In these pages...

André E. Haynal **Guest Editor**

This Special Issue allows us to get a picture of innovative aspects of the work with traumatized patients and the theory of trauma. The papers in this Special Issue are further selections from the presentations of the 8th International Sándor Ferenczi Conference, “Faces of Trauma,” which took place in Budapest from May 31 to June 3, 2012, organized by Judit Mészáros, the President of the Sándor Ferenczi Society, and her team (see also Haynal, 2012).

Since Freud’s (1939) Moses paper, psychoanalysis is more and more sensitive to the dimension of *traumatism*. Also, the millions traumatized, including so many psychoanalysts, by the events of the Second World War (Holocaust, military actions, forced migrations, and so on), contributed meaningfully to this sensitivity in the analysts’ offices. The British Middle Group (Independents) contributed importantly to this awareness, developing the notion of *cumulative traumas*. In the cultural environment of analysis, new psychiatric diagnostics, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the notion of stress in medicine contributed to changes in theoretical views. The rediscovery of Ferenczi’s ideas and a better understanding of our polyphonic history went in the same direction. Nowadays, many analysts join Ferenczi in believing that trauma is a basic notion to understand man’s struggle with his fate.

What is traumatism? It is an experience that cannot be overcome by the strength of the ego, neither in the moment it happens nor afterwards. Let us be reminded that the deepest human desire is that good experiences should be endless, without interruption. While the highest religious promise is eternity, life is full of changes in a continuous process. One central aspect of traumatism is tied to its producing a brutal discontinuity. Life begins with the discontinuity of intrauterine existence interrupted by birth, then followed by

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the weaning, somatic, and psychic, as well as by the innumerable steps of distantiation, each calling for the necessary adjustments. If the adjustments fail, we face trauma, as a result of major personal crises, and also around everyday discontinuities.

What does trauma do? Discontinuity leaves behind wounds, scars, disturbances, and rage. Sometimes nostalgia for paradise lost emerges, as well as the wish to return to the perfect state of being contained in the continuous, steady, warmth, and protective atmosphere of the mother's inner space, without interruption. Ferenczi (1924) brings to light the symbolism of the Archaic sea, Thalassa in the womb. One of Ferenczi's followers, Roheim (1950), thought that humanity was *compelled* to construct civilizations marked by huge statues, stone temples, and impressive monuments built for eternity, as a way to protect themselves against the fear of forlorn disappearance. Psychoanalysis is also an edifice of civilization raised against the destructive forces of traumatism and its remnants in the psyche. However, trauma is not only evil, it is also the motivational force for construction, reparation, restoration, and creativity. The great number of post-traumatic writers, artists, philosophers, scientists and the high number of orphans among the most creative people (Eisenstadt *et al.* 1989) testifies it.

Trauma implies a *harsh* reality, as we are reminded in this issue by Robert Langan's contribution, also stressing the *ubiquitous* nature of trauma. He highlights that trauma is "the assault of reality on one's very existence [...] (an) inescapable current ...," which requires great capacities of adaptation and overcoming for avoiding defeats and breakdowns. The consecutive post-traumatic influences, that is, the factors that enhance or hamper the individual's development, are shown in Clara Mucci's contribution. She highlights that in the work with survivors a reconstruction of the historical reality of the event is fundamental. Kathleen Kelley-Lainé's clinical presentation is convergent with Ferenczi's (1913) warning about harsh reality in his paper, entitled "Stages in the Development of the Sense of Reality." The complexity of the *intrapsychic* processes after *interpersonal* trauma is described by Elizabeth Howell. Her article invites us to a deep reflection about the inner transformational nature of post-traumatic experience, and its triggering many pathways in different directions.

What can we do? The survey of the *therapeutic aspects* begins with an important observation of the need for a secure framework, a therapeutic place, which Vittorio Gonella illustrates through Molnar's (1907) novel *Paul Street Boys*. He shows the necessity of a "playground" to allow a group of kids to play together and develop their pleasure and thus further their maturation. Inspired especially by Ferenczi's (1932) *Clinical Diary*, Gonella also supports his elaborations by relevant connections to Winnicott and Bion.

Future discontinuities make us anxious and past traumas, depressive. We can see how cutoffs are equated with trauma, that is, separation and loss. The aggressive forces, violence, are frequently part of regressive post-traumatic evolutions, consequences of trauma, of deeds of traumatized *personalities* as Benjamin Kilborne's paper shows. He situates these ideas on the axis of history, interwoven within the context of intersubjectivity. The importance of this development was emphasized in psychoanalysis, particularly since the time of the Second World War. We continue to wonder with Freud how it is possible that we have not seen earlier the immense role of destructiveness, especially before the tragic events of the 20th century. In *Confusion of Tongues*, Ferenczi (1933) is not only speaking about two different "languages" as modes of expression, but also about different perspectives on trauma. The inability to understand through traditional means of communication undermines happiness in later social life, leading to a contemporary society full of hatred, envy, greed, and jealousy.

This leads us to wonder whether psychoanalysis should not be able to make an important contribution to improve life in our present-day world. It would not be the smallest of its vocation to address the discontents of our times.

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