attempts at reading it were smothered by *an excess of interest* (emphasis added)".

Freud claimed not having done any significant reading of Nietzsche despite being in possession of some of Nietzsche's works and despite it being well documented fact that he had discussed Nietzsche's thought in various meetings of psychoanalytic society. The comparisons and similarities between his work and that of Nietzsche's were brought to

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<sup>1</sup> "Rank's thought may well prove to be the rarest gift of Freud's disciples to the world", Becker once said (Lieberman 1985)

Freud's attention on numerous occasions (Lehrer 1995, 259) and, at least at a later stage of his life, Freud did acknowledge that the "guesses and intuitions (of Nietzsche) often agree in the most astonishing way with the laborious findings of psycho-analysis" (Freud 1959, 60). The reason Freud gave himself for not exploring Nietzsche properly, was precisely these reported similarities, and also he claimed to be both daunted by Nietzsche's brilliance and scared of the influence this man could exert on his own work<sup>2</sup> (Lehrer 1995, 76). Freud also assured Jung that he had never really studied Nietzsche. Given that Freud acknowledged Nietzsche's genius and parallels with his own findings on many occasions, it is truly curious that he shares almost no opinions nor feelings about this man and his philosophy in his notes or writings (Jung 1966, 59).

Whether Freud's comments about Nietzsche's influence on him are believable is a topic in itself. But be as it may, Nietzsche had an undeniably strong influence to both Freud and Rank, as argued by many authors. And certainly; one does not have to rely on any scholar to believe this. It suffices that one studies their works and discovers the striking similarities and convergences, in terms of philosophical content, in their ideas.

If Nietzsche was an important precursor to the birth of psychoanalysis itself, Rank had a significant role to play in the development of psychoanalytic theory. He was the first to conduct extensive psychoanalytic studies on myth, literature and art. After Carl Jung had departed from the psychoanalytic society it was arguably Rank who was, for a long time, considered as the worthiest successor to Freud. This was due to his breadth of understanding, his impressive literary output and his close relationship to Freud. However, this was not meant to be, as Rank parted ways with Freud in the late 1920's due to irreconcilable ideological and personal differences, a process which bore curious resemblances to the earlier 'break-up' of Freud and Jung.

In Rank's view, Freud could not handle the extensions and modifications he had proposed to the psychoanalytic theory in his seminal work *Trauma of Birth* (1924), wherein he proposed birth trauma to be the source of all neurosis. Rank had personally grown tired to the strict confines of the Freudian system and the way it manifested in their tightly-knit

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<sup>2</sup> As regards to Nietzsche: "I was less concerned with the question of priority than with keeping my mind unembarrassed" (Freud 1959, 60).

group of analysts. Freud's view was that Rank was becoming increasingly irrational and could not handle criticism to his newly found concepts. He also interpreted the changes in Rank's thought as symptoms of Rank's failing mental health. Yet, reducing the development in Rank's thought to his manic-depressive symptoms can not be said to be fair: Rank's works should have been evaluated, first and foremost, on the basis of their content, not by psychoanalysing their author. Same naturally goes for Nietzsche and Freud. This is not to say that there are no insights that can be gained from the practice of so-called psychohistorical, or psychobiographical, analysis.

The aim of this study is not to catalogue the similarities of these three authors, since this has already been done quite successfully. It is rather to try to understand the development of Rank and Freud's thought through Nietzsche's questions and conceptions. When we read Freud and Rank's theories as creative answers to Nietzsche's persistent dilemmas, their personal responses to Nietzschean conceptions, revealing insights about differences between Rank and Freud can also be discovered.

We will see that there is an especially close connection between later Rank and existentialist, Dionysian, Nietzsche. Post-Freudian Rank finds parallels with Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* and his later thought in general. As to Freud, one can see a closer affinity with the Apollonian quality; the cool, rational, image-maker and dreamer. Freud's Id/Ego-distinction can be seen to be derived from Nietzsche's It. Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913) has Nietzschean fingerprints on it, *Genealogy of Morals* most likely being the inspiration there. Freud connects with Nietzsche as a cultural critic, who also made it his project to expose the hypocrisies of the organized religion and Victorian morality.

As the combined output of all of these three thinkers – Nietzsche, Freud or Rank – is vast, outlining all the parallels and contradictions between them would certainly exceed the scope of this limited study. Therefore, in my goal of understanding Rank / Freud – relationship through Nietzsche, I will focus on the notion of *hero*, and Artist as the Hero to be more precise, as the unifying concept. The different periods of Nietzsche's thought can be seen to outline somewhat different notions of heroism: There is the early Dionysian tragic Artist-hero, then the chameleon-like prophet of Zarathustra and also the aggressively

anti-Christian prophet of the 'last days', a man of Will, calling for re-evaluation of all values. It is argued here that all of these heroes can be seen as various forms of the artistic heroism. Do these Nietzschean conceptions of the hero find correspondence in the ones found from Rank's and Freud's writings? And lastly: What is the hero myth that Nietzsche, Freud and Rank projected about themselves?

On the whole, the heroic way of being, in this study at least, can be interpreted here as the man's ideal about himself. An ideal way of being and acting, given man's predicament. The Heroic way of life is the ideal, or admirable, way to respond to the human condition. To frame it in Nietzschean terms: What does one do with oneself, once he realises that the gods have stopped talking? What can he create out of his life? Can we become gods ourselves, creators of our own destiny, or is that just an absurd, wishful fantasy? Can art, and creative way of living, play a meaningful role in this equation? Although the notion of the hero, in the literal sense, was arguably more prevalent concept in the thought of Nietzsche and Rank, it does make sense to include Freud in this discussion and explore his psychology in this context. As it turns out, the notion of hero – and artistic heroism - was far from being unimportant for Freud.

### **1.3 On the Nietzschean concepts chosen and employed**

To start with, it should be noted that once one acquaints oneself with Nietzsche's philosophy and various commentaries that have been made about it, it will become obvious that there is no general agreement as to which concepts can be said to be truly the center of Nietzsche's philosophy, if indeed there are any, as some have argued. In modern philosophy, when it comes to sheer volume of readings, Nietzsche is probably unparalleled. Some of the most influential interpretations are those of Heidegger and Deleuze, who both place great deal of weight on Nietzsche's conception of nihilism. Martin Heidegger saw Nietzsche as the last metaphysical thinker, who at the same time put an end to the Western tradition of metaphysics (Heidegger 1991). In his seminal study *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1961) Gilles Deleuze emphasized the notions of tragic, *ressentiment*, the Overman and the dichotomy of active / reactive. To put it broadly, the famous french interpretations of Nietzsche by Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Deleuze emphasized the

way Nietzsche rejected various dualistic conceptions and sought out non-binary alternatives. Foucault analysed at length the links between power and knowledge and described himself as Nietzschean. Many interpretations see his conception of Dionysos and its various meanings, as key to his works. Richard Rorty found plenty of use for Nietzsche's conception of *perspectivism*, but did not think much of his political or moral ideas. Rose Pfeffer, on the other hand, writes that the whole purpose of Nietzsche's writings can be reduced to an attempt to try to define the meaning of 'tragic disposition' and bring about the coming of a tragic age (Pfeffer 1972, 29).

So, there is a wealth of important concepts in Nietzsche's thought that one can put one's focus on: the Eternal Recurrence, Amor Fati, Overman/Übermensch, Will to Power, the dichotomy between the slave and master morality, the notions of Apollonian and Dionysian. The list goes on. One can choose to focus on certain conceptions, without trying to treat his philosophy as an all-around philosophical system. The approach in this study is simply to make some choices as to how Nietzsche's notions are being employed. The concepts used are ones that seem to stand out thematically when one outlines the notions of heroism as one's subject. Nietzsche is being used here in the Foucaultian sense, i.e. his work and legacy is respected by putting his concepts into work. Nietzschean concepts and/or propositions are used to highlight the differences and similarities in the ideological relationship of Rank and Freud. And if the meaning of the concepts employed is not self-evident - which it usually isn't - I will attempt to clarify in what sense it is being employed. For example, the notion of Dionysian has also various meanings depending which phase in Nietzsche's life we focus on and which interpretation of his work we choose to employ.

#### **1.4 The Death of God and the challenge of Nihilism**

As Nietzsche's figure looms large behind both Rank and Freud, it is now worth exploring in more detail the ways in which his philosophy influenced the birth and development of the new kind of psychology, i.e. Depth Psychology, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>3</sup>.

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3 Arguably it was Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) which was a defining work for the birth of psychoanalysis. The work describes Freud's own 'self-analysis', which introduced to the larger audience to many of his central ideas. Co-incidentally Nietzsche died the same year this work was first published.

In popular culture, Nietzsche is probably most well-known as the thinker who proclaimed that "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him" (Nietzsche 1974, 181). Usually it is only the first part of the sentence that is cited. The phrase appeared originally in Nietzsche's *Gay Science* (1882) but the notion of God's demise, or demise of religious faith itself, remained a central theme in Nietzsche's works. Nietzsche was actually not the first one to coin the phrase. At least Philip Mainländer (1841-1876), a pessimistic philosopher who, like Nietzsche, was at first taken by Schopenhauer had written about the worthlessness of life and of the 'Death of God' a few decades earlier. "God has died and his death was the life of the world" Mainländer stated in his *Die Philosophie der Erlösung*. But Nietzsche put it more poetically:

*God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? ( The Gay Science, Section 125, translation: Walter Kaufmann ) (Nietzsche 1974, 181)*

Nietzsche's statement is not to be read simply as a denial of Judeo-Christian God, although it is that also. It expresses how it has become an impossibility for a modern man to hold on to the traditional theistic, metaphysical and cultural beliefs. Murder of God denotes a radical loss of belief within us. Yet, as faith in religious beliefs and values has become ingrained in us over several millennia, there is a sense of guilt and anxiety that follows our extraordinary deed. There is a new kind of emptiness in us that we need to fill somehow. All this could be read as a symptom of the rapid advance of scientific thought and materialism, connected to the great project of Enlightenment. The birth pangs of the new era, if you will. But Nietzsche is not convinced of the Enlightenment's power to construct a rational morality in place of the old religious values. He claims that the old values are lurking behind the thin veneer of the new rhetorics. Though he rather turned to science than monotheistic religion, Nietzsche was not a simple-minded materialist or neither was he Darwinist either<sup>4</sup>.

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4 In an entry called "Anti-Darwin", Nietzsche claims that "Species do not grown in perfection: the weak keep gaining dominance over the strong- there are more of them and besides, they are cleverer ...Darwin forgot about the Spirit (that is English)" - from *Twilight of the Idols*. (Nietzsche 2005, 199).

Nietzsche claims that despite our bold declarations to be free of superstition and religious bondage, the 'shadow of God' is haunting us – and it will continue to do so for quite some time. We find it embedded in our values and cultural practices. We find it in our art. If we wish to be genuinely free, we would need an all-out dissection, a re-evaluation of our values – and of our motives of holding on to them. This project also entails examining the power-relations that underlie our values. Unlike the biblical or Darwinian interpretation of history, Nietzsche also stresses the contingency in the course of history: Things could have gone otherwise also. Things can be read otherwise also. In his *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887) Nietzsche describes this method, as briefly outlined above, as genealogical.

Nietzsche set out to describe the spiritual void caused by the fading influence of traditional Judeo-Christian religion coupled with the growing influence of mechanistic natural sciences, including Darwinian biology. In the dawn of the new century, Nietzsche becomes a spearhead for the criticism of traditional religion and values it entails. In his writings, he outlines an angry and passionate plea for a redemptive anti-metaphysical vision and a new type of man. His critique is so compelling, and increasingly influential, that anyone who considered himself a serious intellectual in German-speaking world at the time, would have to take interest and form a view to his challenge.

The significance of Nietzsche's critique did not come from merely announcing the 'Death of God'. After all, the crisis of Christian faith and the rise of non-religious thought was not a brand new phenomenon in Europe. Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx, for example, had argued their case for materialistic (and atheistic) communism few decades earlier. What Nietzsche did clearly better than his predecessors though, was that he attempted to describe in depth the psychological ramifications of god's absence: How does it affect the individual, society and culture at large? How does one cope, let alone thrive, if there is no cosmic consolation to be found from a grand stories that religion has so far provided? This leads to a thorough dissection of morality: If our values do lack a transcendental basis, we have to carefully explore and examine their human origins. Especially in cases where divine origin has been assumed.

Nietzsche presented his vision to the present and future man. It was a fitting question for him to ask: *How should we conceive heroism and meaningful, honourable, life mean in the absence of essentialistic values?* Nietzsche has been, more than once, described as the philosopher of heroism. Nietzsche attempts to give an answer to this question in various phases of his thought. Multiple concepts and literary means were conceived and employed in his project.

Nietzsche and Schopenhauer prepared the soil where Freudian theory and depth psychology could grow out of. This not to discount many other influences that affected the birth of psychoanalysis and depth psychology, for there were many, of course. The work of Eduard Von Hartmann, Pierre Janet, Jean-Martin Charcot and Joseph Breyer to name a few. In this study, however, it is suggested that psychoanalysis can be read, as a secular attempt to deal with the Nietzschean challenge of the Death of God (Though psychoanalysis has had curious manifestations bearing close resemblance to religion). How does it attempt to do this? The aim of psychoanalysis was to delve deeper into man's psyche and help him unearth repressed content from his unconscious. The aim was to effect a healing in man's psyche and simply to answer to the call of the ancient oracle: "Know Thyself". As we'd resolve tensions from our unconscious and assigned new interpretations for our experiences, we would be able to live a more sane and less neurotic life, without resorting to supernatural or metaphysical aids. Now, from the definition given above, it is not immediately apparent if psychoanalysis can be of assistance in the problem that Nietzsche has outlined, for his dilemma is significantly larger than mere mild neurosis. Here then, it is worth exploring, whether art and artistic creation could have something to contribute. This then is the question that will be explored in the forthcoming chapters.

#### **1.4.1 Road to Nietzschean Nihilism**

Before we explore Nietzsche's call for heroism in more detail, it should be asked that what exactly is the connection between the notion of nihilism, which Nietzsche sees as the imminent threat, and the decline of traditional, metaphysical, values? What kind of link does Nietzsche see between the Death of God and nihilism and the plethora of decadent values that the latter represents for him?



When it comes to the concept of nihilism, it is clear that Nietzsche was not, by any means, the first philosopher to use the term. Neither was he the first thinker to be accused of being a nihilist. The term is much older, dating back all the way to Christian scholasticism at least. The meaning of it, was then, of course, quite different to modern usage, referring to various heretical strands in christology. In 1163 Pope Alexander II used the term 'nihilianism'. Theologian Friedrich Jacobi (1743-1818) used and presumably coined the term in its modern philosophical sense. The term appears in his letters to Fichte (Heidegger 1991, 4). Wide variety of philosophers before Nietzsche, including Gottfried Leibniz, Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Schelling, were accused of being nihilists and were forced to defend themselves against the charge. Friedrich Schlegel wrote about nihilism at length before Nietzsche. Nietzsche certainly was aware of the work of these writers and also of the existence of nihilist movement in Russia. The origins of the modern usage of the term is often attributed to Ivan Turgenev's 1862 novel *Fathers and Sons* wherein the main character Eugene Bazarov describes himself as nihilist, denying all authorities and affirming only the value of utility (Tuusvuori 2000, 545, 554).

There is also the Eastern counterpart to the concept of nihilism which ought to be mentioned since it plays a role in the philosophy Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's philosophical mentor. Eastern religions were slowly becoming more well-known in Europe at the time Schopenhauer was writing his magnum opus *The World as Will and Representation* (1818). Schopenhauer considered his work as fresh version of the truths elucidated by Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama. Though Schopenhauer claims to "not have been under the influence" of Buddhism while writing his major work<sup>5</sup>, his own views bear an uncanny resemblance to it. Note for example the conception of Nirvana as the cessation of desire and denial of will. Schopenhauer thought that human Will and our various desires and wants are the principal source of our suffering and we should, therefore, find a way to quench them.

Nirvana has been described in canonical literature of Buddhism as a state of non-

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5 He did however say that "If I wished to take the results of my philosophy as the standard of truth, I should have to concede to Buddhism pre-eminence over the others" *The World as Will and Representation*. Vol.2, Ch.17. (Schopenhauer 1909).

attachment, a place of nothingness. To Western ears this can sound a whole lot like nihilism, yet its meaning is not intended to be negative but a state worth striving for. Canonical Buddhism also tends to see the desire for nirvana as something to be cultivated, i.e. not all desire is to be avoided. Buddha addresses views that could be termed as moral nihilism in his discourses, and not in a positive light. He warns that certain ascetics who hold morally nihilistic views are prone to not see the dangers of misconduct and are, therefore, likely to engage in misconduct themselves and not value virtues (Bodhi 1995, note 425)<sup>6</sup>.

Although Nietzsche's first work *Birth of Tragedy* has Schopenhauerian tones in it, Nietzsche does not follow Schopenhauer in his appreciation of buddhism nor embrace its conception of nirvana. Nietzsche is not happy about the progress of 'morality of compassion' in Europe, indeed he laments the development of an 'European buddhism'. This to him is also an expression of nihilism and not a desirable course. In *Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche (Nietzsche 2005, 16) defines both Christianity and Buddhism as nihilistic religions, 'religions of decadence', yet he does give credit to Buddhism for being a hundred times more realistic religion which has already abandoned the concept of God. This is one of the most striking features of Nietzsche's nihilism: He sees it in places, where majority of thinkers do not. In ideologies that profess compassion, such as Christianity and Buddhism, in dialectics of Socrates and in socialism (Nietzsche 2008, 7).

#### **1.4.2 From 'True World' - to 'After the Death of God' - Philosophies**

In his work *The Death of God and the Meaning of Life* (2003) Julian Young makes a distinction between *True World* and *After-the-Death-of-God* philosophies, equating the latter with modern continental philosophy. Young builds his case in favor of the latter. I briefly sketch the evolution of Western thought, as conceived by Young, up until the time Nietzsche enters the picture, for the purpose of clarifying the dilemma Nietzsche found himself in.

Young (Young 2003, 1) suggests that there was a time when people of Western culture

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<sup>6</sup> Apannaka Sutta, Middle-Length Discourses of Buddha, note 425. (Bhikkhu Bodhi 1995).

were clear about the meaning of life. This meaning was the 'True World', in other words God, Paradise or the Absolute, a destination so glorious that once we would arrive there, there would be an eternal bliss. True world philosophies, of which there were many versions of, concerned both the individual and the collective. They provided meaning to life by defining it as a journey to redemption. The end destination for earthly life was supposedly so magnificent that it would make up for all the suffering and hardships endured on the way.

According to Young (Young 2003, 2), true world philosophies have dominated the Western ideological landscape since ancient Greece, all the way through scholastic Christianity up until Nietzsche's time. Before Nietzsche, Kant kept the true world philosophies alive by drawing a distinction between appearances and true reality, famously called he 'thing-in-itself'. We have no access to things-in-themselves through our senses, yet certain vistas to God, or the ultimate reality, can be opened through faith, reason, and morality, Kant argued. Schopenhauer, arguably the closest spiritual predecessor to Nietzsche, attacked Kant's true-world-hypothesis from another angle: He claimed that it was a laughable idea that this world of cruelty and suffering could be a manifestation of a loving God. On the contrary, the creator of this world would have to be a satanic one. Schopenhauer's argument was essentially a moral argument.

Yet Schopenhauer failed to do away with the notion of true world in his own philosophy, which is built around the concept of Will and the necessity to extinguish its incessant drive. Eagleton compares Schopenhauer's Will to Romantic life force, yet without any benign end. (Eagleton 2014, 153) For Schopenhauer True World takes here the form of Eastern-type Nirvana, an atheistic domain of nothingness, where the individual finds peace in the dissolution of his individual strivings. Nietzsche describes this type of thinking as "European buddhism", elements of which he sees in his own 'youthful philosophy' (see: Nietzsche's *Attempts at Self-Criticism*, preface to later editions *the Birth of Tragedy*). This is why Young classifies early Nietzsche, as exemplified in *the Birth of Tragedy*, as a type of true-world philosophy.

The development of Nietzsche's thought act as a watershed in Western thought though. For

later Nietzsche is seen as a first representative of Continental philosophy. The rift between the conservative (various formulations of true-world philosophies) and radical (philosophies that clearly do away with the idea of true world) rungs straight through Nietzsche's philosophy, Young suggests. (Young 2003, 4). The later Nietzsche puts his view across clearly: "The apparent world is the only world: the 'true world' is just a lie added on to it..." (Nietzsche 2005, 168).

The aim of the radical continental philosophy is to tackle the problem of nihilism head-on. Its aim is to find out the meaning of life "in the light of the death of God of Christianity". The answer, though, might also be the abolishment of the innate meaning of things, and finding joy and profundity from the 'surface' (Eagleton 2004, 155) This dilemma clearly extends well beyond the confines of academic philosophy, hence it was not only 'continental philosophers' who attempted to answer it. The project of psychoanalysis and ascent of psychology (clinical and otherwise) at large, can be viewed as an significant attempt of the modern man to combat the dilemma of existential nihilism.

## 1.5 Call for Heroism

Before moving into an analysis of the various types of heroism as responses to the Death of God and threat of nihilism, let us also briefly examine the historical roots for the notion of a hero, and trace our way to late 19<sup>th</sup> century where Nietzsche voiced his clarion call for new type of heroism.

The focus will be here mainly on the Greek notions of hero, since that is the principal source where Nietzsche and the early psychoanalysis drew their inspiration from. The etymology for the word 'hero' can be traced back to the Greek word *heros*, meaning literally 'protector' or 'defender'<sup>7</sup>. The first literary references to the concept can be found from epic poetry and ancient heromyths. Before this, along with other myths, they were transmitted orally. Long epic poems would relay stories of heroic acts, often performed in war or in the context of epic quest. The hero would live his life seeking honour, living according to a code of honor, and perform honourable acts. The admiration that he would

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7 Online Etymology Dictionary ( etymonline.com )

come to enjoy, would be bestowed upon him because of his brave deeds and noble characteristics<sup>8</sup>. In the *Iliad*, for example, the term hero is mainly reserved for the combatants at Troy. In *Odyssey*, its use is somewhat wider: it applied to people such as the peaceable king Alcinoos and the bard Demodocos. Generally, "lordly people" who had lived in a glorious past (Jones, 2004, 4).

However, most often the worth of the classical hero was measured by his skills in annihilating enemies and the setting for these 'heroic acts' is battleground. Classical heroes were also often at least somewhat divine, possessing special gifts such as invulnerability. In a slightly different vein, they might have also grown to become heroes by living through difficult circumstances<sup>9</sup> Heroes of classical myths tended to have a close relationship to gods and fate played an essential role in their journeys. With all his might, the classical hero tried to change the predetermined, often divinely prophesized, fate. But being more of a mortal than a god, he was unable to do so. A good example of this type of story is, of course, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, where one of the key themes of the play is the dilemma of Free Will vs. Determinism. This play, which gave name to one of the most well-known psychoanalytic concepts, was important not only for Freud, but also to Nietzsche and Rank (Lieberman 1985, xxix).

Nietzsche, being a classical philologist and a Greek scholar by training was well versed in antique culture of the Greeks and its classical notions of heroisms and he expressed his admiration and respect for it throughout his life. The moral virtues of Greek heroes, as associated with Homeric Greece, differ from those of Christian culture with its saintly heroes. In the former, some of the principal virtues were those of strength, nobility, justice, wisdom and courage. While Christian philosophy embraced some of these virtues – such as justice – there were virtues such as faith, hope, charity, prudence and pity – which did not hold same value in Ancient Greece. Nietzsche identified more with the Greek virtues, associating them with aristocratic "master-morality" and argued that the advent of Christian morals was an expression of nihilism itself, as it was based on the so-called "slave morality". These terms were introduced and discussed at length in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* (1887).

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8 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hero> and Encyclopedia Britannica (2018).

9 Encyclopedia Britannica (2018).

Nietzsche's call to heroism could then, at least on the surface level of things, be seen to be linked with the return to ancient warrior ethics of the Greeks. It can be argued, as Jacob Golomb does, that Nietzsche was not, in fact, searching for new values but seeking to 'reactivate authentic modes of living'. Golomb also notes that when we look for the positive descriptions of power in from Nietzsche, we do not find new values but rather ones "that have already appeared in traditional philosophical ethics". Golomb mentions the virtues of heroism, courage, nobility and self-sufficiency (Golomb 1999, 14).

Yet Nietzsche's 'philosophy of living' was more than a re-heating of ancient Greek philosophy. And Nietzsche also was of the opinion that by the time Socrates and Plato entered the scene, the Greek culture was in decay. Indeed Socrates and Plato were 'symptoms of decay', 'agents of Greek disintegration'. We need to go back to Pre-Socratic, Dionysian culture to find something of true worth. (Nietzsche 2005, 162) Though Nietzsche dives deep into pre-Socratic Greek culture in his quest for new values, there is a wealth of original concepts and insights in his writings, that should not be reduced to re-heating of the past.

It seems that Nietzsche thought, in a true romantic fashion, that there were certain periods of golden age in the past, wherein man had superior values to those that dominate our culture now, periods where aristocratic morality dominated. These happened to be also the periods that produced our most brilliant geniuses: The artists and the warriors. For Nietzsche, the ability of culture to produce master works of arts or dramatic lives lived with intensity - which can be viewed as great works of art as such - correlated directly to the values that the culture held. Culture, in which right the right type of noble, aristocratic, values reigned, produced both heroic individuals and great art.

Nietzsche's Zarathustra is a poetic portrait of his type of Dionysian hero. But Nietzsche also thought (in his hyperbolic *Ecce Homo*) that the artistic act of conceiving and articulating such a hero was itself a heroic deed of highest caliber, which places him above the rest of humanity. Here we see how closely Nietzsche's call to heroism was equated with artistic creation (Nietzsche 2005, 129).

Later on, we shall describe to what extent did Rank and Freud resonate with this type of heroism.

In this chapter, an attempt was made to establish a connection, both historical and philosophical, between Nietzsche, Freud and Rank. After that, the Nietzschean concepts that are going to be employed in the study were introduced. This was followed by description of the the central problem of nihilism, which Nietzsche saw as threatening the the Western civilization. From here the discussion moved to the notion of hero and how it appears in Nietzsche's philosophy. Hero is defined here as the subject, the agent, who faces the problem of nihilism and attempts to solve it in her life, for herself. The communal aspect is there, but it is not presented as primary here. Hero is the one who attempts to create a meaningful life by discovering, embodying and creating nihilism-transcending values. How achievable is this goal? In the following chapter, we will look at the various aesthetic, artistic notions of the hero as elucidated by Nietzsche. Exploring Nietzschean notion of the Artistic Hero is the starting-point, the basis, for our later analysis. It is then used as a basis for comparisons, highlighting various notions of artistic heroism in Rank's and Freud's thought.

## **1.6 The Anxiety of Influence and the Heroic Escape**

There are few terms that ought to be introduced before we move further on. These are terms that ought be kept in mind, as we explore the interconnectedness of Nietzsche, Freud and Rank. The first is *anxiety of influence*, a term coined by literary critic Harold Bloom (1930-2019), who wrote a book by the same name in 1973. Although the books subject-matter is poetry and poets, it can be applied to cases such as ours, where the subjects are not certainly not far from the poets. Indeed, Nietzsche certainly was one.

What Bloom meant by the term, was the uneasy, and unavoidable, relationship that poets had with their precursors - poets of the past. '*Anxiety of influence*' becomes often a strain and a hindrance to poet's creativity. Bloom (1973, 148) suggests that “the covert subject of most poetry for the last three centuries has been the anxiety of influence” - for every poet fears that there is simply nothing for him to do: That all the great works have already been written. Bloom also claims that it has been this has been the case for post-enlightenment

poets especially, to whom influence and fame has been very important. The romantic notion of artistic hero is at play here, and the idea naturally held some attraction for romantic poets. Like Rank, Bloom is also interested to find out how 'strong poets' are able to create despite – and perhaps partly because of – this anxiety of influence.

There is a 'fear of godhood', Bloom (1973, 152) suggests, that is a real pragmatic fear for individual with great 'poetic strength'. This certainly seemed to apply to Nietzsche at least, to whose poetry and writings during the few last active years took on psychotic qualities. Though Nietzsche seemed to tackle the problem by plunging further into megalomania and visions of grandeur. This fear was less acknowledged publicly in Rank's and Freud's cases, yet their private correspondences also bear testimony to some wild notions about their self-importance and the paramount value of their mission. This is why the issues of priority – of who came up with what first – are a major concern. There is a feeling of ambivalence as one aims to be the 'king of the mountain' – desire to achieve the heroic status and at the same time fear of what that entails when there is no-one to look up to anymore.

In order to break away from this 'anxiety of influence', what needs to happen is something that could be termed a 'heroic escape', where this Oedipal bind – to use Freudian terminology – is being severed by various means and a symbolic patricide (towards one's poetic hero, that can be a genuine father-figure for the artist) is being performed. We shall explore whether this feat was accomplished by Nietzsche, Freud and Rank, respectively.



## CHAPTER 2: HEROIC ARTIST: ARTISTIC CREATION AS AN ANTIDOTE TO NIHILISM IN NIETZSCHE'S THOUGHT

At the core of this chapter lies the argument put forth by Nietzsche in his first published work *The Birth of Tragedy - out of the Spirit of Music* (1872) that art, and tragic art to be precise, can act as a redeeming cure for humanity in their struggle for meaningful life and transcendence of nihilism. Art as a collective answer to the problem of nihilism is not restricted to BT (*Birth of Tragedy*)<sup>10</sup> in Nietzsche's oeuvre, but this stance is probably most passionately propagated in this early work. In one of the most famous passages of BT (from the later added preface "Attempt at Self-Criticism") the idea is expressed powerfully: "our highest dignity lies in the meaning of works of art- for it is only as *an aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*" (Nietzsche 2003, 32). If one investigates Nietzsche's claim further, the next question will naturally be that what kind of art could possibly fulfil this function and what kind of artist, or artistic frame of mind, could produce this type of redemption?

In this chapter, we shall first investigate Nietzsche's notions of the Heroic Artist and the redemptive qualities found in art. Our main focus, as regards to Nietzsche's views on art, will be on those expressed in the *Birth of Tragedy*, but also his later later views on artistic creation, aesthetics, the meaning of the Dionysian life, and the notion of life as an work of art, will be explored. I will examine Nietzsche's redemptive vision of art and juxtapose it in the later chapters with that of Rank and Freud's. Did Rank and Freud see as much potential in its power to create meaning and value as Early Nietzsche did? What potential did these key-figures of psychoanalysis see in art and creativity as a means to alleviate man's suffering? Do their visions align or diverge? As an example, a major idea that runs through the book is the dichotomy between Apollonian and Dionysian, a major conception in Nietzschean psychology. How does that speak with Rank and Freud's thought?

When discussing Nietzsche, it is useful to clarify which period of his thought one refers to, for the vision outlined in *The Birth of Tragedy* has major differences between the views he entertains in other periods of his thought. Though some have argued otherwise, the

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<sup>10</sup> I will predominantly use the abbreviation BT for Birth of Tragedy from now on.

prevalent view is that Nietzsche did not present a unified system for his philosophy. Indeed, Instead, we can differentiate various periods in his thought, where one can discern a certain consistency of thought and a recurrence of certain themes and methods.

There are various ways to divide the periods in Nietzsche's thought. One can, for example, break it into four distinct periods: First would be the early romantic period, where *BT* is the prime example of. Second, positivistic period would start from *Human, All Too Human* (1878), and include *Daybreak* (1881), and *Gay Science* (1882). This period is generally much more critical towards art and its purposes. Third period, would start from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1885). This period introduces a new type of man with new values and conducts a thorough deconstruction of the 19<sup>th</sup> century moral values. This period would also include *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887) and *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886). Last period then would include works of 1888: *Twilight of the Idols* (1888), *The Case of Wagner* (1888), *Antichrist* (1888) and *Ecce Homo* (1888, first published 1908). Here Nietzsche performs summaries of the development of his views, delivers - and re-states - some damning criticisms of the current culture and concludes his 'findings'. The posthumous *Will To Power* (1960) is a case of its own, a massive unfinished project, which Nietzsche eventually abandoned. It was never published with his authorization. Nietzsche most likely had his reasons for this. The primus motor behind publication of *Will To Power* was Nietzsche's sister Elisabeth. Yet, the work is written by Nietzsche and given its extensive influence on 20<sup>th</sup> century thinking and the sheer quality of thought that can be found from it, it should not be dismissed either<sup>11</sup>.

