
The Psychoanalytic Movement

‘Healing through love’?: A unique dialogue in the history of psychoanalysis

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It is true that whenever a crisis broke out Freud invariably showed himself what he really was, a truly great man, who was always accessible and tolerant to new ideas, who was always willing to stop, think anew, even if it meant re-examining even his most basic concepts, in order to find a possibility for understanding what might be valuable in any new idea. It has never been asked whether something in Freud has or has not contributed to a critical increase of tension during the period preceding a crisis. Still less has any analyst bothered to find out what happened in the minds of those who came into conflict with Freud and what in their relationship to him and to psychoanalysis led to the exacerbation. We have been content to describe them as the villains of the piece ... Maybe Rank's case is less suitable for this examination but I am quite certain in Ferenczi's case one could follow the development which, prompted by the characters of the two protagonists, led to the tragic conflict...

(Letter from Michael Balint to Ernest Jones, 31 May 1957, Balint Archives, Geneva)

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and tragic enough. It is more fruitful not to try to reconcile their attitudes prematurely — that also would not do justice to the controversial character of the dialogue.

It was a dialogue, it was friendship; more, it was an ‘intimate sharing of life, feelings and interests’ (Fr., 11 January 1933). In the scientific field they constantly reported their ideas and projects. Their mutual influence continued beyond estrangement and death. Ferenczi's Clinical Diary (1985 [1932]), the product of ‘immersion in a kind of scientific fantasy and truth’ (Fre., 1 May 1932), may be read as a letter to Freud. A quarter of a century after Ferenczi's fragment of analysis with him, Freud was still concerned with the question of whether he, Freud, had behaved correctly (Freud, 1937). One of Freud's last notes, concerning ‘The splitting of the ego in the process of defence’ (1940b [1938]), in which he wrote that he did not know ‘whether what he wanted to say should be regarded as something long familiar and obvious or as something entirely new and puzzling’ (S.E. 23, p. 275), concerned a subject that had been central to Ferenczi's work in later years (Ferenczi, 1938 [1920-32] [308 in 309]; 1985 [1932], etc.).

Freud's influence on Ferenczi's work is clear. Letters (and even Ferenczi's Diary) clearly show to what extent he always wrote for Freud (cf. Fer., 23 May 1919, 15 May 1922, 30 January 1924), how he discussed content, timing and placing of each publication with Freud, and how closely bound up with this relationship his technical experiments were (see further). It is less well known that the ideas in his main work, Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality (Ferenczi, 1924 [268]), were the subject of intensive discussion between him and Freud long before this was published, and that there was even a plan to write a 'Lamarck-work' together (Fre., 2 January 1917).

Freud's way of using other people's ideas was variable. Although he took up other authors' ideas, he worked them over and digested them until they resurfaced as his own. 'I... tend strongly towards plagiarism' he wrote to Ferenczi (Fr., 8 February 1910). And thus there are many of Ferenczi's ideas and concepts which reappear in Freud's work, often after a long period of latency and integrated into his own ideas: thoughts about homosexuality, phylogenesis, trauma, transference and countertransference, ego-development, technique, parapsychology ...

In addition to the scientific, there was a complicated and deep-rooted personal relationship: Freud's plan for a marriage between his daughter Mathilde and Ferenczi; the journey to America, which they undertook together with Jung; the many joint holidays with concomitant pleasures and difficulties; Ferenczi's 'attempt of an analysis' (Fre., 16 November 1916) with Freud; Ferenczi's relationship to his future wife Frau Gizella and her daughter Elma in which Freud was involved in various ways, including his 'tranche' of analysis of Elma; Ferenczi's and Freud's relationships to other analysts, which also had their role in the history of conflict within psychoanalysis: to Jung, Groddeck, Abraham, Eitingon, Reich ...

