



Introduction

FIRST FLORENCE FERENCZI SPECIAL ISSUE

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The historic Convitto della Calza in Florence provided the venue for the 13th International Ferenczi Conference, *Ferenczi in Our Time and a Renaissance of Psychoanalysis*.

For four days in May 2018, it became a forum for members of the International Sándor Ferenczi Network to present their clinical and academic research to a diverse audience of psychoanalysts, psychologists, therapists, psycho-historians, academics, and psychoanalytic trainees. Held every three years, the gathering provides a thinking and debating space for those interested in mining the treasure trove of important ideas that Sándor Ferenczi contributed to the early days of the psychoanalytic movement, and which have proven to be harbingers of contemporary psychoanalytic discourse. Seeds of ideas that he planted in the early part of the 20th Century, had sprouted at the turn of the 21st Century, have borne fruit, and now provide contemporary analysts with much food for thought.

Ferenczi focused on the individual's relatedness to the external world, and how the environment impacted self-development. One of his first papers, *Introjection and Transference* (1909), outlined how the ego (read *self*), expands by taking external objects into its internal space to create an internal landscape marked by the vicissitudes of relations with others. One of his final papers, *The Confusion of Tongues Between Adults and the Child* (1933),

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outlines how interpersonal trauma impacts the tender ego of the developing child. Fragmented and atomized ego, identification with the aggressor, wise baby, alien transplants, forced intromission into the ego, the death instinct in the unwelcome child, and superego as a foreign body, were some of the unique concepts he proposed in understanding how the tender self was impacted by environmental trauma. Active therapy, elasticity, relaxation of technique, analysis of the child in the adult, and mutual analysis were technical approaches he recommended in working with individuals damaged by severe trauma, whether physical, sexual, or emotional in nature.

Of the more than 80 papers presented, the AJP editors have chosen those that are representative of the type of discussions started in the meeting rooms and spilled out into the sixteenth century arcades and courtyard, where many of the above themes were debated. The conference provided the container for a creative space used by the participants to digest the contents in discussion with each other. It also provided the opportunity to connect with others, old and new acquaintances, taking up the threads of discussions started earlier, or adding new threads to a tapestry that keeps growing with each successive triennial event.

The editors wish to share with the reader the richness of these discussions which we experienced in so brief an encounter, but which will be memorable for a much longer time.

Haynal (2018) provides the audience with a brilliant and profound reflection on the centrality of mutuality in the analytic project: "Within the analytic cure, the notion of transference and countertransference implies a game of mutual exchange. This exchange constantly modifies the elements, so the two contributors realize that they have, little by little, constructed a third precious object which will leave internal traces..." in the other.

Haynal explores the different manifestations of mutuality in the analytic field: introjective attention, mutual introjects, mutual construction, malleable flexibility, mutualism, and intersubjectivity. His paper leaves the reader with a solid definition of the analytic field as mutually co-created space where vital and authentic mutual exchanges have a healing impact on the analysand, while leaving traces of a shared profound experience in the analyst. Haynal ends the paper with: "This unconscious and affective experience, the intersubjective, remains a gift for both partners" (2018). Haynal reminds us of the privileged position granted the analyst in joining with the analysand in their inward journey.

But those who have chosen to go on an analytic journey may consider their experience to be anything but privileged. Along the way, various phantoms of past traumas return to haunt once more. Malignant regressions, terrorism of suffering, the experience of deadness, feeling unwanted, being the torturer or the victim, wishing for death, being persecuted by alien transplants, forceful

submission to the will of another, and atomization of the self are some of the experiences that may be encountered by the analytic couple on this journey. Ferenczi has left us his legacy of insights into such challenging experiences from his work with severely traumatized and regressed patients. The path taken for this journey is an intersubjective one that examines the real-life drama of the analytic field lived out by two people in a room.

Haynal's paper on mutuality is a fitting introduction to this voyage into the darker reaches of the mind. The intersubjective position of the analyst leads into the dark underworld of phantoms and alien transplants in the psyche of the other. Like Orpheus, who charmed the gods with his music before being allowed to enter the Underworld in search of Euridyce, the analyst soothes the analysand with his attunement to their analytic affective experience, which allows them to navigate the terrifying underworld together and, hopefully, return together to the light of the external world.

What follows is a brief sketch of papers by authors who have taken the intersubjective path in their work with clients and recount what they have learned in their inward journeys.