Most of the themes that Nietzsche deals with run through all the phases of this thought even if they are formulated and elaborated in various of ways stylistically and methodically. As stated, in this chapter our main focus is mostly on the early 'romantic' period, on the aesthetic, quasi-metaphysical, views found in *BT*. After having explored Nietzsche's early aesthetic conceptions and its notion of artistic heroism, we will take a survey at how Nietzsche's views evolved on the topic in his later works, distilling what is useful to consider as one judges the impact of his conceptions on Rank and Freud.

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11 There is a considerable debate about whether this posthumous work, with its central domineering concept of Will to Power- was meant as kind of magnum opus of Nietzsche or not. Viable arguments can be made both ways, though in general Nietzsche was averse to system-building in a philosophical sense.

## 2.1 Nietzsche's conception of Art in the Birth of Tragedy

In *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Nietzsche suggests that the 'solution' to the meaning of life lies in Art and Tragedy. They are the best antidote we have to the looming abyss of modern nihilism. In the center of this work lie the concepts of *Dionysian and Apollonian* and peculiar conception of the *tragic view*. Though this work is somewhat different in its expression and form from Nietzsche's later works, the book outlines many of the themes he would return to later. It is not an academic treatise in a conventional sense, reading more like a polemical, densely packed, passionate pamphlet, or essay, with a poetically expressed message. It does not bother with citations or historical accuracy. It is a manifesto of sorts. So, it was really not a surprise – with the exception of Nietzsche himself - that it received mostly a hostile reception in the academic world when originally published. As regards to Nietzsche's views on art and creativity, it is certainly ranks among his most important writings.

The book deals with the origins of Greek Tragedy in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. but also of the sorry state of culture in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Not only does Nietzsche see a connection between these two ages, but he sees ancient Greeks as possessing a possible answer to the pitiable state of Western civilization. Nietzsche believes that by adopting the wisdom archaic Greeks held about life, art and *the tragic view*, modern culture could still be saved and it could experience a type of rebirth. Later on in the book, Nietzsche declares that, in fact, we do not have to look far for a savior: a modern equivalent of old Dionysian tragedy is already in our midst, for the operas of Wagner embody this vision of art and tragedy, which so long has been lost to us.

Nietzsche states, in an *Attempt at a self-criticism* – an interesting preface that he added to the later editions of BT - that the guiding principle of the book appears to be the maxim that "*only as an aesthetic phenomena is existence and world justified*". He notes that this work recognises only one god and that is the '*thoughtless and amoral artist-god*' (Nietzsche 2003, 8). This high evaluation of the aesthetic perception and way of life, combined with the whole of creation being described as a type of artist, is a claim which

certainly arouses curiosity but also calls for some persuasive arguments to back it up. Nietzsche knew that for many readers his claims would surely bring to mind the thoughts of his philosophical mentor, Schopenhauer. And he is thus quick to lament Schopenhauerian tones in his work, citing that despite apparent similarities his 'new valuations' are fundamentally opposed in spirit to that of Schopenhauer and Kant (Nietzsche 2003, 9).

Porter (Porter 2000, 71) points out that no other classical scholar would have had courage to publish such a work, so openly hostile to both classical philology and scientific method and has no notes. The work is high-flying and speculative and ends up creating its own mythology. It could be said that in BT Nietzsche does not yet emerge as the radical free-thinker that he later comes to be known, for he still has his own set of idols, of whose influence he quite readily acknowledges. And he also subscribes to a type of *true-world* philosophy as he encourages us "to seek delight not in phenomena themselves but behind phenomena" (Nietzsche 2003, 80).

## **2.2 Apollonian and Dionysian and its sources – Contemporary and Ancient.**

In BT, Nietzsche argues that the world makes best sense if viewed and experienced through an aesthetic angle. To make sense of this *aesthetic view*, Nietzsche introduces to us the conceptual pair of *Apollonian* and *Dionysian*. These principles are names for two opposing, yet complementary, forces or drives that are central to life, and thus to art also. Nietzsche defines them as *artistic powers which spring from nature itself* (Nietzsche 2003, 18). These names are given after Greek deities – Dionysos and Apollo - but their meaning is not restricted to Greek mythology. They are broad categories which encompass many basic existential and ontological qualities. Though Nietzsche defines them in BT as 'artistic powers' and aesthetic categories, it is quite evident that they appear to represent the basic elements of life itself. Given the significance of this conceptual pair in Nietzsche's early thought, they certainly are key-concepts to consider, as we attempt to understand his notion of Artist-as-Hero.

Here is a brief summary of both of these qualities: *Apollonian* refers to a force that expresses beauty of form, harmony, subtlety and also discreteness, sense of boundaries and individuality - *principium individuationis*. Also self-control, moderation and reason are distinctly Apollonian qualities. *Dionysian*, on the other hand, is about transgression of boundaries, excess, loss of individuality, primordial unity, passion, lust, intoxication and ecstatic frenzy (Nietzsche 2003, 17). In terms of arts, Apollonian finds its home more in the plastic arts: In painting, sculpture but also in written and spoken word, whereas Dionysian quality is best represented in the spirit of music.

### **2.2.1 Modern influences: Hölderlin, Schopenhauer and Wagner**

As these two philosophical principles are used throughout the BT and are not given much philological or historical background in the work itself, a brief history is in order. This will lead us to the thought of Hölderlin, Schopenhauer and Wagner – three mentors of Nietzsche. First of all, Apollonian / Dionysian - distinction was something already used by Hölderlin. He (Hölderlin 1983, 50) expressed it with the poetic notions of '*clarity of presentation*' – corresponding with Apollonian – and '*fire from the heavens*', corresponding with Dionysian. Hölderlin's realm of the holy, as described in his poem *Bread and Wine*, was also the realm of the Bacchus, i.e. Dionysos (Young 2010, 42).

For Hölderlin, Apollonian was the realm of division, restriction and differentiation – to put it in other words: A realm of individuation. It is a 'sober' realm where the conceptual restrictions and distinctions apply. Dionysian is the realm of non-differentiation and unity. The laws, conceptual or otherwise, are there being transcended. It is truly a realm of freedom. We can see the similarities to Nietzsche's elucidations here. Hölderlin even preaches the 're-discovery of the Dionysian' through art, however for him it is in poetry where the discovery especially takes place, whereas for Nietzsche it is the music (Young 2013, 97).

Despite Hölderlin's undeniable influence on Nietzsche's conception of the Apollonian / Dionysian – principles, the two biggest influences for Nietzsche at the time were Richard Wagner and Arthur Schopenhauer. Nietzsche dedicated his debut to Wagner, and more

importantly, expressed a conviction that Western culture could find the solution to its decadent state from Wagnerian music-dramas. Exploration of this idea forms the core of the final third of BT.

Though Wagner is very much present especially in the latter part of BT, even bigger influence philosophically for the work is Schopenhauer who, unlike Wagner, was also a major influence for Freud's and Rank's philosophies. Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum 1991, 78) claims that, given Nietzsche's immersion in Schopenhauer's thought, it would be not misleading to claim that whatever Nietzsche perceived at this time, it was through Schopenhauerian "distinctions and categories". Without Schopenhauerian context, she says, it is hard to make sense of Apollonian and Dionysian and other aspects of Nietzsche's argument.

Eventhough Nietzsche was still immersed in Schopenhauerian sentiments in BT, this does not mean that he is not yet critical of 'his master', as he devotionally called Schopenhauer in his days of youth. What Nietzsche seems to be doing is that he builds his argument, his vision, by using essentially Schopenhauer's terms and ideas and then attempts to transcend his 'master's' conclusions. Let us then put our focus for a moment on Schopenhauer and preface his thoughts on art by summarising some of his core ideas.

A major problem for Schopenhauer, as well as for many other thinkers of the time, was to find a way to respond to Kant's distinction between our perceptions and "the-things-in-themselves". He too seemed to think that our ideas and perceptions were inevitably representations of reality<sup>12</sup>. We live in a dream, in *maya* (an eastern term denoting illusion, which Schopenhauer picked up from his reading of the *Upanishads*) and yet, somehow we can deduce from our perceptions that this dream is not all there is. The nature of our experiences permits us to conclude that there is undeniably some kind of pushing and striving element woven into the fabric of reality. Reality is not just a passive lump of clay. Schopenhauer calls this dynamic quality the Will. This willing is a property, not only of man but of all nature. For Schopenhauer (Cited by Nussbaum 1991, 81) willing is not

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12 "We ask whether this world is nothing more than representation. In that case, it would inevitably pass by us like an empty dream, or a ghostly vision, not worth our consideration" (WR 89-99) (Cited in Nussbaum 1991, 81)

connected to any particular object as such, yet there is also an erotic, sexual element to it, which is "found in every blindly acting force of nature, and also in the deliberate conduct of man".

For a modern person, when an idea about all strivings being reduced to sexually charged force is being made, we are reminded of Freud's psychology. Indeed, it does not take a great stretch of imagination to think that Freud would have been inspired by Schopenhauer on this matter. Of course Freud, in a characteristic manner, insisted that he had not read Schopenhauer before his own ideas were already formulated (Freud 1959, 60).

So, Schopenhauer draws a connection with Will and *the-Things-in-Themselves*, yet the willing he describes is also essentially blind, unintentional and lacking in direction. Nietzsche is not satisfied with this solution calling it a "dubious discovery", a "mere guess". "In the place of Kantian X, he places the Will, but only with the help of poetic intuition...", Nietzsche scoffs (Young 2010, 91).

In Young's interpretation, Schopenhauer seems to just have placed just another "thing", the Will, in place of the unknowable thing-in-itself. Yet Schopenhauer's solution is different from Kant's. Echoing Buddhist doctrines, he deems willing as the source of our suffering and therefore something to be eradicated. He talks about the 'denial of will'. But what kind of 'nirvana' or redemption can be found if one manages to achieve the cessation of willing activity? This is the termination of the 'dream', the maya. But what lies beyond it? Apparently the primal unity of beingness, mythical nirvana, perhaps just sweet nothingness? Young, agreeing with Nietzsche, notes that Schopenhauer's thinking is filled with contradictions here (Young 2010, 92). In his major work, *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer deems reality as demonic in its core (in the Book II): For all that exists has willing at its core, and willing inevitably leads to suffering. However, already in Book IV the reality has transformed to be 'divine' at the bottom. There is salvation to be found when willing ceases. Schopenhauer soberly admits, in the later editions of the work, that what world ultimately is can never be answered.

Rank deemed Schopenhauer's doctrine as "the most beautiful hypothesis ever", yet he was

troubled why it was that if people realized his truth, why would they still keep living their lives as before? Perhaps this just proved the tenacity, and primacy of Will for us? Even if the intellect knows the futility of the willing, the Will keeps running the show (Lieberman 1985, 36).

In Young's (Young 2010, 94) estimation Schopenhauer, like religious mystics, can properly only talk about what can be lost, not what we find as a result of our quest. As the core concept for our study is the *artist-as-hero*, let us elucidate the bridge to the domain of art and Nietzsche. The 3<sup>rd</sup> book of Schopenhauer's magnum opus deals with Aesthetics. Schopenhauer draws a parallel with the findings of artists to those of mystics. He postulates a notion of genius which all people are possessed by in varying degrees. Genius can access the aesthetic experience and communicate it to others. And art can act as a bridge to the true reality. In aesthetic experience, our own willing-activity is being cast aside, and it can vanish altogether. Thus an access is being opened to the reality as such. In aesthetic experiences we are able to have '*intimations of the transcendent*', a form of non-rational knowledge.

Treating art as a form of *transcendent cognition* was an explosive thought for Nietzsche, who was looking for solution to 'the loss of transcendence' and who to whom arts, especially music, had always held a major significance. It could be argued, that when Nietzsche lost his Christian faith, the one gateway to divine that was still left for him, was via art and especially through music.

The problem in Schopenhauer's aesthetic experience as a mode of transcendence was that once willing and desire were taken away from the equation, there was – in theory at least – no satisfaction or pleasure to be gained from the artistic/aesthetic object either. Was the pleasure then found from the oscillation movement of life; the ever-recurring process from suffering to the cessation of it? Schopenhauer seems to think something of such, yet he does attach notions such as 'peace' and 'blessedness' to the aesthetic experience. Echoing Buddhist psychology here, the value of an aesthetic experience lies not only in an affective experience but in its access to the world of Ideas, i.e. to the actual content of the reality<sup>13</sup>

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13 As opposed to contemplation of less significant phenomena of inorganic matter and vegetable kingdom, Schopenhauer says that "if animals and human are the object of aesthetic contemplation or presentation,



(Janaway 1994, 60). Art pulls us back from the plethora of phenomena, to the contemplation of 'abstract and general forms' (Nussbaum 1991, 88). Aesthetic attitude can liberate us from the painful yearnings and desires, yet when the aesthetic stance ceases we are back to our usual suffering. Here, then, lies the value of tragedy as a sublime art-form for Schopenhauer: It educates us on the relentless sufferings of life that is lived according to passions – but also points to a pain-free reality that lies beyond them (Nussbaum 1991, 90).

This here is the point where we can observe Schopenhauer departing from Nietzsche, for as we shall see, for Nietzsche being a spectator of tragic art is far from being a passive affair. As Nussbaum points out, ancient Dionysian festivals, where tragedies were performed were "hardly celebrations of renunciation of the will to life" (Nussbaum 1991, 93). Schopenhauer, on the other hand, emphasizes detachment and cessation of all passions in aesthetic experience.

A few points about the philosophical ideas of other great influence of BT, Richard Wagner, should also be mentioned. When Nietzsche met Wagner in 1869, the latter was at the height of his powers, having completed *Mastersingers* and two operas of the Ring-cycle. Nietzsche had just moved to Basel where he had been offered a professorship, when he decided to take up the offer of Wagner to visit him. These two men fast struck a common chord. Both shared a deep appreciation and admiration of Schopenhauer's thought. As well as quickly starting to glorify Wagner, Nietzsche also grew fond of Wagner's wife Cosima, to whom he gave a copy of an essay *The Origin of Tragic Thought*, a preparatory essay for BT. He started to accord Wagner a similar veneration he had so far reserved only for Schopenhauer, calling him a master (Young 2010, 107).

The idea of Wagner's music-dramas being a rebirth of Greek tragedy was not an idea exclusively held by Nietzsche, for Wagner himself also held similar views about his creations. And also: Nietzsche, being a professor of classics, was a useful person to Wagner. He give intellectual validity to the conception of Wagner's exceptional cultural role. In addition to being a close friend and also a 'follower' of Schopenhauer, Wagner

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the enjoyment will consist rather in the objective apprehension of these Ideas" (W1, 212) (Cited in Janaway 1994, 65)

became a type of father-figure to Nietzsche, who was shocked when Wagners decided that it was a time to bid farewell to Tribschen (a place located not far from Basel).

*The Birth of Tragedy* itself can be viewed as a fruit of this mutual trust and intimacy Nietzsche shared with the Wagner's during the Tribchen days. "I offer all my other human relationships cheap, but at no price would I relinquish from my life the Tribschen-days", Nietzsche mused later (Young 2010, 111). Nietzsche himself described the whole work as a continuation of a conversation he had been having with Wagner. A very similar type of criticism which Nietzsche directs at the current 'decadent-culture' can be found from Wagner's writings. Let us present a few examples: In Wagner's view, modern life has turned men into machines that just toil away in meaningless work. Christianity compels them to set their hopes to other-worldly redemption and despise our difficult, burdensome, earthly life. What the exhausted worker wants and is able to handle (culture-wise) after toiling away his days at hard work is trivial entertainment, some distraction. This, compounded with the modern capability to reproduce art in a mechanical way, sets the parameters for the pitiable state of Western culture at the moment (Young 2010, 113).

Wagner also held the conviction that the answer to our cultural crisis should be sought from ancient Greece. First of all, Greek Tragedies were not entertainment but more akin to a religious rite performed by esteemed members of the community. Secondly, we were dealing with *Gesamt Kunstwerk*, a whole artwork, which unified other arts - mainly word and music - into a single artwork. *Whole-Artwork* also collected the community together. Wagner draws a connection with the fragmentation (i.e. specialization) of arts and fragmentation of communities. In Greek tragedies, on the other hand, the whole community participated, often quite literally, in the enactment of the drama (Young 2010, 114). This *Gesamt Kunstwerk* was also mythical and conservative in the sense that in its essence it did not really change. Musical dramas would depict mythical themes and characters would embody archetypal qualities, to use Jungian language. The character of the whole festival was akin to a religious rite, which both collected various arts together and solidified and conserved the community through a collective, emotional, aesthetic experience (Young 2010, 115).

When one compares these ideas to ones found in *Birth of Tragedy*, the similarities of the vision are striking. Later on Nietzsche, did gradually depart from Schopenhauerian / Wagnerian – metaphysics, but this break took effectively place only years after the publication of BT<sup>14</sup>.

### **2.2.2 Ancient Sources of Greek Tragedy and Nietzsche's Aesthetic vision**

Nietzsche's most serious statement as regards to philology, the discipline that he formally (and factually) represented at the time when BT was published, was that the origins of Greek Tragedy can be found from the Dionysian cult. This argument demanded a response from his fellow philologists. Of the metaphysical views expressed in BT, most of them could not say yay or nay. As the concept of 'Dionysian' is so important in Nietzsche's ontology, it is worth exploring the history of it briefly.

In his article 'Tragedy and Dionysus' (2009), Richard Seaford has explored the ancient sources of Greek Tragedy. Classical tragedies in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE were performed at the theater dedicated to god of Dionysus, in his cult to be precise. Dionysus, as a deity, was known as the god of wine and was later called Bacchus. Seaford reminds how Aristotle already commented in Poetics that Tragedy came to being from "the leaders of the dithyramb"<sup>15</sup> and proposed that tragedy developed from Satyric plays, which included a chorus of satyrs – naked, pleasure-loving followers of Dionysos. One fine example of satyr play is Euripides's Cyclops. The old Dionysian rituals consisted not only of tragic play but of a whole festival which lasted for several days. In the festival men and boys dressed up as satyrs, and the ritualistic processions included a whole lot of wine-drinking, something that a whole city took part of (Seaford 2009, 25, 26).

Certain features of tragedy can indeed be claimed to have their origins in Dionysiac ritual: There was the centrality of the chorus, the use of masks, the tendency of the chorus to associate its dancing with Dionysos and the thematic centrality of the suffering individual, to name a few. In these tragedies Dionysos was associated with confusion of the

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14 Often the decisive break is placed at the publication of *Human All Too Human*, which marks clearly a new phase in Nietzsche's thought.

15 Dithyrambs were hymns written to Dionysos.

boundaries and in with unification of opposite forces, just like Nietzsche proposes in BT (Seaford 2009, 31) It is demonstrable then, that the connection between Dionysian cult and the origins of tragic drama is not something Nietzsche had simply made up. It was not just some mystical Schopenhauerian vision. Seaford comments that Dionysiac metaphors tended to be applied with people in dramas who destroy or are face with the destruction of their own households. Notably by killing their own kind. This motif of self-destruction, followed by institution of cult for the whole polis / community, sets a pattern for ancient tragedies (Seaford 2009, 37).

As Nietzsche draws attention to these ancient origins of tragic drama in his writings, he gives new life to tragedy as an art form. Nietzsche coins the term 'tragic age' and soon enough in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century tragedy was hailed again as a "supreme literary achievement". It was "a clarion call for modernity" as Porter puts it (Porter 1999, 68). The notion of *tragic age* raises many questions though. Did the Greeks actually experience such a thing? And could modern Western civilization experience it again, in a way that it can attain the supposed glories of the classical age?

Nietzsche certainly had plenty of faith and conviction in this potential, and the advent of Wagnerian 'music-dramas' was big part of this. For Nietzsche, tragedy was not tied to its historical or generic conventions, but it was a 'primordial experience' which could bring us to face-to-face with the essence of what it means to be human. To experience *the tragic* was to be fully human. Music and tragic myth were inseparable, expressions of our Dionysiac –all-integrating, all-encompassing capacity (Nietzsche 2003, 116; Porter 1999, 69).

Nietzsche looked for the pure expression of tragedy from the ancient Greece. In this sense he could be said to be conventional and classical. Even conservative. But, as Porter points out, Nietzsche's point of view is, in fact, quite original: He sees that the high point of Western culture was already reached in the attic tragedy and from there on we – as a civilization – have been on a downward spiral. Nietzsche is not the only one to posit a quasi-mystical Golden Age into the past where we have had our downfall from, but his novelty comes from suggesting that if only we re-embrace this tragic, this-worldly, view,

this aesthetic understanding of the early Greeks, we can regain the vitality of Western culture (Porter 1999, 70). Nietzsche also went against the grain in his emphasis of the violent and chaotic side of the Greeks. For the common thing among the classic Greek scholars at the time was to emphasize the harmonious and beautiful aspects of Greek culture. Nietzsche's insights made tragedy and its mythic origins a serious theme of discussion and research.

To summarize, early Nietzsche's key-concepts and visions had their context in the German cultural landscape and philosophy of the day. Understanding this context is crucial if one wants to dispel the sense of confusion that might have, when one first encounters these imaginative, mythical-sounding, concepts. Nietzsche's view of the tragic is essential if one aims to understand his notion of heroism, at the time of BT and also later. Tragic heroism, for Nietzsche, is a true alternative to the disingenuous Christian heroism, which places its hopes and rewards in the after-life and other metaphysical notions. It is also alternative to so-called Socratism, a term which Nietzsche uses as a derogatory term, which – also disingenuously – over-emphasizes the rational make-up of this world and the rewards that virtuous and rational man will supposedly reap from it.

### **2.3 The Artistic Hero in *The Birth of Tragedy***

As mentioned earlier, at the center of Nietzsche's argument in BT lies the notion of Apollonian and Dionysian, a conceptual pair introduced early on in the work. Nietzsche proposes that the progress of arts is intimately tied with these two forces and their expression. Though these notions can appear antagonistic to each other, they are still complementary and vital for each other. These forces – if properly utilized - are the driving motor for the birth of highest art and meaningful, authentic, culture. As an example of the need for balance between these forces, one could point out how in his later writings, Nietzsche criticizes Wagner, whom he so revered earlier, for being too Dionysian. There is not enough Apollonian quality in his operas anymore. They've become a like a sea of feeling without proper structure and boundaries. "If Wagner floated upward on the Dionysian surge, Nietzsche, in contrast, sought to give the Dionysian form and limit", as Michael Zimmermann succinctly puts it (Zimmerman 1990, 108).

To recap, the Apollonian quality represents clear appearances, dreams, plastic images, harmless deception, form, beauty and harmony, and traits generally associated with Hellenistic classical art. It also represents the principle of individuation and boundaries. Dionysian quality, on the other hand, represents hidden depths, intoxication, ecstasy, music, dance, orgies, danger, transgression of boundaries, destruction of form and transcendence of individuality. Dionysiac qualities are not generally seen as the qualities that first come to mind when one thinks about the classic Hellenistic culture, yet Nietzsche views them as absolutely essential to the Greek spirit<sup>16</sup>.

Having outlined these two forces, Nietzsche's argument proceeds essentially in a following manner: There was a golden period in Greek Tragedy – first with Aeschylus, followed by Sophocles – wherein Apollonian and Dionysian were expressed in a harmonious way. Music and dance, song and speech, were co-ordinated into great collective spectacle. Pure Apollonian art in itself is naive and expresses only what is on the surface, as exemplified with polished Greek sculptures, yet when it gets merged with Dionysian turmoil and frenzy, it can be elevated in the hands of a skilled artist into a true expression of the joyous and tragic nature of life. Apollonian, harmonious form, acts as a kind of sweetener for the wild, and often bitter, Dionysian truths. The spectator, who is also a participator, is able to digest this experience because it is delivered in an aesthetic form and in a collective setting.

Yet, Nietzsche explains, this form of holistic, total artwork, did not last for long, for already in the last 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, a dialectic Socratic philosophy emerged and permeated the art of drama. Nietzsche blames Euripides for elimination of mystery, for bringing in the spirit of rationalism. Euripidean theater, for him, is already an expression of

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16 Lehrer (Lehrer 1995, 20) has compiled a comprehensive list of Nietzsche's Dionysian / Apollonian qualities: **Apollon** - Law, Beauty, Order, Reason, Self-Control, Self-Knowledge, Sun and Light, Capacity for Measure, Restraint, Individuation, The Art of Sculpture. Urge to perfect self-sufficiency. The typical "individual". All that simplifies, distinguishes, makes strong, clear, unambiguous, typical. Freedom under the rule of Law. "the Dream-interpreter". **Dionysus** - Orgiastic rites, Music, Dance, Drama, God who is torn to pieces and dismembered (and thus individuated), his rebirth is awaited (=the end of individuation). Rites that celebrate Death, Rebirth, Fertility. Also associated with Crops, Grape and Sexuality. Union with Others and Nature. Ecstasy, unleashing of Savage Instincts. Bridging divisions like Mind and Body. The Art of Music. "The Dream" itself. Urge to unity, reaching out beyond personality. A passionate-painful overflowing.

a tragic form in decline. Apollonianism has taken over, the rationalism is running rampant, forcing Dionysian expression 'underground', into mystery cults and such (Porter 1999, 72; Young 2013, 183).

Nussbaum notes (Nussbaum 1991, 76) that the view of Euripides, held by Nietzsche, prevalent in his day is completely mistaken. Medea is hardly a defence of reason, and even if there are long discourses in Euripides, they are usually to demonstrate impotence of reason and justice. Yet, this of course does not mean that Nietzsche could not have illuminating things to say about Dionysos.

Two vital aspects that Nietzsche places lots of weight in his analysis of Dionysian / Apollonian are the concepts of 'dream' and 'ecstasy/intoxication'. They denote the psychological states associated with these two forces. A 'dream' is distinctly an Apollonian state, whereas 'intoxication' connects with the Dionysian quality, denoting the transcendence of individual boundaries (*ex-stasis*) and ordinary consciousness. The German word here is *rausch*, which can have been translated as drunkenness, ecstasy or frenzy. The significance of Dionysian quality is that once we are immersed in it we access the primordial unity. It is then that "the veil of maya is torn apart" and we realize our place "in the higher community" (Nietzsche 2003, 21). As seen above, there seems to be almost no limits as to what one can experience through Dionysian states of consciousness.

The dreaming quality which is associated with 'Apollonian' art, is not the opposite of intoxication. Nietzsche characterizes it as experience of 'profound delight'. This, of course, is also a Dionysian quality (coupled with its potential to horror and terror). The notion of 'dream' is commonly associated with visual, visionary, fantastic and fanciful. All these terms do describe Apollonian quality fairly well. Essentially, it highlights and aestheticizes certain aspects of reality in favor of others. In this way, it distinguishes itself from the Dionysian, which is about embracing also the horrifying and the tragic (Nietzsche 2003, 19, 20). Judging from the focus and the way Nietzsche speaks of the two impulses, it would be easy to deduce that the Dionysian realm of primal unity, world beyond appearances, is the essential realm for him and thus the Dionysian experience the more authentic one. Yet, for humans, the Dionysian impulse needs to be balanced with its

Apollonian counterpart if we are to endure the suffering-filled life of ours. Excessive Dionysian quality has a barbaric element to it as exemplified by Dionysian myths and stories wherein pleasure is derived from mayhem and destruction.

Schacht (Schacht 2001, 195) notes that in Apollinian art, as described by Nietzsche, ephemereal appearances associated with states like dreaming and imagination, undergo a transformative process wherein idealized images, 'beautiful illusions', are being generated. In other words, from the flux of experience, certain aspects are picked and transformed into harmonious images. In the Dionysian art, orgiastic and ecstatic states are produced with aesthetic means and this then gives rise to a new world of symbols wherein "the innermost core of the world is revealed to him in symbolic dream-image" (Nietzsche 1993, 18). Schacht concludes that Dionysian art could therefore be described as transfigurations of ecstatic states, symbolic expressions of it. Also Dionysian art needs a form for its expression.

To describe further the interdependence of the two, the Apollonian art, moderate and beautiful in its essence, owes its existence to the depths of Dionysos, to the 'offerings from the deep'. Art cannot be generated without taking into account sufferings and struggles of existence. And conscious is defined and complimented by unconscious. There is a temptation to equate Apollonian with the rational and analytical, yet this does not quite cut it either. Apollonian is more akin to the soothing balsam of beautiful forms that make life more bearable. Both of these art-forms work in the symbolic realm: They are not reality as such, even in the 'total art-work' where Dionysian intoxication would give one temporary access to the realm of 'primal unity'. One still has to return to the ordinary consciousness with its trials and tribulations (Lehrer 1995, 23).

We have now described how Apollonian and Dionysian function in art, wherein one perhaps dominates the other but both exist still in a symbiotic relationship. The question arises then: How does this relate to the artist himself and to the redemption of the culture? Does it speak seriously to us as a way to overcome nihilism? Is there a heroic aspect to be found from this conception of art and artist? Was the heroic artist the one who was able to use Apollonian symbolism to express his offerings from the deep? The one who was able



to integrate and utilize these seemingly contradictory forces?

Let us be remind ourselves now that, for Nietzsche, culture in the golden age of the Tragedy – in 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE and earlier – was an era which had not been surpassed in cultural achievement. Only now with Wagnerian *gesamt-kunstwerk* and works done in similar spirit, was there a possibility to reach such heights. The force that glued Greek culture together was that of *tragic art*, and the power of artistic creation. The artist certainly was a hero in the sense that he was the active agent who generated redemptive art and performed it in the collective festivals. Yet, the artist in this context was far from being the 'lone genius', for it was the whole community of people who participated in these ritualistic dramas and festivals. They were the true artist, the creators of a collective vision which defied (and paradoxically also affirmed) the tragic fate of man. The heroism of this type of art and people who lived in its culture, lay in the fact that they were able to face the existence with all its horrors directly with the help of the aesthetic culture, which was of their own making.

This vision, as described above, seems to be a fairly unified vision, a respectable response to nihilism. But was Nietzsche satisfied with this vision himself for long? Not really. The seeds of doubt were already sown but it would take few years for a new artistic vision to emerge.

What kind of criticism can be levelled against BT's vision, apart from its hubristic praise of Wagner and high hopes it places on Wagnerian art? First of all, it could be argued that the nature of this heroic *aesthetic redemption*, as outlined in BT, is essentially impersonal: The transcendence of individual boundaries in a collective Dionysian artwork is not dependent on any one individual, no matter how brilliant. In fact, it stands to reason that if the individuality, as a phenomenon which stands out from the vast sea of beingness, is the source of our suffering – and this is what early Nietzsche, in a Schopenhauerian fashion, believed – then isn't there a problem with celebrating or striving towards the towering artistic individuality and heroism contained therein?

Young argues that if the world becomes justified, affirmable, as an aesthetic phenomenon

in the Nietzschean sense, it is clearly not to 'individual human beings, but rather to the world creator': Amoral artist-god, as Nietzsche describes the creative power of life, who is not concerned with the pleasure or happiness of individual human beings. (Young 1992, 52). Though we might momentarily identify with the whole of existence and with the other human beings, this does not solve the problem of absurdity and horror that accompany our personal existence. The threat of nihilism still looms large. Identifying with the beingness as such; existence that goes beyond any individual forms, is not necessarily a satisfying answer to the problem of death and finite duration of our lives either. It could be seen as a cop-out and as a type of life-negating buddhism Nietzsche so keenly criticizes in BT.

Despite its shortcomings BT is an impressive work, with thought-provoking ideas and evocative visions. The notions of Apollonian / Dionysian, the *tragic view* and the redemption found therein, are themes Nietzsche keeps returning to. These concepts also influenced early psychoanalysts: Freud, Rank and Jung being perhaps the most pertinent figures to mention here. However, Nietzsche's view of these themes changed and developed beyond the scope of what he was able to express in one short book. So, while so far we have been outlining and analyzing the aesthetic, heroic, vision of early Nietzsche, there are other aspects to Nietzsche's conception of creative, artistic heroism. This is what we shall look at in the following sub-chapter.