Ferenczi visited one another: Ferenczi gave hospitality to Anna Freud in Hungary, supplied the Freud family with food and patients during and after the war; Freud kept Ferenczi informed about happenings in his family and the fate of his sons in the war. They wrote about cigars, flour, missing the morning shower, the political situation, mutual friends and acquaintances, Ferenczi's military service, the lack of fuel in postwar winters, financial problems and Freud's grandchildren. Months before their journeys they began to study Baedeker and timetables of train and boat.

There was also controversy, conflict, taking offence and misunderstandings. In 1910, during holidays together in Palermo, Ferenczi refused to allow Freud to dictate to him notes on the Schreber case, and for the rest of the journey neither was able to speak about this incident and its emotional importance. Freud criticized, both openly and covertly, Ferenczi's behaviour towards Gizella and Elma PáAlos. Later, he was annoyed that Ferenczi got 'involved so deeply' with Rank (Fre., 12 October 1924). He feared that his 'Paladin and secret Grand Vizir' wanted to take a 'step towards creating a new and oppositional analysis' (Fr., 13 December 1929) and imagined Ferenczi going forward 'in all sorts of directions' which seemed to him 'to lead to no worthwhile goal'. He could conceive of Ferenczi's 'maturing' only after finding 'a way to turn back' (ibid.). Freud criticized with biting irony

Ferenczi's 'technique of maternal tenderness' (Fr., 13 December 1931), and saw the latter's creative regression as a game with 'dream children' on a 'fantasy island' from which only violent means could tear him away (Fr., 12 May 1932). Lastly he expressed himself with considerable bitterness: 'In the next sentence you accuse yourself, and with this I can only agree. For two years you have deliberately turned away from me, and have apparently developed a personal enmity, which goes farther than could be expressed' (Fr., 2 October 1932).

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Ferenczi criticized Freud's failure to 'see through and to bring out the transference of negative feelings and fantasies' in his analysis and his neglect of the healing process (Fer., 17 January 1930). Ferenczi rejected the diagnosis of his immersion in therapeutic problems as a 'symptom' (Fer., 19 May 1932) and wrote of 'the depth of my shock' (Fer., 27 September 1932) after their last meeting, when they had disagreed whether Ferenczi should or might be allowed to give his planned lecture on 'Confusion of tongues between adults and the child' (Ferenczi, 1933 [294]) at the approaching conference in Wiesbaden, and at the end of which Freud did not even shake his hand in farewell.

Shortly afterwards Ferenczi, who was already showing signs of his fatal illness, made a note 'about shock' in which he said that 'perhaps even the organs which secure self-preservation, give up their function or reduce it to a minimum ...' (1938 [1920-32] [308 in 309], p. 253). Ferenczi expressed his criticism of Freud even more in his Clinical Diary than in his letters (Ferenczi, 1985; cf. also Foreword from J. Dupont). However, we also know that when Freud was shown Ferenczi's unpublished work after the latter's death, he expressed 'his admiration ... for the ideas which had hitherto been unknown to him' (M. Balint, in Ferenczi, 1985).

Would it not be presumptuous to reduce this relationship to pure 'transference'; or to give one or other of the protagonists all the 'blame' for their dialogue going off the rails? The controversy did not end with desertion and enmity, but nevertheless it could not be cleared up fully: 'The disagreements between us ... can wait ... it is more important to me that you regain your health,' wrote Freud on 2 April 1933. A few weeks later Ferenczi died.

The relationship between Freud and Ferenczi was one of friendship and of controversy — and psychoanalysis was always interwoven: psychoanalysis as theory, technique and movement but also as personal experience.