Frankel (2018) explores Ferenczi's shift to mutuality in his later writings (*Clinical Diary*, 1932; *Confusion of Tongues*, 1933). Frustrated by what she described as Ferenczi's sadism and misogyny, Elizabeth Severn insisted that his negative transference was the cause of impasse in her analysis. She suggested that they switch roles and that she become the analyst, in order to gain insight into the unconscious underpinnings of his resistance in the analysis. Ferenczi, fearing that the analysis would end in failure, finally acceded to her wishes, acknowledging that his hiding behind the veil of standard technique was causing her to be re-traumatized by her new persecutor: Ferenczi. After several months of analysis by Severn, Ferenczi gained insight into his unconscious, misogynist perspective. In fact he hated Severn who represented his aloof emotionally distant mother. He felt that Severn, like his mother, wanted to control his mind and have him submit to her bidding. Subsequent to this realization, the analysis, became more authentic and vital. This radical approach had not been fatal for the analysis but in fact caused it to progress. Ferenczi cautioned that this avenue should only be considered as a last resort in a failing analysis. He worried that the patient being privy to personal self-disclosures might become problematic for the analysis in the long run. Frankel is careful to distinguish between self-disclosure and self-analysis, suggesting that Ferenczi's experiment with mutual analysis was meant to uncover the analyst's countertransference and further the progression of the analysis. This is not an uncommon recommendation in stalled analyses: the analyst should analyze his/her countertransference (CT). But having the analysand analyze the analyst's CT was, and still is considered a radical departure from the usual frame of the

analytic situation. Nevertheless, self-analysis of countertransference pointed out by the analysand can lead the analyst to have insight into their own unconscious conflicts contributing to inertia in the analysis.

After defining the essential distinction between self-analysis and self-disclosure, Frankel points out the hazards of the latter. Patients struggling with a malignant regression, can elicit or even demand self-disclosure from the analyst, but once satisfied, their thirst for further relaxation of abstinence and neutrality may intensify and become a black hole that sucks up all the energy in the analytic situation. An innocent and apparently innocuous request for self-disclosure can end up triggering a voracious appetite in the analysand demanding more gratification, depleting the analyst and derailing the analysis. In this type of situation, reinforcing boundaries and focusing on understanding the need for self-disclosure, instead of gratifying the demand, may restore the analytic work of the couple.

Judy Eekhoff explores the terrorism of suffering in the analysis of a client who introjected a “pain mother”. A developing child with a fragile ego needs a mother to help him/her process overwhelming perceptual and affective experiences. When the mother is emotionally compromised and suffering psychic pain, the child is unable to contain and symbolize its own distress but introjects a pain mother in an attempt to find an internal mother in a cohesive self-object experience. The child identifies with the suffering mother’s pain but there is no gap between mother and child for representations to form. “What is internalized is not an object representation but the thing in itself or the concrete experience of pain” (Eekhoff, 2018). Since representation is foreclosed, the experience can only manifest as a bodily eruption. In the analysis, Eekhoff shares this experience with her client. She paraphrases Ferenczi: “For pain to be transformed, two people must experience it together.” Traumatized children have registered the suffering and terror in a primal manner, but a reckoning occurs in adulthood, when they are revisited by these phantoms from the past and are once again terrorized by suffering. When joined with their analyst in this primitive place, she also suffers the pain concretely. Eekhoff toiled away at the analysis suffering various physical maladies and dreading the next assignation. Relief from her torment came with the realization and verbalization of the communication of her analysand’s own reckoning with childhood trauma and mimicking of her pain mother which Eekhoff had become attuned to. Working through the subsequent constructions of her early childhood experience with her pain mother was accompanied by emotional abreaction and physical distress but emerging from the ashes of the immolation of the pain mother was a “living three-dimensional woman with thoughts and feelings of her own” (Eekhoff, 2018).