## **2.4 The Artistic Hero in Later Nietzsche**

### **2.4.1 Nietzsche's Positivistic Period - Human All Too Human**

Next time Nietzsche returns to the topic of Art and Heroism with something new to offer is in *Human All Too Human*, published in spring 1878<sup>17</sup>. By this time, it has become clear for Nietzsche that neither (neo-) Romanticism, mode of thought in which the BT is basically written in, or the ideals of Enlightenment as such, can provide sufficient meaning for man in his present crisis (Schaht 1996, xii) However, HATH (*Human All Too Human*) starts a

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<sup>17</sup> Strictly speaking, this is not true: For example, Nietzsche does visit these themes in 'Wagner at Beyreuth' too, but the visits are not a major departure to the ideas expressed in BT. Art still essentially remains the gateway for the individual to identify with 'something higher than himself'. Nietzsche is still, at least formally, paying lip-service to Wagnerianism.

period in Nietzsche's thought, wherein he shifts his attention more towards science and the ideals of Enlightenment in his search of new type of culture and human being. Nietzsche had published a collection of long essays called *Untimely Meditations*, wherein the last 'meditatio'n is called '*Wagner in Beyreuth*' and here Nietzsche predictably deals with the themes of BT. But as mentioned, there are no major changes in his views: Art is still presented as a force which can take us to a 'musical absorption'. Nietzsche's solution is still unequivocally Dionysian. It is in his next major work where the next period of his thought is generally seen to have begun. This period is often referred as his 'middle-period', its major works consisting of *Human All Too Human*, *Daybreak* and *Gay Science*.

It can be quite startling to note how in HATH Nietzsche seems to make U-turn with many of the views he held so firmly in BT. This includes his views on artistic creation and role of rationality in shaping the modern culture. One of the major things that had happened between this work and BT, was that Nietzsche had lost his faith in Wagner and his art as the force that would lead the way for new Dionysian culture. If in BT Nietzsche seemed to view Socratism – the Apollonian solution, roughly speaking - as one of the main reasons of our cultural decadence, then in this new positivistic period, he now seems to see it as our best bet against nihilism. But when one delves deeper into 'positivistic' Nietzsche and reads carefully, one sees that this is not the full picture either.

In HATH, Nietzsche emerges as a thinker who has liberated himself from his past idols: Schopenhauer and Wagner. "I deceived myself over Richard Wagner's incurable romanticism as though it were a beginning and not an end", he confesses (Nietzsche 1996, 6). If before his notion of a hero was someone who, through aesthetic means, could transcend individuality and even rationality, and merge into the stream of life, the new hero is a figure who does not aim to go into frenzy states, nor transcend rationality. On the contrary, he aims to embody cool reason. Also, the previous glorification of the artist-genius is absent, replaced here with scepticism as regards to the motives and practices of the artist. The artist has a weaker morality than the thinker, he declares (Nietzsche 1996, 80). He is now deeply sceptical of notions such as 'child-artist-god' or our, true, essential self (Young 1992, 61).

Since the main focus of this chapter is not in the biographical aspects of Nietzsche, I will not delve into speculating as to what extent his life-events affected the crisis and re-birth in his philosophy. To put it simplistically, biographical events and life-long psychological trajectories were arguably a major influence in the large philosophical shifts which took place in Nietzsche's thought. But if we would like to characterize the shift that took place in strictly philosophical terms; it could be that Nietzsche sets out to demythologize and strip down his thought from all the previous romantic and metaphysical strappings that were still there in his previous works. This shift obviously has a big impact on the type of hero that will emerge from the ashes of the Schopenhauerian Artist-god.

In many ways, HATH and the whole so-called positivistic, middle-period of Nietzsche, is the one where he and Freud are closest to each other in thought. Closest in ideals, but also in praxis and content. In this work Nietzsche outlines his philosophical project and methodology, which Freud later employs to his purposes. Nietzsche explained himself the meaning of the title of his new work in the following way: "where you see ideal things, I see what is human, alas, all-too-human! - I know man better" (Ecce Homo, VI, I). The work is subtitled as '*A Book for Free Spirits*'. What kind of free spirits? Individuals that have freed themselves from all kinds of superstitions: artistic, metaphysical and religious myths. Nietzsche now sees the Dionysian intoxication (*Rausch*) only as a temporary escape. He claims, not unlike Freud or Marx, that we need to place our focus on the real world and seek our redemption there. That is true heroism, not some romantic escapism.

In this work Nietzsche claims to have found a new method for his work of ridding our culture from the false gods. He calls it "historical" and later genealogical (As in his *On Genealogy of Morals*). The attempt is to demonstrate how even the most "glorious colors" stem from base motives and needs, Young notes (Young 1992, 67). For a modern reader, this project naturally brings to mind Freud's work, wherein higher motivations are also 'proven' to have their basis in our base drives, most notably the sexual drive. The hero, in both of these projects, is then the lucid, scientifically-minded man, who is boldly able to withstand the truth and strip reality from its mythological balsam, be it in the form of religion, metaphysics, art or even modern science.

If before he was guilty of placing artist next to gods, or even seeing him as the channel of the True Reality, in HATH Nietzsche puts up a fierce fight against deification of the artist. He now seeks to demythologize art and accuses artists of resorting to 'conjuring tricks' in their attempt to convince us that they have a private access to Reality, reality beyond appearances that is. Future, Nietzsche claims, does not belong to artists or art but to science. Art is dishonest, a type of drug, giving us the permission to keep enjoying religious sentiments without taking intellectual responsibility for our confused, dishonest worldview. He calls artists "necromancers", whose task is to conserve and take "extinguished, faded ideas" and "restore a bit of color" to them (Nietzsche 1996, 80).

Connected to this is the statement by Nietzsche in HATH, that artist's imagination is permanently stuck in childhood, he "stuck at the point at which he was first assailed by his drive to artistic production" (Nietzsche 1996, 81). This apparently also explains his fascination with worldviews of earlier, more primitive times. His childish nature is reflected naive fantasies about reality. These crude statements do bring to mind Freud's aesthetic views, to be explored later. There is an unmistakable resemblance of HATH's 'aesthetic brutalism' and Freud's infantilizing view of artist's psyche, which he flouted in more than one of his writings on art and the artists.

Does art or artists have any value in Nietzsche's positivistic vision? Certainly, however this value does not lie in transcending reality but in embracing human actuality. Artist and his work are meaningful in so far as they promote of certain values. Pure science as such is value-free, a follower of values itself. However, it is not desirable – nor possible – to depict all human actuality. Therefore the artist chooses aspects of reality: he must become a sculptor or a modeller of life. Since the reality of life is heavy, art can make it more playful. Nietzsche reminds us of the early Greek poet Simonides who encouraged his compatriots 'to take life as a game', for life 'could become a source of enjoyment only through art' (Nietzsche 1996, 82).

Instead of wild Dionysianism, surely this vision resembles more the Apollonian aesthetics, the Apollonian heroism, which is above all about beautifying life and of creating role models and beautiful archetypes to cherish? Yes, but Nietzsche is denies here the

deceitfulness of Apollonianism and instead calls it honest, because it has its basis in this world. As Young puts it "Only this-worldly art can construct the future of this world" (Young 1992, 76). The qualities Nietzsche now admires aesthetically are coldness and sobriety, 'avoidance of passion' and symmetry – all characteristically Apollonian qualities. Again this reminds of the type of art Freud enjoyed: Classical sculpture, classical painting and literature where possible Dionysian content is restrained by Apollonian form – ie. Shakespeare, Sophocles, Michelangelo, Leonardo Da Vinci etc.

Nietzsche argues that we need to reject the cult of the artistic genius - propagated by Schopenhauer for example. If we examine the hallmarks of it – such as inspiration, or masterpieces created by great artists – we will find all-too-human elements behind them. First of all, their inspiration is preceded by perspiration: enormous amount of hard work, a gradual process which we don't want to see. It is easier to conceive artist simply as someone who receives divine gifts (Nietzsche 1996, 83) This is convenient for it releases us from responsibility: we don't have to take a hard look at ourselves. We do not have to confront our own complacency and laziness, for unlike the great ones, we tell ourselves, we are simply not chosen for these inspirations: "...for only if we think of him as being very remote from us, as a miraculum, does he not aggrieve us" (Nietzsche 1996, 86).

Nietzsche also talks about the 'cult of vanity' that surrounds the notion of artist-genius. Given that the styles change over the centuries and the works in general do not have a lasting value, the excessive value we give to artist-geniuses is unreasonable. Most interestingly perhaps, in the same vein Nietzsche says that the raptures brought about by art, tell us nothing in regard to their truth-value. And same goes for religion (Nietzsche 1996, 85).

In *Dawn*, another work of this positivistic period, Nietzsche now criticises fiercely the art of his former hero Wagner: His works are now defined as the art of empty effects, inflated, swollen art motivated by market-forces (Young 1992, 91).

## **2.4.2 Gay Science and Nietzsche's Mature Period**

If in HATH, Nietzsche was enamoured by the scientific optimism and, to an extent, by the spirit of Enlightenment, then in his last major work of positivistic-period, *Gay Science* (1882) this optimism comes to a halt: GS is not a merry work. The reality, as introduced in HATH, remains the same: Fully de-mythologized, purified from metaphysics and theism. But in this work Nietzsche also introduces his epistemological position of perspectivism. If in HATH, there was a real world to defend, in *Gay Science* Nietzsche asserts that world consists of interpretations – and nothing else. Young notes that in this way Nietzsche returns to the spirit of *Birth of Tragedy* wherein reality, or beingness as such, is essentially unknowable and incapable of correction (Young 1992, 97).

The glorification of reason, a prevalent motif in HATH (and later in *Dawn*), is now turning into a contempt of reason. The intellect is described as a "clumsy, gloomy, creaking machine" (Nietzsche 1974, 254). We are betrayed by the love of truth, he states bitterly. But what is Nietzsche's solution to nihilism now? And what role – if any - does art and the artist play in it? His position is not altogether different from his previous one, as he still thinks that through aesthetic experiences life can be kept bearable. We need arts, 'the cult of the untrue', for otherwise we cannot bear the "realization that delusion and error are conditions of human knowledge and sensation" (Nietzsche 1974, 163).

The major new addition, introduced in *Gay Science*, is that the Self as such must be turned into an aesthetic phenomenon (!). This shift heralds the coming of the mature Nietzsche, wherein the idea of one's Self and Life as a work of art gains paramount importance. The lightness, gayness, of it comes from the fact that since there is no absolute reality, but only perspectives, we can create our own life-values and truths, which to express and follow. There is a type of superficiality and lightness that emerges in this project – and the hero is the one who can embrace and accept this 'truth', one can embrace his own perspective, the seeming superficiality of it (because he cannot know the truthfulness, the depth of it), create a script of his life and live by it. And certain artistic distance is needed, so that one can see oneself as a character, an actor, on the stage of life.

But the question is: will we be able to ignore the harsh realities and affirm life as we choose to create it? In Freudian terms: won't the repressed bite back? Isn't this succumbing

to the pleasure-principle again? Young (Young 1992, 101) suggests that in GS, Nietzsche offers, two solutions to the problem of existence: The first one is to embrace the frivolous and superficial, our preferred illusion. This is the Apollonian solution. The second solution, which is preserved for the stronger Artist-heroes, is the Dionysian solution, wherein one boldly faces the tragic existence, with no fabrications nor lies, and endeavours with artistic creativity to make the most of it, to become who one is.

### **2.4.3 Eternal Recurrence, Amor Fati and Overman/Übermensch - A Bridge to Mature Nietzsche**

In GS, Nietzsche also introduces for the first time his idea of Eternal Recurrence. The idea closely connected with another important concept of Nietzsche's late period: *Amor Fati* – love of one's fate. Eternal Recurrence is introduced in a chapter called "The Greatest Weight" (GS 341). In this chapter Nietzsche inquires about our reaction if some day or night a demon would come to us in our 'loneliest loneliness' and tell us that:

*"this life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence..." ? (Nietzsche 1974, 273)*

Nietzsche (Nietzsche 1974, 274) continues and asks if our reaction be that we would 'curse and gnash our teeth' at the messenger of such a terrible vision or could we at least conceive a moment where we would've answered to the demon that "you are a god and never have I heard anything more divine?".

The question with every deed that can we desire it again and again, innumerable times more. This becomes the ultimate challenge of the aesthetic self-creation, a seemingly impossible task which Nietzsche assigns to the heroic man, ever willing to challenge the prevailing nihilistic era. In Zarathustra, Eternal Recurrence is even used as a type of yardstick to define how much of a heroic man one is: to what extent is one willing to will his life to recur again and again up to the last detail? As Hollingdale puts it: "Dionysian acceptance of life is then put to the hardest test through the postulation of 'the eternal recurrence of the same events'" (Hollingdale 1977, 10). Whether Nietzsche meant this in a



polemical way, simply to emphasize the importance of assigning value to all one's actions, including the most minute ones. It seems though, that the meaning of this conception was something larger to him.

*Amor fati* – the love of one's fate – then entails for Nietzsche, not only to ability to affirm one's life as such but the ability to will the Eternal Recurrence of it, to the minute detail. That, at least, is the ideal. Is there any difference between these terms? Not significantly, if Eternal Recurrence is not treated as a cosmological principle but as a life-moulding, transformative metaphor. "My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*; that one wants nothing other than it is, not in the future, not in the past, not in all eternity", he states in *Ecce Homo* (Nietzsche 2005, 99). It seems that, in these formulations, Nietzsche had found the most potent way to express the Dionysian, affirmative, stance towards existence, in all its tragic depth.

This then becomes Nietzsche's answer to the problem of nihilism: To take up the process of self-creation as an artistic – and existential – project. The constructing this self from the 'ingredients' that life provides will be the answer one provides. As Young (Young 1992, 109) suggests, perhaps there is not so much difference in the Apollonian and Dionysian responses as one would've imagined: The former seeks to beautify, and transfigure life by choosing certain aspects to life, which are pleasurable and conducive to joy, whereas the latter 'sanctifies and calls good even the most terrible and questionable'<sup>18</sup> in life. Both seek to attain equilibrium with what is, only the means are different. Nietzsche's (Nietzsche 1974, 163) new formulation Nietzsche of his old doctrine seems to be that artists need to continually 'glorify', for only as an aesthetic phenomenon is existence, still *bearable* for us.

*'What makes heroic? - To go meet simultaneously one's greatest sorrow and one's greatest hope.'*  
*'What does your conscience say? - You should become him who you are.'*  
*'What is the seal of freedom attained? - No longer to be ashamed of oneself.'*  
(GS 268-75, Nietzsche 1977, 236)

Although the stated focus in this study, as regards to Nietzsche's formulations of the heroic, has been on the views found in his earlier works, this study would be seriously lacking, if not at least some analysis would be given to the notion of *Übermensch*, perhaps

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<sup>18</sup> This expression is from *Will-To-Power*, pt. 1050 (Nietzsche 1968, 539)

the most controversial concept in Nietzsche's oeuvre. This conception relates directly to Nietzsche's project of revaluation of all our values and creating new ones. He states: "*We, however, want to be those who we are – the new, the unique, the incomparable, those who give themselves their own law, those who create themselves! (...)*", GS 335 (Nietzsche 1977, 335).

Nietzsche thus defines man as that which continuously seeks to over-come itself. He urges us to both become what we already are and to create ourselves anew. There is no contradiction here if the continuous becoming is to be accepted as our very nature. "*I teach you the superman. Man is something that should be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?*", asks Zarathustra and placing a burden of responsibility on his listeners (Z I Prologue 3-4) (Nietzsche 1977, 239).

It is clear, though, that according to Nietzsche the world has not yet seen any supermen. It will be the man of the future, who will have the stomach to will the Eternal Recurrence, to affirm existence with all its terror and ecstasy. "*You higher men, the worst about it: none of you has learned to dance as a man ought to dance – to dance beyond yourselves!*" - Zarathustra IV (Nietzsche 1977, 245). The higher, heroic men, are being contrasted with the Last – or the latest – Man, who longs to be part of the crowd, that is the *herd* type. The Last Man wants everyone to be equal and alike. This is in stark contrast with *Overman* who is able to withstand solitude and relishes on formulating his own conceptions of life, even if it means in setting oneself apart from the community.

*Übermensch* could be defined as the type of man who embodies the best of both Apollonian and Dionysian worldview, though his emphasis does seem to be on the latter. Apollonian in the sense that, like a sculptor, he is able to mould existence according to his values. He is not a slave to the tradition or conventional morality or taste, but able to be his own judge. He has also mastered the skill of restraint, not being a slave of the passions either. And Dionysian in the sense that in his ability to affirm everything, sublime and terrifying, he gains access to a more or less permanent state of *Rausch* – ecstasy, lodged 'in the spirit of the music'. This 'Overman' is the "antithesis to 'modern men', to 'good' men, to Christians and other nihilists", Nietzsche outlines (Nietzsche 1977, 247).

#### 2.4.4 Nietzsche's Final Thoughts on Art and Heroism

In the last creative burst of Nietzsche's art and the role of an artist is again esteemed as important and valuable. This burst would include all four works of 1888, among them the *Twilight of the Idols* and *Ecce Homo*, and the material published during this time in *Nachlass / the Will To Power* – notebooks. Art is defined here as a 'great stimulus to life' and intoxication, *Rausch*, is again seen as an essential center in the 'psychology of the artist' (Nietzsche 2005, 204). In his high estimations of the value of the artist and his creation, Nietzsche is returning even to the days of the BT. The sour and scathing criticisms about artist's motivations and the questionable value of his works – one of his favourite theme in his 'positivistic period' - have all but disappeared. Wagner, though, does not get reappraisals anymore. On the contrary: Nietzsche releases two critical works about him in this last phase, but Nietzsche has other artistic heroes to lavish praise on, such as Goethe, Stendhal, Emerson, Strindberg and Montaigne (Nietzsche 2005, 195, 198). From philosophers, Schopenhauer still gets an honourable mention, though his ideas about will are used towards nihilistic ends (Nietzsche 2005, 202).

Artist-heroes are being seen as the torch-bearers of the Dionysian spirit with their attitude of unconditional affirmation of life. And what about its enemies? In *Twilight of the Idols (1888)*, Nietzsche reminisces how he identified Socrates and Plato as a 'symptoms of decay' already in 1872, and he still deems their attitudes as profoundly anti-Greek. Their gravest mistake is to equate reason with virtue and virtue with happiness. Socrates and his ilk railed against the the tyranny of instincts and saw 'the daylight of reason' as their only saviour (Nietzsche 2005, 163, 166). In Socratism, Nietzsche sees a precursor to anti-sensual, Christian thought with its ascetic ideal, his main target of criticism in many of his later works, culminating in the vitriolic *Antichrist*. His last published work *Ecce Homo* (if we do not count *Will To Power*) famously ends with the words: "Have I been understood? - Dionysos versus the crucified..." (Nietzsche 2005, 151).

In 'spiritualization of sensuality', Nietzsche sees a great victory over Christianity. Indeed, it serves him as a definition of love. While Schopenhauer was right in turning to art to a

source of redemption, he was wrong in making it a disinterested state, an ascetic ideal of sorts. For Nietzsche all true morality and art stems from 'an instinct of life', also known as the Dionysian attitude, which, to him, all true artists embody and manifest. This attitude is fundamentally life-affirmative yet also tragic as it also embraces suffering. The beautiful visions and sounds depicted in works of art arouse our Will, not quench it into silence, as Schopenhauer claimed (Nietzsche 2005, 173)

To return to Nietzsche's key concept in unlocking artist's psychology – *the intoxication* that is – Nietzsche defines sexual excitement as the 'most ancient and original form' of it. Art is sublimated, spiritualized, expression of our sexuality. Here, again, Nietzsche is a clear precursor to Freud's ideas on art. But it is also clear how Nietzsche cannot be equated with any crude form of freudianism: He elaborates that *intoxication* is also present in all great desires, in all strong affects, in the extreme movement, in cruelty and destruction and in victory and contest. What characterizes intoxication is feeling of fullness and sense of increased strength. From this state of fullness, we impose ourselves into things, into the world. This is the crux of the artistic creation: A form of discharge coming out of abundant inner state. By this token, true art does not arise from neurosis or lack. On the contrary, artist transforms things until they are 'reflexes of his perfection' (Nietzsche 2005, 196) Christianity does the very opposite: the things it encounters it dries up, the very notion of Christian art is, for Nietzsche, an oxymoron. And same goes for all pessimistic art as such.

In *Will To Power*, Nietzsche states that art is essentially an affirmation, blessing, deification of existence. From the state of intoxication, art perfects, glorifies, affirms and beautifies. Sex and sensuality are a natural, essential ingredient of the life-affirmate art, yet this should not be equated with actual sexual act, which has a way of squandering one's energies (Young 1992, 127) Also 'ugliness' has way of depleting strength and weighing one down. Whenever we are depressed, we sense the presence of something ugly. Nietzsche (Nietzsche 2005, 202) declares ugliness is both a sign and a symptom of degeneration and praises art for its contempt of all things ugly, for as terror and ugliness abound in life, we need a countering force for it in human culture. But isn't Nietzsche here succumbing to pure Apollonianism once again?

Nietzsche claims that 'art for art's sake' means essentially that art resists any purpose given to it outside itself. To be more precise: It resists any moralizing tendency whether it comes from religion or some other instance. This same principle characterizes Nietzsche's thought overall: Resistance to any norms imposed outside our immediate life-experience. This purported 'purposelessness' does not mean that art does not have any guiding principles or values. What art does is that it selects those aspects of life which celebrate our *Dionysian victoriousness in the face of suffering* and hardships of life (Nietzsche 2005, 205). The value that is encouraged to be emulated here is the courage and freedom before existence with all its horrors and beauties.

Perhaps the last questionable notion of 'heroism' that ought to be mentioned before closing the chapter is the one displayed in the 'final chapter' of Nietzsche's life: that of self-aggrandizement, megalomania and self-validation. These qualities certainly characterize his late autobiographical work *Ecce Homo* and his late letters, but also to an extent his earlier works, such as *Zarathustra*, whose author is certainly not suffering from excessive modesty in his estimation of his own ingenuity and significance. Whether Nietzsche's self-praise is just a tragic, neurotic, quality and something not to be associated heroism, is a valid argument to be made. Yet, as mentioned, this self-hubris was part of Nietzsche's oeuvre well before his delirium, and therefore, arguably integral part of his philosophy. Indeed, if one affirms that we really possess power to choose our values and perspectives in relation to reality, that we can create and recreate our selves, the forces of narcissistic delusion and psychological solipsism are real threats to be reckoned with.

In conclusion, Nietzsche's thought is rich with various notions of heroism. Yet there are over-arching concepts tying these notions together, some conceptions appear and re-appear right till the end of Nietzsche's life. The most important notion of heroism, it is suggested here, is the conception of the Hero as an Artist. This idea is articulated first in the *Birth of Tragedy*, and it is critically evaluated in so-called positivistic period. *Zarathustra* can be considered an expression of artistic heroism in itself. In late works such as *Twilight of the Idols* and *Ecce Homo* notion of artistic heroism is again prominently displayed. Dionysian art, and way of life, is the force that can take us over the abyss of nihilism, which is a threat posed both by Christianity and over-confident rationalism (i.e. Socratism).

Artist is the agent and embodiment of art, the creative force of life, and he cannot be separated from his creation. There are connections between Nietzsche's aesthetic hero and all of his major concepts such as *Amor fati*, *Eternal Recurrence*, *Will-To-Power* and *Dionysian / Apollonian* – dichotomy. The major question that arises here is whether Nietzsche's hero is plausible as an ideal: is it possible to realize such a vision in one's life. Nietzsche's own life, especially its tragic final chapter, does not provide us with a clear answer. Indeed, it might suggest a negative answer. We'll return to this question briefly in the final chapter of this study. But now we shall now turn to Rank and Freud to see what they took from this brilliant but contradictory vision of aesthetic heroism. Did they align in their life-work with Nietzschean vision of heroism and if so: Which one of them? The early Schopenhauerian romantic or the sombre, critical free-thinker of the 'positivistic' era? Or perhaps the later Dionysian artist-hero?

### **3. ARTIST AS THE HERO IN FREUD'S PSYCHOLOGY**

We now arrive to the third person of our study – Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), who chronologically speaking, stands in the middle between Nietzsche and Rank. The aim for this thesis was to investigate the way Nietzsche's thought – his concepts and philosophical problems, mainly those that relate to art, heroism and meaning – can shed a light on the divergence between Freud's and Rank's philosophies. The aim was also to examine the ways Rank and Freud's notions of heroism in their psychology can be studied as their takes on the dilemma of nihilism – the problem of meaninglessness in modern man's life – which Nietzsche so forcefully outlined. So far we've focused mainly on Nietzsche and Rank. We've established that for Nietzsche, it was precisely the artistic type of heroism, the notion of heroism with creativity and aesthetic creation in its core, which was the most potent and believable type of heroism to combat against the abyss of nihilism. Nietzsche gave various vision of heroism – some of which would promote Artist-as-Hero and some less so. Rank also outlines various notions of heroism – all of them which included creativity as a major component.

But what role did art and creativity play for Freud, in his psychology, as an answer to great dilemmas of life. Earlier in this study, we briefly touched upon his ambivalent relationship towards Nietzsche – wherein both admiration and anxiety of influence co-existed. However, there remains much to be said about Freud and his notion of aesthetic heroism that can be detected in his writings and also through the way he lived his life.

In this chapter, I will first offer some remarks on Freud's biography and how his life was used as a fodder for hero-myth(s). After that I will examine the perspectives he had about art and heroism and finally examine how these thoughts could possible be seen as answers to meaninglessness and nihilism.

#### **3.1 Myth of the Hero and Freud's biography**

As mentioned, Rank's life was – and is – not very well-known nor studied, unlike Freud and Nietzsche's, of whom both there exists plenty of biographical literature and studies. So,

instead of giving a summary of Freud's life, I'd like to offer some biographical considerations that relate to the theme of the study: the notion of heroism and artistic heroism more precisely. The biographical literature about Freud offers interesting points for consideration as we talk about heroism and artistic creativity. In classic Freud biographies, like Ernest Jones' (1953-1957) or Peter Gay's *Freud* (1988) Freud is generally presented as more or less exemplary figure in terms of his character and an outright genius when it comes to his scientific and creative work. However, there is another picture, not so well-known to general public, presented by so-called Freud-critics, writers whose general view towards Freud's character and/or psychology is generally critical. Frederick Crews, Peter Swales, Adolf Grunbaum, Hans Eysenck, Henri Ellenberger, Jeffrey Masson and Frank Sulloway are some of the most well-known names from this camp. Especially interesting take, in terms of this study, is Frank Sulloway's *Freud: The Biologist of the Mind* (1980) wherein Sulloway examines, not only Freud's legacy as a biologist but also how Freud's lifestory, his biography, has been used, propped up, for myth-building by the psychoanalytic movement and Freud himself. Sulloway also argues that the so-called Freud-myth aligns well with archetypal 'hero's journey' as outlined by Joseph Campbell (1949). We examine Sulloway's argument, and analyse it in relation to Rank's and Nietzsche's biographies.

Sulloway's argument is that there is a type of hagiography that has been built to defend the psychoanalytic movement. This heroic myth about Freud has been built both by Freud himself and members of psychoanalytic movement. Sulloway examines the various compelling reasons and motivations Freud, and various other psychoanalytic writers, had to create an alluring and heroic narrative about the founder of psychoanalysis. Sulloway (Sulloway 1980, 445) argues that this 'historical decontextualization', rewriting and outright denial of certain facts has been essential for good myth-making. This perspective is relevant to us as we explore the claim - offered by Nietzsche and Rank - that, as we seek to create meaning to our lives through creativity and art, the most important artistry consists of making one's own life a great work of art<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Sulloway points out that it is not that only that the facts of Freud's life have used to create an 'an archetypal pattern' of the classical hero myths, but that the Freud's biography has "often been remolded to fit this archetypal pattern whenever suggestive biographical details have first pointed the way" (Sulloway 1980, 446).



Let us outline few facts, or observations, from Freud's biographies which are often mentioned as Freud's 'heroic' life. Sigmund Freud was born 1856 in Freiberg, Moravia and the family moved to Vienna when he was just four. Freud already had two step-brothers, but he was his mother's first-born, and a "family-favourite". Freud's intellect and studiousness was recognized early on. Freud was to only one of the siblings to get his own room, so he could pursue his studies in peace (Gay 1989, xii).

Although in Freud's psychology, the relationship to the father is probably the most crucial relationship for a young man, Freud did not look at his father in an uncritically heroic manner. He recalls an episode where his father had failed to defend himself as he encountered antisemitic taunting on the streets of Vienna. This lack of heroism on his father's part disappointed Freud, who contrasted his father's behaviour with Hannibal who had bravely fought against the Romans and outwitted them. Freud identified himself with 'semitic Hannibal', one of his great childhood heroes and had ambitions of becoming a type of warrior himself. Into his early heroes, he also included Napoleon and parliamentarian Oliver Cromwell, who had defended the Jews (Jones 1961, 50).

Gay (1989) and Jones (1961) argue that Freud had to learn to fend for himself against the critics and stand his ground - as an outsider - already as a student, for antisemitism had 'pervaded' Vienna and the University Freud attended. Freud (Freud 1959, 9) says that he "was expected to feel myself inferior and an alien" because of his Jewishness. This view is contested by Crews and Sulloway, who see the image of 'outsider' who needs to learn to stand by oneself as an exaggeration. Crews (Crews 2017, 22), for example, states that there is no known occasion where Freud would've been "deprived of a career opportunity because of ethnic bias".

In the context of our study, Freud's claims about Nietzsche during his student days hold a special interest. Nietzsche was Freud's predecessor in many ways: for example, in his conception of unconscious, in his views about the conflicting forces and motivations within man, and finally in the process of sublimation. Schopenhauer was significant in similar ways. Notably Freud claimed that during his study-years he did not study Nietzsche's philosophy and he was careful to make the same point about Schopenhauer. As

mentioned, Freud's curious claim was that his attempts to study Nietzsche were 'smothered by the excess of interest' (Minutes I: 359, cited in Sulloway 1980, 468).

Freud (Freud 1957, 16) also claimed that matters of priority – of who-proposed-and-what-first – were of no concern to him. This is contradicted by the vigorous efforts with which he sought to establish himself as the founder and inventor of his key-ideas. It is likely that Freud not only was familiar with Nietzsche's ideas which were debated in the University at the time but that he also participated in those debates. Sulloway (1980, 468) points out that For years he was a member of the reading Society - of German Students of Vienna - who actively studied both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. The members of the society were known to even correspond with Nietzsche.

In his recollections *On the history of the psychoanalytic movement* (Originally published in 1914), Freud tells us how it was Otto Rank who showed him how his theory of repression was not, in fact, an original idea of Freud, but was already explored by Schopenhauer, in the section concerning the explanation for insanity in *World as Will and Idea*. Freud (Freud 1957, 15) assures the reader that he never studied Schopenhauer but came to his conclusions independently. And he adds that "in his later days"<sup>20</sup> he has denied the pleasure of reading Nietzsche, so as to not acquaint himself with any anticipatory ideas as he goes about with his psychoanalytic work. Freud (Freud 1957, 16) claims, though, that it does not bother him if philosophers can claim 'priority' to these kind of key ideas, since they have recognized them only through intuition whereas psychoanalysis, apparently, proves it empirically.

Later in his life (in his autobiographical study), Freud (Freud 1959, 59) writes again about his influences: He says that he read Schopenhauer very late in his life and acknowledges that psycho-analysis coincides to a large extent with Schopenhauer's philosophy, which "asserts the dominance of emotions", "the supreme importance of sexuality" and contains even awareness of "the mechanism of repression". Major admissions of priority, though expressed with not unusual caveat.

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20 We may ask, then, whether this is an admission that he studied Nietzsche in his earlier days?

