

## Childhood

Fritz Rainer was born in Basel, Switzerland in 1925. His father, Florian Rainer, was a renowned psychiatrist and his mother, Lena Rainer, a midwife. Both Catholic, though not as devoted as many others, their first child Fritz was to be raised in a relatively liberal family. Despite the fact that his mother was a midwife, as well as a lady of great mental and physical strength, the labour process was long-winded and challenging. His mother knew already then that he was going to be a special boy, a very special boy indeed.

Fritz was a curious child, and a fast learner. He soon developed a bizarre habit of spending hours examining various objects, drilling holes in them with his eyes. This later evolved into a more active fascination, exploring and testing the physical qualities of things he could find around him. His habits never took a destructive turn though – Fritz took good care of his findings, as well as any toys his parents presented him with. He was quiet and friendly, sometimes a bit absent, absorbed in his world of exploration and learning.

## *Teenage years*

Fritz was what you would call a young adult. Although never much of a chatter-box, he was polite, very knowledgeable and up for a serious discussion on world politics, human rights, or anything really, at any occasion. He always managed to take the subject of discussion into a direction of interest to him. By the age of twelve he had developed strong opinions on most world matters, as well as infinite theories of his own.

Half way through high school, his parents decided he should continue his education at the Rudolf Steiner School which had opened in Basel a decade earlier. Florian and Lena Rainer



Hold the plate firmly in front of you  
for a demonstration of power

became great supporters of the Anthroposophical Society, promoting its principles in the medical realm as well as among their circle of friends and colleagues.

In school, Fritz was looked up to with amazement and admiration for his excessive academic knowledge that was combined with a natural state of mind. It was there that Fritz received anthroposophic speech training cultivated by Marie Steiner-von Sivers, and where he further developed his ideas through active conversation and debate with his classmates and teachers. They quickly became the testing ground for his theories. He soon took on the ideas propagated by Steiner, reaching deeper into the world of spiritual science which, even though entirely metaphysical, synced well with his earlier object exploration which often took the form of perceptive meditation.

His teachers saw great potential of leadership in Fritz, and attempted to offer help sharpening his ideas on education and religion. But Fritz's understanding of things was not to be interfered with. He showed little or no interest in their suggestions. Fritz knew that if he wanted to be somebody he must follow his own path.

### Early adulthood: Germany

At the age of seventeen, in 1942, young Fritz decided to travel to Germany to fight against the closing of the Waldorf schools by the Gestapo. By then his theories had crystallized into a coherent form and his plans of changing the world were finally becoming tangible. His parents were expressing a sense of worry and his father even attempted to use psychiatry to make sure Fritz's mental health was in good shape. But Fritz was as lucid as ever and determined to push forward.



Hold the plate above your head  
to stimulate a feeling of unitement  
and comradery

The real reason behind his visit to Germany was to set up a new school based on the foundations of Waldorf education, taking what Rudolf Steiner had begun into far extremes. Rainer believed he could convince the German leaders of the necessity of such teachings and its positive effect on the future generation. Unfortunately, after several meetings with high officers Rainer realised he had been too optimistic and overly confident of his persuasion skills. Marie Steiner-von Sivers' speech techniques were helpful to a certain extent but Germany's attention and interests lied somewhere else at that moment. He was told that even though Germany is open to radical ideas in education, the world was not yet ready for such a change. Not just yet.

It was in Düsseldorf that Fritz Rainer ran into the soon-to-become-artist Joseph Beuys who was about to enter the Monumental Sculpture program at the Düsseldorf Academy of Fine Arts. Beuys, four years older but none the wiser, found Rainer's ideas and strong character fascinating. Rainer poured him over with excessive information on Anthroposophy (though mainly his own view on it), which later played an important role in Beuys' work. The two found common ground in the interest regarding the internal qualities of daily objects and their potential in shaping our society. Though the two never met again, their contact strongly influenced their future decisions and worldview.

