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SECOND SPECIAL ISSUE: HERITAGE OF A PSYCHOANALYTIC MIND. FERENCZI INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN TORONTO*

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INTRODUCTION

Sándor Ferenczi was one of the most innovative thinkers on the early psychoanalytic scene, the *enfant terrible* of psychoanalysis as he called himself in his conference presented to celebrate Freud's 75th anniversary (Ferenczi, 1931, p. 127). Much of his work revolved around the question of trauma and the treatment of those who were its victims. Ferenczi played a major role in the development of psychoanalytic clinical work and its transmission, even if it was a long time before the analytic community would recognize it. The core of Ferenczi's work lies in his concept of trauma. He considered physical, sexual, emotional or psychical trauma as central in the etiology of psychopathology. In his understanding of trauma, the child's tender and affectionate feelings have been jostled by the passions of an adult, which impose premature sexual and emotional demands on an "innocent" child. Ferenczi maintains that trauma lies essentially in the fact that the distressed child finds no response from the caretaking other or is confronted with disavowal. The consequences of trauma go from identification with the aggressor and loss of confidence in his own perceptions, feelings, and interpretation of reality, to splitting and fragmentation of the self. The child must then resort to severely neurotic, borderline, or psychotic "solutions". In the case of transgenerational transmission of trauma, even

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the capacity to think is impaired. The immature/tender mind is not yet capable of processing traumatic experiences. Consequently, the symbolic representation/memory of the experience is fragmented, atomized, split-off and often somatized.

Ferenczi pioneered the investigation of the early mother-infant relationship, the importance of the early environment in personality development, and the reciprocal influences at play in the mind–body relationship. He explored those dark territories at the crossroads between physical and psychical, even between cosmic and psychoanalytical. He addressed the question of "…whether the primal trauma is not always to be sought in the primal relationship with the mother, and whether the traumata of a somewhat later epoch, already complicated by the appearance of the father, could have had such an effect without the existence of such a pre-primal-trauma (*ururtraumatisch*) mother–child scar" (Ferenczi, 1932, p. 83). He talks of a scar that cannot be recovered by memory but can only be approached through the psychoanalytical emotional relationship.

In his superb book, *Thalassa* (1924), Ferenczi conceptualized the origin of the human species and the development of sexuality in relation to the primal "catastrophe" of the sea drying up and adaptation to life on land. His argument links ontogenetic and phylogenetic evolution (the first recapitulating the second) to pre-genital instincts and the origins of both sexual life and primal trauma. This integration of biology and psychoanalysis, or bioanalysis, provided a new and different perspective on symbolic repetition, even during an analytic session.

In his clinical studies, and through very challenging clinical experiences, he was entirely original in his focus on the transference/countertransference dynamic in the psychoanalytic process. The evolution of his technique and the development of his trauma theory (the catastrophe), puts the accent on introjection and identification, as well as on narcissistic wounds or failures. Ferenczi's ideas also shed a new light on the child's early sensitivity to the messages embedded in the broader family background, the cultural and socio-political context. He suggests that the transference and countertransference interaction is a foundational experience that allows a symbolic representation of split-off traumatic experiences.

Through the legacy of Ferenczi's extraordinary psychoanalytic mind, we have inherited a unique way of thinking about the psychoanalytic process that continues to be an invaluable source of inspiration. Freud and many others have reproached Ferenczi for being too much of a tender, mothering analyst. Ferenczi was well aware of the universal aspiration to be reunited with the primal oceanic mother and, at the same time, the importance of allowing the patient to recover, with the analyst, something of the loving mother he longs for. But he also addressed the need, for himself and his

patients, to be mindful of the negative transference without disavowing hatred, violence, death wishes, and repetitions of the original catastrophe. He did not shy away from psychic "murder" that, in the end, is inevitably repeated with the patient (Ferenczi, 1932, p. 52).

This is the second Special Issue featuring a selection of papers that were presented at the International Sándor Ferenczi Conference, *Heritage of a Psychoanalytic Mind*, May 7–10, 2015, held in Toronto, Canada. (Also see the articles from the Toronto Conference in the First Special Issue of Koritar, 2016). In his article, Frankel (2017) focuses on the highly relevant concept of narcissism when addressing the question of trauma. Referring to Ferenczi's article "Stages in the Development of a Sense of Reality" (1913), he puts forward the unconscious refusal to give up the feeling of omnipotence in a patient at risk of collapsing under the narcissistic injury. We follow him as he describes Ferenczi's technical essays until the relaxation that allows the patient's omnipotent fantasies a certain fulfillment. The important analytic stances that permit this are kindness, indulgence, and love. In his technique that he called "mutual analysis" Ferenczi went further, promoting the analyst's total openness and honesty—the acknowledgement of his negative transference. Frankel goes on developing Ferenczi's concept of "identification with the aggressor", its necessity for the child and its consequences.