Whatever Freud's encounters with philosophy were, did not end up studying the discipline in rigorous manner but opted for natural sciences. He graduated in 1881 and started to build his career as a neurologist. Freud worked first as a researcher but soon - apparently because of financial hardships – he started to do clinical work with patients at a local hospital. Freud was influenced by Jean-Martin Charcot's (1825-1893) work (which involved the use of hypnotic suggestion) with 'hysterics' in France, and he later continued investigations into this phenomena with Joseph Breuer (1842-1925). Before settling on his psychoanalytic technique whose nucleus was the process of 'free association', Freud's main tools with his patients were hypnotic suggestions and electrotherapy.

Breuer had had some success with his patients with a so-called 'cathartic method' where a patient was taken via hypnosis to a 'traumatic scene' and re-calling this event with "a free expression of emotion" provided the patient alleviation – and even cessation – of her present symptoms. The earliest of Breuer's cases was that of 'Anna O' – whose real name was Bertha Pappenheim. Breuer gave Pappenheim lots of credit for discovering herself the "cathartic-method". Freud, having by now realized the limitations of his present 'toolkit', was excited about Breuer's method and proposed further collaboration. The fruit of his collaboration was the joint-work *Studies in Hysteria* (1895), often considered the formal starting point of the psychoanalysis (Freud 1959, 13, 16).

In 1909 Freud gave a series of lectures at a university in America. In those lectures he gave credit for the birth of psychoanalytic method to Breuer. In Freud's essay about the history of psychoanalytic movement, he seems to backtrack from his statement. He (Freud 1957, 8) states that his friend's had suggested that his gratitude to Breuer had been excessive. The 'cathartic method' of Breuer was really just a precursor to proper psychoanalytic method. Freud tells us he wants to bring this up, because so much scorn has been piled upon him as the originator of psychoanalysis, but Breuer has been spared from it. How could this be, if he'd been the real inventor of the method? In here too, it is quite obvious that the issues of priority and 'anxiety of influence' have plagued Freud.

The common narrative (Gay 1989, for example) is that Freud could not settle for "conventional career" in science, because he was driven to solve some of the great

philosophical riddles about man that puzzled him. Gay describes him as a "brilliant researcher" and Jones adds how throughout his life Freud would remain loyal to the scientific ideal of 'intellectual integrity'. This is contrasted by more critical accounts, Crews and Sulloway to name a few, who paint a conflicting and an unsettling picture of Freud as a researcher and theorist. Their portrait is of a man whose burning ambition is first and foremost that his name is to be carved among the intellectual giants, and who does not shy away from doing whatever it takes to get this goal, a personal immortality of sorts, realized.

Crews especially gives sharp criticism on Freud's legacy as a scientist, arguing that Freud's efforts as a natural scientist were essentially failures, involving a gross misconduct both in methodology and in theory. His cocaine-studies being a good examples (Crews 2017, Chapter 4: White Magic ). Crews' argument is that because of his ineptitude to the work of natural scientist, Freud could simply not carry on anymore as a empirical scientist, but he had to invent something like 'psychoanalysis', an ideological self-sustaining system and a lucrative business venture so that he could support his family and fulfil his, grandiose heroic ambitions (Crews 2017, 524).

Ellenberger (1970) has explored at length how it also cannot be claimed that Freud 'discovered the unconscious'. Nor can he be said to be the first one to have affirm the existence of childhood sexuality (consider here the work of Wilhelm Fliess (1858-1928), for example). But to affirm these kind of grand achievements to Freud is important, of course, if one wants to paint a narrative of a heroic genius in the likes of Darwin and Copernicus, a revolutionary who single-handedly effects both a cultural and scientific revolution. This is not to deny that Freud was not an original thinker, for that he was, and it is not to deny that his thought did not have a great influence on the culture – for it obviously did. What is being said, is that what was being constructed by Freud himself – and by his followers – is a heroic narrative, which has given meaning and sustenance to those who've espoused it and benefited from it.

Same kind of grand narrative was woven about Nietzsche also, and though he himself did not come to see it coming to fruition, he basically came to achieve the intellectual status ,

immortality through his visions, which he affirmed for himself already in his lifetime. His grandiose visions about himself were continued to be espoused by his sister and later by his fervent followers. Same kind of narrative does apply to Rank to an extent, who first in his youth and later in his post-freudian years did entertain grandiose notions about himself (as a thinker especially) but struggled to get this vision validated by his colleagues and general public. In this sense, Rank's biography is closer to Nietzsche than to Freud, who certainly had his fair share of acclaim already during his lifetime.

For a researcher, it is hard to gain 'objective' access to Freud's early history, since Freud destroyed a large part of his diaries. Seemingly amused by his deed, he quipped that later biographers can sort out the truth<sup>21</sup>. "Let each of them believe he is right in his Conception of the Development of the Hero", he continued and predicted how all of them would 'go astray' (Jones 1961, 27). Another telling description that Freud gives about himself in Jones's biography (dated around 1900), goes as follows:

*"You often estimate me too highly. For I am not really a man of science, not an observer, not an experimenter, and not a thinker. I am nothing but by temperament a conquistador – an adventurer, if you want to translate the word – with the curiosity, the boldness, and the tenacity that belong to that type of being"* (Jones 1961, 297).

This quote co-incides quite close cronologically to the next great heroic deed in the saga of Freud; his famous self-analysis. In the psychoanalytic lore, Freud's self-analysis is often said to be the true birth of the psychoanalysis. Without it, the breakthrough work *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) would not exist. According to Jones, Freud's self-analysis started in 1895, and it proceeded simultaneously with the writing of the aforementioned 'magnum opus'. Freud started to methodologically analyze his dreams. The death of Freud's father 1896 had given him a compelling reason to dive deeper into himself. Freud describes writing the *Interpretation* as reaction to his father's death – which is "the most important event, the most poignant loss, in a man's life" (Jones 1961, 281).

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<sup>21</sup> "I have destroyed all my diaries of the past fourteen years, with letters, scientific notes and the manuscripts of my publications...Let the biographers chafe; we won't make it too easy for them" Freud. (Jones 1961, 26).

Many changes happened in Freud's thinking during those years. By the turn of the century, he had abandoned his 'seduction-theory' - the idea that at the core of the traumas of his patients, lie an incident of sexual molestation, usually inflicted on the child by a parent or a family-member. Freud had had 180 degree turnaround: He now suggested that, among his patients, there was a general occurrence of incest wishes towards the parents, usually toward the parent of the opposite sex. The Oedipus complex was born. Jones (Jones 1961, 282) suggests that the process of coming to terms with this surprising conclusion took five years for Freud. There was an admission in himself, of a passion towards his mother and jealousy towards his father. Freud was certain that this same condition was applicable to mankind as a whole. This would explain the huge influence of Oedipus legends in world mythology.

Yet, Sulloway (Sulloway 1980, 486) remarks, even as late as 1950's Freud's students, such as Erik Erikson, knew very little of the 'mysterious self-analysis' which he referred to in his writings. It seems that the story of 'self-analysis' grew over the years, and gained its mythic significance only later on. Rather than discovering insights through self-analysis, Freud "read into his self-analysis what he had already begun to realize from these other sources of evidence" (Sulloway 2007, 56).

Freud had complained to his friend Fliess about the unappreciative and hostile reception to his *Interpretation of Dreams*. He complained about being isolated and even shunned. But the reception among his peers was hardly hostile, there were many reviews that expressed interest towards his ideas (at least thirty contemporary reviews total) (Sulloway 1980, 450). Sulloway dubs it as the 'hostile-reception' myth. Most likely, Freud had simply expected more coverage in a more prestigious scientific journals. The same narrative of being an isolated warrior who needs to shoulder against hostile forces continued even when Freud's reputation was well-established and his movement steadily growing (Sulloway 1980, 453)<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Also, though the values of Vienna were certainly Victorian and conservative, sex as a research-subject, was not a taboo among scientists and thinkers. So, the part of Freud's hero myth, where he battles bravely among the uncomprehending moralists, does not accurately reflect the reality either.

Freud heroes included also biblical figures: Early on in life, he identified himself more with Joseph – the dream-interpreter of pharaoh – and later with Moses, the great spiritual leader of the Jews. The topic of Freud's last book was, of course, Moses (*Moses and the Monotheism*, 1939). One can aim to understand Freud, as well as Nietzsche and Rank, through the various hero-identifications they went through and through the 'anxiety of influence' they had about their predecessors and contemporaries. Freud certainly had his share of powerful leaders who had to withstand fierce isolation and opposition. Not unlike Nietzsche, there is a sense of heroic calling, a destiny, that atheistic Freud seemed to have believed in, connected to and derived sustenance from (Sulloway 1980, 478).

There is a strong case that can be made about Freud's isolation being self-imposed, for the large part. Freud was not like Nietzsche, who did spend a fair share of his life in his own company. He worked with people – colleagues and clients - intimately for the most part of his life, and had a large family also. Yet with colleagues who had ideas of their own, who perhaps felt a heroic calling of their own, Freud did not get along well. He eventually burnt the bridges with majority of the most important and luminous colleagues that he ever worked with: Fliess, Breuer, Adler, Jung, Rank, Ferenczi, the list is long. What characterizes these breaks is a major disagreement in ideology and often a fierce power-struggle or clash of egos.

As we consider the idea of artistic heroism as an answer to nihilism, it is interesting to note how Freud made himself the ultimate hero of his works. Spector (Spector 1972, 35) suggests that this is the one thread that ties Freud's works together: His preoccupation with himself. His connection to the Oedipus myth is clearly personal – Freud admitted as to having had romantic sentiments to his mother and antagonistic feelings towards his father – and when he analyses the works and lives of the great cultural figures like Goethe, Leonardo Da Vinci or Moses – he steps into their shoes, claims affinity towards them – and then claims to understand their motives better than they themselves did. What does one gain from this type of identification and self-characterization? A personal immortality, of course, would be a Rankian answer. A personal, self-created meaning, to combat the abyss of meaninglessness would be an answer in a more Nietzschean vein. Freud, certainly, had

more grounds to assume these grandiose positions than most people<sup>23</sup>. Nevertheless, it is uncertain how conscious was Freud's attempt to create meaning – and combat nihilism – through building a heroic myth out of his life – which contained a whole new 'religion' within it: psychoanalysis.

#### **4.2.1 The Anatomy Of The Break-up**

Before moving on from the biographical sphere into exploring Freud's ideas more closely, let us briefly return to the process of Freud's and Rank's 'break-up', as this process was explored only briefly in our earlier chapter on Rank. We will now explore it more from Freud's perspective. Freud's rift with Adler, which happened in 1911, was not the first rift Freud had had with a close colleague but it was the first major one within the young psychoanalytic movement. Rank (Lieberman 1985, 127) once quipped that after Adler's departure most of Freud's writing was just reactions to his critics. There was increasingly less leeway for original thinking in the movement<sup>24</sup>. After Adler was gone, it was Jung and Rank who were the most likely heirs to Freud. Lieberman's interpretation is that though Jung acknowledged Rank's brilliance at times, he also thought of him as Freud's 'slavish son' (Lieberman 1985, 142).

Freud had high hopes for Jung to lead the psychoanalytic movement, yet he had to admit that Jung's views had grown increasingly apart from his own. Jung had voiced his criticism on the Freudian concept of libido early on, and now – Freud felt - there was also an increasing religious mysticism in Jung's thought. As Jung accused Freud of attempting to control him – and wanting only to produce loyal subjects to himself, and Freud simultaneously claiming that Jung could not look at the neurotic aspects of his personality, there was not much hope for the growth of their relationship. Freud cut the ties with Jung in a letter in 1913. It was now arguably Rank and Ferenczi who were the most important figures in the psychoanalytic movement after Freud (Lieberman 1985, 142). After Jung's departure, Ferenczi was elected as the chairman of the International Psychoanalytic

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23 Perhaps surprisingly, Freud held himself in a very high esteem morally - describing himself as a "very moral being" - but found himself wanting in his intellectual capacities (Lieberman 1985, 63).

24 Adler, at one point, even seemed to blame Rank for his rift with Freud: "the little fellow always tried to set the old gentleman against me" (Lieberman 1985, 128).



Association. Freud's letters seem to indicate that it was perhaps Rank's lack of medical degree, which stood in the way of him assuming a leadership position in the movement (Lieberman 1985, 182).

Though Freud seemed initially open towards the new experiments happening within the movement, the rift between Rank and Freud could be said to have started with Rank and Ferenczi introducing new ideas to the psychoanalytic technique and theory (*The Development of Psychoanalysis* 1923). Yet this did not stretch their relations anywhere near the breaking-point. The authors – Rank and Ferenczi – claimed to be working securely within psychoanalytic framework<sup>25</sup>. It became a different matter as Rank released his *Trauma of Birth* in the following year (1924), wherein he openly questioned the father-dominated theory that Freud propagated. Although initially tolerant, Freud did not take well to this.

Rank claimed that after having introduced the resolving the birth trauma as the goal of the therapy, he had achieved better results with his clients. Freud placed his experience against Rank's: There was no significant improvement in his patients after having introduced Rank's new ideas to them. Rank felt that Freud had not really given a fair hearing to his new ideas and snubbed whole psychoanalytic movement as fiction. Freud (Freud, Rank & Lieberman 2012, 216) was offended and wrote to Rank: "An evil demon lets you say: The psychoanalytic movement is only a fiction". As with Jung, Freud felt that Rank's bloated pride was to his untreated neurosis.

Freud (Freud, Rank & Lieberman 2012, 238) suggested that Rank was placing too much weight on their 'ideological differences'. Surely they could still be emotionally intimate and dine together as usual despite their disagreements. Rank did seem to come back to the folds, and even requested help from Freud to treat his neurosis. Freud was satisfied as this seemed to confirm his view that Rank's new theory was "strikingly complementary" with his neurosis. However, as the other key-members suspected, this did not prove to be lasting improvement.

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25 "...your co-authorship with Ferenczi has my full support. The energetic, daring initiative of your joint draft is gratifying." Freud claimed in a letter (Freud, Rank & Lieberman 2012, 146 ).

As Rank bounced back from his depressive episode, he continued to publish writings which were increasingly departing from Freudian doctrines. Freud (Freud, Rank & Lieberman 2012, 251) was angry: his perception was that Rank had used his neurosis, the momentum of his illness, as a way to detach himself from the movement. "Theoretically he seemed to be retracting nothing" Freud scoffed. Freud publishes his answer to Rank in his *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1925). Since the just-born child is wholly narcissistic creature with a solipsistic world of his own, there can be no birth trauma as described by Rank, Freud replies. The anxiety arrives with the father-figure, with his inhibitions and rules, enters the scene and disrupts the 'conflict-free', oceanic relationship between child and the mother.

Rank bids farewell to Freud and leaves Vienna to start a new life in Paris. They will never meet again in person. He sends a parting-gift to Freud: The leather bound collected works of Nietzsche. Freud (Freud, Rank & Lieberman, 253) does not appreciate it: "The gift has an oppressive feeling of owing so much to me", a quality of boastfulness, due to newly-acquired riches. The pendulum-like movement which characterized Rank's departure from Freud and the movement made Freud's reaction harsher than what might've been the case otherwise. "Now I have forgiven everything, I am through with him", Freud concludes (Freud, Rank & Lieberman, 274).

Though Freud (Freud, Rank & Lieberman 281) considered Rank to be a gifted person, indeed 'the ablest and most gifted of all', he did not put much value in Rank's later psychology. Freud (Freud, Rank & Lieberman 263) charges Rank for being 'an impostor by nature' and that his 'genetic psychology' is a product of mania, consisting of confused and incomprehensible thinking. Rank flirts with other 'departed ones' – Jung, Adler and Stekel – and as with Jung, the unconscious has been turned into a mystical concept.

There were many people who made comments about Rank's and Freud's break-up and the reasons for it. Anais Nin (Nin 1966, 279. *The Diaries of Anais Nin, Vol 1.*), the writer who was also an analysand of Rank's, was of the view that Freud had wanted a son for himself from Rank. Yet he could not forgive Rank from deviating from his concepts so radically. Rank's explorations were a threat after all. Yet, the rift was widened by the associates of

Freud, "the committee", who wanted this 'break-up' to happen (Freud, Rank & Lieberman 2012, 264).

In a lecture titled 'Beyond Psychoanalysis', Rank stated (Freud, Rank & Lieberman 2012, 277) Freud's great merit was the 'dethroning' of old medical materialism, which equated the psyche with our nerves; the physiological apparatus. Yet, his great mistake was to replace it all-encompassing biological sex-drive. Freud's (Freud, Rank & Lieberman 2012, 281) final take on Rank was that the latter's attempt to bring soul and free will back to psychology with aid of 'quantum physics' was not convincing nor desirable. Neither was Rank's brief therapy, a 'bold' idea which might be suited for fast-paced Americans.

But now, let us return depart from the biographical spere and examine more closely what role did Freud assign to art and creativity in his psychology, and how the notion of Artistic Hero could be applied to him.

## **4.2 Role of Art and the Artist in Freud's Thought**

Though Freud's stated aim was first and foremost to be a scientist and a beacon for rationality and reason, it can be hardly denied that Freud was also a gifted storyteller and an artist in his own right<sup>26</sup>. While he did express bleak and reductionistic views about some of the humanity's greatest artists and about the process of artistic creation, it is still clear that Freud also had great respect and admiration for artists and the artistic process. Though not to the extent of Nietzsche and Rank, Freud did write about the subject of art and the artist almost throughout his whole career. Was the artist a pathological character in Freud's psychology, a special type of neurotic, or were there other sides to the artist's psyche that he wanted us to consider? Is there an artist-type, in Freud's philosophy, who bears a resemblance to the artistic hero in the vein of Nietzsche and Rank? Did Freud also held hopes for the Artist to provide meaning in godless world? These are the questions we turn our attention to now.

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<sup>26</sup> Literary critic Harold Bloom even dubbed Freud as 'The Greatest Modern Writer', whose writing are 'intensely metaphorical' and about things that what cannot really be described (Article in New York Times, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1986).

Freud's case studies, which were a steady feature of his works, are considered by many to be literature, work of creative fiction more than scientific literature. Freud is nowadays perhaps more influential in humanities, literary studies being a fine example of this, than he is in the field of clinical psychology. One reason for the persuasiveness of Freud's work is arguably the literary, artistic, and rhetorical skills he employs in the works. Unlike most of Rank's works, Freud's writings read well. This does not mean that his thinking would not be that of scientific kind, mind you. As Spector (Spector 1972, 34) notes, many critics did not see this as a handicap, but as a proof of Freud's abilities in both areas – artistic and scientific (Havelock Ellis, for example). However, many critics have also argued that as Freud aimed to arrive at universal psychological principles, he did certainly go beyond what was within the parameters of "scientifically valid and testable psychology" - his system was more of a philosophy or ideology....or even religion as Rank ended up arguing.

The relationship Freud had to his most cherished theories, such as the Oedipus complex or the Death Drive, is more akin to what artist has to his most beloved works, rather than scientist relationship to his hypothesis' or theory. Both Jung and Rank did get to experience this in a visceral way. Freud initially professed open-mindedness, but eventually he could not tolerate colleagues who would attack his most beloved conceptions. Of course, Freud himself would tell us a different story: that Jung simply became a mystic or Rank fell in love with his pet-theories and sunk into fog of mental disturbances. Let's one bear in mind though how often this phenomena repeated itself in Freud's life. Rank and Jung, mentioned together here because of the similarities they share in both biographical (the prodigal sons, close to Freud, who were destined to lead psychoanalytic movement, but who then become heretics, subject to ad-hominem attacks) and philosophical sense, were also far from being the only ones who fell out of sorts with Freud after denouncing some of his most fabulous and crucial artistic-scientific creations, i.e. his ideas that is.

Though Freud did characterized himself as a strict rationalist and atheist, someone who fought against the 'occult tide' of religion and herd-like thinking of the masses, his truth was – and is - still more of an artistic and philosophical statement than he cared to admit. Karl Popper (1902-1994) famously treated psychoanalysis as a prime example of a pseudoscience, because its hypothesis could not be adequately subjected to an empirical

scrutiny and testing. There is a case that can – and has been - made that psychoanalysis, as a system, shares a closer affinity with art, rather than science. Does this make it a less valuable enterprise? This depends, of course, to whom this question is directed to. Let us now move on to explore more explicitly the ideas Freud did express about art and the artist. As we do that, we may find out what is their relation to heroism, if any.

What kind of art did Freud enjoy and what was his expertise in it? First of all, it could be said that Freud's taste in art was predominantly classical. He studied the Greek classics, including Sophocles and other tragic dramas, but also the history of Western sculpture and painting. Of all the arts, what valued most was literature and the plastic arts (sculptures, artefacts etc). The art of painting was also something Freud took time to analyze. Of literature, Shakespeare was a towering figure for him. The story of Hamlet was second in importance only to Oedipus. Within German culture, Goethe and Nietzsche were the probably the most important figures for him. Freud did not have a great affinity for music, in fact he often actively avoided it and did not write much about it either. This, of course, is in stark contrast to Nietzsche, to whom music was a life-line and who wrote many works on Wagner. Freud's interest, regardless of which art we are dealing with, was mainly directed to 'dead geniuses', whose reputation was securely established. He was not a connoisseur of modern art – not in literature nor in painting – and notoriously sceptical of the budding new art of cinema. Freud, after all, spent his formative years, with pre-modern art: He was not exposed to Picasso, Kandinsky nor Joyce. Not that he would've necessarily enjoyed them anyway. Koffman (Koffman 1988, 4) suggests that the answer lies more in Freud's intellectually based character: He could not enjoy art 'without understanding' – and his lack of taste in music ( arguably an art where intellect – at least while experiencing the artwork- is cast aside more than in literature) as well as his taste for more classical literature can be understood this way.

In a tone which some critics have characterized as false-modesty, Freud (Freud 1997, 255) claimed that he was merely a layman when it came to art, not a connoisseur nor an expert. He also was of the opinion that his thoughts on art should be considered as just that: Opinions, a perspective, not on par with the scientific theories, that his psychoanalysis was presenting. It is only 'scientific research' that should be conducted without presumptions.

Aesthetic musings and strains of thought did not, and could not, be included to the same category. What aesthetic studies could do was to provide some illumination for the 'nuts-and-bolts' of psychoanalytic theory, and novel insights for those interested in matters of art and culture. Applied psychoanalysis of sorts. It seems that Freud suggests, that in themselves the aesthetic questions, do not warrant – or even allow - same precision or meticulousness that can be given to so-called serious 'scientific research'<sup>27</sup>.

But even if Freud did not rank questions related to art and artist in the first priority, in the way Rank and Nietzsche did, he clearly did value the contributions of art and artists to the understanding of human psyche. Does it not already tell us something how the story of Oedipus was chosen to serve such a prominent role in his psychoanalytic project? Freud certainly recognized how the myths and artists how employed and created them crystallized and expressed something crucial about human nature. And secondly: The task of the analyst, as outlined by Freud, quite inevitably involves intensive use of our creativity faculties. For the main material that the freudian analyst works with is that which is provided by the unconscious. More often than not, this material is not clearly rational nor straight-forward, and it cannot be understood without creative use of our cognitive and creative capacity. The unconscious requires the art of interpretation to be understood and deciphered. As Freud (Freud 1959, 41) put it: "The work of analysis involves an *art of interpretation* (Italics not added)", a skill which may requires both tact and practice.

In Freud's psychology, understanding how unconscious permeates into our consciousness and how it affects and dictates our behavior, is the key in alleviating our neurotic suffering. Underneath our civilized nature there is the domain of instincts which is actually largely running the show. The domain of the instincts, our basic drives, lies largely in the unconscious. These instincts are by nature 'conservative', i.e. they have a *compulsion to repeat* themselves. Unless alternative pathways are being forged by ego or the environment, they keep repeating the status quo ad infinitum. So, understanding the dynamic economy of instincts is of paramount importance. Only that way, can we attempt to affect the 'compulsion of repetition'.

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<sup>27</sup> Imago was a journal edited by Otto Rank and Hans Sachs (also a non-medically trained analyst), which was founded to study the issues of application of the analysis to various "mental sciences", art and culture included. Freud's writings on art were published there also (Freud 1959, 50).

potential for change, it was through psychoanalytic therapeutic work – that one could even hope to affect some changes to the slavery of our neurotic 'compulsion to repetition' (Freud 1959, 57).

Freud (Freud 1959, 45) famously defined dreams as the 'royal road to unconscious' and as "the (disguised) fulfilment of a (repressed) wish". Like dreams, art also employs symbolism to carry out their function. But if dreams function was to give a disguised expression for repressed wishes – and simultaneously to fend off too arousing stimuli – then what was the function of art? Instead of believing dreams to be arbitrary and random, Freud was convinced that they provided an access to the forgotten material of childhood. Was the same true for art? And did this link to childhood perhaps provide also a key in understanding the passionate motivation artist often had for their craft? Freud seemed to believe so.

The Oedipus myth, as described by Sophocles (and others), should naturally work as an example for Freudian theory of art. And indeed, Freud (Freud 1959, 63) explains how the experiencer of this particular artistic work is puzzled both by the terrible subject-matter but also of the effect that it has on him. Why this is so, becomes clearer when one understands that "universal law of mental life" is being captured in this story in all its emotional intensity, Freud suggests. Fate and the oracle represent 'materializations of an internal necessity' and hero's fatal sinning is him expressing unconsciously his 'criminal tendencies'<sup>28</sup>. Freud also sees Shakespeare's Hamlet as expressing the Oedipal truths, though not quite as directly as Sophocles in his play.

Freud (Freud 1959, 69) gives Rank credit for his work on the incest theme (Rank 1992)<sup>29</sup>, wherein Rank explored how dramatists throughout the ages have used the 'Oedipus situation' as a theme, though often in a 'modified' and 'softened' manner. Freud describes mythology as the 'special province' of Otto Rank. Rank's task had been interpreting myths and tracing their origin to the "familiar unconscious complexes of the childhood". A clear connection is made by Freud between the 'language of dreams' and folklore, legends and

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28 Choice of the word is curious here: If Oedipus indeed is acting out of inner necessity, why is this activity deemed as criminal?

29 Originally the work was published in 1912.

myths. The connecting symbolism found therein is certainly not an invention of psychoanalysts.

This 'Oedipal explanation' of the motives and themes of (dramatic) art, does not cover all there is to say about the art's functions per se, in the psychoanalytical sense. Freud did have more to say about artist and the aesthetics. He explained that art provides us 'a substitute for instinctual satisfactions' which have to be given up in real life. It helps us to cope as we try, with great difficulty, to make the reality principle the guiding principle of our lives. Like Rank, Freud (Freud 1959, 64) does not equate the artist to the neurotic – though both regularly withdraw from a harsh reality into a world of fantasies and imagination. The difference between the two is that the artist knows how to find a way back into reality and often has a firm grip on it. Neurotic, on the other hand, struggles with this. Function of a work of art is defined as the "imaginary satisfaction of unconscious wish" – quite like the dreams – and like dreams they are compromises, since they avoid open conflict with the reality and its repressive forces.

For Freud (Freud 1959, 65) works of art are also unlike the fantasies of an asocial narcissistic personality in the sense that they seek to evoke sympathetic response from the viewer of the art-piece. Artist seeks to satisfy the 'same unconscious wishful impulse' in the audience of his works. In addition to catering to our instinctual nature content-and theme-wise, this goal (of art) is partly achieved with the formal aspects of the art-work – the beauty, the artistry, and the admirable craft.

Now, while this vision shares – so far – some common characteristics with both Rank and Nietzsche's vision of the artist (especially the former), it also has some major differences: in Rank's psychology, artist does not simply use artistic creation as a substitute for wished reality, a type of coping mechanism, but he moulds the material of reality into something more tolerable. He transfigures, transforms and divinizes the clay of reality, if you will. As explained earlier, for Rank artist joins nature in artistic creation and thus achieves a type of immortality. This is somewhat similar to Nietzsche's romantic vision of artistry as elucidated in the *Birth of Tragedy*. As for Nietzsche, there are various visions of the functions of the art and our aim is not to go to that direction now, but it may be pointed out



that both Freudian vision of the art as a type sedative to protect against the harsh reality and the more Rankian vision of art as a reality of its own where the artist aims to work out his own salvation (or a type of immortality) can be found from Nietzsche's oeuvre.

But let us return from Nietzsche to the Freudian theory of the artist and his creation. What Freudian psychoanalytic theory of art has become famous for is how it extrapolates from the artist's life and his artwork, into the "mental constitution and instinctual impulses at work in it", exploring the interrelations between artist's life and his works. It seeks to carve out the neurotic part of the artist, which he shares with all men. This method has found many examples from a type of writing called *psychobiography* wherein an interpretation, a reading, is made from the known life-events of a person, into his real, underlying, motives and drives, which are not explicitly given by the life-events themselves. In the psychoanalytic interpretation of art, the life-events of the artist – his biography – can give us understanding to the art-works, and vice versa (Freud 1959, 65). Freud uses this type of method, for example, in his essay about Leonardo Da Vinci wherein the childhood memory of the artist and the painting 'The Madonna and Child with St. Anne' act as the material for the interpretation (1910)<sup>30</sup>. Interestingly Freud notes that while this method can shed light on many things, it cannot explain the 'artistic gift' nor the artistic technique. Indeed, he remarks that some of the best works of art, are "riddles to our understanding" (Freud 1997, 253).

It is hard not to view some of Freud's interpretations as a peculiar art-works in their own right: A good case in point is the above-mentioned essay where Freud studies the formation of Da Vinci's character – including his alleged homosexuality- and its relation to his art. He traces the origin of Da Vinci's problems into the childhood and arrives at a conclusion that Da Vinci must have sublimated his sexual urges first to art and then to scientific exploration. The turn to natural sciences must have been due to the outgrowth of his neurosis, and this in turn has been due to the suppression of his homosexual urges. Though he re-connected with his father at a later stage, Leonardo lacked a father-figure during his early years and was overwhelmed by the excessive tenderness of his mother's sexuality, Freud interprets. He (Freud 1997, 184) is especially concerned about Da Vinci's

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<sup>30</sup> Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood (1910).

childhood memory, where a vulture came to Da Vinci's cradle and struck him many times on the lips. Freud views this as an urge to return to the excessive tenderness of the mother, with its pleasures of suckling and passionate kissing (the tail in the mouth). Freud now recalls a vulture-headed deity Mut, an Egyptian mother-goddess, who was fertilized not by a male but by the wind, and who was often represented with by a phallus. All this is presented as a crucial information for the reader, as we try to decipher the meaning of the memory.

It's an imaginative interpretation – a colorful story – the psychological validity of which Freud refuses to deny even when it is later revealed that the 'vulture' of the story is a mistranslation of the word 'kite', and so the whole argument – with its allusion to Egyptian Goddess – is put into a different light. Spector (Spector 1972, 56) notes how Freud maintained till the 1930's that the painting in question (Virgin and St. Anne) could not be understood without this "characteristic childhood experience". This type of creative interpretations – whether it was about the meaning of dreams or the content of artworks – were quite the norm for Freud.

Going somewhat against Rank, Freud did not believe that this type of reductive analysis would 'spoil the enjoyment' that can be derived from the works of art. On the contrary: He was suspicious of any mystical muddying of the water, be it art or any other area of life. Rank was of the opinion that shedding too much 'analytical light' on the process of art-creation could have a detrimental effect on the artist's creativity.

All three – Rank, Nietzsche and Freud – shared a deep personal interest in the study of tragedies but also of comedy. However, it was only Freud who published a book about it (*Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* 1905). Freud proposed that the pleasure derived from a joke was due "to the momentary suspension of the expenditure of energy upon maintaining repression" (Freud 1959, 66). Rank was planning a book about comedy but never got it finished. His final words, though, were apparently: *Comisch!* (Lieberman 1985, 389). Anyone who has read Nietzsche, knows that his works contain plenty of humour – though large part of it is arguably grim. Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* contains plenty of witty self-referential humour, some of which was probably most hilarious to the author

himself. In *Gay Science* Nietzsche argues passionately about the virtues of lightness and superficiality. In *Zarathustra*, it is the spirit of gravity that is deemed to be the enemy of the man. Humour can certainly be seen as a force of lightness but also a means with which we can deal with matters of great weight and depth<sup>31</sup>. Humour can also be seen as a method to transcend the confines of rationality and conventional modes of thought – a goal which was certainly shared by Rank and Nietzsche. But perhaps the notable thing here was that all these thinkers, in addition to trying to understand the tragic nature of life, recognized and explored the other side of the coin: the meaning and value of humour and comedy.