On their journey to America Freud, Ferenczi and Jung analysed one another. We know what a deep impression it made on Jung when Freud, at a certain point, refused to be analysed any further (Jung, 1961). We know about the complex relationship between Carl Gustav Jung, Sabina Spielrein and Freud (Carotenuto and Trombetta, 1980). Freud had given many of his disciples a short analysis, often for example while out walking (as with Eitingon) (Jones, 1955, p. 31). He even analysed his own daughter Anna ('Annert's analysis will be fine, other cases are not interesting'); in a letter dated [Fr.] 20 October 1918. On the other hand, Freud refused to analyse certain people, such as Tausk (Roazen, 1969), Federn (Roazen, 1971, p. 310), Reich (Roazen 1971, p. 493) or Otto Gross, against whose treatment 'my egoism, or perhaps I should say my self-defence mechanism, rebelled' (Freud and Jung, 1974, p. 157). Both Groddeck (Groddeck, 1974, 1974, p. 88) and Ferenczi (Fer., 26 February 1926 and 1 March 1926) offered to take him into analysis, but Freud refused. Ferenczi and Groddeck analysed one another (Groddeck, 1974, p. 82), Ferenczi analysed Jones (correspondence, passim), Freud Jones's common-law wife, Loe, and they corresponded about this. Ferenczi thought that Freud should analyse Jung (Fer., 20 January 1912) and vehemently contradicted Otto Rank who, during the controversy about him and his Trauma of Birth (1924), had expressed the opinion that it was an advantage for him not to have been analysed (Fer., 1 September 1924).

On 14 July 1911 Ferenczi wrote to Freud that he had taken Elma, the daughter of his mistress Gizella (Pálos by marriage), into analysis. Gizella had already been analysed by him too. In the course of her analysis Ferenczi falls in love with Elma Pálos, who enters 'victorious into [his] heart' (Fer., 3 December 1911). He begs Freud to take over the analysis, and despite his doubts Freud agrees. Later he keeps Ferenczi informed about the details of this treatment, and in particular whether and how Elma's love for Ferenczi will 'stand up to' the analysis. All of those concerned commit indiscretions: Ferenczi sends Freud copies of Elma's letters, in which she 'wants to know what you [Freud] have written to me about her ...' (Fer., 18 January 1912). Freud writes confidentially about Ferenczi to Frau Gizella (Fer., 17 December 1911) — and, of course, Gizella shows the letter to Ferenczi. In addition, Elma's father, to whom she has communicated details of the analysis, wants to intervene. Ferenczi visits Freud in Vienna in order to talk to him about Elma. This meeting is kept secret from Elma, who lives in Vienna. Although Elma wishes to continue her analysis, Freud breaks it off when, by his reckoning, it has reached 'the narcissistic current' (Fer., 13 March 1912). Back in Budapest, Elma returns to analysis with Ferenczi. By this means he hopes to achieve certainty about her feelings. He resists her 'arts of war (tenderness)' (Fer., 27 May 1912), and remains abstinent in a 'rather cruel way' (Fer., 18 July 1912, but still does not achieve clarity about his own or Elma's feelings. On the other hand 'poor Elma has no enjoyment at all ... (from the analysis)' (Fer., 26 July 1912). In the end Ferenczi abandons Elma's analysis. (Let us remark that, interestingly, in 'Psychoanalysis and telepathy' (1941 [1921], S.E. 18, pp. 191-2) Freud
reports a similar triangle in which a daughter was submitted to analysis because the man concerned could not decide between her and her mother.)

Elma marries Mr Laurvik, an American man. This marriage does not last long. Years later, in 1919, Frau Gizella and Sándor Ferenczi marry. On the way to the registry office they learn about the death of Géza Pálos, Gizella's divorced husband. Ferenczi suffered for years in the wake of this event, complained of depression and hypochondriacal symptoms, and had great difficulty in regaining his balance. It was characteristic of his temperament that he should throw himself unreservedly and without any ‘insurance’ into the therapeutic situation, and that he should do so little to draw a clear and protective line between his professional and private lives. Not only Ferenczi the analyst but the whole man was involved in this relationship, and he went to the outer limits with a degree of boldness or courage that was his strength and also — in this episode — his weakness.