Soreanu (2017) raises the issue of what was lost in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). She discusses the question of the "Death Drive" in both Freud's and Ferenczi's approach. Her article addresses the crucial concept of the *Nachträglichkeit* in relation to thinking through the idea of repetition and of the "ego instincts" with Ferenczi beyond Freud. Soreanu asks: "Can we come to conceive of a *reparative and restorative repetition*, in relation to the ego, aiming residues of unworked-through traumas and at restoring a pre-traumatic state of the ego?" She introduces Ferenczi's conception of the symbol and its relevance to healing.

Mucci (2017) explores Ferenczi's revolutionary therapeutic approach and concepts related to trauma, the reality of trauma, its impact: identification with the aggressor, splitting and psychic agony, as well as the devastating effect of the forced silence imposed on the traumatized child. She revisits Freud's concepts of the death instinct and the Oedipus complex. She strongly agrees with Ferenczi on the importance of an empathic witness, a sensitive and committed testimony so that the parts of the self that were dead and fragmented become alive and integrated in a history. Finally, "It is as if the very last thoughts on the resolution of trauma for the subject were for forgiveness, the internal reconciliation."

In opposition to classical psychoanalytic neutrality, abstinence, and frustration, Kupermann (2017) recalls Ferenczi's neo-catharsis, and proposes empathy and the game of sharing affects, as a sensitive way of

working through in the service of healing. Through examples, he presents different aspects of clinical work, starting with Freud and the Wolf Man, arguing that a classical technical approach repeats the past trauma and drives the analyst to become the aggressor. He proposes a different way of referring to the Freudian working through in light of Ferenczi's neo-catharsis and affective sharing, which allows access to the traumatized child and his creative/sensitive dimension, when analyzing an adult.

In his article, Marcio Leitão Bandeira (2017) provides us with an insight on unconscious communication, from unconscious perception to figurability and reverie. He bases his discussion on the concept of receptive unconscious by Bollas, and questions how unconscious perception occurs and how reverie results from figurability. He reconnects with the concept of empathy as a condition for unconscious communication specifying that it impacts the intersubjective work of figurability in the analytical pair. He concludes with the very important distinction made by Widlöcher who states: "The subjective nature of this connection should not be confused with the interpersonal relationship" (2001, p. 53), which concerns real people whereas intersubjectivity concerns a process of thought.

Lijtmaer (2017) communicates a very personal and eloquent reflection, rooted in her own story and that of her patient, on the devastating effect of silenced social traumas that entail developmental conflicts, guilt, shame, and rage in the next generations and impairs their very sense of identity. Silence, as she puts forward, intensifies the impact of trauma and its intergenerational transmission, eventually, in a condensation of three generations. The unspoken traumatic events and memories haunt the next generation unless they can be mentalized, revealed, and processed to free the subject of "alien introjects".

Granieri (2017) studies the positive impact of a therapeutic psychoanalytical group for the people of the Piedmontese town, Casale Monferrato, affected by a contaminated environment that produced a cumulative trauma and its toll of catastrophic affects imbedded in their psyche and the soma. The group work opened the possibility for participants to create multiple narrations of their feelings and psychosomatic sufferings related to the trauma whereas emotions had been previously frozen. It also helped to promote an internalization of the group and a more realistic approach to the trauma and favored mourning the dead who, until then, had been ghosts in the mind.

Cohen (2017) studies the analytical relationship between Ferenczi and his patient Clara Thompson (referred to as Dm. in the *Clinical Diary*) as it appears in both of their writings. Transference and countertransference were entangled in their "game" or enactment, as it is called in contemporary psychoanalysis. Cohen links this relationship to their personal stories and traumas. As time passed, Ferenczi became more aware of the enactment at

stake and acknowledged his mistake, as well as his irritation towards Thompson. By this acknowledgement, he demonstrated that he was entirely different from her father and, therefore, allowed her to regain trust.

Meigs' (2017) article also addresses the analytical relationship between Ferenczi and Clara Thompson—essentially, the incredible history of the attempted analysis of Harry Stack Sullivan, initially pursued to promote Ferenczian psychoanalysis and healing technique in North America. Meigs illustrates how the project failed. She shows how Thompson's discovery of Wilhem Reich's *Character Analysis* (1933) influenced her approach to Sullivan's analysis, as she moved away from Ferenczi's way of treating trauma by relaxation and neo-catharsis.

NOTE

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