In his critique of psychoanalytic art-interpretation Adorno (Adorno 1970, 12, 13) remarked on how problematic is the Freudian tendency to review art and artists, wherein a psychic normalcy raised to a criterion of judgment. This even in the cases like Baudelaire, where the greatness of his art is hardly in question. Though Freud admitted that the 'spiritual essence of art' remained hidden for him, he tied the function of art too closely to neurotic daydreaming. Psychoanalysis virtually ignores the art itself, making it a subjective system of signs denoting drive-states, Adorno scoffs and continues that only a dilettante would try to reduce whole enterprise of art into unconscious, ignoring in the process the objectivity, inner consistency, the non-psychic elements and truth-content of the works of art.

It could be said that whereas Freud's theory on art moves the focus from the art-work into the artist's biography - personality of the artist – putting the focus especially on the artist's formative experiences – the movement of Rank and Nietzsche seems to go diametrically to the opposite direction: Not to the works of the past, not to the past experiences of the artist, but into the present and there on to the future. Artworks are not here to provide us clues, evidence and possible explanations about the neurosis of their creator. Nor are they merely a defence-mechanism against the harsh, true reality. For Rank and Nietzsche art creates a reality of its own, which does not simply mirror the harsh, 'true reality'. They proclaim that, indeed, the highest art is that of living. One's own life and personality are the most important works of art.

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31 Here is a little example of Nietzsche's humour from his letters. It's Nietzsche making a comment about a moustache: “As the accessory of a large moustache he will give the impression of being military, irascible and sometimes violent – and will be treated accordingly” (Prideaux, 2018).  
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/oct/06/exploding-nietzsche-myths-need-dynamiting>

We might say that Nietzsche proposes through artistic creation an alternative to the dichotomy of This world and the True world, a dichotomy which had for so long dominated both Western (and Eastern) philosophies (See Young 1992). Early Greeks, for Nietzsche, were an exception to the norm: Through art they were brave enough to affirm this reality despite its suffering and tragic nature. He proposed that we simply wipe out the hypothesis of True World away from the equation altogether. This applies directly to the artistic creation: We should not aim to create alluring vision of the after-life or true reality, but works that affirm ourselves and bring us happiness here and now<sup>32</sup>. For surely we have no guarantees whether our efforts and hardships will ever be rewarded in some after-life. Nietzsche's plea was that not only should we not count on the existence of any 'true reality' but actively turn away from philosophies that prescribe something of such. We must turn away from essentialism and metaphysics, to put it simply.

For large part of the way, Rank followed in Nietzsche's footsteps but he was more cautious and sceptical of man's psychological ability of to embrace this world and discard all ideologies. Man needs his immortality-projects, was Rank's conviction. Where he did seem to find common ground (with Nietzsche) was that only by transcending even rationality, could man possibly escape the straight-jacket of reason, the prison formed by his own ideas and norms.

Freud, on the other hand, believed that reason was the cornerstone of civilization and was also reluctant to embrace the notion that 'intellectual bewilderment is necessary for the state of awe to be produced by a work of art'. An artwork that Freud could not penetrate with his reason, seemed uninviting, at times even repelling. Freud believed that what artist desires most is for the audience understand his intention, and that he is able to communicate it via his works. This perhaps is one big difference between Freud and the other two thinkers examined in this study: Freud's rationalism goes deep into his character, including his conception of the art and the artist. Nietzsche and Rank, though very perceptive and articulate about the intentions of the artist, were more willing to accept the element of the mysterious and incomprehensible both in creation and enjoyment of arts

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<sup>32</sup> We can see how this could apply to Christian art with its visions of Heaven and the Redeemer (Christ), but also to Marxist 'realism' in where the real experience of this-world is being elevated into visions of idealistic worker and communist society.

(Freud 1997, 254).

In this sub-chapter, we have explored Freud's views about art and artists. We have also juxtaposed them with those of Rank and Nietzsche. Let us now look more closely if there is a more explicit vision, a clear connection, found between artistic activity and heroism in Freud's thought.

### **3.4 Freud and the Artist as Hero**

As we've already found out, Freud had a somewhat ambivalent relation to artist. Spector (Spector 1972, 33) notes how Freud admired them for their gifts – which he deemed practically unexplainable – and on the other hand perceived them as expressing more infantilism than average-man. Freud considered their works as products of sublimated sexuality. Artists were similar to reckless youth: they lived their life in a way that was not confined to the strict control of reason. Perhaps this ambivalence tells us something about Freud's own perception of himself as an artist: He did not want to be seen as such, even though his theories did go beyond scientifically verifiable psychology.

Though Freud, in his writings, did not espouse the create-life-as-the-greatest-artwork, which was found from both Nietzsche and Rank, but he did seem to engage in aesthetic moulding with his own life: Freud was sculpting his own life to be kind of a modern hero-myth. In this myth, Freud was the underdog, the shunned one, who had to rely on one's own reason and ingenuity and rise up against the prejudices and superstitions of the time, against one's cunning intellectual enemies. He had to be the moral and intellectual father for his colleagues and followers, and the provider for a large family. He had to be the diplomat when the members of his society's 'inner circle' turned against each other. He had to put his foot on the ground when too wild theories were espoused, and reckless behaviour was exhibited. He had to stand up to Adler, Jung, Rank, Ferenczi and so on. And, if we follow his own estimation, he came through these challenges with flying colors. He emerged as a wounded, but victorious hero. Surely he became the conquistador of the uncharted ideas and Hannibal of the new bold and promethean movement? Was this not a work of art, where the stuff of life was the moulding-clay? These questions are not to be

only in sarcastic or ironic manner, since this is the story that has been espoused by the classical accounts of Freud and psychoanalysis.

Spector (Spector 1972, 42) points out that one thread that connects the twists and turns in Freud's theories is his preoccupation with himself: Certainly it is Freud who is the hero of his work. His aesthetic interests and valuations correspond with his personal obsessions. The real protagonist of both the Oedipus myth and Hamlet is Freud. He identifies with Da Vinci, Shakespeare, Goethe and Moses – their dilemmas touch him – what does this tell us about the man himself? That he viewed himself as a genius? Or that there was an intense wish to be one? Spector suggests that it was Freud's powerful need for a father-figure to replace his biological father, which led him to identify with a series of transient father figures: This gallery of great dead men from the history. To cope with a loss of a father-figure, a new one needed to be found?

What about Freud's efforts - so severely criticized by Crews, Sulloway and others - to write and rewrite his own life to fit that of a morally high-minded, scientifically ingenious individual? To be hailed as the new Copernicus, Darwin or Kant. What's wrong with that? Nothing per se, for we are not looking to make moral evaluations here. Freud certainly had many assets both in an intellectual sense and character-wise. What is aimed here is not to smear his character or life-work, but to remind that there is a more multifaceted picture to be found, than what is given in the hagiographies written about him or from his own autobiographical essays. Spector (Spector 1972, 35) aptly terms Freud as *a complex hero* (Spector 1972, 35). And certainly this term would apply to Rank and Nietzsche also. Freud reveals some aspects of himself, and some he carefully hides. He is not ready to reveal the most embarrassing details about himself. He is concerned about his legacy – what he leaves of himself to future generations. To put it in Rankian terms: This was his immortality-project: the psychoanalytic theory and movement ... and Freud himself.

Freud's personality starts to get carved out in his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). Here Freud shares at least fifty dreams of his own. We get to know him, through his personality and unconscious. His style of writing is already well-formed. There is often a great single concept or a metaphor that a given work of Freud revolves around: In this case, it is the

myth of Oedipus. But this is not the only masterful metaphor that we find from him. In fact, like Nietzsche, Freud was brilliant at creating evocative concepts that stuck. Yes, not scientifically verified, but – Freud protested – neither are those of physics, initially, until more research is being conducted. The drives of Eros and Thanatos, the Compulsion of Repetition, the trinity of Id / Ego and Superego... the list goes on. If philosopher would be defined as the artist whose art is that of concepts, then surely Freud could be hailed as a fine, interesting artist. As Rank put it: "Freud used myths to name his concepts, and thought he had explained the myths", yet he himself was "a myth creator in the grandest style" (Rank, Freud & Lieberman 2012, 278).

Does Freud's Oedipus Complex tells us more about Freud or about human condition? Everyone lusts after their mother and harbors animosity toward their father – true for everyone or true for Freud? Which description seems more probable? Freud (Cited in Spector 1972, 42) had stated that the highest and deepest satisfaction a man can have is as an infant suckling at its mother's breast. He also claimed that the greatest loss for a man is the loss of his father. Again: elucidations of Freud's sentiments about life, or axioms to be generalized to cover whole humanity?

In the case of his Da Vinci – essay, Freud ended up dismissing the work as 'half-fiction'. Could it be, that Freud realized that Da Vinci's life-story somehow was too close to his own? He needed to distance himself from this ingenious, scientifically talented, artist-hero with an ambivalent, repressed, sexuality. Freud (Freud 1997, 229, 230) says few interesting things about the scope of his inquiry and about Leonardo, the artist, at the end of the Da Vinci-essay: he says that we cannot explain Da Vinci's "extraordinary capacity for sublimating the primitive instincts". Instincts and their transformations are what can be detected and observed by psychoanalysis, but the 'organic foundation' of the character belongs to the sphere of biological research. The true nature of 'artistic function' and Leonardo's 'artistic power' remain both inaccessible to psychoanalytic research, he admits. Yet, what can be understood better are the limitations of the artist and the impact that childhood experiences can have on him and his art<sup>33</sup>.

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33 His study of Da Vinci was certainly not the only one where Freud attempted to decipher the relations of a legendary artwork and its creator. He was equally at awe with the Moses of Michelangelo, and found the work also somewhat inscrutable to dissect with the power of intellect. He certainly tried. His method is not the same there as with Da Vinci: For here Freud does not focus on the biographical details of the artist

Let us engage for a moment, in the same type of analysis that Freud utilized: Could the verdict, which Freud stated about Da Vinci apply to himself – and his relation to psychoanalysis? The 'artistic power' and foundational forces of his character, were something that he was unable to work out with his analytic method? He understood something about his limitations and the impact of his childhood experiences, yet his own 'capacity for sublimation' was left somewhat uncharted. This was a task left for the future generation, Freud himself nor his zealous followers were not up to task.

Similar speculative line of thought could be expressed about Freud's interpretation of Michelangelo of Moses: He says that although depicted Moses has the urge to throw the tablets – the Law - to the ground, he 'remembers his mission and for its sake renounces an indulgence of his feelings'. He saves the tablets before they fall to the ground. Freud (Freud 1997, 273) sees how the figure of Moses shows both "suppressed movement" and yet "retains the attitude of projected action". One can quite easily see how Freud could identify with Moses, perhaps the greatest father-figure of the Jews, in his life-situation. The text was originally published in 1914, around the time when Freud's split from Jung had just taken place. Adler had already departed. Freud sees himself as the upholder of the "Law" ( the torchbearer of the New Psychology, science of the unconscious), and around him he sees defectors and uncomprehending masses. But the law needs to be protected, though there is an urge to 'indulge the feelings' and attack or throw the 'tablets' onto the ground. Freud suppresses the movement, the urge to retaliate for the sake of the movement, and "retains the attitude of projected action".

If Freud was not the best judge of his strengths, he probably was not the best judge of his own weaknesses either. We have briefly explored the murky issues of priority, originality and anxiety of influence, that are associated with Freud's lifework: To what extent was he influenced by his predecessors and contemporaries in philosophy (Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Groddeck, Rank) and in natural sciences (Charcot, Janet, Breuer, Fliess etc.) As his early Viennese circle hailed him as the first person to create truly scientific work on dreams, unconscious and sexual theory, Freud did little to dissuade them from this

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and its relation to his works, but the details of the artwork – the form and its relation to the subject-matter.



idolizing tendency (Sulloway 1980, 458). When Jung called him up on his tendency to make his colleagues into his minions, Freud soon cut all relations with him. All this, of course, is 'all-too-human' to use Nietzsche's term. We are truly not the best judges of our own nature. We have focused here, perhaps unjustly, on the discrepancies between the hero myth of the Freud, and the more gritty reality that has since emerged from the research conducted in life of Freud and history of psychoanalytic movement. Yet, it is hopefully clear, this is not to dismiss Freud's 'heroic qualities', in his private life and in his scientific and artistic output. It is simply to say, that as we carve out the 'greatest work of art' out of our own life and character, we – and the ones closest to us – are perhaps not the most reliable art-critics or interpreters of this work.

Let us conclude this chapter by assessing whether there is a artistic hero to be found from Freud's psychology. The answer seems to be 'yes', yet it is a more ambivalent affirmative than in the cases of Rank and Freud. Freud seemed to have both disdain and admiration for artists who did not need to adjust their lives to the strict control of reason. Yet, his own life – including his written works – shares much with that of the artists. He used literary tactics in his writings, employing and creates myths and evocative narratives, sometimes bending the truth for his purposes. His theories went beyond what was testable with strict scientific methods. He moulds his life into a type of hero myth: A humble, but persecuted scientific researcher, who rises from challenging circumstances into a leader of a group of intellectual pioneers. He operates like a conquistador in a hostile terrain, eventually beating the odds, and becoming a cultural icon and intellectual giant.

Freud had his various father-or herofigures, men who he identified with and strived to emulate, throughout his life and Johan Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832) was certainly one of them. Goethe was a figure who had successfully harmonized, or integrated the artist and the scientist within himself. He has been called aptly 'the last renaissance man'. Freud did not have the same sentiment about Dostoyevsky or Da Vinci, both of whom he felt were more imbalanced and neurotic than Goethe. As Freud puts it: "In Leonardo's nature the scientist did not harmonize with the artist, he interfered with him and perhaps in the end stifled him" (Freud 1997, 467). Incidentally, Nietzsche (and Rank) also held a high opinion of Goethe, and thought of him as the free spirit for excellence. Both Nietzsche and

Freud, seemed to also appreciate how Goethe did not surrender his intellect to meek Christianity, but instead sought to understand to nature and himself on his own terms.

Freud did share the overtly heroic portrayal of artist we find from late-Rank, and sometimes from Nietzsche. Freud saw artist as someone who was seeking honor and power, and sexual success, but lacked the means to achieve these goals. Hence, the artist would turn to realm of fantasy to achieve his goals. Perhaps the successful fantastic works would then help him to achieve the goals in reality also. Freud – and those following his aesthetic reasoning – would seek to find neurotic and sexual motives that the artist had. They'd ignore or downplay the aesthetic, formal, aspects of the work<sup>34</sup>. Freud would admit that a good artist had to retain somekind of balance between reality and his neurotic fantasies – in order to create art of a lasting value. Neurotic artist, the proverbial daydreamer, did not meet this criteria but was lost in his infantile fantasies (Spector 1972, 78).

Freud did see in the artist something similar of a psychoanalyst, as they were also able to gain access to the depths of man's psyche, an area generally unaccessible to natural scientist. Freud derived inspiration to his work from art and artists, yet, as Spector (Spector 1972, 78) notes, he did not credit art to be on the level of his own psychoanalysis when it came to the lucidity of the insights. Often artists tended to express their own problems, rather than elevate and inspire other men with their insights. Even someone like Dostoyevsky is branded as a neurotic and, to an extent, a criminal character (Freud 1997, 442)<sup>35</sup>. Freud saw too powerful fantasy-life as a cause for concern, a fertile ground for psychosis or neurosis, a sentiment also expressed by Nietzsche in his positivistic period.

Freud did entertain a notion of the artist-hero in the sense that he believed that it was not possible to explain the basis of artistic 'genius'. His portrayal of the Artist is sometimes the one of romantic hero, the bohemian, who deviates from the common folk and is able to tap

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34 This is why Adorno ( Adorno 1970, 11 ) felt that it was important to debunk the psychoanalytic interpretation (of art). Adorno saw that psychoanalytic arti-criticism was better suited to explain purely psychic phenomena rather than aesthetic ones. In psychoanalytic theory, artworks are essentially reduced to projections of the unconscious. The emphasis is one the individual producer of art and the aesthetic content is treated as psychic content. This does very little to advance the understanding of the form.

35 The reason Freud gives is that the choice of material by Dostoyevski – violent, murderous, egotistical characters – points out to the existence of such qualities within the writer himself (Freud 1997, 442).

into creative source of life, sublimating his base instincts. This, then, is juxtaposed with his notion of the artist as the neurotic, infantile, escapist, who obeys the dictates of the pleasure-principle. But, to summarize, in his own life Freud, in more ways than one, embodied the archetype of an Artist-Hero, as he moulded his life story into a kind of heromorph, synthesizing his artistic and scientific qualities in his writing and asserting himself as a spearhead of a new type of psychology. Freud had a certain narcissistic streak, often attributed to artists also, which came about as he attacked the work of those disagreed with him and as he pushed the limits of truthfulness to get across the right kind of portrayal of himself. Yet none of this negates the fact, that Freud created a remarkable body of work, and lived a rich life accompanied by an close, admiring circle of friends and colleagues. The gallery of his personal heroes reveals us something about the type of men he admired and considered heroic: They were often men possessing great artistic talent combined with lucid rational mind, strong will, and the ability to stand outside the mass-consciousness. Not unlike himself.

## 4. ARTIST AS A HERO IN THE THOUGHT OF OTTO RANK

In this chapter, we will look at the notions of heroism in Otto Rank's thought, focusing, again, specifically on the idea of Artist-as-the-Hero. The chapter is divided into brief philosophically orientated biography and subchapters on different phases of Rank's thought. Different conceptions of artistic heroism are found in each of them. The influence of Nietzsche and evolving relationship to Freud's thought is being examined in each step along the way.

### 4.1 Short Biography and Outline of the development of Rank's Psychology

Since the life and the work of Otto Rank (1884-1939) is much less well-known than that of Nietzsche and Freud, it is fitting to start this chapter with a brief biographical outline<sup>36</sup>. Rank was born in Vienna, Austria, one of the capitals of Austro-Hungarian empire at the time. His birthname was Otto Rosenfeld, he was the third and youngest child of Simon and Karoline Fleischner Rosenfeld, who were "weak but apparently healthy parents", as Rank put it. The family lived in Leopoldstadt, the main settling place for Jewish immigrants in the city, an area where Freud also had lived as a child (Taft 1958, 10).

Rank does not talk much about his childhood nor parents in his diaries, which he started writing at the age of 18, nor in his later writings. Quite evidently Rank found it difficult to build a genuine rapport with his father. He describes his father in the following way: "*My father, who is a quiet drinker, wherewith it is not to be said that he is also quiet after the drinking, bothered himself little about me and my brother*" (Taft 1958, 10). Rank's mother's focus was on getting the children properly clothed and fed. The family was not very religious. Their Jewishness meant following "customs, usages, prejudices, and leaving the rest to the dear God". Rank's feeling was that the parental guidance was lacking in most areas of life (Taft 1958, 11).

Rank's closest bond with the immediate family seemed to have been with his brother Paul.

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<sup>36</sup> As a source, Lieberman's (1985) and Jessie Taft's biographies (1958) are the main sources here. Not a whole lot of biographical literature exists. In addition to being best works on the matter, they also reference Rank's diaries quite extensively. Rank himself was not very

He notes that contemplating Paul's death was to him much more difficult than his own. School became Rank's diversion from family-situation, though he had to enter technical school while his brother, being the eldest son, was given preference in getting the best education the family could afford. Rank then embarked on a learning-journey of his own immersing himself in the works of notable cultural figures such as Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Ibsen. He spent a lot of time on his own, remarking that he was basically without friends of his own age, being "drawn to "big men" more than to my colleagues" (Taft 1958, 11; Lieberman 1985, 2-4).

Young Rank was a passionate consumer of culture, who not only read and wrote a lot but also attended concerts and theater regularly. Rank describes how the illusion created by artists was like a "veil over the raw reality of the day". (Taft 1958, 11) He took his pen name Rank from a character in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Ibsen being one of his biggest mentors. He changed family name Rosenfeld officially into Rank at the age of 19 and at the same time he also changed his religious affiliation into 'unaffiliated' (konfessionslos). Though Rank was terrified of death and lied awake on many nights in terror, he was adamant to not seek solace from organized religion (Lieberman 1985, 4-5).

There is a progression in Rank's diaries of a self-doubting introvert into a more self-confident young man. If compared to Freud's famous self-analysis, conducted at the ripe age of 40, Rank's diaries are less of a story of scientific pursuit and more of a philosophical, artistic journey into himself. Like his great mentor Nietzsche, Rank also struggled with the fear of going insane, 'over the edge', and battled with thoughts of suicide. He tries to push himself beyond the limits of reason and at the same time make sense of world, without resorting to the help of God or some divine power (Lieberman 1985, 7; Taft 1958, 13).

Much of Rank's diaries of the youth run as commentaries of the works he has read. Three writers stand out: Schopenhauer, Ibsen and Nietzsche. Darwin was also a thinker he admired. Nietzsche's writings lead Rank to a detailed study of Wagner. Rank shared a love for music with Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, unlike Freud whose passion in arts was directed to literature, painting and plastic arts. Nietzsche died when Rank was sixteen, so

there was no opportunity for Rank to meet him in person (Lieberman 1985, 9, 10) For Rank, Ibsen was the writer who best understood and described human beings. Ibsen's play *Wild Duck* seemed to dramatize Rank's childhood family dynamics, Hjalmar Ekdal's character resembling his father. The play exemplified, for Rank, the tragic effects that truth, if brutally applied, can have (Taft 1958, 13).

As for Nietzsche, Rank describes him as 'model, leader and guide'. Nietzsche employed the concept of unconscious and emphasized the power of the irrational in us, though the terms he used were different from those of Freuds. Unlike Freud, Rank never tried to downplay Nietzsche's huge influence on him. Rank seemed to have conducted an extensive study on Nietzsche's thought, which came to a halt only when met Freud and begun his decades long work with him (Lieberman 1985, 11).

Rank did not have experiences with women during his adolescence and struggled with ambivalent feelings towards his sexuality. Since religion did not offer a viable escape from these emotions, Rank threw himself into the study of art and creative life. Art was for Rank a way to plunge oneself towards immortality (Lieberman 1985, 16). The notion of art as a means to reach immortality remained an essential idea for him throughout his life. However, Rank also had the idea – which he later articulated powerfully in his writings - that art could become an escape from living one's life fully. His conviction came to be that the highest art should be that of living. As he put it in his youth diaries: "Life itself must be formed creatively and indeed in and of itself, not confused with artificial artist life" (Taft 1958, 43).

Rank identified himself as an artist and wrote plenty of poems throughout his youth. However, his line of study indicated, already then, that his main talent was probably more in understanding the creative impulse rather than creating works of art himself. I have "looked too deep into the workings of the world", Rank says (Lieberman 1985, 35), reflecting on his creativity endeavours. In his freudian period, Rank believed that excessive awareness into the creative process would stifle one's artistic output.

Rank was barely twenty when he was introduced to Freud's ideas. This happened probably

by studying the works of Otto Weininger (1880-1903)<sup>37</sup>. The first mention of Freud is from 1904. Freud takes the place of Nietzsche as his main intellectual mentor. He also becomes a real father-figure to him. Judging from his writings, Rank also becomes more at ease with his sexuality in his early twenties and resolves some emotional issues he has had towards his parents. He starts to regularly analyze his dreams (Lieberman 1985, 26).

Rank starts writing his first psychoanalytic essay in early 1905. The topic is the Artist and the creative process. In the vein of Schopenhauer, Rank proposes that there is contest within man between the forces of intellect and will, and of the two the latter is dominant. In this study, Rank aims to find the source of creativity without stifling it with excessive intellectuality. Rank becomes, in effect, the first Freudian thinker to analyze art and the artist. He summarizes some of his findings in the following way:

*”Dramatic art is the interpretation of the life dream: the seeming loosely connected ongoing scenes made understandable to all... In the dream we feel only our own emotions. Through music the emotions (inner self) of every single person are revealed”<sup>38</sup>.*

The bears resemblance in tone to *The Birth of Tragedy*, and like for Nietzsche, music was for Rank the most sensuous of arts – the real unifying force between arts. Rank suggests that unconscious impulses of sexual nature are transformed by artist into admired works of art, which have potency to heal and gratify the audience. The idea of sublimation, familiar from Nietzsche and Freud is shared here. Rank distinguishes between an artist – a type of psychotherapist who brings healing impulses for the masses – and the neurotic – a person who is unable to make a meaningful use of his fantasies and instead becomes a prisoner of them. There's a strong Nietzschean and Schopenhauerian influence in Rank's first work (Lieberman 1985, 38, 81).

Rank meets Freud for the first time in 1905. He stops writing diaries in the same year.

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37 Weininger's well-known work was *Sex and Character* (1903). The work borrowed heavily from Wilhem Fliess's work. Fliess accused Freud of submitting his ideas to Weininger. "You cannot take out a patent on ideas" was apparently one of Freud's excuses (Lieberman 1985, 56).

38 There is also a beautiful comment about his mentor by Rank, which on the theme of interpreting life as a dream: "When Nietzsche could interpret the dream of his life, he began to love his fate" (Lieberman 1985, 29).

Rank is introduced to Freud through Alfred Adler, whose patient he has been because of lung troubles. Freud describes the meeting as follows: "One day a young man who had passed through the technical training school introduced himself with a manuscript which showed very unusual comprehension"<sup>39</sup>. With some changes suggested by Freud, *the Kunstler / the Artist: Towards a Sexual Psychology*, Rank's first manuscript, is published in 1907 (Lieberman 1985, 81) (Taft 1958, 54). Rank quickly establishes himself as Freud's master-pupil. Infatuated with the new psychoanalytic method of interpretation he boasts how "the world is no longer a riddle...I can explain everything. What shall I do with the rest of my life?" (Lieberman 1985, 42).

Rank soon becomes Freud's assistant and secretary in the 'Wednesday Society', where a little group regularly meets at Freud's house to debate and present psychoanalytic ideas to each other. Freud helps Rank to get to Gymnasium and then to university so as to receive more academic and 'non-medical' training. "The little society acquired in him a zealous and dependable secretary and I gained in Otto Rank a faithful helper and co-worker", Freud comments (Lieberman 1985, 62). The encounter in 1905 starts a close professional and personal relationship which would last over two decades. Lieberman stipulates that this was a good fit as Freud was a scientist with artistic leanings, and Rank an artist with scientific interests (Taft 1958, 54).

As a secretary of the society, Rank's detailed records of the Wednesday Psychological Society, constitute the first written records of the psychoanalytic movement. Rank's next major presentation to the society is a lengthy study called the *Incest Motif in Literature and Legend* (1912), a work mostly written already before he presented it to the society in 1906. In the work, Rank aims to show how incest theme, as exemplified in the story of Oedipus, has remained essentially the same over the centuries, though the forms it takes have changed. Rank argues for the universality of the incest motif and for the close connections between ancient myths and incest dreams. (Lieberman 1985, 70). In his autobiographical study Freud gives credit to Rank about the work, complimenting how Rank is able to show how often in world-literature, the Oedipal situation is taken as the main-theme, and how this material is modified and softened in the myths and literary

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39 Freud, Collected Papers, London: Hogarth Press Ltd, Vol. I, p.307.



works. But he also chides him for not staying within the limits of the subject and outlining the topic clearly (Freud 1959, 64). The members of Wednesday Society criticized Rank for approaching the topic in a too broad manner<sup>40</sup> Adler felt that Rank's ideas did not promote 'progress in art' but might in fact inhibit artists. Rank took the criticism well, judging it to be mostly about the form, not substance. Rank was of the view at the time, that where unconscious is made conscious....art must perish. This was a problem Rank had been analyzing in his debut work also (Lieberman 1985, 70, 75).

Rank's next published work *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (1909) can be considered as the highlight of his Freudian period. The work explores a wide variety of heromyths and their cultural meaning. Freud contributed a chapter on 'Family romance' to the early editions of the work. We will look at the ideas of the work at greater length later in this chapter. Around this time Rank also got his doctorate from the University of Vienna (1912). His dissertation was on the topic of *Lohengrin Legend / Die Lohengrin Sage* (1911). Foreshadowing the coming major theme of Rank, his study dealt with birth and death symbolism and the pairing of the two (Lieberman 1985, 108).

Rank worked hard in both practical and theoretical matters of the psychoanalytic society. He and Hans Sachs founded a psychoanalytic journal *Imago*, which they co-edited. The journal dealt with matters of art and society in relation to psychoanalysis. The first world war slowed down the publishing pace of both *Imago* and Rank, but some contributions were made even then. Rank's main focus remained in the study of culture and psychology of the artist. Freud's first foray into the theme of artist's psychology was *Delusion and Dream in Jensen's Gradiva* (1907) and few years later an essay about Leonardo Da Vinci (1910), which we shall briefly explore in the next chapter.

After some prominent members of this young movement – Jung, Adler and Stekel being the most notable ones – had strayed from Freud's basic doctrines, they were expelled (or left voluntarily). In reaction to this, an inner circle of the loyal key members of the society was formed in 1912 on the suggestion of Ernest Jones, the British member of the group. The original committee included Freud, Jones, Sandor Ferenczi, Rank, Sachs and Karl

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<sup>40</sup> Jung, though, described the work as "a very distinguished piece of work" and that it "will make a big impression" (Lieberman 1985, 141).

Abraham<sup>41</sup> The committee would discuss departures from any of the 'fundamental tenets of psychoanalytical theory' before acting in public – and would act as a kind of doctrinal gatekeeper for the movement. When Rank was introduced to the secret committee, Ferenczi asked him: "I suppose you will always be loyal to psychoanalysis?" "Assuredly" was Rank's embarrassed reply (Lieberman 1985, 145; Gay 1989, 229).

Both Jones and Sachs claim that wartime changed Rank's personality significantly. "I never knew anyone change so much", said Jones (Lieberman 1985, 157) According to him, post-war Rank was much more assured and had a "masterful air" about him. Not much is being attributed to the fact that Rank had met his wife-to-be during the wartime and was now a married man. Jones simply draws a distinction between a sane Rank that existed before the war and disturbed Rank emerges after. Few years after the war, Rank starts to have major disputes with Jones – first about publishing matters of the society, which later develop into personal feuds. Later on, due to his comments on Rank in his Freud-biography, Jones is chiefly responsible in coloring the public perception of Rank as a manic-depressive, imbalanced character, whose post-freudian work should not be taken seriously (Taft 1958, 70).

After the war, Rank starts to also work as a clinical analyst. He was the prime lay-analyst of the society. Freud was not against lay-analysts, unlike Jones. In early 1920's, Rank and Ferenczi start to experiment with new ideas for the psychoanalytic theory and clinical practice. They introduce the notion of 'active therapy', wherein a set time is determined for the ending of the therapy (not just for individual sessions) and more emphasis is put on the emotional experience rather than intellectual side of the therapeutic process. Rank and Ferenczi also start to investigate analysts role in the therapy as an active participant, as a midwife of sorts. Freud is, at first, impressed with the new developments and encourages them. Rank's and Ferenczi's ideas of this time, can be seen as foreshadowing the developments of existential and ego-psychology<sup>42</sup> (Lieberman 1985, 173; Taft 1958, 74).

Rank started to voice out more criticism on the then-accepted basic tenets of the

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41 On Freud's suggestion, also Max Eitingon was added in 1919.

42 Their book, *The development of Psychoanalysis* was first published in 1924.

psychoanalytic theory, even without Ferenczi. He emphasized the relationship of the mother and the child as the essential developmental relationship. Rank refused to classify homosexuality as a perversion, unlike Jones and the rest of the committee (Freud excluded). Rank also criticized how the appearances were always reduced to being mere manifestations of some deeper reality. (Lieberman 1985, 196). This critique had Nietzschean tones to it (Rank: *Perversion and Neurosis*, 1923). Freud tolerated these criticisms but the major rift started to emerge when, during the same year, Rank also published his major work *The Trauma of Birth* (1923).

