

In these pages...

The innovative contributions of Sándor Ferenczi—one of the first and more important followers and privileged interlocutors of Freud, who rightly called him “*primus inter pares*”—are transcendental treasure for our present day psychoanalytic thought. Known as one of the most outstanding masters of psychoanalysis, Ferenczi came to be considered as the rebel, and then forsaken. From his initial contact with Freud in 1908, until his premature death in 1933, Ferenczi’s once luminous presence became obscured for decades; to the point that his portrait was missing in the gallery of presidents of the International Psychoanalytical Association and was only restored there during the presidency of Dr. Horacio Etchegoyen (1993–1997). It is only recently that he has been “re-discovered” and his valuable contributions are being recognized. This recovery and rehabilitation are important movements in re-connecting with certain concepts and attitudes in psychoanalysis, which are of immense value to our present day practice.

The papers we are publishing in this Special Issue and the one to follow, are some of the contributions of a group of scholars who have broad knowledge of Ferenczi’s work, and who in turn make novel contributions, inspired by his line of thought within psychoanalysis. The papers are a selection from the 7th International Sándor Ferenczi Conference, “Introjection, Transference, and the Analyst in the Contemporary World,” which we had the privilege of organizing in Buenos Aires in October 2009. Our idea was not to build a monument to commemorate Ferenczi, but rather that the meeting should demonstrate the aliveness and fertility of his ideas, as well as display the Ferenczian attitude of (always) searching for new possibilities. These new ideas will undoubtedly contribute to enriching our way of understanding this, “impossible psychoanalytic task,” to which we are committed. The papers responding to this challenge originate from psychoanalysts from South and North America as well as Europe, witnessing the spreading of interest in Ferenczi’s ideas in the world.

Ferenczi was a most relevant figure in the creation and development of psychoanalysis. We can see his fecundity as a thinker in his more than 150 papers published in his lifetime, as well as in his posthumously published papers. The unique *Clinical Diary* (1932)—finally published in 1988, more than 50 years after Ferenczi wrote it—is an admirable example

of his sincere and creative thinking, and evidence of how dedicated he was in body and soul to his vocation. The more than 1200 letters of the Freud–Ferenczi *Correspondence* (1908–1933) show a very intense personal connection between the two men, and an unceasing flux of ideas regarding psychoanalysis, its theory, practice and institutional politics. The extent of interpenetration of thoughts between these two pioneers of our discipline is extraordinary.

His introduction to the psychoanalytic movement stimulated Ferenczi's valuable contributions such as: "Psychoanalysis and education" (1908), "Introjection and transference" (1909), "Transitory symptom constructions during the analysis" (1912), and "Stages in the development of the sense of reality" (1913); in these works we can see already a certain Ferenczian profile of some of his later central conceptions.

Then, from 1918 on, Ferenczi begins to develop his own line of thought, in which he reformulates ideas regarding trauma, countertransference, psychic reality, disavowal, the handling of regression, and the importance of re-living (*erlebnis*) in transference, the elasticity of analytic technique, and the roots of a theory of intersubjectivity.

The central theme of our 7th International Conference in Buenos Aires was introjection and transference, highlighting the importance of the relationship with external reality in the structuring of the psyche, through introjection (a concept created by Ferenczi), projection and transference. His consistent acknowledgement of the effects of reality on our own psyche carries with it important, lasting ideological consequences in psychoanalysis, from a theoretical, technical and ethical point of view. These ideas can be appreciated in the papers published in these Special Issues.

In this First Special Issue Pedro Boschan examines *The Clinical Diary* (1932)—containing the ideas Ferenczi entertained at the end of his tragically short life. *The Diary* shows the evolution of his clinical thought, expressed with unusual sincerity—and points us to the potentials of these ideas for our present day clinical practice. Boschan emphasizes Ferenczi's attitude of ongoing search, through a novel and passionate utilization of transference and countertransference, of ways for gaining access to the most archaic or fragmented aspects of the psyche. The circulation of these aspects is considered by Boschan essential for the understanding and modification of the severe pathologies Ferenczi treated, in which the capacity for symbolization had been damaged by trauma.

Boschan examines these ideas from different aspects: What is in circulation in the analytic situation; the temperature of the transference–countertransference interaction; mutual analysis and the issue of symmetry–asymmetry in the analytic relationship; the denial of countertransference and its effects on analysis; as well as its relation to trauma; the difficulty of differentiating

countertransference as such from the analyst's transferences; and the different sources these transferences may have; and finally, analytic receptivity versus the narcissism of the analyst who is facing the emergence of the archaic communication, proceeding from the non-repressed levels of the Unconscious, which has been de-symbolized by trauma and the fragmentation of the Ego. This concept includes the greater or lesser permeability to external reality and tolerance to transference depositions. In a clinical vignette Boschan highlights some of these issues as seen in the clinical setting.

