

# Metapsychology Monographs 10: A Social Work Perspective on Psychoanalytic Theory and Practice

## Abstract

This article provides a social work perspective on psychoanalytic theory and practice, drawing on the work of Otto Rank and other psychoanalytic thinkers. Rank's theory of the "will to power" is discussed, as well as his emphasis on the importance of relationships and community. The article also explores the implications of Rank's work for social work practice, including the importance of understanding the unconscious, the role of the social worker as a catalyst for change, and the need for social workers to be aware of their own countertransference.

Psychoanalytic theory has been a major influence on social work practice since the early 20th century. However, there has been relatively little written about the specific contributions of social work to psychoanalytic theory and practice. This article aims to address this gap by providing a social work perspective on psychoanalytic theory and practice, drawing on the work of Otto Rank and other psychoanalytic thinkers.



## Substance Dependency, PTSD and Traumatic Incident Reduction (TIR) in South Africa: A Social Work Perspective (Metapsychology Monographs Book 10)

by Liesl Sonnenliesl design

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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## **Otto Rank's Theory of the "Will to Power"**

One of the most important contributions of social work to psychoanalytic theory is Otto Rank's theory of the "will to power." Rank argued that the primary motivation in human beings is not sexual desire, as Freud believed, but rather the desire for power. This desire for power is not simply a matter of wanting to dominate others, but rather a more fundamental need to feel competent and in control of one's life.

Rank's theory of the will to power has important implications for social work practice. First, it suggests that social workers need to understand the unconscious motivations of their clients. This is because clients may not be aware of their own unconscious desires for power, which can lead them to behave in ways that are self-destructive or harmful to others.

Second, Rank's theory suggests that social workers need to be aware of their own power and how it can be used to either help or harm clients. Social workers have a great deal of power over their clients, and it is important to use this power responsibly.

## **The Importance of Relationships and Community**

Another important contribution of social work to psychoanalytic theory is the emphasis on the importance of relationships and community. Social

workers recognize that humans are social beings who need relationships with others in order to thrive. These relationships provide us with support, love, and a sense of belonging.

Rank's theory of the will to power also highlights the importance of relationships. Rank argued that the desire for power is ultimately a desire for connection with others. We need to feel connected to others in order to feel whole and complete.

The implications of this for social work practice are clear. Social workers need to help clients build strong relationships with others. This can be done by providing clients with opportunities to connect with others, such as through support groups or community service. Social workers can also help clients learn how to communicate effectively and resolve conflict in healthy ways.

### **The Role of the Social Worker as a Catalyst for Change**

Social workers play a unique role as catalysts for change. They are often able to help clients see their own unconscious motivations and to make changes in their lives. This is because social workers are trained to be empathetic and supportive, and they can create a safe space for clients to explore their thoughts and feelings.

Rank's theory of the will to power suggests that social workers can be catalysts for change by helping clients to overcome their fear of power. This can be done by providing clients with opportunities to experience success and to feel competent and in control of their lives. Social workers can also help clients to develop a healthy sense of power, which can be used to make positive changes in their lives and the lives of others.

## **The Need for Social Workers to Be Aware of Their Own Countertransference**

One of the most important things that social workers need to be aware of is their own countertransference. Countertransference is the unconscious feelings that social workers have towards their clients. These feelings can be positive or negative, and they can interfere with the social worker's ability to provide objective and supportive care.

It is important for social workers to be aware of their own countertransference so that they can manage it in a way that does not harm clients. This can be done by talking to a supervisor or therapist about their feelings, or by taking time for self-reflection.

Social work has a unique and valuable perspective to offer on psychoanalytic theory and practice. Social workers understand the importance of relationships and community, and they are trained to be empathetic and supportive. This makes them well-suited to help clients overcome their unconscious motivations and to make positive changes in their lives.

Rank's theory of the will to power is a valuable addition to social work theory and practice. This theory helps us to understand the unconscious motivations of clients and the role that social workers can play as catalysts for change.

By being aware of their own countertransference and by using their power responsibly, social workers can help clients to overcome their challenges and to live more fulfilling lives.



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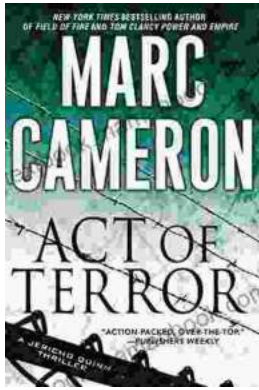
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