In his next major work *Trauma of Birth* (1924), Rank claimed that the core of anxiety and neurotic behavior is formed in the primal separation when child departs from mother's womb. Fear of castration and Oedipus complex come only much after that. Rank also again asserted the primary importance of maternal tie. Well-aware of the explosive potential of his ideas, he slyly commented to his typist that "they will all be surprised" (Taft 1958, 83) Taft remarks that the tone of the book is again that of Rank's Diaries, wherein he gave a full freedom for himself to express his philosophical insights. According to Rank himself, his intention was not to re-invent the wheel or to overthrow Freud- he even dedicated the book to Freud - "the explorer of the unconscious. Creator of psychoanalysis". He saw the work as expansion of the existing theory.

Freud was at first curious about the work, and deemed it as "a very important book" but later came to other conclusions (Taft 1958, 87). On the whole Committee acted in a similar manner. Jones praised it at first but later condemned it as a product of a disturbed mind. Abraham saw in Rank's development 'ominous resemblances' to Jung's case. Rank thought that Freud had not fully understood the work and did not see any contradiction in it with the Freudian theory of drives. He was disappointed that Freud didn't bother to read it fully. Freud's reply was that after introducing Rank's ideas in his practice and having his patients read the work, he had not found much utility for it<sup>43</sup>. In the end, Freud's judgment is that he finds practically nothing approvable in the work (Lieberman 1985, 202; Taft 1958, 93).

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43 In a private exchange with Rank, Freud also claimed that it was due to Rank not having undergone a personal analysis and thus being driven by 'personal influences', that there was 'the exclusion of the father' in his theory (Taft 1958, 99).

As the debate about Rank's ideas raged on and no compromise was found, the future of the 'secret committee' hung in doubt. There was a serious rift between the northerners – Abraham in Berlin and Jones in London – and southerners - Ferenczi in Budapest and Rank in Vienna. The differences concerned both theory and practice. And there were also personal issues. Freud tried to remain neutral, but given his frail health, was too weak to act as an active referee. (Taft 1958, 95) However, the publication of the work was not the only reason why Rank fell out of favour with the Committee. He conducted a trip to United States in 1924, the purpose of which was to practice analysis in the States and forge stronger links to local therapists and psychologists. Instead of toeing the line, Rank had promoted his own 'revisionist' ideas and presented them as the cutting edge of the psychoanalytic theory, "the most recent analytical understanding of the unconscious". At the same time, he acted publicly as the Freud's emissary (Lieberman 1985, 230).

The essential myth for Rank now was not the Oedipus-myth but our expulsion from Paradise (symbolizing the womb) and our yearning to return to the Paradise-state. The basic human conflict was between our need to separate (and be individuals), and at the same time needing to merge and unite i.e. Desire to "return to the womb". In this way, Rank's thought resembled thematically that of early Nietzsche's with its dynamic tension of Apollonian (symbolizing separate forms and beings) and Dionysian (merging with the whole) forces.

Ferenczi broke away from Rank's new ideas and decided to stay with Freud, so Rank was left alone with his developments. This was lot to take and Rank suffered nervous breakdown. After recovering from it, he apologized for the committee for his wayward ways and asked for their forgiveness. He claimed that his behavior was due to his own unresolved psychological issues (Lieberman 1985, 253). The committee on the whole was sceptical, but Freud, after conducting some personal therapy sessions with Rank, was willing to accept the wayward son back to the ranks. Rank said that he needed to do another trip to US to "set things right". In US, however, Rank was more explicit about his differences with Freud, but hardly apologetic. Rank acquired some followers of his own from America. His own development was now clearly leading him to a new uncharted direction (Lieberman 1985, 258).

As Rank's wife did not want to move to US, Paris was agreed upon as a compromise in 1926. Rank bid his farewell to Freud and as a parting gift he gave him the complete works of Nietzsche. Freud was not sympathetic: "He is gone now and we have to bury him", he wrote to Ferenczi (Lieberman 1985, 260). Freud's assessment was that it was Rank who broke "the magic spell". His departure and Abraham's death were the reasons the Committee was dissolved (Lieberman 1985, 321).

The next major publications of Rank were *Truth and Reality* (1929), *Will Therapy* (1929-1931) and *The Psychology and the Soul* (1930). In these works Rank outlines his theory and technique of post-Freudian psychology. There are strong arguments lined up against Freud, Adler and Jung in these works. Rank summarises the aim of the therapy to be "freedom from the mother, adjustment to the environment, and discovering of abilities" (Lieberman 1985, 269) In these works Rank establishes himself as forerunner of humanistic psychology and in his emphasis on Will, he aligns him back to his early Nietzschean thinking and lays a foundation for his egopsychology (Taft 1958, 123).

In 1931, returning to his beloved topic of art and the psychology of the artist, with great speed Rank writes his magnum opus *Art and the Artist*. It is published in the following year. We will visit the content of this work later in this chapter. After working with Freud intensely for many decades, break-up from his beloved father-figure is not easy. There is a long period of self-searching and introversion for Rank. He falls into depression and is forced to cancel some of his American lectures. Rank returns to Paris, wherein he meets the writer Anais Nin. Nin becomes his patient. They greatly influence each other, and speculations about their romance float around about. Rank divorces his wife Beata Rank. At this point, Rank has lost interest both in writing and therapy. He no longer wants to call himself an analyst.

As Rank battles with depression, he is forced to apply his principles to himself. A new type of personality is emerging. Rank becomes convinced that the most important function of the creative impulse is not to use it to create works of art but to mould one's own self. He criticizes art for its attempts to "eternalize the all-too-mortal ego" (Lieberman 1985, 301).

The actual life is to be distinguished from the one solely devoted to art-creation. A creative type is now to be defined as the one who pours his creative force into creating a life and new type of human in oneself.

Rank emigrates permanently to United States in 1934. The 1930's also sees Hitler's rises to power and Freud's books are being burned<sup>44</sup>. Rank is shocked by what he deems as compliance by Jung with the Nazis. "Jung has gone overtly 'Nazi' and propagates now a 'Germanic' psychology against the Jewish" he writes (Lieberman 1985, 341) By now Rank has managed to rise above his depression. The process of disentanglement from Freud and the psychoanalytic movement has taken roughly a decade for him. He claims to have found 'a new self', 'an identical twin to his 'old Natural Self' (Taft 1958, 199).

Although Freud never quite forgave Rank for breaking up the Committee and going his way, his feelings for him were less bitter than for Jung. He referred to Rank as the "naughty boy" and "Huckster-Rank", probably because he viewed Rank's claims of being able to cure neurosis in a such a short time were akin to that of a snake-oil salesman. Freud's sarcastic take on Rank's method of brief therapy was that it probably suited the American needs: fast-pace and haste. It was an "ingenious device to profit from the haste and affluence of Americans" (Lieberman 1985, 321).

Rank spent the remaining years of his life in United States. In addition to working intensively with social workers, he also gave lectures in many universities, such as Harvard and Yale. Before his death, Rank remarried and also worked on his final work 'Beyond Psychology', posthumously released in 1940. This was the first work Rank wrote in English. Otto Rank died of kidney-infection in October 1939, only one month after Freud's physician-assisted suicide (Taft 1958, 266). Reportedly Rank's last words on his deathbed were '*Komisch*' (Strange, comical) (Lieberman 1985, 389).

### **3.2 Artist as the Hero in Rank's Early writings: the Freudian period and *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero***

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<sup>44</sup> In his characteristically dry humour Freud commented: "What progress are we making. In the Middle Ages they would have burned me; nowadays they are content at burning my books" (Lieberman 1985, 326).

We will now move our focus to the notions of heroism, and more specifically that of the Artist Hero in Rank's writings. We start from his early works, which could be described as mostly 'freudian' all the way to *Trauma of Birth* (1924). The works that we focus on most are *the Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (1912) – being the prime example of the freudian period -and *Art and the Artist* (1932) – being arguably most relevant to the theme of this thesis and a major work from Rank's post-freudian period. We'll explore in detail Rank's idea of how the project of heroism, whether expressed through art, religion or other means, is linked to our desire for immortality. Rank's answer to this dilemma is then linked to the question we posed in the beginning: Can nihilism be overcome in our modern time and how? Is there still a type of heroism we can believe in?

As mentioned earlier, Rank's first booklet *Der Kunstler* (The Artist, 1907), contained many of the themes Rank later explores at greater length. The book has a strong Nietzschean and Schopenhauerian influence, as evidenced in the following quote: "...the human will is the long-sought God who directs and guides everything and now man dares to presume to bring down judgment on the world – and behold it was bad" (Taft 1958, 53) Another great influence was naturally Freud.

In his debut, Rank argued that the artist represents the highest stage of evolution and what he calls an 'inner culture'. Rank makes a distinction between the Dreamer, Neurotic and the Artist. Artist is the type that can restore what mankind lost as a result of building a organized but repressive civilization. Only Artist can restore the harmony between the inner and outer world, which so often are in unbearable discord. One can see both Freud's and Nietzsche's influence here. The pathological, sorry state of modern man described in the work, draws inspiration from Freud, whereas the antidote prescribed to it resembles Nietzschean Superman, who balances the Apollonian and Dionysian currents within himself (Taft 1958, 57).

In his second work – *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (1909) – Rank's focus is on the psychoanalytic interpretation of myths, found from legends and classical literature. In the preface (of early edition) Rank credits Freud for giving him the original impetus for this

work. Rank operates strictly from a Freudian framework and the Nietzschean influences are not apparent here. Rank's work was of the first of its kind. A fellow analyst Karl Abraham work *Dreams and Myths* (1909) being another one. Abraham interpreted myths with Freud's methodology also, however Rank used a wider selection of myths and his treatise was more detailed. According to Rank (Rank 2004, xlvi), the work was well received among the general population, but less so among psychologists, to whom it was mainly directed.

In 1922, a revised second edition of *the Myth of the Birth of the Hero* is released. This is only two years before the release of the *Trauma of Birth*, the work that really pushes Rank and Freud apart. In the introduction of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Rank claims that due to increased research in mythology, many phenomenon investigated in the book are now easier to understand. For example totemism and its relation to heroic myths has now become comprehensible. For this he credits especially Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913). Thanks to Freud we are now better equipped to understand the primitive and collective elements of our life-experience, Rank comments (Rank 2004, xlvi).

Like Rank, Freud was also interested in myths and his most famous analysis of a myth comes from *the Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) wherein he conducts an analysis of the myth of Oedipus. For Freud, there is a clear connection between myths and dreams, and the understanding of the former depends on the right understanding of the latter. Symbols found from dreams are not restricted to individual's dream-life but are to be found from collective myths and legends, as well as in religion and art. As Freud claimed that function of the dream was primary that of the wish-fulfillment and the nature of the civilization was repressive, then it was only to be expected that our primal wants and drives would find their way, albeit often in diguised form, into works of art and collective myths.

In his work, Rank builds upon Freud's ideas and develops an argument about the universal nature of the Oedipus- complex expressed through myths, legends and artworks. He presents numerous case studies from mythology, and then condenses the general structure of the heroic myths and their thematic core. According to Rank, all myths can be viewed as hero myths. Rank agrees with Freud that heroism is especially relevant to the first half of



life – birth, childhood, youth and early adult life<sup>45</sup>. The driving theme of this first half are person's attempts to assert himself as an individual in the world and society. Freud once allegedly suggested that ability to work and love were the main ingredients for a satisfied life. We can see how these two abilities relate to the first part of life in where one attempts to break free from the influence of one's parents, carve oneself a working career and find a life-partner. The success in the first goal – disentanglement from parents – is related to the success of the later goals (Segal 2004, ix).

The model that Rank uses in his work – he applies is to over thirty case-examples – is focused in the events of the first half of life: The 'hero's journey' extends here from the birth to the formation of one's life's work. Let us proceed into a summary of Rank's findings about the mythical hero: The hero in these case-examples, collected from various cultures, is always a man and most often a historical or a legendary figure. What makes him a hero is the journey that he makes from anonymity to glory (often the throne of power). The hero is usually not born under 'happy stars', and the fate is harsh for him right from the start. Usually the parents want to get rid of him or destroy him altogether. The motive for this type of behavior can be the protection of the Father – as is the case in the Oedipus-myth. Eventually the hero dares to rise against the father, and against his fate, and commits patricide – murder of the father – either symbolically or literally. By doing this, hero is subconsciously seeking the love, or affection, of the mother.

The real goal of the patricide is not incestuous relationship but power. The climax of the story is when the hero attains the position of power, often literally the throne. This is often connected to finding a life-partner, a wife (Rank 2004, 68, 69). Segal (Segal 2004, x) points out that what is notable in this conception of hero-myth is that it is actually not a story about becoming independent, resolving the family complex, but precisely the opposite: The hero often attains 'the job' of his father and becomes partner for his mother. Myth can even attain an incestual conclusion.

The reason for this is, Rank proposes, is that although the creator of the myth is an adult,

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45 Two halves of life is a conception that is attributed especially to Carl Jung, who famously thought that there is much growth that takes place in the second half of life. Man's inner growth for him took place especially in the second half of life.

the wishes that it emulates are those of a 3-5 year old child. Therefore, these heroic myths can be described as regressive childhood-fantasies. In this fantasy, an oedipal wish of the death of the Father and love of the Mother is being attained. Myth is created by an adult who has not overcome, nor become conscious, of this wish. This wish is an expression of undeveloped ego and does not express the developmental goal of life's first half, but a fixated, regressive, goal of early childhood (Rank 2004, 82).

The whole process of myth-making is unconscious, and relates intimately to repressed psychic realities. Gods can strive for goals that are an abomination for an average man (Rank & Sachs 1964, 38). Some heroes are more repressed than others: Rank and Freud saw Hamlet as more repressed than Oedipus, which to them signified the increase of repression as we approached modern times (Segal 2004).

What is described here is a classical Freudian interpretation of heroic myth. The myths are like dreams here: Wish-fulfillment fantasies of repressed antisocial sentiments. Naturally, this classical interpretation has been complemented by many other interpretations for a long time now in the psychoanalytic lore. However, this classical take still finds supporters. For example, Alan Dundes (Dundes 1987; Segal 2004, xiv) considers myths to be expressions of repressed wishes, not a sublimation towards something higher.

Let us now look at some specific observations Rank makes about heromyths in his work. He says that what is amazing about heroic myths and stories are the universal similarities and parallels they contain right up to the smallest details. The mythologists as a whole have been baffled about this (Rank 2004, 1). Rank details some of the most common attempts to explain such similarities. Rank seems to support a view that certain core myths have been created among certain culture – mostly Babylonians – and have from there spread, either orally or in a written form, to other cultures. Rank says the modern research has shown that Babylonia – and not India – can be rightfully considered as the "first home" of our collective myths. And from there they have spread across the planet (Rank 2004, 2, 3).

What is really interesting though is not how the myths have spread but how and why they have risen in human psyche in the first place. Rank believes that it is only through

psychology that we can start to understand the material that mythologists and ethnologists are bringing before us (Rank 2004, 3).

Like many others, Rank (Rank 2004, 4) is baffled by the similarities between different heroic myths. Why is the hero always conceived in some magical way? Why is he being put into a casket or box and then placed into a body of water? He is convinced that the answer lies in the analysis of the general characteristics of human psyche. This is where the analysis of the dreams steps in.

For many primitive tribes dreams have been the primary – if not the sole source of myth-formation. This has been acknowledged by many researchers, Rank notes and stipulates further that the criticism towards this view might stem from the lack of familiarity about Freud's teachings or of the fact that there's been too much emphasis on nightmares (Rank 2004, 5) Rank believes that through Freud we can understand how dreams relate to all psychic phenomena. Besides, Freud has explained in a convincing way how mythic elements connect to our psychic structure. Good example being his analysis of the Oedipus-myth. Myth can – and should – be seen as a kind of "dream of the masses" (Rank 2004, 6).

Rank attempts to provide a multitude of examples about the connection of dreams and myths later in the work. He (Rank 2004, 8) is aware of the exceptional, unusual, nature of his method, and notes that the kind of psychological approach that he uses to unlock myths and legends has never been used – not this extensively anyway.

In the chapter *Cycle of Myths* Rank lists and analyses famous myths from various cultures. The chapter makes up half of the work, making the whole book run a bit like an encyclopaedia of myths. Here are few examples of the type of cases Rank investigates: He starts off by comparing the myths of Sargon (the founder of Babylonia) and Moses and finds significant similarities. Both, for example, are placed on the body of water as babies and later become kings or rulers. These myths are similar to Egyptian legends of Thoth and Osiris (Rank 2004, 9-11). Similar kinds of legends can be found all over the world. It is also often the case that, in these myths, there is a threat directed from the family towards

the youngest and most vulnerable child, which the child then somehow manages to overcome. Eventually, after overcoming many obstacles, the hero manages to rise to a leading position, a mythical throne, in his own community.

Of the Oedipus-myth, Rank's observes how story of Oedipus not only ticks the boxes for all the archetypal qualities for the typical *Birth of the Hero* - myth, it is also significant because many Christian myths are apparently based on this model. Rank (Rank 2004, 18) notes that the theme of exposing – abandoning – the child is being repeated in almost all cultures with their various mythical forms. This includes even the myth of Dionysus, who was a type of discarded, shunned, god. Dionysos, born of union between a mortal and Zeus – represented the 'underworld', the shadow aspect of Zeus. His myth was important because it also acted as a birth-story for a mystery cult. The birth story of Apollo can also be included to this category (Rank 2004, 19).

A different type of category of hero-myths that Rank (Rank 2004, 29) explores in the work are the 'Hamlet-legends'. Story of Hamlet itself contains many parallels to earlier historical myths, and one of its main features is that the hero is put into a position where needs to avenge wrongdoing against a family-member or stand up against the current ruler. At some point in story the hero usually appears as 'the fool'. Hamlet-legends can be found from Arabia, Skandinavia and Italy, to mention few.

Founders of various religions and their lifestories are also analysed among other hero myths. According to Rank (Rank 2004, 38, 112), they are identical with other heroic myths – and similar to each other: The birth-gospel of Jesus does not differ significantly from that of Zarahustra. Zarahustra's mother receives a prophetic dream about her son, a wise man who prophesizes that this boy will do great deeds, a current ruler that is a threat to son's safety etc. As with many other mythical heroes, the animals act as protectors of Zarahustra. Similar elements are to be found from Buddha's lifestory also.

The same way as hero's birth is full of magical events, also his death is surrounded by miracles, peculiarities and unconscious symbolism. As we've established, early Rank's analysis of myths was heavily focused on hero's birth and early development. Dundes

stipulates that it was Rank's psychoanalytic bias which made him underline the birth and devote so little attention to death (and later part of life) in his analysis. One must point out here, that Rank did start devoting more attention to connection between birth and death already in *Trauma of Birth* (1924). Issues with death and immortality and their relation to heroism constitute a major theme in later Rank (Dundes 1990, 195).

### **The Archetypal Story of the Heromyth**

After having investigated this plethora of myths from around the world, Rank presents the universal model of a heromyth, an archetype of sorts, that can be deduced from them:

*"The hero is the child of very distinguished parents, and usually the son of a king. His origin is preceded by difficulties, such as sexual abstinence, prolonged infertility or secret intercourse of the parents due to external prohibition or obstacles. During or before the pregnancy, a prophecy, in the form of a dream or an oracle, warns against his birth, usually threatening harm to the father.*

*Therefore the newborn child, usually at the instigation of the father or his representative, is doomed to be killed or exposed. As a rule, he is surrendered to the water, in a box. He is then saved by animals, or by lowly people (herders), and suckled by a female animal or a lowly woman.*

*After he has grown up, he finds his distinguished parents in a variety of ways. He takes revenge on his father, on the one hand, and is acknowledged, on the other, achieving greatness and fame (Rank 2004, 45).*

What are we to make of this summary? Surely it is not highly useful for a common reader who he tries to instil some heroism into his life? What did Rank made out of it? First of all, he points out that there is a very disturbed relationship between the hero and his parents, especially the father. Hero's noble ancestry does him no good – indeed the opposite is the case: He faces resistance and resentment because of it. His fate, his mission, compels him to reject his parents – even a loving mother (Rank 2004, 48). This brings to mind Nietzsche's Zarathustra, who was understood only by few. Or Jesus of Christianity, who

beckoned his followers to denounce their family for the greater cause, and ended up crucified.

In order to understand why man has made up such stories and myths, we need to turn our attention to the activity of fantasy-formation, Rank says (Rank 2004, 48). The activity of creation of fantasies is most active in the childhood. Therefore, our most important object for study, if we wish to understand artistic or mythical fantasising, is to study the psychological life of children. This, of course, is not easy. However, studying the psyche of adults is a poor substitute if one wants to understand child's mind.

Child's emotional life is different from adults, and so it should be, and normal adult has either transcended or repressed his childhood fantasies. Often, Rank admits (Rank 2004, 49) we are at loss when we aim to understand the motivating forces of child's psyche. Neurotics, whose fantasies resemble those of a child, could be a solution here. There is however, one method, which of course for Rank is the psychoanalytical method, that can build a bridge to this world of fantasies .

In the book, Rank (Rank 2004, 49) quotes a long passage by Freud (Freud 1900) about the connection between the fantasy-life of neurotics and children. Freud believes that the process of disentangling ourselves from our parents is one of the hardest and most painful tasks we ever have to face. Indeed, for Freud, hero could be defined as someone who has rebelled against his father and victoriously overcome him. Despite the difficulty, normal adults, manage to achieve this task, more or less. Yet there always remains a discrepancy between the love we get from our parents and love that we wish we would've gotten. With children, this discrepancy is expressed as an idea, Freud suggests, that we are adopted or that we are only partly our parents child. For boys, these malevolent impulses are usually directed towards the father, and boys usually strive more to become free from their father rather than their mother. It is absolutely of paramount importance that we understand these impulses if we wish to understand the nature of myths, he concludes.

Now the distinctive feature of the neurotics, as believed by both Rank (at the time) and Freud, was the exceptionally vivid fantasy-life, which also rules their family-affairs. In

childhood these fantasies are expressed in play and in youth in different type of daydreams. The fantasies serve our wish-fulfilment, and their underlying motive most often sexual. Sometimes the wishes can be about desire for glory or power, but even then they are essentially sexual wishes if one digs deeper (Rank 2004, 50). This is one major point wherein freudian theory differs from (late) Nietzsche, who thought that essentially our motives are about will to power, which cannot be reduced to sexual wishes.

How is this related to heroic myths again? Well, as a child we might have a fantasy about getting rid of our parents or having them swapper into ones that are 'cooler', into one's that generally have a higher social status. These kind of childhood fantasies can be seen as a recurring element in classical heromyths. Also, when it comes to revenge and fantasies of payback (the so-called Hamlet-myths) we can look for their origins in childhood. According to Freud (Freud 1997) and Rank (2004, 50), neurotic children have often been punished for their bad habits, especially ones related to sexuality. Now, in the form of fantasies these children can have their revenge. Also, in these kind of made-up fantasies children can get back at their older or stronger siblings who have the upper-hand in reality. The fantasizing hero legitimises himself in this way.

By now, given all the points he has made and examples given, Rank (Rank 2004, 67) feels that he has convincingly proven that there is a connection between the ego of a child and the mythical heroes. Through fantastical imagination and dreams, the themes and imagery of so-called 'family romance'<sup>46</sup> find their expression in heroic myths. The whole family romance-scenario finds its psychic fuel from child's sense of being neglected, and from 'the assumed hostility of the parents'.

But, the critic might ask here, hasn't Rank been doing a whole lot of cherry-picking here? He has in his disposal the whole world's mythology – the works that were available in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe anyway – and what he does is that he simply picks narratives from there that fit the freudian psychoanalytic theory? Following Freud, Rank (Rank 2004,

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<sup>46</sup> 'Family romance' is a term Freud coined in 1908, which has multiple meanings. Generally refers to Oedipal family dynamics and instinct-based family relations between the parents or siblings. It also refers to child's fantasy of being of higher social status than his parents. Lieberman summarizes the 'family romance' as the idea that children, in protest against their parent, often fantasize a more elegant or heroic lineage (Lieberman 1985, 88).

67) believes that you can arrange the elements of these heroic myths in any order you like and the arguments and conclusions drawn here remain still as valid.

To conclude this summary of the work, we could say that for freudian Rank (Rank 2004, 83), the Myth of the Hero is a construction of the insecure ego, wherein it essentially imagines its own revolt against the father. The myth is an excuse, a justification, for it. Myths are created "by adults fantasizing back into childhood", in them their creator of the myth finds his childhood longings realized. Rank noted Freud's view too that the archetypal *Birth of the Myth of the Hero*, is the real 'nucleus of myth-formation', and hence of utmost importance (Rank 1993, 106).

This is how Rank summarized his views on the heroism and its relation to myths in his text 'Literary Autobiography'(Rank 1981,6):

*"Freud's interest in the subject (of hero myths) was on account of the hero's dependence on his family (Oedipus-complex) whereas I emphasized, particularly in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition<sup>47</sup> the hero's struggle for independence. In the light of my later will psychology one might explain the whole legend (with all its motives ) as a symbol of independence from the parents (a denial of the same) as the presupposition of the heroic, ie. creative type of individual".*

But the archetypal heromyth, as explicated by Rank, certainly be read both ways: As a struggle for independence or a symptom of unresolved Oedipus-complex, depending on the emphasis and the context.

Let us look at myth formation from a Rankian point of view: as a creative struggle for independence – The proper activity for the artistic hero, one could say. There is certainly certain heroism, and artistry, involved in the way that ego creatively – and often unconsciously – constructs these mythical stories which help him to cope and make sense of himself as he struggles out of the maze of oedipal family romance.

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47 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *the Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (1922).



Nevertheless, considering the fact that Rank is placing a one-size-fits-all evaluation on all the mythology mankind has so far created, it is fair to say that his view of the function of heroic narratives is still quite limited. What about the second part of life? For Jung, heroism definitely takes place there too, and includes the activity of unraveling the excesses of youthful ego. What happens to the myth-formation once Oedipal complex is more or less resolved? Isn't there something more to say about heroism in general, and about the Artist who creates heroic myths? As it turns out, Rank's view did expand from this initial theory, which was firmly focused on the infantile aspects of heroic myths.

### **4.3 Artist as the Hero in Rank's Post-Freudian Psychology**

#### **4.3.1 Transition: *The Trauma of Birth***

Before moving to post-Freudian Rank and to the rich material of ideas that they contain about artistic heroism, there is something to be said about the interim, transition-period in between. It is fair to say that Rank started his transition away from strictly Freudian psychology already before the publication of *Trauma of Birth* (1924). He experimented with new ideas regarding both the theory and practice of psychoanalysis with his Hungarian colleague Sandor Ferenczi, who was also very close to Freud, both personally and professionally. Rank and Ferenczi co-authored a book – *the Development of Psychoanalysis* 1924 – where they detailed their new ideas.

In their work, Rank and Ferenczi (Lieberman 1985, 193) suggest that the emphasis of therapy should be in the immediate present experience, in order to not get stuck in the interpretations of the past. Therapeutic intervention, instead of passivity was called for from the therapist's part. Thematically the focus of therapy should be more on love and intelligence, rather than on sex and instincts. Therapist's love is a crucial element in effecting transformation in the patient. Around this time, Rank (Lieberman 1985, 200) also proposed that the crucial element that psychoanalysis should aim to bring to therapy is the alleviation of guilt, for in modern society people are still very much burdened by the guilt-feeling. Freud was initially open to these ideas and believed Rank and Ferenczi as they defined their intention as simply extending the technique of psychoanalysis. However,

Ranks next work *Trauma of Birth*, turned out to be a different matter.

Rank says (Rank 1978, 2) that until now (*Trauma of Birth*) he had been "completely under the influence of Freudian realism", trying to express his vision of the creative man, the Artist, in "biological-mechanistic terms of Freud's science ideology", but that the publication of this new work marks a decisive turning-point. In *Trauma of Birth*, the birth of individuality is treated as a type of rebirth-experience, a creative act of man where the creature-like being, bound by biology, becomes now creator of himself. A big step away from strict freudianism.

One work that thematically seems to have had influence on Rank here, though, is Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), released few years before *the Trauma*. In this work Freud suggests that there are two basic impulses – *Eros/Libido* and *Thanatos* – operating in man. The first one is the pleasure or the life-principle, bringing forth creativity, sexual connection, and self-preservation. The other one is *Thanatos*, the death-drive, bringing forth destruction, repetition, aggression and self-annihilation.

The influence of this idea is evident in *Trauma of Birth* in the sense that also in this work there are two competing yet interdependent forces in man: the one that drives pushes him away from mother's womb to individual, separate, life. And the force that compels him to return to the womb. Though it has a biological basis<sup>48</sup>, the urge to return to the womb should not be taken literally, but seen more broadly as the desire to merge and unite with the whole of life. In this sense, this drive-to-merge can be seen both as *Eros* or *Thanatos*. If *Eros* is defined strictly as the connecting and life-generating force, then the pull to unite with the mother – and merge back into the "womb", the *Oceanic Feeling* – can also be seen as the work of self-annihilating *Thanatos*. A case can be made either way really. The influence of Nietzsche's dichotomy of Apollonian and Dionysian can arguably be seen in both Freud's and Rank's theories.

Freud also makes use of the Eastern philosophy in his notions of Nirvana – principle and

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48 Rank came later to regret the literalistic, biological, interpretation of birth-trauma that his work seems also to advocate. His emphasis was later clearly on the symbolic interpretation of the birth / death – dynamics.

takes a stand against eastern tendency to succumb the temptation of 'Oceanic Feeling' as the goal of life. This is seen as an infantile behavior by Freud. It is a wish to return to the womb instead of growing up and adhering to reality-principle (See Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* 1929).

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The key point of Rank's *Trauma of Birth* is that the crux of our anxiety and neurosis lie in the *primal separation* from the mother, and thus from the primordial unity with life. Only after that comes the trauma of weaning, fear of castration and the Oedipus Complex. The event of primal separation is the blueprint for all our future anxieties and it cannot be fully 'cured', since it the human condition to separate and individuate. As primal separation is a massive experience of loss, it also makes us sensitive and reactive to future experiences of loss. Rank actually credited Freud with this insight, as Freud had said that we are born into trauma and it forms the nucleus of our unconscious. All anxiety goes back to that which is experienced at birth (Rank 1991, 11)

It is interesting to note that the work itself acted for Rank as an agent for cutting his umbilical cord from Freud and ushered him into a type of 'birth-trauma', from where he would later emerge as a more thinker and person. What was particularly upsetting for Freud in Rank's Trauma – theory, was that in it the primary relationship was with the mother, not with the father.

*Trauma of Birth*, released around the same time as the joint work with Ferenczi, forms a kind of bridge from the ideas of *Birth of the Hero* to later Rank. For Rank claims (Rank 1993, 106) that the Heroic deeds, which he outlined in *the Birth of the Hero* are simply

reactions to an especially severe birth-trauma, the hero's life is simply about working out the situation, wherein he was not wanted in this world, nor did he asked to come here himself. Heroic deeds are *heroic compensation* to the birth-trauma, their motive is to win back 'the primal situation in the mother' and of course father acts here as the chief object of resistance.

Rank utilises in *Trauma* again numerous examples from various mythologies – from legends, literature and religious scriptures – to support his thesis. The Biblical Paradise of course represents '*the unattainable blessed primal condition*' and our expulsion from Paradise is the birth, inevitably a traumatic experience for us. God's command to not eat from the Tree of Knowledge represents:

”...the same unwillingness, in the sense of the birth trauma, to separate the ripe fruit from the maternal stem as, in the myth of the birth of the hero, the original hostility of the father to the hero’s coming into the world at all” (Rank 1993, 113).

The punishment of death, the expulsion from the Paradise, seems for Rank (Rank 1993, 116) to mean 'the most definite wish-fulfillment' of the Unconscious, since it is fully in accordance with the infants wish: To return to where he came from. Here we see how Rank connects the wish to return to the womb with Freud's Thanatos, the Death-Wish.