Burton Seitler (2018) draws the reader into the real-life drama of the consulting room with a patient who demanded of Seitler a reason why he should not kill himself. In compelling and at times riveting prose, Seitler paints a picture of an analyst struggling to connect with an analysand suspicious of anyone who tried to reach out to him. With the patience of Job, Seitler wrestled with Benedict's demons to the point of madness himself. A sensitive appreciation of how to respond to Benedict's emotional storms and paranoia was essential in containing madness in both analysand and analyst. Once Seitler survived Benedict's attacks and gained his confidence, they were able to explore the scars and wounds of his inner landscape. Introjecting mother's shaming and derisive voice became an alien transplant forced into him and which manifested as demons tormenting him. He fantasized about suicide as a way of ridding himself of the demons, and in a phoenix-like rebirth, start life anew without his tormentors. Seitler, in accompanying Benedict into the dark places in his inner world, and surviving the experience, was able to lead him out into the light, into a world where he no longer had to kill himself to start anew.

Veronica Csillag weaves Winnicott's primary maternal preoccupation, Green's dead mother, and Ferenczi's unwelcome child together as a preamble leading into a case discussion where she struggled with each manifestation in her countertransference. In the afterwardness of the premature termination, Csillag (2018) frankly discusses the manner in which she contributed to the termination. She chastises herself for having lost her analytic stance in her enactment within a session that ultimately led to a premature termination. However, in a more compassionate interpretation of the events that led to termination, she later opines that her response was an outcome of the analytic field with contributions from both participants.

Such frank discussions of the therapeutic process are all too rare in the literature and a valuable mode of self-reflection that informs clinicians about their practice and blind spots to be aware of. Research engendered by such cases is an important mode of learning. Csillag reviews Bion, Ferenczi, Civitarese, Ogden among others, in searching herself for the underpinnings of her attitude that contributed to the outcome. Such genuine self-disclosure and self-analysis is enormously informative for clinicians actively struggling with countertransference in the analytic field on a daily basis.

Judy Vida's remarkable narrative of self-disclosure and self-analysis draws the reader into her intimate analytic space where she struggled with her "blood crisis", defined as "...a sudden unexpected change of fundamental premises that shakes stability, identity, and self-understanding..." (Vida, 2018). We are drawn into a profound analysis of Vida's painful relationship with her mother triggered by her reflections upon reading *Sally*

Hemings by Chase-Riboud. The conflation of servitude and love reminded her of her relationship with her mother. An equal, adult-to-adult relationship was foreclosed by a mother who demanded respect and acquiescence to her will, which resulted in rebellious opposition in Vida, and a lifelong struggle to pursue her own vision of life. She recognized echoes of this struggle in Ferenczi's subordination to Freud's vision of psychoanalysis. Emancipation from an internal "higher power", as Vida points out, involves a rearranging of one's inner world, and is not an easy process for anyone who has structured their ways of being in servitude to the will of another for much of their lives. "Rearranging is a process, not a result" (Vida, 2018). In the process of re-arranging, Vida has moved from a subaltern position to one of liberation experiencing the lightness of unfettered being in the process.

Once Ferenczi was able to free himself from subordination to Freud's vision of psychoanalysis, he was able to pursue his own vision which included an external object world that impacts the formation of the inner world from birth on. This psychoanalytic perspective is a much more "user friendly" model to apply to analyzing social, cultural, and political factors impacting on the individual's internal landscape.

The papers that follow take up Ferenczi's vision in considering how external world events, whether in the nursery, family life, the consulting room, or environment generally, contribute in shaping the individual's inner world.

Jô Gondar points out the inadequacy of Freudian theory in considering the impact of trauma on the individual while Ferenczi has a sophisticated and relevant trauma theory that sheds psychoanalytic light on social and political impacts on individual and collective dynamics. The shift from Freud to Ferenczi requires a subtle but major paradigm change from the intrapsychic to the interpersonal. Intrapsychic dynamics considers disavowal as a defense against the realization of some external event that is overwhelming for the conscious mind to process. From an interpersonal perspective, disavowal is a dynamic transaction between self and an other where the other disavows that a traumatic event was inflicted on the self, or that it was traumatic. Expanding this view to a social or political dimension, disavowal can be read as lack of recognition. Trauma occurs when there is a lack of recognition of the vulnerability of the individual and an expectation that they "suck it up". This requires a dis-identification with the vulnerability of the other. Gondar elaborates on Judith Butler's writing on the importance of recognizing vulnerability in others as an important mode of establishing social bonds and connections with others. The key to alleviating the damage inflicted by trauma, as Ferenczi suggested (1933), the recognition of the vulnerability of the other and their need to be protected. Ferenczi goes further (1932 Mar 13, p. 56) in suggesting that both "analyst and patient give

the impression of being two terrified children who compare their experiences, and who, because of their common fate understand each other completely." The social bond is based on shared experience of vulnerability. The judicial protection of vulnerability is essential in a society based on interconnectedness and cooperation.