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We see Freud pulled backwards and forwards between deep sympathy for Ferenczi's and Gizella Pálos' fate, a sympathy that drove him to intervene, and doubts about the effect of such an intervention. He was ‘worried about linking the fate of our friendship to something different and unpredictable’ (Fr., 21 April 1912), and he wrote of ‘the danger of personal estrangement caused by analysis’ (Fr., 4 May 1913). He saw the danger more clearly than Ferenczi; nevertheless he analysed Elma, and later Ferenczi too. On one occasion he described himself as an ‘emotional donkey whom ... even gray hair does not prevent from making a fool of himself’ (Fr., 23 January 1912) and on another as ‘hard hearted’ — albeit ‘from sympathy and softness’ (Freud to Frau Gizella, 17 December 1911).

In other relationships with followers and patients Freud varied between an ‘emotional’ and a ‘hard hearted’ approach, between a type of relationship that he called ‘unpronounced’ transference (1914, S.E. 12, p. 151), where he allowed considerable closeness — ‘because I like them’ (Fr., 6 October 1910) — gave presents and invited them to meals (Haynal, 1987, p. 7), which he scarcely analysed, if at all, and another type in which he ‘tended towards intolerance’ towards ‘neurotics’ (Fr., 20 January 1930) in which he could keep his distance, ‘frustrate their tricks’ (Fr., 20 July 1912), and show considerable ‘cooling off’ in the face of their transference wishes (Fr., 24 March 1912). His position was a difficult one. Many were disappointed not to find in him that ‘psychoanalytic superman’ (Fr., 6 October 1910) that they had ‘constructed’ (ibid.), and whatever he did there was criticism. For Freud the unverbalized area had a great deal to do with a saying of Vischer's that he liked to quote: ‘As to morals, that goes without saying’ (Freud, 1905a, S.E. 7, p. 267). He could not and would not take up an analytic stance towards people for whom morals were not self-evident but passed judgement on them — and who shall deny him the right? — in accordance with the morality that was self-evident to him as man, doctor, professor, father of a family and founder and leader of a new movement in the Vienna of his time. Thus he said, for example, that Stekel ‘is absolutely incorrigible, an offense to all good taste’ (Freud and Jung, 1974, p. 418), and there were things

that a ‘gentleman’ should not do, even unconsciously (Jones, 1955, p. 145), as Freud remarks about Jung when the latter gave Jones an incorrect date for a meeting (two slightly different versions in Jones, 1959, p. 221, and Jones, 1955, p. 145).

Freud’s followers and patients found themselves in a dilemma when, on the one hand, he did not allow certain aspects of his role to be discussed, and, on the other, indicated that the partner should ‘tear himself out of his infantile role’ (Fr., 2 October 1910).

This was Elma's dilemma and also Ferenczi's. The latter could not accept a relationship being divided into a verbalized and an unverbalized — because self-evident — part. According to him, everything can and should be verbalized between analytically trained people: ‘Only think what that would mean, if one could speak the truth to everyone: to one's father, one's teacher, one's neighbour and even the king' (Fr., 5 February 1910). And analysis seemed to Ferenczi to be the means by which even the hidden and unutterable could be brought to light and put into words.

Puzzled and uncertain in the face of the complications produced by his involvement, Sándor Ferenczi resorted over and again to analysis as a tool. He started with the hope of having here an objective method of clarifying human relationships. Thus he thought that every fully analysed analyst must inevitably come to the same conclusions ... and will consequently adopt the same technical and theoretical method' for all specified patient (Ferenczi, 1928 [283], p. 89). He compared the process with chemical reactions 'in a test-tube' (Fr., 21 April 1909). Neither in Elma's analysis, however, nor in Ferenczi's with Freud could psychoanalysis produce that measure of chemically pure emotion, untouched by conflict. On the contrary, the relationship did not become simpler, but more difficult.
Precisely during this episode Ferenczi had to realize painfully, both as analyst and as analysand, that psychoanalysis is not an instrument which can function independently of the person using it. Very probably these events played a major part in making Ferenczi recognize the analyst's attitude as a variable in the therapeutic equation, and therefore placing this at the centre of his interest. As he suffered from not being able to distinguish between 'transference'.

and ‘real’ feelings in this web of relationships, and from the divisions between the roles of analyst, analysand, lover, friend and disciple, in the same way he involved himself with his whole personality in this relationship and was also able to see with extreme clarity how patients suffered under the 'hypocrisy' (Ferenczi, 1933 [294], pp. 158-9) of phenomena of intended 'abstinence' on the part of the analyst.