There is an interesting segment in the *Trauma*, in the chapter *Artistic Idealisation*, about Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, which deserves to be mentioned. Firstly, Rank (Rank 1993, 141) notes that for Schopenhauer, aesthetic achievement consisted of the deliverance from Will, which pushes us around endlessly. Nietzsche, however, saw deeper since he recognized the 'sexual repression' working behind the Will (in his *Genealogy of Morals*). Rank applauds Nietzsche's brilliant analysis of Greek Civilization in Birth of Tragedy and the conception therein ”of that harmonious quality which is for us the essential factor in Greek culture and which he called “Apollonian,” being the reaction against a kind of neurotic disturbance which he characterizes as “Dionysian.” (Rank 1993, 142)

This surely sounds like a mischaracterization of Nietzsche's Dionysian quality, for if anything, Nietzsche seems to long for the return to the Dionysian state, which surely would not be the case if he'd see it as a mere 'neurotic disturbance'. Rank (1991, 143) goes further

in trying to define the Dionysian quality, and suggests that the 'original source' which feeds the whole development (we assume that Rank means the development of Greek Culture?) is anxiety. What is the path from anxiety to great art, "the highest perfection of the artistic idealization", that the Greeks achieved?

Rank (Rank 1993, 147) seeks the answer from the riddle of the Sphinx, a key-feature in the Oedipus-myth. He interprets the Sphinx as being a symbol of mother, which represents the ultimate 'anxiety experience', the direct symbol of Birth Trauma. The hero, Oedipus, needs to overcome his birth-anxiety in order to get back to the mother. In the Oedipus saga, the hero does literally end up having an intercourse with the mother. And how does this relate to the glorious achievements of Greek culture? Rank claims that unlike other cultures, Greeks have managed to 'free themselves from the womb' and this is evidenced in their symbols where animal-like Gods (which were the norm in Egypt and India) are replaced by human figures. In Greek art one can see the 'biological and prehistorical' act of becoming and standing upright as human, worshipping the human body and severing one's regressive clinging to mother, represented in primitive religions by these half-animal beasts.

One can certainly disagree with Rank's imaginative analysis, but what we can deduce from it, at least, is that Rank shares some of the Greek-inspired principles espoused by Nietzsche, though his take on Nietzsche's Apollonian/Dionysian – dichotomy seems to be based on a misunderstanding here.

To summarize, in his transition period, Rank emphasized the mother at the expense of the father, and considered the trauma of birth to be more significant than Oedipus-complex in explaining our neurotic and existential anxiety. He presented life as a battlefield of two different desires: Desire for autonomy and independence and on the other hand desire for the primal unity, as experienced in the womb. As one strives for this primal unity, a fear of one's own annihilation arises – This fear Rank called *the death-fear*. Striving for autonomy leads to multitude of conflicts with reality. These conflicts elicit what Rank calls *life-fear*. The concepts of Life – and Death fear are elucidated in detail in Rank's *Will Therapy* (1929 and 1931). In Rank's theory neither mother or father are sexualized, and the aim of the child is not to literally achieve sexual union with the mother. As the child strives for autonomy – and tries to retain the affection of the parents – it is through his will that he

starts to mould his personality. The rebel of the child against his parents is termed Counter-will, which is essential part of developing individuality. So, in his post-freudian psychology of Rank, the Will emerges as the crucial factor. In Rankian therapy it is by strengthening the will, not the ego, that the healing happens<sup>49</sup>.

There is a vision of the heroic individual that emerges now from Rank's psychology. In this vision, the individuals who deserve most respect, and are most heroic, are those who dare to position themselves apart or even against their community, thus creating a self-chosen isolation. This type resembles the Nietzschean hero who resists the herd-mentality and herd-morality, choosing instead to create his own values and goals. These kind of people are not necessarily artists by profession but can be found among other professions as well of course. When such an individual works in moulding his self in a creative way, he is not merely working for himself but also helps others with the pain they feel about their existential isolation. Creative personalities are true heroes, for they offer models for others to strive for. Heroism is thus about the glorification of creativity and a creative person. We will next explore, in further detail, Rank's view of the Creative Hero and how it differs from the neurotic personality.

### **4.3.2 *Art and the Artist***

As we study the notion of Artist-as-the-Hero further, the work that offers most material for our theme from Rank's bibliography is *Art and Artist* (1932). Apparently the work was written with amazing speed, twelve of its fourteen chapters finished within a month. In this work Rank comes closer than ever on Nietzsche's philosophy on life as the ultimate form of art and personality as the ultimate work of art. As Progoff (Progoff 1973, 190) notes, the creative personality was really the overriding theme of Rank from his first to last work. And the Creative impulse was not to be used only on works of art, but to mould one's personality.

*"For the artistic individual has lived in art-creation instead of actual life,  
letting his work live or die on its own account, and has never wholly*

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<sup>49</sup> Segal (2004, xvii) makes a distinction between Rank's notion of Will and Nietzsche's Will to Power, pointing out that the former is about achieving autonomy, and not about dominance for example.

*surrendered himself to life. In place of his own self the artist puts his objectified ego into his work, but though he does not save his subjective mortal ego from death, he yet withdraws himself from real life” (Rank 1989, 430).*

As can be seen from Rank's quote above, which appears right at the end of the *Art and the Artist*, he has become somewhat jaded about life that is devoted to art – not vice versa. This view reflects the changes in his life: Rank is becoming tired of life devoted to writing and studying. He gradually withdraws from writing, but still sees patients, teaches and travels, partly out of obligation and necessity<sup>50</sup> (Lieberman 1985, 301).

In this 'magnum opus', Rank calls forth a new type of man: one that devotes his whole creative energy to life, and doesn't escape behind art-works. Here lies the way to greater happiness. But what ideas does Rank put forth here to justify this grand vision? He is seeking to understand the nature of man's creative impulse – and what man can achieve through it. He is of the view that scientific psychology hasn't been able to explain artistic creativity and he is convinced that the problem of Will, so central in understanding psychology and personality for him, is also a key-issue in understanding creativity (Rank 1989, 9).

In *Psychology and Soul* (1930), another important work of later Rank, he argued that the belief and desire for immortality is central in artist's creation much the same way that it is central for religious – and for social - institutions. Immortality-wish is the primary ideology (Rank 1989, 9). In *Art and Artist*, Rank seeks to explain in detail how this psychological process functions, especially in the case of artistic personality. One must start with the fact of death, and of the anxiety that it produces: The psychological event of man coming face-to-face with his mortality. Death-anxiety takes hold of us and forces us to create religious ideas, prime example being that of the immortal soul. Hence, the idea of soul arises directly from the problem of death. Soul is simply somewhat more "evolved" individualized concept that has developed from the earlier notions of collective spirit (Rank 1989, 13).

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<sup>50</sup> Rank (Taft 1958, 168) says he is "fed up with psychoanalysis" and is not in a hurry to do any writing nor teaching, since he is "few generations ahead anyway, so why widen that distance?".

Rank (Rank 1989, 12) explains that the task of his book is to explain there is a correlation between the changes in the form of art and changes in our conception of soul, which is still the ultimate conception of a developing personality. Just to be clear, Rank is not approaching this task from any pre-conceived religious or theological point of view, and as with Nietzsche, the aim is simply to understand what motivates and drives man's creations.

Art has sought to give abstract concepts like 'Soul', 'God' or 'Absolute' concrete forms, and in this sense it has directly affected our conceptions of soul. The "*process of humanization of the soul has completed itself in art and not in religion*", Rank claims (Rank 1989, 16). However, a critical question arises: What about art that is made from a purely secular motives? Can all art really be reduced to wishes of immortality? Rank claims that personal creativity is indeed anti-religious in the sense that it is the 'individual desire for immortality' that comes first before the 'glorification of the creator of the world'. Yet, no matter what style or method the artist expresses, his aim is to immortalize his mortal life in his creation – to transform death into life – and there is no escaping of this psychological fact (Rank 1989, 39).

Rank (Rank 1989, 17) explains that religion stems from the collective belief in immortality, whereas art spring from 'self-feeling', that is only later sub-ordinated to religion. The conflict that sometimes arises between religion and art is ultimately that between individuality and collectivity – and these two impulses also rage within the creative individual! But why does artist need collective ideologies – which religions undoubtedly are – in the first place? Isn't art anti-collective by its very nature?

This is true to an extent, Rank (Rank 1989, 18) admits, even the artist needs social systems to validate his impulse toward immortality – this process happens through fame, status, money etc. Society grants the artist his symbolic immortality. Also, the collective systems – with its established symbols - act as challenges for the artist to overcome – and through this challenge artist creates new forms of art...and moulds his heroic self. In the present age (or at least in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Rank expressed his ideas) where there is no single collective ideology, what prevails in art is the 'decaying cult of personality' wherein one needs desperately to come up with something novel to stand out. Rank claims that this type



of 'strong individualism' has not resulted in great art, but in overvaluation of the so-called artist-genius.

Although art does give man access, albeit imperfectly, to 'a realm of freedom', Rank is also not a great believer in "art for art's sake" ideology. He sees that it is more honest to admit our dependence on nature, for 'dishonesty towards nature' – an attempt to break away from nature - will eventually lead to art that is driven by guilt-consciousness (Rank 1989, 328).

Let us give a bit more context for these claims of Rank that we've outlined so far. In the second chapter of the book, titled *Life and Creation*, Rank presents his current view of man: In addition to biological duality of inhibition and impulse, there is the individual Will, manifesting both as the controlling element and the urge to create. Rank (Rank 1989, 39) stresses, that despite Freud's belief, this impulse for creation is not sexual. It is more accurate to describe it as life-impulse, that serves the individual will. Here Rank allies quite closely with Nietzsche and Jung. Rank sees a creative ethos in nature which artists seeks to connect with. And as he connects with it, he feels he becomes god-like and achieves, at least temporarily, a sense of immortality.

Rank makes a distinction of different type of humans, artists and styles of art in this work. "A romantic type", which Nietzsche is the most ultimate example of, aims to turn himself and his life into work of art. Rank (Rank 1989, 47) claims that this type of art-ideology is actually in the process of dying out. One can observe an attempt to save this 'religion of genius' in modern times, as man attempts to bring forth 'permanently valuable work of art'. Rank notes that this romantic type, as a psychological type, is actually very close to a neurotic<sup>51</sup>. Here we come to Rank's major point of interest: The difference between the neurotic and the artist.

The Artist-type concretizes ideological systems by pictures, narratives or melodies. The ideology can be religious or secular. These works add credibility to the ideology, and also to the artist. As artist gets acceptance and reward from the social system, he gets *symbolic*

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51 Ernest Becker, a great interpreter of Rank, defines the Romantic solution as an attempt to merge with the Other. This "agape-merger" can have as its object a person or the spirit of Art as such. It seeks salvation from the beauty, merging with the 'divine Other' (Becker 2011, 160).

*immortality*, but a part of him that still remains unsatisfied. There is a temporary relief from anxiety, but why is the relief not permanent? It is because artist's true aim is to unite and connect with nature's inexhaustible energy, and not with societal symbols. He understands that he can never really compete with nature, he will never really be god, nor can he ever permanently merge with nature in a truly Dionysian fashion – without losing his individual self. There is a lingering doubt about his personal immortality (Rank 1989, 72).

Working with society, with its symbols of immortality, gives only partial relief. Rank defines artist as someone who is unable or unwilling to adopt the dominant immortality-ideology of his age, not because of its content necessarily but because of his aversion to succumb to collectivity. The Artist is not satisfied by the same standards as average man, for whom fame and respect might be enough, for he is a person who often sees through the symbols and artificial norms of society. He separates himself from the common pool of meanings, yet he needs to make use of them. The art he creates is the best answer he can give to the existential dilemma and burden that life poses through individuation (Becker 2011, 171; Rank 1989, 72)

Yet, being an artist is a better predicament than the neurotic, who is defined by Rank as an individual who tries to preserve himself by restricting his experience ( Rank 1989, 47). Arguably, none of us can fully deal with all the terrible truths life poses for us, so we concoct various coping-strategies to deal with it. Neurotics do this by restricting the flow of experience in way or the other – restricting the sheer overwhelming volume and intensity of existence. But, as said, this act of repression is quite natural and necessary for us. The normal man is neurotic, as Freud clearly elucidated in his works.

And following this strain of thought, Becker (Becker 2011, 179) – a great interpreter of Rank - points out, neurotic lifestyle is such where repression starts to constrict us too much, preventing us from free choices and possibilities of growth. Attached to it there is also a deep, existential guilt in us, that results from us being humbled by existence in this manner and being forced to flee from it. We don't quite understand what it is, but 'the unlived in us' simply refuses to quiet down.

Rankian therapist Esther Menaker (Menaker 1996, 73) suggests that another way to understand the origins of our existential guilt - in the way that Rank did - is to trace it all the way to our 'primal separation' from the mother: We had to question our oneness with mother in order to become separate person, yet we still feel – some more some less – traces of guilt from this original differentiation from the source of life.

So, the neurotic symptoms serve to narrow our experience, to make it more manageable and to distract us from concerns of death, guilt and meaninglessness. We escape death in this way, but kill ourselves in the process! (Becker 2011, 181). On the other hand, there's another kind of neurotic, the one who takes in too much of the world, too large chunks of experience, without being able to partialize it. One's surroundings become part of one's ego. One could say that the 'narrowing tendency' seems to be a regular feature of obsessive-compulsive disorders whereas the overly 'expansive tendency' can be seen in psychotic breaks as one merges one's ego with the world as such and one's fantasies about it. To summarize, there are two problematic tendencies: one of merging too much and being unable to separate enough, and another one of excessive isolation, corresponding with the inability to unite. Neither one of these tendencies are to be seen as displays of heroic courage in Rank's psychology, but as defence mechanisms.

How does the Artist-hero, or the artist type, then manage to avoid these neurotic tendencies? Of course, he doesn't fully escape them, but he takes in the world and reworks it through his art. The neurotic is unable to do this. The artist and neurotic both "take in too much" but the artist is able to transfigure his experiences, remodel them into something more tolerable (Becker 2011, 184). Neurotic, as Rank (Rank 1989, 100) often expressed, is a failed artist. However, neurotic symptoms can be made into a creative work.

Interpreting the mission of Rankian artist, Becker (Becker 2011, 185) suggests that the artist faces the world – and the problems that it poses – and then fashions a distinctly human answer to it through art. Both neurotic and artist are creators, but only the latter one has the potential to become a cultural hero, the other is lost in "fantasized self-glorification" which leaves him unfulfilled. Artist is then both neurotic and creative, but he

avoids the 'naked lunacy of reality' through the unique cultural creations, which essentially are his personal immortality-symbols. Rank (Rank 1989, 73) speculates that the artist's creative dynamism arises perhaps precisely from the "conflict between the individual death-problem and the collective immortality-idea of the particular age". But is there anything behind their cultural creations, these fleeting symbols of immortality? Are we doomed to solipsistic creations with no transcendence? (Rank 1989, 100).

We have now arrived to the last part of this chapter, which deals with the problem of illusion and truth. This was a problem which was essential not only for Rank, but for both his mentors Nietzsche and Freud. They all gave somewhat different perspectives to it. We now focus on Rank's perspective. In neurotic person, the personal and cultural illusions are collapsing and brutal self-consciousness is creeping in. There is usually deep disillusionment about one's self. So, as Rank (Rank 1978, 42 ) puts it "to be able to live, one creates illusions, not only outer illusions such as art, religion, philosophy, science and love afford, but inner illusions which first condition the other" In other words, we need both our personal and cultural illusion in order to live.

Unlike Freud who regarded illusions as 'infantile wish-fulfillments', Rank (Rank 1989, 100) declares that he has always been able to see their vital value. Cultural illusions are our self-justifications, the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves. This relates to the profound superficiality that Nietzsche called for (in *Gay Science* for example). These illusion are our creative play and there is not much we know beyond our creative play (Becker 2011, 189).

If we lose our heroic cultural stories, we are as good as dead in the psychological sense. This has been exemplified by various native cultures who after being overcome by some aggressive conquering culture, lose the sense of their cultural heroic story and fall into a state of deep psychological – or spiritual – crisis. Their illusion no longer sustains them. Interpreting Rank, Becker (Becker 2011, 190) says modern man's problem is that the immortality-schemes that he has can no longer satisfy his hunger for cosmic heroism and self-perpetuation. In other words, he no longer believes his own stories and the meanings they've provided. This is not so different from what Nietzsche tries to express in his parable of the 'Death of God'.

Psychology, with the help of the masterful analysis of the likes of Nietzsche and Freud, has exposed the neurotic motivations that underlie our cultural projects and everyday behavior, yet it has done little to address our deeper existential concerns. It has not significantly alleviated the existential terror regarding life as such and severe guilt-feelings we harbor towards ourselves (Even though religion has lost big part of its influence, we are still afflicted by the consciousness of sin – without a notion of it! ). This is why Rank deems psychology as an negative ideology (Becker 2011, 198).

Psychology is not able to answer the big questions. Rank attacks psychoanalysis of pretending to be a total worldview, who reduces the cause of unhappiness into sexuality. It is no better than religion. Religion is actually better in some ways – for its immortality symbols and associated rituals are often richer than its secular counterparts. And in fact, psychoanalysis is actually a modern religion – devised by Freud – wherein the mysterious "Thou" of religion is replaced by the guru-like therapist whose face you do not see as you lie on the couch. In the system of psychoanalysis and modern psychology, Rank claims (Rank: Will Therapy, p. 92-93. cited in: Becker 2011, 196) man is deprived of the absolute mystery that he existentially needs, and instead makes 'a heroic gesture' of "placing himself within the immortality of his own ego" and making it his ultimate immortality symbol.

For Rank, psychology is an ideology like any other. It's another attempt by man to justify himself. Yet, ultimately we cannot justify our own heroism in a believable way. Hence there is a need for theological and artistic solutions. For Rank, the only cure for neurosis is that of the worldview: A life-affirmative collective ideology. But how would that be introduced and solidified into our consciousness? Through myths and rituals? Hasn't that train has passed already? Surely the modern man cannot get rid of his scepticism and rationality by resorting to naive simplicity?

What Rank stresses then is a 'need for legitimate foolishness'. We need to search for the best illusions, those that are best suited for our needs<sup>52</sup>. We need a compelling illusion which does not lie about life nor death. Becker reminds us that Rank criticized Freud for

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<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, Rank states that modern art is not based on any consoling idea of immortality, be it collective or individual. Its compelling motives being *fear of life and experience* (Rank 1989, 76).

lacking this capacity for illusion and creative myths (Becker 2011, 257). Rank (Rank 1989, 327) called for a childlike trust and hope in human condition, where mystery is still alive. In child-like play, and in man's self-created ceremonies and rituals, he can rise above his 'compulsiveness towards nature' and above his creatureliness (Becker 2011, 204).

Let us present a short summary of the main points of the chapter so far: According to post-freudian Rank, we need some "ideology of justification" to psychologically survive.

Neurotic is a person who has tried to live without illusions but has gotten overwhelmed by the tragic nature of reality. So, he narrows his experience into manageable 'slices of reality', where he attempts to control it through compulsive action or fantasies. Neurotic is a 'failed artist' in a sense that he's unable to use his creativity for his benefit.

Rank's hero, on the other hand, is the artistic type who has managed to transmute his fear of death into acts of self-perpetuation. He works with myths of heroic self-transcendence and explicit immortality-ideologies. He is defined through his will to immortality – it does not matter whether his solution is a fairytale or a myth or whether he actually tragically fails in his efforts. It is the heroic action and the expansive will that is the crucial element in Rank's psychology (Rank 1989, 283).

In these thoughts, Rank does not appear to be too far away from late-Nietzsche with his emphasis on the Will to Power and affirmation of life's tragic, Dionysian, character. Our mental-health issues relate to the struggles we have as we try to overcome ourselves, to our efforts in expanding beyond our "fate" and to the doubts we have about our immortality. When we fail to become a hero for ourselves, we seem to succumb to depression and existential guilt-feelings. As Becker (Becker 2011, 285) eloquently put it we need to fashion something out of ourselves and give that freely as a type of offering to the life-force, to the great Unknown.

As we've seen there was quite a significant evolution in the notions of heroism and artistic hero in Rank's thought. In the freudian period Rank's artistic heroism consisted of working through the Oedipal dynamics, in somewhat unconscious fashion, and the self-directed moulding of one's own personality was markedly absent. In the transition period, as Rank

started to work with Ferenczi in developing the "active therapy" and subsequently in his major work *Trauma of Birth*(1924), Rank's notion of heroism changed too. His focus had now shifted from Oedipal situation into working with anxiety caused by the primal separation, which takes place already at our physical birth. Rank's lifelong interest of working out man's existential guilt-feelings takes also more prominence and his suggested solutions to it shift away from classical freudian solutions. Rank's emphasis on the maternal influence and the present takes the locus point of the therapy, and place him at odds with his freudian colleagues. Although not popular at the time, his new insights make him one of the pioneers of the so-called second wave of psychoanalysis.

In his distinctly post-freudian period, which could be dated all the way from the late 1920's unto his death, it can be said that Rank returned to his 'Nietzschean roots'. He made Will and the Artist-type the central ideas of his psychology. The heroic artist was someone who utilized his will-power to mould something out of himself, in co-operation with the forces of nature. Denial of Will (in Schopenhauerian manner) was out of the question, yet Rank did was neither envisioning a solipsistic Superman who simply creates himself as kind of *causa sui* project. No, Rank emphasized the need of the heroic artist to work with the collective 'immortality-ideologies' of the age. In this way, he came quite close to Jung who stressed our need to understand and tap into the collective archetypes that underlie our behavior – to connect and work with them.

Unlike Freud, who has greatly disturbed by man's propensity to destruction and evil deeds, Rank thought that man was not so much evil as he was stupid: Stupidity is "even more powerful than badness" (Cited in Lieberman 1985, 379).. He did not see any easy way out of man's predicament, and instead of advocating science as our slow but steady way into the truth, he thought that our best bet will be to utilize our creative powers and playfulness. It is only in child-like play, which of course can and does happen in the context of art, that we can forget ourselves and rise above our 'creatureliness'. Perhaps this was the reason why Rank was planning a book on humour not long before his death. In *Trauma of Birth* , Rank (Rank 1993, 166) had defined humour as the "highest stage of overcoming repression", and a "definite attitude to one's unconscious" but unfortunately also in that work he had put the task of attempting to explain its origins to another time.

Before finishing this chapter, let us once more go back to the theme of creative, artistic, heroism as it relates to Rank. As regards to his notions of heroism, it's important to highlight Rank's view of the historical phases: Rank believed, like romantic-Nietzsche of the 1870's, 'aesthetic idea of beauty' could bring salvation for the human soul and that psychic chaos could be managed with the help of artistic form. However, the problem was that this did not apply to modern man anymore! Rank (Rank 1989, 388) said that Nietzsche had ushered us to a psychological era, which surpassed the romantic era of the 'genius-art' and the solutions that worked in the previous era did not work anymore. The theme of this psychological era was a 'total creation' or 'total experience', where the artistic creation becomes merged with all life-experience.

However, 'psychological ideology' cannot adequately work as a blueprint for artistic creation as it is closer to science than art by nature. Rank (Rank 1989, 389) states that Nietzsche saw the dangers of the latest Artistic Revolution and tried to warn us about it in *Human All Too Human*. As the romantic artist-as-the-genius – ideology came to its end, nothing as substantial has come to replace it. Yet, without some 'collective or social basis' artistic creation is impossible.

It is a bit hard to see what is the real cause for Rank's alarmism here. Surely if the time has passed of the romantic notion of the artist-hero, there can be no way that we can force back the time? The same could be said for romantic Nietzsche with his hopes of bringing back the Golden Greek era. And secondly, isn't the democratization of the artist-type something he should be rooting for? Rank laments that that artistic creation has changed its function from being a means of furthering the culture of the community into 'a means for the construction of the personality' (Rank 1989, 425).

So, Rank admits that this modern development is turning the artist-types 'from art towards life'? Again, isn't this what he has been advocating all along with his 'life as the ultimate art-work'? Rank (Rank 1989, 427) says that the problem here is that we do not possess the old type of mind anymore: A symbolic immortality was promised to the artist-type by society (in the form of success and fame) before, but we cannot buy into this anymore.



There is a 'break-up of the collective function of the art', which has led to its democratization also. This is 'the polar opposite of the 'aristocratic religion of genius', which was in Rank's opinion the last effective art-ideology. Nowadays, art is simply a means to develop personality.

The creative instinct is turned now towards the ego – to make it more useful in life. Salvation is no more sought from the ideology of art, but from the development of personality. We are now, Rank (Rank 1989, 430) believes, in the 'psychotherapeutic transitional stage' and we must grow out of it in order for the new type of humanity, and new type of art, to emerge. In the end, Rank does not see much wrong in this stage, where the creative impulse is turned towards the development of the personality, yet he reminds that this way of life requires a lot from oneself, there needs to be a push beyond the 'fear of life', since it was the fear in the first place that led us to separate art from life, and put the former to the service of some ideology.

#### **4.4 Freedom from Self-Consciousness: Hero in Here and Now**

Artistic heroism, as an aesthetic way of life, was not the only solution Rank offered to the problem of meaninglessness. There is an answer being offered in Rank's *Truth and Reality* (1929) that is based on (i) becoming centered in the present moment and (ii) finding meaning by extending oneself towards the other person. Rank's argument here illuminates well his post-Freudian views, his somewhat unorthodox rhetorics and makes it understandable why he is often considered to be a pioneer for the Gestalt Therapy, object-relations theory, and relational therapy in general. We shall now explore his arguments.

Firstly, in '*Truth and Reality*' (1929), which could be characterized as one of Rank's most important philosophical statements after his departure from Freudian ideology, Rank (Rank 1989, 72) follows Nietzsche by tracing the 'birth of individuality' into ancient Greek civilization and suggests that it was here when man first took "the place of God in the self-ruling creative hero". This extraordinary deed also led to extraordinary guilt as man now had to take responsibility for his 'god-slaying'. This sentiment was expressed in the classical tragedies. The Greek poet hero makes himself responsible for everything – and

pays a heavy price for it, usually death.

The formation of a Greek hero raises the man into a divine status, glorifying the individual creative power, despite its often tragic consequences. If in Jewish civilization God represented 'will' and man represented 'guilt', in Greek hero these two – 'guilt' and 'will' – are united. For Rank, Greeks represent a heroic solution to human problem. In Christianity, a new element is added into the mix as God now takes on the guilt and man subjects his will to Him. Christianity also adds the experience of love in the center of human experience. The patriarchal dominance – and will principle – which were emphasized in Jewish culture give way to a feminine principle. Each of these aforementioned cultural groups embody a certain level of development – and an essential element of a human experience (Rank 1989, 74).

Rank (Rank 1989, 78) sees 'God' as a symbol of will. The notion of 'creative, omnipotent and omniscient God' is a glorious, yet hubristic representation of human will. Rank follows Jung in deconstructing the most basic cultural symbols into psychological representations: Mother represents 'positive will' and father 'the counter-will'. The creative powers of the individual, artistic and productive kind, can be understood "under the justifying symbol of the creative god". Through Christianity, with its humanization of God, the hero – the creative man – becomes now a universal type, culminating in a modern highly individualistic man.

This neurotic modern man has seen through his God-illusions, i.e. has recognized his own part in their creation and is unable to find solace from the paternal symbols of Divinity – be it feminine or masculine. He is forced to become his own therapist, and at the same time: A therapist for other sufferers, his fellow men. (Rank 1989, 81) He does not long for a common saviour but seeks an individual one – one just for him. With this in mind he comes to a therapist. Yet he realizes, sooner or later, that he cannot achieve salvation in this way: Yes, the therapist is a creator of new meanings but so is he himself. The 'patient' needs to both affirm his own will and throw himself into the mutual therapeutic creation, which Rank characterizes as a 'rebirth experience' (Rank 1989, 82).

In *Truth and Reality*, Rank (Rank 1989, 82) gives a scathing critique about the potential of psychoanalysis to genuinely help man with his existential problems, yet in the end he ends up resurrecting the notion of therapy – and therapeutic relationship specifically - into an even more elevated position as a true hope for modern man. In therapy, a neurotic modern man is to be allowed to "mold himself into that which he is"<sup>53</sup>, to affirm his individuality. There can be no pre-conceived model for this. So, there is an opening in the new type of relationship – a therapeutic relationship - for man to rise beyond symbols of redemption into something more real, yet he is doubtful about 'individual therapy's' ability to offer him salvation.

Modern man has projected his own will into a symbol of God, but now starts to realize what he has done. Also, he sees how creating a secular 'ethical love ideology' is also...another ideology. Man is suffering from 'the loss of illusions'. In this situation, Rank (Rank 1989, 86) says, there is a danger that he will try to get free of the "conscious will-ego" either temporarily or permanently. If the 'individuality' has caused this isolation, let it be rooted out! He might try to do this through freeing up his sexuality. Though this can offer a brief consolation, Rank (Rank 1989, 86) warns that there can be "no salvation that aims at the dissolution of, or escape from individuality".

And here, just as one is starting to feel somewhat despondent about Rank's ability to offer any kind of solution, the narrative takes an interesting twist: Rank (Rank 1989, 88) proposes that the whole business of longing for redemption has to do with guilt consciousness, which itself is a gruelling form of self-consciousness. 'Happiness' and 'redemption' are actually polar opposites, not different degrees on a same scale, whose endpoint would be the dissolution of individuality and separation. Longing for salvation is directly connected to will-to-unity and oneness, which is the destruction of individuality. Rank claims that there is always a guilt-feeling associated with the act of giving up oneself. Happiness, on the other hand, relates to 'personal consciousness', pleasurable affirmation of will, and is 'a peak of individualism' itself.

An observant reader might ask here that doesn't it seem that Rank here is taking a stand

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<sup>53</sup> Compare this with Nietzsche's dictum about how man must become who he is.

against the impulse to Unity/Oneness and siding squarely with the impulse to Autonomy/Individuation? Is the balance between these impulses no more the ideal? Rank's move turns out to be less one-sided than what first appears. Rank (Rank 1989, 89) explains that our problem lies in our strong desire to prolong or shorten psychic states: To prolong life ad infinitum as in our desire for immortality. Or to shorten it to a up to a point of nothingness, as in the extreme acts of self-negation. From the point of view of psychology of emotions, he explains, consciousness has a problem with time. It is the time-factor that makes different contents and contexts pleasurable or painful.

Buddhist path, at least if crudely understood as a linear process towards Nirvana – the dissolution of the separate identity – and Christian path – with its goal of immortality – are both attempts to free oneself from the 'tormenting self-consciousness' and are not actually dealing with biological death, Rank claims. Self-consciousness is a *temporal* form of consciousness: Not present in the absolute moment of now. This temporal form of consciousness is what is being kept alive, by "permanence and eternity symbols", such as immortal Soul, Heaven or Nirvana (Rank 1989, 89).

Prior to developing a time-consciousness, man was actually feeling immortal in his own experience. To Rank (Rank 1989, 90), this is also the meaning of the myth of the Fall: It represents the guilt and complications that arise directly from the emergence of temporal consciousness. Rank names it as the "Kronos complex", deeming it as perhaps "the most powerful complex" tormenting the modern man.

We then have two problematic impulses: Firstly (i) the one attempting eternal duration, which corresponds with our need for individuation and self-preservation, and secondly the (ii) one attempting deliverance from consciousness, which is connected with our will to merge with life and thus to disappear as separate entity. Both are bound to fail and prone to create guilt-feelings in us. Schopenhauer saw no redemption except through 'eternal nirvana', a cessation of one's individuality essentially. Freud was not far from this when he highlighted the power of *thanatos*, the death instinct, in both individual and society. Nietzsche advocated the affirmation of one's Will expression as a self-creation, yet, Rank (Rank 1989, 92) notes, this is difficult for a modern neurotic who suffers from excessive

self-consciousness and guilt-feelings associated with it. Neurotic longs for denial of the will.

Rank's solution seems to be as follows: Human longing for redemption and happiness - both denoting experience of lack - can be shattered in the experience of love, which can only happen in present moment. This love experience Rank (Rank 1989, 95) terms, simply, "therapeutic". Salvation-seeking denotes always a guilt-consciousness, but making the other person happy can release us from guilt, which then makes the individual himself happy. This can certainly be difficult for a neurotic person who, in his longing for salvation, starts divinizing the other, putting her on a pedestal. However, the release from guilt cannot be accomplished this way, but through 'positive will accomplishment' – for, in the end, the salvation does not depend on any object outside of oneself. Happiness cannot be achieved through the other person but it can be discovered with another person (Rank 1989, 96).