Raluca Soreanu (2018) structures her scholarly research on splitting as a dialogue between Klein and Ferenczi on their differing visions of the process of splitting. Whereas the former talks about splitting by the ego of the life and death instincts and their projection into external objects, the latter talks about splitting of the ego into different fragments as a result of environmental trauma, opening up the field for contemplation of the psychic life of fragments. The two different conceptualizations of splitting lead in entirely different directions and ways of considering object relations.

Whereas Melanie Klein's perspective has been widely discussed in the analytic literature, Ferenczi's voice had been silenced over the decades due to psychoanalytic political ostracism. Soreanu is one of the many contemporary researchers who have unearthed Ferenczi's important legacy to psychoanalysis. Soreanu comments on the paucity of reference in Klein's work to Ferenczi's writings on introjection and splitting, despite the fact that Ferenczi was Klein's analyst for four years in Budapest between 1914 and 1919. She outlines how their different perspectives converge in some places but mostly diverge. Klein's theory being a metapsychological elaboration of the vicissitudes of the phylogenetic life and death instincts, while Ferenczi focused on the fate of self-fragments after fragmentation due to environmental trauma. The individual's ongoing struggle with the death instinct was Klein's main focus, while Ferenczi focused on how the survival instinct made it possible for self-fragments to cohere in the individual's ongoing way of being. Soreanu outlines in detail, with a wealth of references from his papers, Ferenczi's conceptualizations on the growth of the ego through processes of introjection and identification. Splitting and fragmentation of the self, after trauma, results in various self-fragments held together by the Orpha self-preservation drive. Ferenczi's development of his ideas on the life of self-fragments was cut short by his untimely death at age 59 in 1933, but Soreanu delves deeply into his later works, and picks up where Ferenczi left off, clarifying key concepts on self-fragments: identification with the aggressor, Orpha, autotomy and teratoma formation, as well as superego as an alien transplant.

Ferenczi's concepts were experience-near renderings of introjected relatedness with animate external objects, while Klein's writings are experience-far theorizing about the handling of life and death instincts by splitting and projective identifications. Ferenczi draws our interest as clinicians for his depiction of real-life dramas played out in the consulting

room and therapists as real-life figures in the lives of our patients who in turn experience different fragments of the self interacting with the person of the therapist. In a simplistic Cartesian interpretation of the difference between the two, one might say that Ferenczi's gaze is turned to the impact of the external world on the psyche of the individual while Klein's gaze is turned to how the psyche of the individual impacts the external world through splitting and projective identification.

Ferenczi provides the psychoanalytically-informed reader with a sophisticated theory of trauma (1932, 1933) that is applicable to the analysis of the manner in which social, political, and culture factors impact the psyche of the individual.

Robert Prince's (2018) timely and important paper shines a psychoanalytic light on the underlying dynamics of the Trump supporter. This is a well-researched and incisive analysis of the inter-relationship between a receptive public and their charismatic leader. How did we come to this? What do we do about it? These are questions tackled by Prince, and to his credit, he answers them well. Psychoanalysts have traditionally kept themselves out of the public forum preferring instead to work with individuals behind closed doors. However, this may also represent a sequestration of professionals who may be better equipped than most to understand the underground machinations of world events. Insights gleaned about unconscious individual dynamics in the consulting room, can be applied to understanding the underlying forces that impact the sociopolitical scene since both are driven by human behavior. However, Prince signals potential compromising of the psychoanalyst's objective perspective from a perch of neutrality, when one enters the political bipartisan forum. Whereas countertransference is expected and can be observed in the controlled environment of the analytic situation, it is much more difficult to maintain a neutral stance when the analyst's equanimity is challenged by the encroachment of the type of mass psychosis that destroyed the world order in the last century. The analyst asks himself: Is this my paranoia? Or is this the reality? Is humanity doomed to repeat history having not learned from it? Driven by a fear of an inexorable drive towards the latter, Prince does what analysts do: he strives to understand what is going on.

Searching for answers leads him to research the dynamics of interaction between the social character and the seductive passionate leader. He draws ideas from several sources. In his works, Erich Fromm describes the social determinants of the authoritarian character and the marketing character. Ferenczi's ideas (1933) on identification with the aggressor are useful in understanding the appeal of a passionate aggressive leader.