### *Back in Basel*

Fritz, devastated and lost, returned to his parents' home in Basel. His father proposed he could help him out with administration at his psychiatry practice until he gets back on track but Fritz wasn't ready to admit defeat. Beuys had encouraged him to go to the



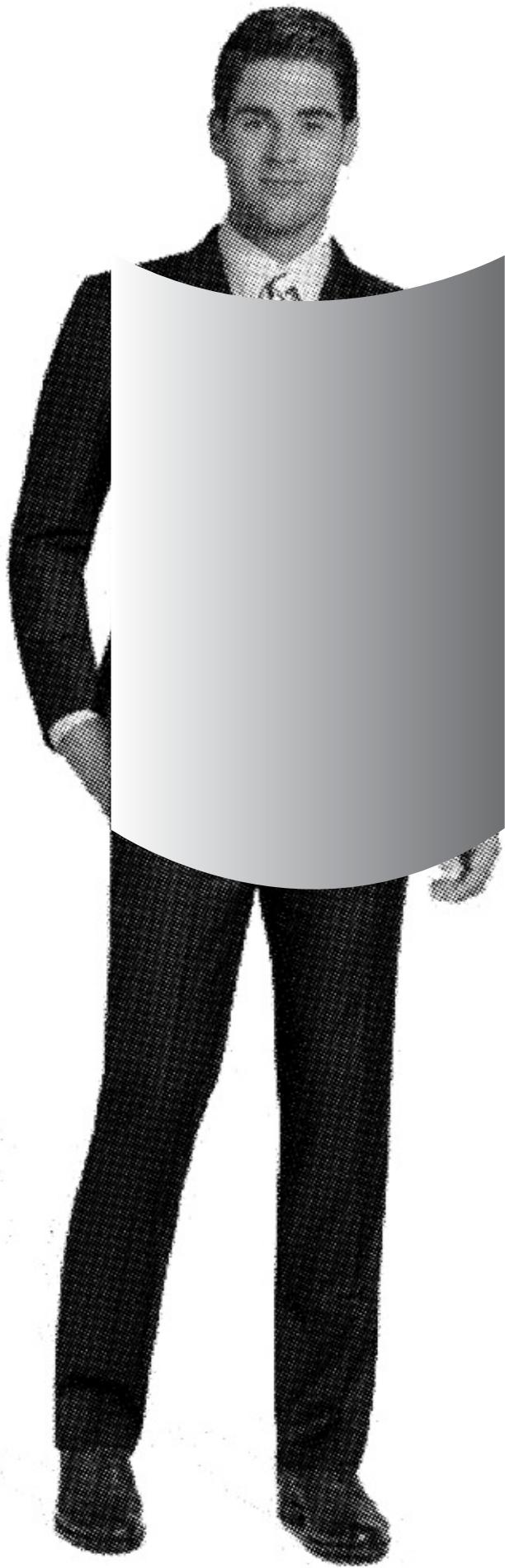
Lean on the plate from either your left  
or right side to give a casual appearance  
to your speech

Goetheanum to pledge for his ideas in front of the core leaders of the movement. That was to be his last attempt at seeking recognition and help within the Anthroposophic scene.

Soon enough he managed to get an appointment through his teachers at the Rudolf Steiner School in Basel. Fritz was determined this was going to be a breakthrough, and regretted not having done this earlier. Yet the success and glory Fritz had hoped for wasn't going to shine on him just yet. At the meeting he faced one of the founding members of the Anthroposophical Society, Alexander Brandenberg, who was not so thrilled about Fritz's plans. He expressed severe disappointment in his going to Germany behind the society's back and declared that they were not supportive of such a revolution Fritz had in mind. He was presented with the option of returning to the school to further shape his ideas and learn the Anthroposophic way, but he felt too embarrassed and betrayed and so declined the offer.

For four years he stayed at home day and night thinking and writing, spending his spare moments interacting with objects again. It was the exploring of things and their qualities that fed his intellectual work. His goal was to finalise his theories and work them into a form accessible to a wider public. If his ideas were too much ahead of their time on an institutional level, he was sure he would find support by reaching out directly to the people.