It is Rank's (Rank 1989, 97) conviction that all 'universal redemption therapies', whether they take their manifestation in religions, sciences or arts, need to be shattered, for the individual salvation that the modern man strives for can only be found from individual happiness, not through a collective endeavours. When the individual arrives to a point that he no longer finds satisfaction in universal ideologies, he must seek it through individual means. At this point, there is a risk of self-destruction as man tries to finally free himself by any means necessary. This risk is high especially when one does not engage in any therapeutic work.

However, if the will of the individual is "affirmed and not negated or denied", there results the life instinct, and happiness", which could be called salvation, Rank believes (Rank 1989, 97). All this can be found from life-experience and too much theorizing about its dynamics, does not necessarily bring us closer to it. The questions about it, which arises from a psyche, where the will is split into timid self-consciousness and sense of guilt, cannot be answered with philosophical theories. The happiness is not found in 'truth', but in reality, here- and now.

## 5. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY: CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Visions for Combatting Nihilism: Summary of the problem and solutions.

We started this study by describing the problem of nihilism, which Nietzsche thought was threatening our culture. He expressed culture's current predicament with a fable about *the Death of God*. Opposing all other-worldly ideologies, Nietzsche (Nietzsche 2005, 168) described the concept of God as being the "last, emptiest, most meagre idea of all" and inquired if God was just man's mistake and not the other way around. This fable can be read in a literal sense – a direct critique of theistic religion - or as a warning about the dangerous vacuum of meaning that our society finds itself in when traditional ideologies have gradually lost their meaning. "The tragedy is that we cannot believe the dogmas of religion and metaphysics", yet we still "need the highest means of salvation and consolation" (Cited in Eagleton 2014, 23). Nietzsche (Nietzsche 1968, 7) felt, also, that "residues of Christian value judgments" were still everywhere, even in 'socialistic and positivistic systems'. He made a passionate and compelling case demanding a response.

The problem of nihilism, as Nietzsche articulated it, was a problem of meaning – or namely: the lack of it. "The aim is lacking; why?" finds no answer", as Nietzsche put it (Nietzsche 1968, 11). This was not an abstract philosophical problem, but both an existential and concrete, pragmatic one. If one does not see a meaning, to one's life and one's activities, this is bound to have a deep impact on one's life – be it mental or even physical health. Nietzsche outlined a vision – or various visions - of new type of man and a new type of culture, which would entail new kind of heroism. This would replace "the old dead horse"; the decadent European, Christian, culture. He called forth a return to Dionysian, Tragic Culture, which had existed before Socrates. It was in pre-Socratic Greece that mythic, exuberant, Dionysianism was properly expressed. Nietzsche saw this era as the pinnacle of human culture. The 'new' type of culture – which would draw inspiration from the early Greeks - included new vision for man and new approach to morality. Nietzsche argued that morality was "a way of turning one's back on the will to

existence". Traditional morality – secular or religious – would not be the answer. Even morality, as such, could not be a basis for Nietzsche's heroism. The hero was not a meek and virtuous man of Christian religion, working for his reward in the True World. Neither was his hero fully content with physicalistic, mechanistic, biological explanation of life. A person who could not fool himself with the implausible myths of religion, but who neither couldn't quite be content with a conviction that he was simply a hairy monkey, paying a brief visit from non-existence onto existence and then disappearing into eternal night. He wanted something more: What Nietzsche's hero was more than anything else...was the Self-creating Artist (Nietzsche 1968, 11).

Nietzsche's Heroic Artist was someone who needed art, the aesthetic perspective, to make sense of the world and himself. He needed to create his own meanings and values, to the extent it was possible. He needed beauty to cope with ugly realities. He was Apollonian in the sense that he needed to transfigure and aesthetize this reality, but a Dionysian in the sense that he strived to plunge into life with all its ecstasies and terrors. He did not shy away from the tragic nature of life, for he knew that only by embracing this tragic view could he penetrate beyond the lies and illusion of his culture. His credo was *amor fati* – to love one's destiny, to love what is and what will be.

Early Nietzsche's artistic hero was somewhat confined to the realm of art and culture. He sought to penetrate through the veil of separation via tragic drama and music and achieve a state of intoxication or frenzy (*Rausch*) wherein distinctions disappear and there is a unity between men and between nature and man. Nietzsche encountered some serious problems with this vision. Firstly, he got disillusioned about his conviction that it'd be possible to create Dionysian, tragic culture in modern-day Europe. This realization came as he broke ties with Wagner. It was arguably one of the most powerful experiences of Nietzsche's life, an experience which he returned to again and again. Secondly, it proved problematic to stay in the state of Dionysian state of any lengths of time, without it having repercussions on one's health. From unity one was jolted back to separation and suffering. Nietzsche had to redefine his Dionysianism. He was done with romanticism.

In the re-defined Artistic Heroism, Dionysianism re-born, one did not try to seek blissful

states behind the immediate phenomena anymore: Instead one affirmed the reality as it was. "The profundity of the superficial", was now the name of the game. In neo-romantic Nietzsche's vision, individual got shattered when the 'primal unity' emerged, but in post-romantic Nietzsche there was a resurgence of the strong, heroic, individual, with an ability to accept his separation from others and even affirm suffering. "What makes heroic? - To go to meet simultaneously one's greatest sorrow and one's greatest hope", Nietzsche (Nietzsche 1974, 219) states in *Gay Science*. Man attains freedom by affirming oneself just as he is, without shame. His highest artwork is his own life. It is his very own self that he attempts to mould according to his will<sup>54</sup>. In this vision, life does not need even an aesthetic justification: Life and self needs to be affirmed as just that. There is enough holiness and aesthetics in tragedy and suffering. Tragedy merges into joy. There is intense pleasure in pain, and intense pain in pleasure and these two can't be separated (Lehrer 1995, 17; Nietzsche 1977, 235, 236)

Nietzsche attempted to peel away all the illusions and irrationalities that we held about ourselves, and was convinced that what was left was of utmost value: This he called the 'Dionysos' and later on 'Will To Power', the Will to Existence. Nietzsche's Dionysos can be viewed as a symbol for life's destructive yet abundant Will-To-Power. Here was the Creative, Artistic urge, as its purest. Was this enough to make existence meaningful? For Nietzsche the answer was 'Yes'. Yet it ought to be added that Nietzsche resisted easy definitions and evaluations. Nietzsche (Nietzsche 1997, 19) mocked the "martyrdom of the philosopher", willing to die for the truth. This unquenchable will-to-truth he defined as "merely a satyric play" – a futile effort to resist the tragic nature of life. Was this nihilistic irony or also an expression of life-affirming, creative heroism?

Speculation abound whether these high demands Nietzsche placed on himself - To break through the collective illusions and live his life according to his own notion of heroism – were what caused his breakdown in the end<sup>55</sup>.

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54 There is of course a natural question arising here: Why does one need to mould something out of oneself if one, at the same time, is encouraged to affirm one's self as it is? Nietzsche explains that the creation and moulding is to be done out of state of joyful abundance, not out of lack. We create and express because that is our nature.

55 This 'high-minded' explanation certainly cannot be ruled out, but we also have plethora of possible physical explanations for Nietzsche's illness, such as syphilis or brain-cancer.



Nietzsche died in 1900 and by that time his influence and presence already reverberated strongly in Europe. Freud picked up on it. It was suggested here that it was highly implausible that Freud would not have been aware of Nietzsche's main ideas, even though he suggested<sup>56</sup> that he had avoided reading Nietzsche for various of reasons, including being afraid that he would be influenced excessively by him (Freud 1959, 60). We've suggested that the issue might've been rather that this priority of Nietzsche as regards to some major conception did not fit well with Freud's heroic myth about himself. Nevertheless his fear came true, since Nietzsche's influence can be seen in Freud's thought and these parallels of thought have been well documented by many researchers.

Let us revisit few of the most important parallel ideas. "...*A thought comes when "it" wishes, and not when "I" wish..*", said Nietzsche (Nietzsche 1997, 12). He had placed 'it' – which Freud later called 'id' – to the driving seat long before Freud. Freud claimed he had gotten the concept from Georg Groddeck (1866-1934), yet it was evident that, at least Groddeck had derived his (*das Es*) from Nietzsche<sup>57</sup>. The 'it' was the raw power of our primal instincts, the Will to Life. Nietzsche urged us to look beyond our stated motivations, whether this was in morality, religion or sexuality. "Good actions are sublimated evil actions; evil actions are good actions become coarse and stupid", he stated (Nietzsche 1994, 75). Simplistic put, isn't this what became Freud's project too? To understand the psychic dynamics beyond our stated motivation?

Like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche entertains a notion of Unconscious in his works, though mostly it is expressed in a more poetic, literary language than Freud. What Freud did was to develop a scientific method to study unconscious and scientific language (or at least scientific-sounding language!) to describe it. By no means was Freud the father of the notion of Unconscious, as Hans Ellenberger (1970) and others have demonstrated. There is a long line of 'ancestors and forerunners', Ellenberger (Ellenberger 1994, 3) suggests, going all the way to 'primitive psychotherapy' and shamanism, depending how broadly we want to use the term. One view could be that, for Western civilization, the real pioneers for this concept were the tragedians of the past: From Sophocles to Shakespeare and all the

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56 In his autobiographical study, originally written in 1925.

57 Rudnytsky (2002, 144) notes that one explanation - argued by Nitzschke (1983) for-example - is that Freud gave credit to Groddeck to conceal his intellectual debts to Nietzsche. Rudnytsky does not buy this explanation himself.

way to Ibsen.

Parallels can also be seen between Freud's *Id / Ego* – dichotomy and Nietzsche's notions of Apollonian and Dionysian. As to Freud's Superego, Nietzsche's concept of *Bad Conscience* (1887) and the *Higher Self* (as described in *Human All Too Human*, 1878) bear a striking resemblance. The clash between the powers of Id, the raw force of primal instincts, versus those of the civilization, was a dilemma of a pressing concern for both Freud and Nietzsche<sup>58</sup>. As regards to their view about this clash between instincts and civilization, this is where Freud and Nietzsche somewhat differed. Nietzsche did not see much value in the efforts of trying to upkeep the coherence and harmony of the society whereas Freud did, even if he also argued that our civilization was making us sick (*Civilization and its Discontents*, 1930). It was Nietzsche's view that it was enough if the culture produced some exceptional individuals, who were able to express their genius in a creative way, nevermind the rest. Freud, on the other hand, writes in *the Future of an Illusion* (1920) that if the satisfaction of the minority depends on the suppression of the majority, then society (or civilization) "neither has nor deserves the prospect of a lasting existence" (Cited in Eagleton 2014, 173).

To most Freud's major ideas and concepts, a parallel or similar type of formulation can be found from Nietzsche or Schopenhauer or (as is often the case) both. This applies to nature and function of Dreams, Libido, Sublimation, our psychic structure (Id/Ego/Superego), theory of drives and instincts, the concepts of Repression and Resistance, Compulsion to Repetition, the Guilt-motive for Criminal behaviour, possibly the Cathartic method, and many others (Cybulska 2015, Lehrer 1995).

Let us make a one more conceptual comparison before moving on to the solutions these men proposed. For Freud, sexuality was famously behavior-guiding primary force *par excellence*. Post-romantic Nietzsche's defined his primary force as *Will to Power*, which was not to be reduced to sexuality, Eros. On the contrary: Eros was merely a sublimation

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<sup>58</sup> Jung states that the aim of psychoanalysis was to make animal instincts conscious, and to also incorporate them into a purposeful whole. This is not far from what Nietzsche aimed to do, though the emphasis of Freud was on the conscious ego: He needed to stay on the driver's seat. This was not so with Nietzsche, who emphasised more the wisdom of the body and the pluralism of various 'centers' or selves in man (Jung 1956, 35).

of Will to Power, life's basic expansive force. Both Rank and Jung aligned on this point more closely with Nietzsche. Rank posited two basic forces: Will to merge and will to separate and individuate. One definition for Rankian hero would be the person, who is able to harmonize these forces in himself. This is similar to Nietzsche's conception of hero as the one able to synthesize Apollonian and Dionysian tendencies within himself. As to Freud's *Eros / Thanatos* – dichotomy<sup>59</sup>, wherein the former is a binding force and the latter a destructive force, there are certainly similarities to Rank and Nietzsche. However, Thanatos cannot be equated to Dionysos quite so smoothly, unless we interpret our Death Wish as a will to merge with the whole (Jung 1956, 38).

But how about the notions of heroism, and especially that of the Artist as Hero, which Nietzsche elucidated? How do they resonate with Freud's and Rank's sense of heroism? Were these early depth psychologists answering to Nietzsche's challenge of nihilism in their philosophies? Let us now see how Nietzsche's solutions tie together with the notions of heroism found from Rank and Freud.

## 5.2 Self as a Work of Art

This perspective needs to be mentioned first, as we talk about Nietzschean solutions to nihilism. Nietzsche declared himself as the Dionysus, the ultimate work of art, one who was able to create meanings into a meaningless world, one who could instill new kinds of values into a decadent culture. Nietzsche's life was spent mostly in writing though: he articulated and propagated these things beautifully, but was this the same as living them in 'real life'? Jung (Jung 1959, 41) noted that Nietzsche's Superman was someone who attempted to transcend oneself by being obedient to one's instincts, yet Nietzsche (especially during the years before his breakdown) lived almost a monastic life, isolated from his fellow men. Jung was not convinced by Nietzsche's life as an example of the heroism he elucidated. Perhaps so, but who can say what Dionysian, creative life should

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59 Here is Freud (Freud 2004, 70) explaining his reasons for positing a Death drive to juxtaposition to Eros: "Starting from speculations about the beginning of life and from biological parallels, I reached the conclusion that, in addition to the drive to preserve the living substance and bring it together in ever larger units, there must be another, opposed to it, which sought to break down these units and restore them to their primordial inorganic state". The impetus for these ideas, Freud writes, was given to him through his observations about our compulsion-to-repetition and from the conservative nature of the drives.

exactly look like? Surely transcendence can happen by dissolving inner barriers too? Nietzsche's life might not have been the most colorful in terms of external events, but this was compensated by the undeniable richness of his inner life. Besides, the Superman, as described in *Zarathustra*, was mainly a Man of the Future, i.e. Besides a few notable exceptions, he had not yet arrived.

Who were, then the real-life heroes, the *Übermensch*, Nietzsche admired? Nietzsche had many mentors and heroic figures during the course of his life, Wagner of course being the biggest one during his romantic years. But after his disillusionment with Schopenhauer and Wagner, Nietzsche's tendency was not to idolize his heroes to the point of putting them higher than himself. In his essay *Nietzsche and Jesus* Bataille (Bataille 2004, 375) speculates that, in the end, it was perhaps only God that Nietzsche was really jealous of. Certainly not Jesus. "No God! No man above me!", was Nietzsche's battle-cry. Though it could be argued, given the vehement fury that Nietzsche attacked Christian religion and the stylistic and narrative resemblances to Gospels, that Nietzsche did have at least an anxiety of influence with Jesus. Was he able to perform a heroic escape from this lofty divinized poets? He certainly tried. Spurred by the early loss of his father, his search for a father-figure reached a feverish intensity in his life. Do his efforts and achievements count as an proof of heroic confidence and successful heroic escape? Or are they more likely an expression of narcissistic solipsism?

It was a curious fact that the later Nietzsche of 1880's concocted many grand concepts such as *Eternal Recurrence* and *Will to Power*, which had a quasi-metaphysical air about them. Whether Nietzsche was searching for immortality via these means is open to question. Based on his unfinished work *Will To Power*, it seems that Nietzsche was building a philosophical system, which in Rank's terminology could be called his immortality-project, a way to extend himself beyond death. However this project was apparently abandoned. What we can rely on as Nietzsche's definite statements, are most likely the one's that were sent to publication.

It was suggested earlier in this study that for Freud too the project of building a personal heromorph – out of one's own life - was of utmost importance. His legacy mattered, for

Freud did not seek solace from divine after-life. His investigations were often tied to his persona: his personal passions and obsessions. Freud's concern with his legacy and memory is evidenced by the manner he managed the records that would be left of him for future generations: he destroyed material he did not want to be read, he massaged facts to give a favourable image of his own role (questions of priority, which we have explored in this study) as a great scientist and psychologist. Freud's descriptions of himself alternated between modesty and hyperbole. As an example of the latter, we famously compared his achievements to those of Copernicus and Darwin<sup>60</sup>. His autobiographical essay ends on a more humble note: *"Something will come of them (Freud's findings) in the future, though I cannot myself tell whether it will be much or little"* (Freud 1959, 70).

Despite these expressions of modesty, Freud was far from being open-minded and sympathetic, when his pet-theories were challenged. He and his followers veewed a legend out of the founder of psychoanalysis. As with Nietzsche, we can also suggest that for Freud his personal legacy, which was intimately tied with this work, was his immortality-project: his ticket to the stars. Freud did not have Eternal Recurrence to fall back to, not even as a poetic construction. So, what's 'wrong' with it then, the critic might ask. Isn't all this all too human? Not many human beings can claim a more marvellous legacy than these two, at least in terms of sheer influence. Their biographies and philosophies have also had a rich life of their own. This is certainly true. But what is evaluated here is not the amount of narcissism involved, but how well this method of mythic herobuilding - organized by oneself...for oneself – has worked for our study-subjects as a source of meaning.

If compared to his mentors, Rank was less prone to making hubristic, grandiose statements about himself, yet he produced his share too, especially during his manic periods. He boasted, for example, about making more progress with a client in five sessions than what Jung had achieved in three years (Taft 1958). In private correspondence, he (Lieberman 1985, 286) quipped that "I am kind of Einstein in the field of psychology, and therefore people don't understand me (of course with a few rare exceptions!)". It is fair to say that Rank also was building an art-work out of his own life and he viewed this as the most meaningful activity one could do with one's life. He expressed this mission multiple times

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60 He did this during his General Introduction to Psychoanalysis – lectures (1915-1917) in a paper called 'A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysisä (1917)

and in multiple ways:

*”...He (creative individual), so to say, appoints himself as an artist, though this is only possible if the society in which he lives has an ideology of genius, recognizes it, and values it...The creative, artistic personality is thus the first work of the productive individual, and it remains fundamentally his chief work”*  
(Rank 1989, 27).

Post-freudian Rank was not shy in pitting himself against Freud or any other intellectual giant - but compared to Freud, he was less hands-on at managing the 'legacy of Rank' - the image that the future generations would have of him. Perhaps this was because he recognized the limits of any immortality-project, including that of 'genius-artist'? Rank expressed towards the end of his life, that there was no 'Rankian School' nor 'Rankian psychology' that he intended to leave behind. He was simply keen on living and enjoying life fully. Since Rank published quite little autobiographical writing – though did have plans in writing the history of psychoanalytic movement – we mainly have to rely on the recollections his close ones have of him. These recollections suggest that though Rank valued his philosophical output – the rich psychological vision he articulated in his writings and lectures – what he valued probably more was the work and energy invested in the human relationships (therapeutic and otherwise) and creative 'sculpting work' done with one's own self.

### **5.3 Art and Artistic Heroism: Evaluation**

Though very much interrelated to the project of 'Self as the work of Art', let us still return separately to the theme of artistic creation as solution to the problem of nihilism. As for Nietzsche, we've already articulated his view – both the problem and suggested solutions – on the matter extensively. Let us focus on Freud and Rank and also summarize how they were able to use Nietzschean ideas in this matter.

Jacob Golomb (1999, 121) has pointed out that Nietzsche was used by both Rank and Jung as they liberated themselves from Freud. Both Rank and Jung resonated more with

Nietzsche's affirmative psychology rather than Schopenhauerian pessimism and crude materialism which Freud had come to represent for them. So, Rank used Nietzsche's thought to differentiate himself from Freud. This seems like a plausible idea, given what we know about Rank's life and ideas.

Freud's and Rank's view on heroism co-incided fairly smoothly around the time when Rank published *The Birth of the Myth of the Hero* (1910). Heroism was about a fragile ego revolting against the father and working out the Oedipal situation. Hero myths were seen as a type of compensation in where the infantile ego could have its way with parental figures. Story of Oedipus was a fable about the wishes of the childlike ego. Art in general, especially in narrative form, was seen in the similar manner: Expressing deep-seated instinctual drives. Yet, Oedipus could also be interpreted with a different emphasis: as a story about patricide and struggle towards individuation. A story about becoming more independent – A Heroic Escape. Later Rank claimed that this had been his perspective early on<sup>61</sup>. The seeds of discord were there, but they were not ready to sprout. At this point, Nietzsche's influence was not yet a separating factor between Rank and Freud. Rank could still point out to Freud how certain ideas of Nietzsche were pertinent to psychoanalysis and these notes would be quite welcomed. Rank's overtly Nietzschean influences, expressed in his youthful diaries and, to an extent, in his debut *The Artist*, had been put aside or possibly repressed, to use Freudian term. It is not far-fetched to think that Nietzsche's interpretation of the Greeks had contributed to the fascination both Freud and Rank had with Greek tragedies and mythology (Seif 1984).

The situation changed dramatically in 1924 (*Trauma of Birth* especially) as Rank started to voice views contrary to some of Freud's core-ideas such as the Oedipus complex. Rank suggested that the primary trauma takes place already at the birth as man gets separated from the mother and the womb - where life had been undivided and free from strife. This trauma produces the primal anxiety, which is then activated by later experiences of separation. In this schema, Oedipus-Complex comes later and is important but secondary. Man has two impulses – and corresponding fears: There is a will to merge (back to the womb, to undifferentiated life) and will to individuate (to stand apart from others, to carve

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61 This view was expressed in the later editions of *the Myth of the Birth of the Hero*.

out one's self through separation). Corresponding fears, naturally are death-fear (fear to merge) and life-fear (fear to individuate and live as a separate being). In here, Rank has derived inspiration from Nietzsche, yet his psychology is still mostly compatible with Freudian paradigm. The hero here is the one who was able to balance these primary drives of unification and separation (Brown 1962, 53).

As to Freud's solution to artistic creation as a source of meaning, we established in chapter four, that he had an ambivalent relationship with artists. Artists were neurotics, who struggled to break away from their infantile fantasies and adapt to the dictates of the reality-principle. In this vein, he viewed artistic pursuits as sublimations of the sexual impulses into cultural constructs. Not unlike dreams, it was an activity of wish-fulfillment and a way for the artists through compensatory means to get what they really after: Sex, recognition, power. Art was created out of unconscious desires, but transformed – sublimated – into acceptable form. The idea of sublimation in relation to art was also expressed by Nietzsche earlier as he had suggested that the instincts could be channeled into spiritual activity, sexual activity being at the heart of aesthetics (Cybulska 2015).

Yet there was also another side to Freud's take on the art and the artist: Here artist was seen as a somewhat mysterious, superior being. When viewing the artist from this romantic angle, the focus was more on the inaccessibility to the creative source of the artistic genius and the ingenious and moving ways artists were able to express the perennial psychological truths. The way Freud used creations of his admired artist as an inspiration to his psychoanalytic work, spoke lengths about how he valued their access to human psyche and truths of the unconscious. In his view, it was the artistic creations – such as the Greek tragedy of Oedipus and Shakespeare's Hamlet – that had so far been most apt at describing the definitive truths about human motivation and behavior. Yet, for Freud himself, the scientific inquiry and rational mind were the basis where the detours into areas where conducted from. Aesthetic perspective needed a cool analysis to distill the truths it contained, it was not a destination in itself.

To conclude, it is unlikely that Freud would've viewed the creation of art as a seriously potential way for an individual or a culture, to dig their way out of the looming nihilism in



a post-religious world. He would've insisted that our best bet still is to rely on that faculty which sets us apart from other animals: Our superior reason and faculty of consciousness. This is how we can shed light to the murky waters of unconscious, and still the instinctual forces. Art can provide insights for us and act as panacea to the sufferings of life, but it should not be elevated to new type of metaphysics.

Erik Erikson (Erikson 1963, 264-265) tells a story of how Freud was once asked what a person (we assume that this means a normal, psychologically healthy person) should be able to do in life? Freud answered: "to love and to work". While we cannot be certain of quotations authenticity, it does seem to express some core-values that Freud held on to: he was a notoriously hard worker and a person whose life revolved around the family and therapeutic and collegial relationships. In this light, it was interesting that his view of the working therapeutic relationship between the patient/client and the analyst was somewhat distant. We can imagine that instead of going after lofty goals like *Urbmensch* or *Dionysian culture*, Freud would've rather advocated somewhat prosaic solution as our best bet strategy against nihilism: Love and work, work and love.

Let us return to Rank now, and summarize his view of the artistic heroism after his fall-out with Freud. First of all, there was a markedly more distinct differentiation between the neurotic and the Artist, compared to Freud. Rank famously defined the neurotic as the failed artist. While a potentially gifted individual, neurotic failed to adjust to the world. And unlike the artist who could sublimate his frustration into art – and thus both transform his experience of the world and also possibly gain worldly recognition – the neurotic fails to channel his unique vision and feels increasingly isolated from his fellow man.

Psychotherapist, in the eyes of the freudian Rank was a modern hero of the psychological era, a physician of the soul, who could help the neurotic out of the maze of his own disjointed self and interpret his 'life-dream'. Freud, of course, was a good example of this new type of hero (Lieberman 1985, 163).

In the final period of his life, it can be said that Rank returned to his roots and became essentially Nietzschean. The Will and the Artist-hero became the central tenets of his philosophy. Since during his time with Freud, the personal creative will was almost an

anathema and certainly not a concept to base your psychology on, there seems to have been an over-emphasis on the Will in Rank's early post-freudian thought. A type of pendulum movement from one extreme to another. There's an impression that a person can simply create and then re-create himself by making such a choice, by sheer power of will. The Heroic Artist-type, in co-operation with nature's forces, simply moulds what one will out of himself. This bears a close resemblance to Nietzschean Superman. As Rank (Rank 1989, 4) put it: a Creative type is able "to create voluntarily from the impulsive elements and moreover to develop his standards beyond the identifications of the super-ego morality to an ideal formation which consciously guides and rules this creative will in terms of the personality".

This hyperbole doesn't quite last, though Rank retains Will, Creativity and Consciousness as a central concepts of his psychology. There is simply a more nuanced, and more ambiguous view of man that is formed as one in account Rank's final works. In *Art and the Artist* (1932) and *Psychology and the Soul* (1931) Rank articulates a more interconnected (ie. less individualistic) and sociologically driven view of the Artist-Hero. Rank suggests that Artist, like almost everyone else, is driven by a desire for self-preservation and self-perpetuation: In other words, a desire of immortality. The artist needs social systems to validate his needs for immortality: In exchange for his 'artistic goods', the Artist gets symbolic forms of immortality: recognition, fame, money, power, sex etc. Society grants him symbolic immortality.

This does not satisfy the Artist in a permanent sense, for the artist is often a person who is not willing to succumb to the dominant immortality-ideology of the time. He is by nature more of an individual than a collectivistic person. He is only too aware that what he what he has created are his personal immortality-symbols. What has been given back for his artistic creations – are mere societal symbols. What does the artist really yearns for? He yearns to unite and connect with nature's inexhaustible creative energy in a true Dionysian sense. But he also knows that he can never merge with nature in the permanent fashion, without losing his individual identity. He stands in the middle: not quite an animal who can simply act in accordance with nature, but not quite a self-created, cultural being either, who could simply affirm his own creations and be satisfied with them.

Rank believed that neither traditional psychoanalysis, nor psychology as a scientific doctrine, could not provide relief to this lack of 'cosmic heroism'. There is no cathartic narrative, which would explain through sexual etiology, or through psychopathology, our existential anxiety in a way that would satisfy us in a meaningful enough way. Is the conclusion then, that Rank did not believe that there were any solutions to a situation where 'immortality-ideologies' have lost their meaning for us?

And what about the anxiety of influence, which we defined as a force of tension which functions both as a stifling and creative force in the life of the artist. Well, this seemed clearly to be at work, as we observed the oedipal trajectories of Nietzsche influencing Freud, Freud struggling to both integrate and simultaneously not be affected by him. Rank, on the other hand, struggled with Freud's influence but derived strength from already deceased Nietzsche as a father-figure. Nietzsche's anxiety of influence was clearly directed to Wagner and Schopenhauer, but also to a more loftier heights towards the end of his life. It can be argued, that they all were able to perform a heroic escape from their predecessors and father-figures, yet were more at loss what to do in the solitary heights where they then found themselves.

#### **5.4 Rankian Solutions to Nihilism**

It is suggested here that although Rank aligned with Nietzsche in promoting aesthetic heroism, he was more sceptical than Nietzsche as to whether that was enough to free man from his existential angst. Nietzsche's manic rhetorics shortly before his breakdown also make it hard to establish what his 'final stance' was, if any. Rank's scepticism was evidenced in his description about the disillusionment that the Artist-type feels towards all immortality-ideologies, and these ideologies appear to include religion, psychoanalysis (and psychology as such), sciences and art – especially as an profession.

Rank's evaluation about the merit of Artistic Heroism (Judging mainly by his works *Art and the Artist* and *Psychology and the Soul*) appears to be aligned with Nietzsche's in a sense that aesthetic heroism is indeed the most noble, and rational (!) way of being in the

world that lacks any inherent meaning. One ought to affirm one's creative will and mould one's self like a work of art, yet none of this can be used as an immortality-ideology, a means of salvation, to hide ugly realities of life, such as the seeming absence of 'Higher power' or the cruelty that seems to be part of nature.

However, this according to Rank is the nature of our psychological era where the artistic creativity is turned into development of one's personality. One's self is the most important work of art. This state of affairs is not necessarily a bad thing, for it can produce breakthroughs in psychological sense, even if it would make the art-culture scattered and chaotic and merge with the psychologically orientated culture of self-development.

The self-creation and artistic heroism was certainly the 'medicine' Rank, in a general sense, was offering to the disease of nihilism. Yet, there were other important healing factors, which he wrote about: in the sub-chapter 3.4, we explored Rank's argument about how becoming centered to here-and-now can free the individual for his compulsive latching to immortality-ideologies. In the same chapter, the role of humour – and healthy sense of irrationality and self-deprecation – was mentioned. One important aspect of Rank's work, which is his input to the development of more relationally orientated therapy, has been somewhat neglected here. And this is because the scope of this study has forced us to make thematic choices. Yet there is a beautiful passage in Rank's *Beyond Psychology*, which illustrates the value post-freudian Rank places on the human relationships:

*“The ego needs the Thou in order to become a Self, be it on the individual plane of human relationship or on the social plane of a foreign group-ideology, or on the broadest basis of one civilization needing another one for its development and maintenance. The tragic element in this process is that the ego needs a Thou to build up an assertive self with and against this Thou”*  
(Rank 1941, 290).

On a final note, the Artistic heroism is a solution offered by both Nietzsche and Rank to the malady of nihilism that they see threatening and plaguing the modern man. Freud and classical freudians would predominantly turn their focus to the artists neurosis, rooted in

biological drives, to explain creative genius and compensatory heroic action, whereas Rank would do the opposite: Looking to find the heroic strivings in our neurosis. Neurosis seen there as a stifled creativity. Early Rank joined Freud in explaining heroism through psychopathology, whereas post-freudian Rank – using Nietzsche as his stepping-stone to independence – explained heroism through artistic creation. Rank and Nietzsche joined ranks in their belief that artistic heroism entailed seeing life itself as a creation of art. Freud would express more scepticism in this regard, as he was interested in ways that our past – and our repressive civilization - was curbing our present creations.

As to the notion of anxiety of influence, sets up a tension which can act both as a stifling and creative force. This seems clearly to be the case when we observe the trajectory of Nietzsche influencing Freud, Freud struggling to both integrate and simultaneously not be affected – at least – publicly by him. Rank struggled with Freud's influence but derives strength from already deceased Nietzsche as a father-figure. Nietzsche's anxiety of influence was clearly directed to Wagner and Schopenhauer at least.

The problem of nihilism, we must concur, remains an open question. It's answer, obviously, depends on the person answering it: To what extent has he plunged himself into the process of transforming one's life into a heroic work of art? To what extent is he able to immerse himself into relations with the Other – be it a human or nature as such? This process will not absolve oneself from the sufferings of life, in fact it might even increase it's intensity, but – at least in the case of Nietzsche, Freud and Rank – they seemed to have created lives that were rich in meaning for themselves and rich in meaning for us.

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