A consistent line can be followed from these experiences to his technical experiments, to active therapy and relaxation methods, and further to mutual analysis and to his theoretical concept of the 'Confusion of tongues between adults and the child' (Ferenczi, 1933 [294]), the role of adults and the psychological atmosphere during development and as a result of trauma.

III

It is tempting to pass judgement on Ferenczi's and Freud's estrangement, their use and misuse of psychoanalysis, their indiscretions and acting out, from a supposedly superior position. As if presentday psychoanalysts with all their training, their personal analysis and supervision, and with all the theoretical and technical equipment that have since been provided, find it any easier to achieve optimal separation or optimal fusion between their professional and private lives. It happens that they marry their patients, a few finish by sleeping with them (Fischer, 1977; Chertok, 1983) and how much must be going on between parent- and child-generations of analysts that can never be verbalized and worked through.

Analysis is, in Freud's words: 'actually a healing through love' ('eigentlich eine Heilung durch Liebe') (Freud and Jung, 1974, p. 12; our translation from Briefwechsel, p. 13, and our italics).3 Probably for Freud the term love means transference love, and for Ferenczi (also) countertransference.4 In choosing this quotation from Freud for the title of this paper we intended to play on this double meaning.

Anyhow, if Freud or Ferenczi is right, the attempt to work with pictures of emotions is bound to fail, because 'it is impossible to destroy anyone in absentia or in effigie' (Freud, 1912, S.E. 12, p. 108). Working with effigies is behaving 'like the less than potent man who said to his young wife after the first coitus on their wedding night: now you know what it is like: all the rest is just repetition' (Er., 20 January 1930).

Why do we tend to think that technique then was not so developed as it is today — as if today we had access to a definite and undoubted technique, and only the first generation of analysts was in a phase of 'experimentation', to adopt Ferenczi's expression? In fact one can just as well say that analysts then were aware that all this is always a matter of experimentation, and that from the moment when we spoke of 'classical' technique, we entered a phase of illusions: the illusion that there could be a technique which one needed only to learn and apply 'correctly' and about which even textbooks could be written!

We have reached the year 1932, one year before Ferenczi's sixtieth birthday. He was thirty-five when he got to know Freud; a bare quarter of a century of intense friendship lay between, decades of the painful and satisfying work of an analyst who wanted to go as far as possible with the means at his disposal, who tried to understand himself and his 'analysands' (a term Ferenczi created, 1915 [181 in 309], p. 81) with a passion that many — including Freud — considered exaggerated, because, in his desire to help, it drove him to the very bounds of possibility.

Ferenczi is no longer willing to judge himself in the mirror of his master's approval or disapproval, and decides to take his enquiries as far as possible in the form of a clinical diary. This diary, covering nine months (from 7 January to 2 October 1932) is certainly a step towards self-assertion and an attempt to understand all the depths of an analyst's position, without recourse to the dialogue and interaction of correspondence. Nevertheless the transference figure of Freud, the imagined addresssee of this diary, can be clearly discerned.