The paper by Luis Martín Cabré is centered on the history of the concept of introjection, one of the central topics of the Buenos Aires Conference and an original contribution of Ferenczi to psychoanalytic theory. Focusing on a metaphysical definition of the theory of seduction, Martín Cabré considers the identification processes and the split of the ego, with emphasis on the essential role of denial and the forced introjection of the feelings of guilt. The author traces a parallel with an isomorphic process, which may occur within the analytic relationship as the result of forced intromission and the neurotic submission of certain patients. Martín Cabré extends the concept as a risk in analytic training, where the identifications of the trainee and possible failures in the later disidentification may be due to these mechanisms of intropression, with their devastating effects on the mind of the child, the patient or the trainee. Intropression is considered as an abuse of aggression and power, which attacks thought and denies any personal want and alterity. He considers Ferenczi's concept of *alien transplants* (*Fremdüberpflanzungen*), (*Clinical Diary*, 7 April 1932, p. 81) as a certain "forced introjection" of the trauma the adult suffered in their childhood, of which only a part would remain disassociated and denied, a theoretical line developed by Abraham and Török (1987).

In her very original proposal, Jô Gondar considers language and symbol formation from a Ferenczian point of view, differentiating it from structuralist theories. She emphasizes the sensitive dimension of language, by stressing the importance given to emotion in the formation of symbols; therefore the metaphoric capacity or its fault are considered from a different perspective. There is a strong support of the idea of mimesis between words and things. Gondar proposes that "the backbone of the symbolization processes does not reside in language or in the capacity of representation, but in the possibility of establishing similarities on the plane of being sensorial. In Ferenczi, meaning is not produced from the relationship between what is meaningful, but from the relationships found in the sensitive dimension." Gondar draws a sharp difference with authors such as Saussure or Lacan, and questions the arbitrariness of the sign, and attributes a great importance to its sensorial quality. She stresses the intimacy between words and things, extended to the rescue of the sensory

potential of words in situations of great suffering. In traumatic experiences, the distance between the word and the thing diminishes, which causes individuals, who experienced very strong traumas or cumulative traumas, to “feel” the words, using them literally. The clinical advantage of this point of view enhances the possibility of considering the use of language by contemporary patients in a positive way, avoiding the risks of describing them as poor in their capacity of symbolizing and creating metaphors, thus stigmatizing them from the viewpoint of their potential to be helped by analysis.

In his paper Dominick Riccio challenges the abusive use of psychotropic drugs and relates it to the unresolved countertransference issues (one of the major topics of Ferenczi’s work) of the analyst. He lists certain beliefs leading to a preference to medicate: the belief that drugs will alleviate the patient’s symptoms or make him/her more amenable to treatment; the concern that patients might commit murder and/or suicide; the wish to control patient’s behavior or hallucinations; the belief that mental disorders are biologically based and therefore need biological interventions that correct theoretical chemical imbalances or offset genetic effects; the request of the patient and so on. Riccio addresses some of the concerns with great clinical experience. He points out the deleterious effects medicating may have on the dynamics of transference and the patient’s way of sensing his own self. He considers in detail the different issues and problems surrounding medication as adjunctive therapy and proposes a thorough analysis of each of them in terms of rationale, efficacy and the impact on the psychotherapeutic relationship. He proposes psychoanalytic solutions for each of these issues, exposing a very personal but well founded point of view.

Teresa Pinheiro and Diane Viana examine the relation of the Ego with time and identity by analyzing the concept of “certainty of oneself,” which is at the same time an illusion of the Ego, but one that is necessary as a cornerstone of the construction of our subjectivity. They compare the cultural values at the time of starting psychoanalytic treatment when certainties are questioned and the notion of our Ego is split, revealing an unknown, novel part for us. In our present day practice, the clinical complaints are very often centered on the uncertainty of living, and of values.

Pinheiro and Viana propose to link the concept of loss of certainty of self in Ferenczi’s writings with present day clinical practice. In his theory of trauma, Ferenczi emphasizes the traumatic importance of the adults *disbelief* (a translation the authors consider more pertinent than the customarily used *denial*). The adult’s disbelief damages the trust in the child’s own senses, leading from then on to the absence of the certainty of the self, impairing perception and therefore introjection. Thus, if it is through the

other that we have access to meaning, becoming capable of producing and attributing meaning, the disbelief of the other, interrupts the possibility of appropriation, and makes it impossible to appropriate in the universe of meanings what was perceived and experienced. The concept of introjection as the primary condition of subjective constitution leads us necessarily to the notion of narcissism. They stress the importance of these concepts in contemporary clinical practice.

To the title of the Buenos Aires Sándor Ferenczi International Conference: "Introjection, Transference," we dared to add: "and the Analyst in the Contemporary World," based on the idea shared by most of us that psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts change over time and culture; an idea that is clearly expressed in one of the papers which will appear in the second Special Issue: "With Ferenczi, the psychoanalyst in the contemporary world is Other" (Jimenez Avello, forthcoming). And this being *other*, means not only that we and the analyses we perform are not the same as they were a few decades ago; that we understand psychoanalysis today as much more flexible than the rigidities that Ferenczi objected so much; it means a different understanding of human subjectivity, our own as well as others.