In 1948 Fritz decided he was ready to go public with his new way of living and learning. Before hitting the streets with his ravishing speech skills and a story polished sharper than the New Testament, Fritz decided to put together an essay that would contain all his ideas in an easily distributable form – a pamphlet. This couldn't have been easier for Fritz – he knew what he wanted to say and he knew how to say it.



Bend the plate inwards  
to indicate your mental power

## Printing

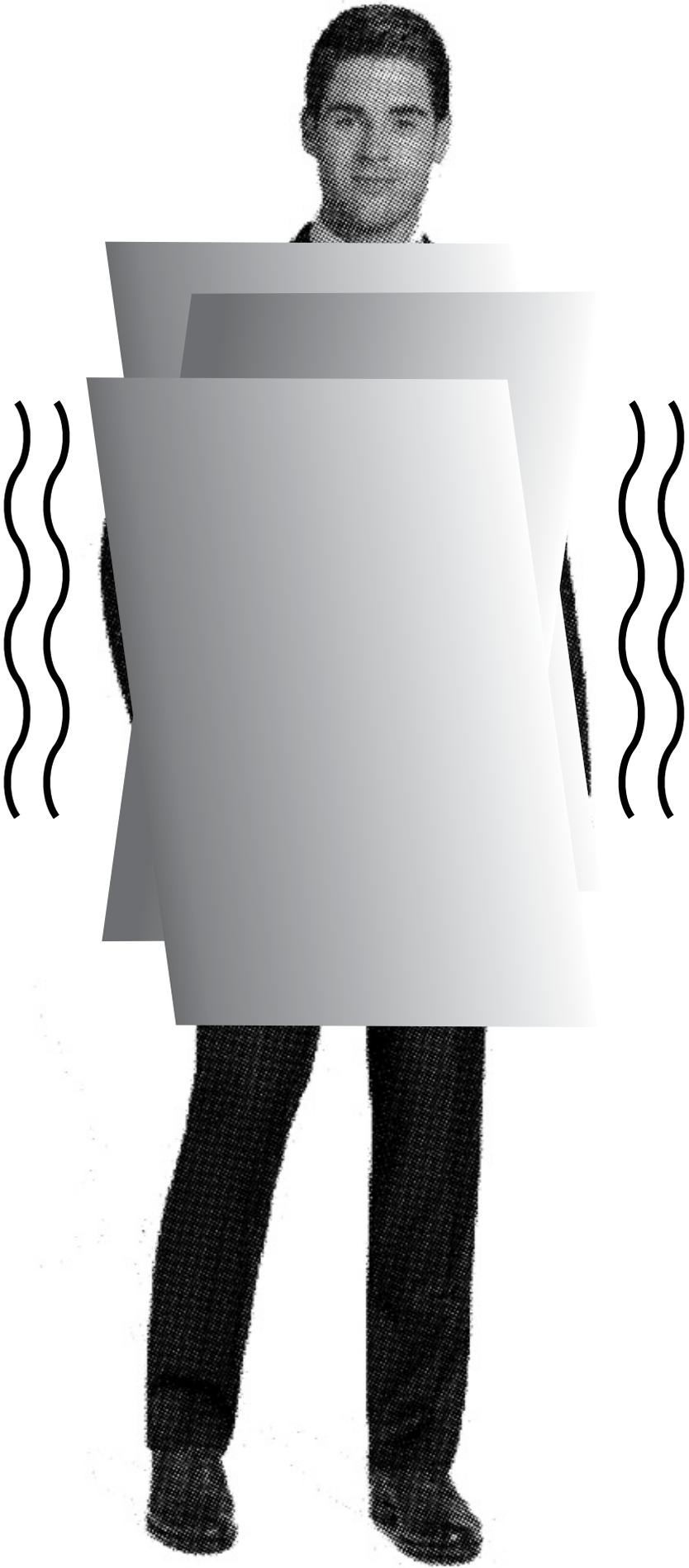
He had organised a local printer, living just down the street from his parents' house, a friend of his father's, to produce the pamphlets. One afternoon in late August, Fritz set his feet towards the printing house to pick up his fresh-off-the-press manifesto – his precious beliefs neatly summed up on just a few pages. Full of excitement, Fritz had no idea what news was about to be delivered to him.