When an analyst considers the whole of his life and work hitherto with such depth of self-enquiry, this cannot be defined by the alternatives of orthodoxy or heterodoxy, whatever the definitions of such terms may be. The problem is stated on the first page: 'the analyst's lack of feeling'. We are in the midst of the subject — the
analyst’s ‘real countertransference’, the need to know more about it and the idea, almost like a caricature, of ‘mutual’ analysis. Ferenczi himself describes the connection:

Mutual analysis will also be less terribly demanding and allow more friendliness and help on the patient's part, instead of the unremittingly all-too-good, selfless demeanor, behind which exhaustion, unpleasure, even murderous intentions are hidden. (Ferenczi, 1985, p. 16, in part our translation)

In the following passage Ferenczi relates this atmosphere to his ideas about the body and trauma: ‘The end result of the analysis of transference and countertransference may be the establishment of a kind, dispassionate atmosphere, such as may well have existed before the trauma’ (ibid. p. 27, in part our translation). In mutual analysis one finds ‘that common ground’ that is present ‘in every case of infantile trauma. And is the discovery or perception of this the condition for understanding and for the overflow of healing compassion?’ (ibid. p. 15, in part our translation).

Ferenczi’s concept of trauma is complementary to that of Freud. Whereas Freud concentrated on discovering the intrapsychic happenings, Ferenczi centred on the individual’s relationship to the reality around him, and investigated the different ways in which the organism responds to the changing environment — be it in phylogenetic speculation in Thalassa (1924 [268]) or in his questions about the relationships between adult and child, analyst and analysand.

Ferenczi approached the traumatic event and its working through in therapy from the point of view of man as primarily a social being (Ferenczi and Groddeck, 1982, p. 45, letter from Ferenczi to Groddeck of 11 October 1922). Before trauma there was an atmosphere of trust between the individual (the child) and her or his social surroundings (the adults) (first phase), which is destroyed by an extreme rise in tension in the relationship (second phase). The child seeks help from precisely that person or those persons who were responsible for this rise in the emotional temperature of the relationship in the first place. If this help is not forthcoming (third phase), there will be a split within the personality, giving rise to one part which suffers under this intolerable situation and another which observes unemotionally and as from a distance and offers comfort, in fact tries to take over the assistance to ego functions that should have been carried out by the outer world. The result is a permanently disturbed relationship to social reality. The ego, the ‘outer layer’ (Freud, 1940a, S.E. 23, p. 145) of the psychic organization, has withdrawn so far ‘within’ that it can no longer assume its function of harmonious interchange.

In therapy Ferenczi tried to revive the traumatic sequence and find a new resolution, by offering what had previously not been offered: a trustful atmosphere, which was called by Balint later ‘an innocent, unconditional one’ (Balint, 1933, p. 165). This, he hoped, would enable the analysand to heal the split in his personality. On the analyst’s part this requires a particular kind of listening and sensibility:

If the patient notices that I feel real compassion for her, and that I am eagerly determined to search for the causes of her suffering, she then suddenly not only becomes capable of giving a dramatic account of the events, but also can talk to me about them. The congenial atmosphere thus enables her to project the trauma into the past and communicate them as memories. A contrast to the environment surrounding the traumatizing situation — that is, sympathy, trust — mutual trust — must first be created before a new footing can be established: memory instead of repetition. Free association by itself, without these new foundations for an atmosphere of trust, will thus bring no real healing. The doctor must really be involved in the case, heart and soul, or honestly admit it when he is not, in total contrast with the behaviour of adults toward children. (Ferenczi, 1985, p. 169, our italics)

The involvement of the analyst, the ‘countertransference’, becomes an important tool, the analyst’s weaknesses and errors ‘fortunate sins’ (Augustinus):

One could almost say that the more weaknesses an analyst has, which lead to greater or lesser mistakes and errors but which are then uncovered and treated in the course of mutual analysis, the more likely the analysis is to rest on profound and realistic foundations. (Ferenczi, 1985, p. 15)

Thus the analyst’s ‘strength’ is defined through his way of dealing with his ‘weakness’. The light thrown on this countertransference has advantages for the analyst as well: ‘In one case the communication of the content of my own
psyche developed into a form of mutual analysis, from which I, the analyst, derived considerable benefit (p. 3).