Prince's suggestion about "what to do" is enlightened. As with traumatized children, soothing empathic attunement with the traumatized

“people” should help to diffuse the “terrorism of suffering”. Prince applies the principles of analytic work with clients to the social and political scene with great effect. The media might follow step and ask politicians: “What are the social or political situations at the root of the terrorism of suffering in the ‘people’ that have resulted in such passionate protest that strives to upend the social order?”. An attempt at empathic attunement and the creation of a thinking space to draw the disaffected “people” into a constructive dialogue might address their distress.

In this ode to thinking, Ian Miller takes apart—more like demolishes—the basic premises of anti-thinking, defined as “...the toleration of obfuscation and aggressive reversal of a previous social assumption or consensual agreement: and the relegation of what was once central to that which is first peripheral, and next uncanny, until it is nothing at all...” (Miller, 2018). Paraphrasing Garon, 2004, 2012, reality is first negated, then disavowed and finally foreclosed leaving a gap in thinking about what was once an agreed-upon truth. It starts with fake news: negation of what has been considered reliable reporting of the facts, then disavowal, finally foreclosure of reality, which results in a hole in the psyche that can be passed on to future generations. The rhetoric of an authoritarian leader decrying “fake news” creates a void of anti-thinking in the psyche, where socially-agreed-upon reality once dwelt, and can now be filled with the hypnotic message of the leader. Miller analyzes the basic characteristics of anti-thinking that fill the void with a primitive paranoid-schizoid type of ideation: one that identifies a bad traumatizing world of precarious existence and promises a return to a paradisiacal “good old days” when America was great.

In this environment of anti-thinking, psychoanalysis presents the public with the tools necessary to start thinking again, thereby becoming a political activity subverting the anti-thinking movement. Miller defines thinking from a psychoanalytic perspective: “... psychoanalysis unpacks the parataxic distortion or autistic contiguous cauterization as therapeutic co-participants address the underlying wounds protecting the seeming inviolability of the patient’s current psychological situation” (2018). Dyadic engagement serves as a container for the terrorism of suffering rendering paranoid anxieties thinkable and transforming anti-thinking into thinking. This is a lyrical paper that elevates psychoanalytic theorizing to literary expression. Readers should delve into this complex paper for a psychoanalytic literary treat, written by a wordsmith psychoanalyst.

The bipartisan nature of political discourse, especially since 2016, can make it difficult to maintain a neutral stance in the consulting room as is described in Leslie Hendelman’s paper (2018). The pressure to take positions in the political forum, made it difficult to maintain a dispassionate stance in Hendelman’s experience with a patient resulting in an enactment that

ultimately led to Hendelman experiencing, in a role reversal, what her patient experienced with an oppressive mother who devalued his thinking. Hendelman is able to recover her analytic mind to analyze the repetition of trauma and role reversal in the therapeutic situation, but such violent intrusion into the therapy space may represent a challenge facing therapists in a polarized political landscape. Is neutrality possible when a therapist passionately disagrees with a patient's viewpoints. Is a Ferenczian relaxation of technique (neutrality and abstinence) a necessary approach when external reality intrudes into the therapeutic space? And how does one manage the countertransference when patient and therapist are at opposite ends of a political divide? Such questions may become commonplace in the consulting room when the external reality of political tensions makes it difficult to maintain a neutral stance. Thoughtful analysis of enactments can inform the therapist about which archaic roles are being played out by the analytic couple, and such considerations can then lead to progress in treatment.

As the conference wound down at the Calza, little discussion groups continued their social and intellectual intercourse, along the arcades, reluctant to draw to a close an enriching and enlightening experience. It was as if after a full-course gourmet meal at an Italian restaurant, the diners wanted to stay and prolong the experience in each other's company. They had consumed beautifully prepared antipasti, primi, secondi, carne, pesce, dolci, washed it down by a delicious Ornellaia, and now it was time to digest such a feast for thought. This conference will leave the participants and presenters with at least three years to digest the feast of ideas until the next International Sándor Ferenczi conference in 2021. The papers in these special editions are only a sampling of the many excellent papers inspired by the spirit and works of Sándor Ferenczi. Many of us eagerly await the next feast in three years.

NOTE

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