He walked into the office and kindly greeted the printer. Fritz could immediately tell by his posture that he was agitated and defensive – not at all the friendly guy he had seen many times coming by their house when he was still a little boy. After a long pause he picked up an obscure-looking metal sheet, which later turned out to be the printing plate, and just sighed. With a slightly shaky voice he then announced to Fritz he had read the material on the plate and there's no way he can allow this to be printed; that he's merely a printer for local businesses and he can't be held responsible for the existence of such words.

Fritz, speechless and infuriated, in a fit of rage seized the plate from his hands and exited the building. He aimlessly wandered the streets of Basel, defeated for the third time in a row. This was the final straw – no one seemed to be in favour of his ideas, nobody even tried to understand.

He soon realised he was still carrying the plate in his arm and stopped to figure out what in fact it was. He hadn't noticed it contained the text he had worked on for so long. He read it once more and was as determined as ever this work could change the world. This filled him with even more rage and despair.

Suddenly a strange light shined on the plate, which created a sense of stillness in Fritz. At that moment the plate



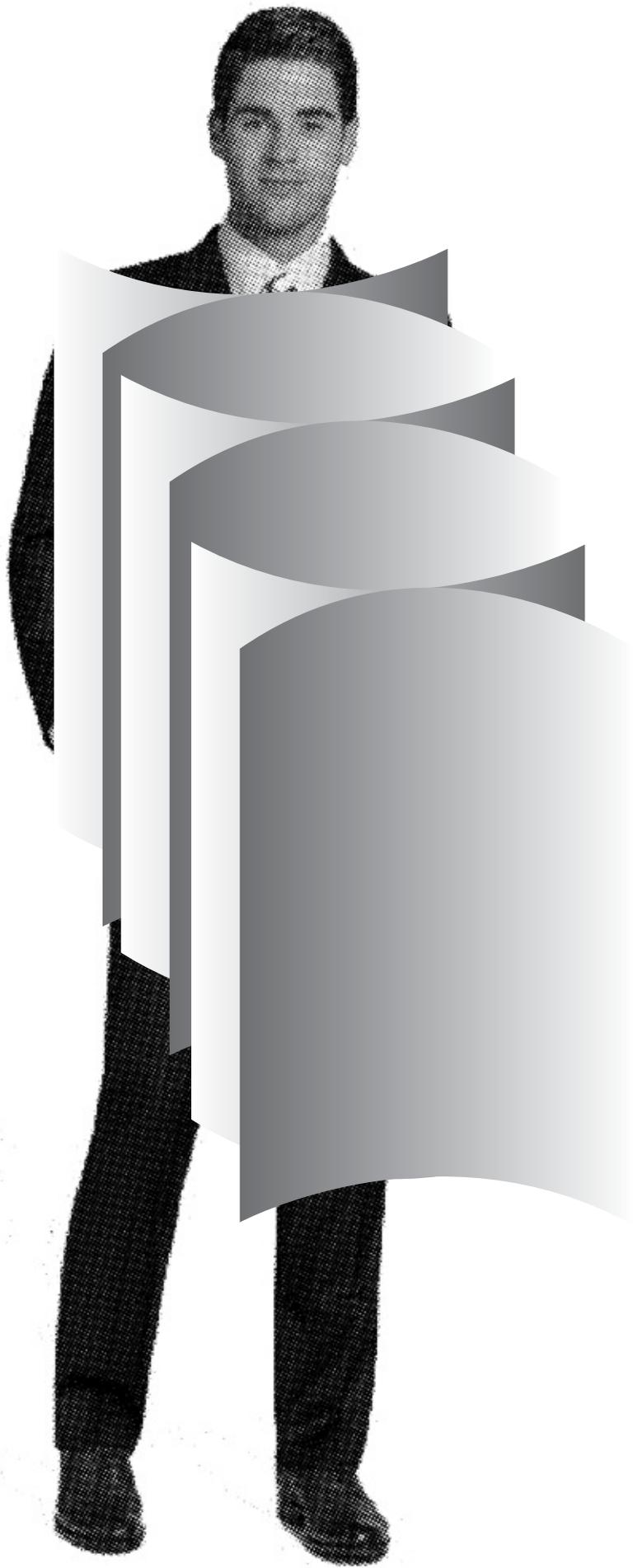
Wiggle the plate up and down  
at a slow pace to create  
a harmonious sound that will  
help to relax the audience