However, Ferenczi quickly recognized the ‘dilemma’ of mutual analysis (p. 28), the dangers and limitations which restrict its use. Mutual analysis can be carried out ‘only to the extent that a) the patient’s needs require it or b) the patient is capable of it in the given situation’ (p. 34). And lastly: ‘mutual analysis: only a last resort’ (p. 115).

Ferenczi sees the end of an analysis as a vision … which would be quite similar to the parting of two happy companions who after years of hard work together have become friends, but who must realize without any tragic scenes that life does not consist solely of school friendships, and that each must go on developing according to his own plans for the future. This is how the happy outcome of the parent-child relationship might be imagined. (p. 37)

‘Just as Freud’s strength lies in firmness of education, so mine lies in the depth of the relaxation technique’ (p. 62).

Ferenczi’s methods led him to regard Freud’s attitude — despite the latter’s recognition of emotion in the transference — as intellectual and impersonal (p. 92) and to stress the importance of the analyst’s own analysis. He envisaged it thus: ‘Thoroughgoing analysis by a stranger, without any obligation, would be better. The best analyst is a patient who has been cured. Otherwise the student must first be made ill, then cured and made aware’ (p. 115). About supervision: ‘Strictly supervised by the patients! No attempts [should be made] to defend oneself’ (ibid.). Not ‘using analysands, instead of letting them develop’ (p. 183, in English in the original).

Looking back, Ferenczi describes the way he has come. Freud had told him that patients were ‘riffraff’ (Gesindel) and psychoanalysis was of no value as therapy:

This was the point where I refused to follow him. Against his will I began to deal openly with questions of technique. I refused to abuse the patients’ trust in this way, and neither did I share his idea that therapy was worthless. I believed rather that therapy was good, but we perhaps were still deficient, and began to look for our errors. (p. 186)

He describes his ‘errors’, namely following Rank ‘too far’, ‘because he dazzled me with his new insight on one point (transference situation)’ (ibid.), his ‘exaggeration’ in relaxation technique, and he goes on to say:

In the wake of these two defeats, I am working humanely and naturally, with benevolence, and free from personal prejudices, on the acquisition of knowledge that will allow me to help. (ibid.)

This was his programme. The concepts he derived from such methods are remarkable. His notes on the sacrifice of women’s interests read like a radical feminist critique:

One example: the castration theory of femininity. F[r[eu]d] thinks that the clitoris develops and functions earlier than the vagina, that is, girls are born with the feeling that they have a penis, and only later do they learn to renounce both this and the mother and to accept vaginal and uterine femininity. Thus he neglects the alternative possibility that instinctual heterosexual orientation (perhaps only in fantasy) is highly developed quite early on, and that masculinity only takes its place for traumatic reasons (primal scene), as a hysterical symptom.

The author may have a personal aversion to spontaneous female-orientated sexuality in women: idealization of the mother. He recoils from the task of having a sexually demanding mother, and having to satisfy her. At some point his mother’s passionate nature may have presented him with such a task. (The primal scene may have rendered him relatively impotent.)

Castration of the father, the potent one, as a reaction to the humiliation he experienced, led to the construction of a theory in which the father castrates the son, and, moreover, is then revered by the son as a god. In his conduct F[r[eu]d] plays only the role of the castrating god, he wants to ignore the traumatic moment of his own castration in childhood; he is the only one who does not have to be analyzed. (Ferencz, 1985, p. 188, italics in the original)

Hard, for many perhaps shocking words, but perhaps also rousing ones and a plea for taking up a personal inner psychoanalytic attitude instead of repeating irremovable statements of ‘truths’ or of unassailable dogma in an idealizing-
projective position, which certainly cannot secure the future of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis has to have an attitude of re-questioning, constantly and repeatedly — or it will be in danger of losing its functions and of ceasing to exist as such.