André Haynal, one of Ferenczi's direct followers and President of the International Sándor Ferenczi Association, reminds us that most of the elements we use today in our psychoanalytic practice originate in some of the technical innovations proposed by Ferenczi; and the systematic consideration of transference may be the most remarkable of them all (Haynal, 1988).

These special issues are consistent with Ferenczi's clinical experiments, successful or failed (which he himself carefully evaluated, criticized and eventually discarded), based on the idea that analysis should be adequate to the patient and not the other way round, as it frequently happened then (and even nowadays). Facing the "unsolvable" cases referred to him by his colleagues Ferenczi held that the limitations in analizability could be more in the analyst than in the patient. This point of view is reflected in his introducing the term "analyzand," emphasizing the protagonic role of the patient in analysis.

Some of Ferenczi's central and highly original ideas concern the concepts of trauma, regression and psychic reality. In his work with severely ill patients, he found himself facing trauma; pointing out that when analysis is carried on to the adequate level of depth, the traumatic experiences come forward as repetitions or enactments in the transference. This is due to the fact that trauma produces a narcissistic splitting, or a state of fragmentation or even atomization, which blocks mental processing, and therefore having no access to words or dream elaboration. According to his ideas, the only way to reach

these contents is through re-living (*erlebnis*) in the transference, which is only possible if the analyst can tolerate and go along with a deep regression. Ferenczi considers this re-living as a stage, which gives the only possibility of gaining access to those areas of the mind, which are not in the realm of repression, but that of splitting and denial. Such work requires a deep enough analysis of the analyst himself.

Ferenczi is the first psychoanalyst to point out the importance of countertransference in the analytic task; he proposes not to suppress it or deny it, but rather to tolerate and understand it, this way transforming it into a valuable tool. He warns that the non-awareness of countertransference is an obstacle for psychic change in the analytic process. He states that the analyst's resistance to take into consideration his countertransference may lead to an excessive distance with his analysand and this in turn may interfere with the development of transference, or forcing the analysand to split this transference to safeguard an idealized relation with his analyst.

The other line of development of these ideas, which can be fully appreciated in "The unwelcome child and his death instinct" (1929) as well as in the "Confusion of tongues" (1933) points to how traumatic might be the Other's mind, when this Other has the power of signifying the relation. In this way the adult who traumatized the child imposes his own denial, leading to fragmentation, submission and identification with the aggressor. This point of view broadens the idea of trauma, as not just an event but to the traumatic quality of the bond, the unconscious desires towards the child. He reminds us that this traumatic situation may get repeated in the transference, when the analyst disregards the real perceptions of the patient regarding himself, or lacks receptivity to his needs, imposing on him his own perceptions and values, as can be appreciated in Luis Martin Cabré's paper on "intropression." Ferenczi reminds us that the patient's submission may go unnoticed by us, taking it mistakenly (and narcissistically) as collaboration.

The consideration of the Other's mind is a very important aspect of external reality, and the taking into account the transcendent role of the external reality and the *entourage* gives us strong elements for understanding the effects of culture, external violence in the person's psychic life and therefore the analytic task.

In these times—with rapidly changing contexts and values—of crisis (in its double meaning of risk and opportunity), which demands from us a permanent revision of our being and doing as analysts, Ferenczi's ideas give us fundamental elements for this endeavor. The patients that ask for our help nowadays are much more like those "extreme cases" Ferenczi treated: suffering anomia, violent desubjectivation, distortions of reality (forced on us by the omnipresent media), rather than the "classical

neurotics” for whom the standard analytic technique was designed. The new times demand from us “the elasticity of psycho-analytic technique” Ferenczi (1928) proposed, to be able to respond to the demands of this new century.

I want to close these introductory remarks by thanking those friends and colleagues who participated in the intense task of preparing and organizing the 7th Conferenci in Buenos Aires, where these and many other papers were presented: Lic. Liliana Barletta, Lic. Mabel Cambero, Dra. Beatriz Corti, Lic. Oscar A. Elvira, Lic. Ana María Giner, Dr. Narciso Notrica, Lic. Silvia Raggi, Dr. Marcos Tabacznik, Lic. Daniel Tosso and Lic. Alberto Trimboli, who constitute the Board of Directors of the Asociación Cultural Sándor Ferenczi.

Pedro J. Boschan
Guest Editor

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Editor's Note

With a great sense of personal and professional loss I am announcing the untimely death of Pedro Boschan, M.D., the Guest Editor of this and the upcoming March Issue of the American Journal of Psychoanalysis. Dr. Boschan died while this issue was in the final phase of production and we will address the impact of his passing in the next issue.

Giselle Galdi