was in the centre of his consciousness – he was able to see it as he used to see objects when he was young. The plate appeared in front of him as a way out, as a solution. Fritz now knew how he was meant to continue – it wasn't over just yet. Not just yet.

### *Preaching*

The following day Fritz was back on the streets. This time with a clear purpose. He brought along the plate and started reading aloud from it. Performing his routine examination of the plate object the day before, he had discovered it attains various entrancing qualities which might come in handy persuading the people of his beliefs. First he merely held the plate tightly in his grip in front of him and cited the text from it, which he actually by now knew by heart. Doing that for a while, he soon realised that there's much more the plate has to offer. He began experimenting with different movements, holding the plate above his head, leaning on it, holding it at various angles. Followed the sound gestures: shaking the plate at different speeds, banging on it. This was the most excitement he had ever experienced during an object testing. After some rehearsing, Fritz was soon parading the streets of Basel with his freshly developed technique and new hope.

His act immediately caught the attention of passersby who stopped out of curiosity to figure out what this crazy guy was all about. Little did they know that the plate performance would instantly bring them into a strange trance, a mediation of sorts. Once they had stopped it wasn't easy to move on. The people that were already standing there, or following him, attracted more and more spectators. Even when Fritz stopped to take a little break or engage in conversation with his audience, the spell wasn't broken. Some people



Shake the plate back and forth to create  
a thunder-like roar to boost your statements  
and your listener's state of mind