Ferenczi was such an enquiring ‘restless spirit’ (Ferenczi, 1931, p. 126) as he called himself. He wouldn’t have claimed to have ‘resolved’ the problems or to have offered an answer to the questions he raised. His last work — the Diary (Ferenczi, 1985) — is a return to psychoanalysis strictu sensu: to self-exploration. His ‘experimentations’, as he called them, opened an innovative path — with many turnbacks and without definitive conclusions. Even he wouldn’t have advocated ‘mutual analysis’ (Ferenczi, 1985, pp. 28, 34, 115) for each of his patients and he saw clearly the shortcomings of this method, as already mentioned. But the direction he took has proved fruitful. In a perhaps simplistic manner we may state that, whereas Freud concentrated on theory, Ferenczi’s great love was expansion of technique and psychoanalytic practice. Freud tended to see the patient as an object of rational study, yielding new insights for his model of the mind, whereas Ferenczi considered his analysand as a suffering person interacting with, and affecting, the analyst. He explored affective communication in psychoanalysis. Freud, with genius, constructed a ‘one-person psychology’. Ferenczi, with intuition, opened up the whole field of ‘two-person psychology’. He developed the ‘object-related’ method with high levels of transference and countertransference work, interactive ‘empathy’ (Einfühlung = ‘attunement’) and the use of regression. Beginning with his interest in countertransference, the spotlight moved more and more on to the analyst as a whole person. Every analyst who considers analysis as an interaction, implying a high degree of personal involvement and explicit awareness of it, is heir to the pioneering work of Sándor Ferenczi. Recognizing our intellectual heritage can sensitize us to important problems of psychoanalytic practice and their reflection (or absence of it) in our theoretical framework.

Various factors led to the historical fact that this pioneer’s work and the subsequent discussion of greatest importance for psychoanalysis fell into oblivion. These factors may in part be related to Freud, his old age and his personal limitations but probably owe more to the relationships among analysts and their fears of and resistances to re-questioning or even giving up positions which they had thought were sure and safe. As Balint states: ‘the disagreement between Freud and Ferenczi acted as a trauma on the analytical world’ (Balint, 1968, p. 152), and it promoted a silence that suppressed all these controversial issues as disturbing and ‘dangerous’. After Ferenczi’s death, analysts, impressed by the fact that even such an intimate friendship could be heavily disturbed by these problems, became extremely circumspect in their discussions of technique, even though all admitted subsequently that the analysis of transference was a central issue. But problems of regression and, above all, of countertransference seemed to disappear from discussions — until Alice and Michael Balint published their article on this latter subject in 1939 (Balint and Balint, 1939). It was Michael Balint, Ferenczi’s literary executor, who brought the awareness of this problem to the British Middle Group of independent spirit (Kohon, 1986) where Donald Winnicott (1949), Paula Heimann (1950) and subsequently many others took it up.

It seems essential that our recognized history should be based on the actual facts that gave this story its form. This could help analysts to free themselves from a certain sectarianism, from the unanalysed influence of local ‘sorcerers’ encountered during their training. It could restore a historical perspective to the remarkable adventure of investigating inner life, that extraordinary undertaking in this century, which was started by a genius and continued by outstanding people, one of whom was distinguished not only by great charm and generosity but also by intellectual courage, independence and unknown honesty: Dr Sándor Ferenczi.
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Notes

The (hitherto unpublished) letters from Freud to Ferenczi are designated by 'Fr.', those from Ferenczi to Freud by 'Fer.'.

In fact Ferenczi has written: 'more courage and more open speech on my side ... would have been better' (Fer., 27 September 1932).

A similar idea — 'our cures are cures of love' — can also be found (in another context) in the Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, where Freud explains how much the 'power' of the cure is in the (transference-) love: 'the patient is compelled to give up his resistances to please us' (Nunberg and Federn, 1962, p. 101 [discussion at the scientific meeting of 30 January 1907]).

A late 'dissident' pupil of Ferenczi's, Leopold Szondi in Zurich, spoke often about the therapis as a 'Seelenspender', a 'donor of soul' (a word constructed on the model of Blutspender, a donor of blood).

References


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