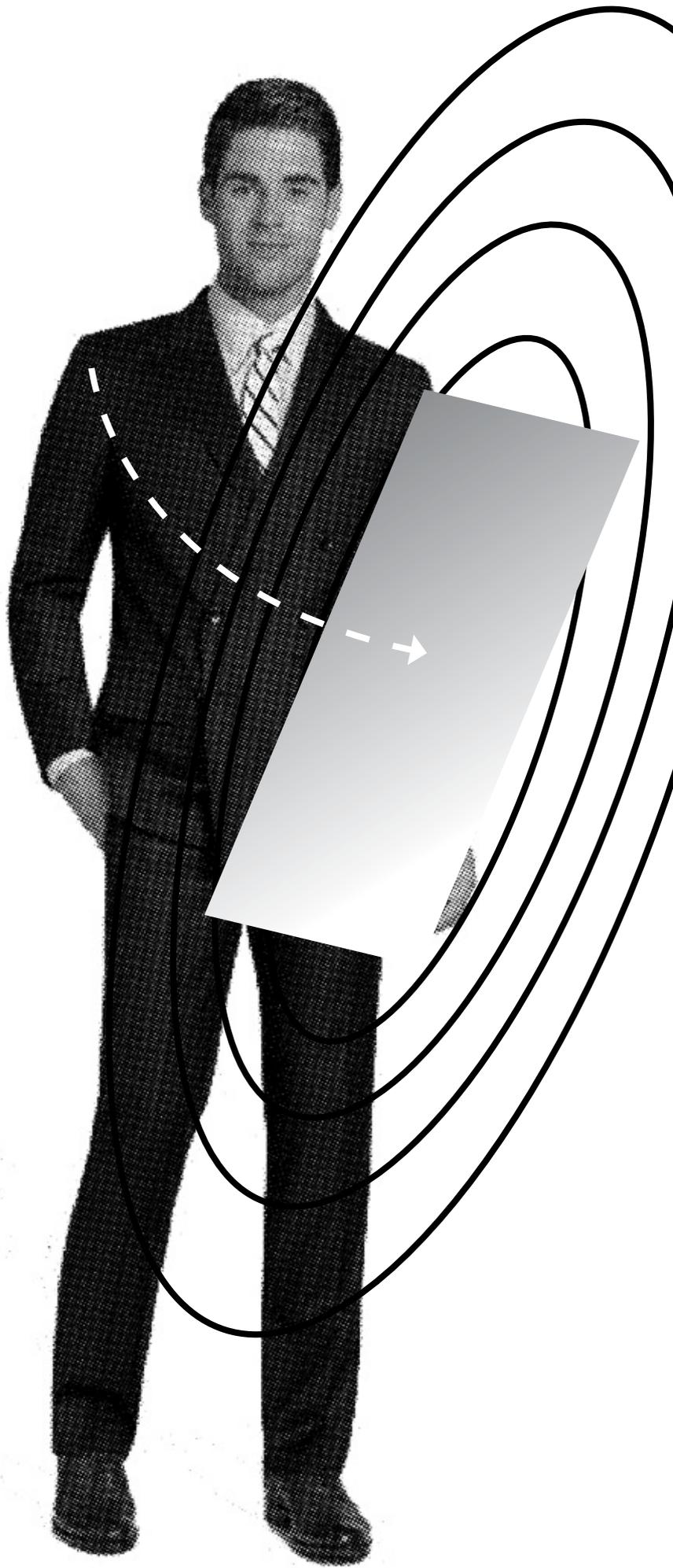
stayed for a whole evening and joined him again the following day. But of course it wasn't just the plate. Fritz's performance might have been mesmerising and incredibly entertaining but it was also his words that carried weight and opened up new worlds for whoever was ready to listen.

Stories of the man preaching with a metal plate spread fast to cities around Basel and soon the whole of Switzerland was curious to meet him and experience his performance. Even though the commotion dissolved fast, Fritz continued spreading his word with the plate-technique and soon enough he had followers all over the country who began calling themselves Rainerists. Not much time went by until the Rainer School was opened in the outskirts of Basel where Fritz and his supporters gathered to share and learn.

### Early retirement

At the age of thirty-six Fritz got married to a fellow Rainerist, Lena Rüegg, coincidentally bearing the same first name as Fritz's mother. By then he had thousands of followers who were spreading the spirit of the movement. Soon after getting married and having a healthy baby girl born into the family, Fritz decided he had fulfilled his dream and it was time for him to let the rest of the Rainerists carry on what he had started. He emigrated to Columbia, Ohio with his wife, daughter and a handful of followers who expressed a strong wish to live by his side and practice his ways of living.

Decades have gone by since anybody has heard anything of Fritz Rainer. What ever happened to Fritz Rainer?



Shake up the crowd  
with a powerful bang on the plate

In his mid-twenties Fritz Rainer, born 1925 in Basel, became a spiritual leader with a fast growing group of supporters, due mainly to his unusual means of deliverance. Unable to have his pamphlets printed because of their controversial content, Rainer began using printing plates as a means of communication with his followers.

The idea to use the printing plates suddenly struck him after a particularly disappointing visit to the printer during which the printer declared he could never print anything with such disruptive content. In a fit of rage, Rainer seized the actual plate and rushed off in confusion and despair. On the way, a solution dawned on him, a spiritual epiphany where the plate appeared in front of Rainer not as a tool in the process of reproduction but as reproduction itself.

He began rehearsing holding the plate tightly in his grip but soon discovered the plate allows the possibility to be moved around and played with. Using this obscure preaching method first on the streets and later for large audiences all over Switzerland, Rainer became well-known for his original and persuasive performances. He has now emigrated to Columbia, Ohio to spend the rest of his days with his wife and a handful of followers.

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