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Psychoanalysis and the Human Sciences

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Sándor Ferenczi Returns Home:
Papers from the Miskolc Conference

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Manuscripts must be double-spaced throughout, including quotations and references. Explanatory notes should be kept to a minimum, and the author-date system of citation used in the text. Footnotes and references should conform to the style indicated below. The list of references should include only works cited in the essay.

1) The alphabetized **reference list** should be titled "References" with entries in the following format:

Solomon, Maynard. 1981. Franz Schubert's "My Dream." *American Imago*, 32:137-54.

Sprengnether, Madelon. 1990. *The Spectral Mother: Freud, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

2) The **author-date** system used in the text should be in the format given below, except that the author's name may be omitted if it is specified in the preceding sentence, e.g., "As Sprengnether (1990) suggests, the oedipal paradigm ought to be regarded as a 'complex compromise formation' rather than as a 'fundamental breakthrough' in Freud's consciousness" (4).

(Solomon 1981, 142)

(Sprengnether 1990, 4)

All works should be cited in the text by their **original** dates of publication, with the edition or translation used specified in the references.

Preface

As Franco Borgogno has written in his indispensable book reviewed in this issue, "it is Ferenczi, more than any of its other pioneers, who personifies the essence of psychoanalysis" (1999, 260). Such, at least, is the conviction shared by an ever-increasing number of people in the psychoanalytic community, many of whom converged on the northern Hungarian city of Miskolc, November 27–29, 2008, for the conference "Sándor Ferenczi Returns Home," selected papers of which I am delighted to be able to publish here.

It is in Ferenczi's spirit that our collection of authors should be international and include renowned senior analysts and scholars as well as exceptionally gifted younger colleagues. We begin with Ernst Falzeder of Salzburg, *primus inter pares* as an editor of psychoanalytic correspondences, whose "Sándor Ferenczi between Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy" strikes a keynote in judiciously weighing Ferenczi's never fully resolved conflict between "an unqualified dedication to a School, to a Cause" and his "nonconformist, rebellious, and creative spirit," and in urging prospective disciples to heed the admonition of Nietzsche's Zarathustra in their attitude not only toward Freud but toward Ferenczi as well.

Like Ferenczi himself, historian Krisztián Kapusi is a native son of Miskolc, and in "Toward a Biography of Sándor Ferenczi: Footnotes from Miskolc," Kapusi treats the reader to some tidbits from his archival forays: the questions answered by Ferenczi in his 1890 final secondary school examinations, the location of the family vineyard "on the emblematic hill of Miskolc," the fact that Ferenczi left the Jewish congregation of Budapest, a contemporary account of the personality of Ferenczi's mother, and so forth. Kapusi is becomingly modest in his claims for the significance of his discoveries, but one need not idolize Ferenczi to welcome any addition, however small, to our store of knowledge about his life.

Our final paper directly concerned with Ferenczi is Luis J. Martin Cabré's "Ferenczi's 'Feminine Principle': A Feminine Version of the Death Drive." Cabré, a training analyst in Madrid, where he was the main force behind the 1998 conference "Ferenczi and Contemporary Psychoanalysis," sees in Ferenczi's elaboration of a "feminine principle" a counterpoint to Freud's theory of the death drive that inheres in both nature and the psyche. This capacity "to suffer, to wait, to undergo and tolerate frustration" undergirds not only "maternity and altruism" but also "the ability to be an analyst."

We follow with two papers on Ferenczi's heirs. Horst Kächele, the distinguished psychoanalyst and researcher based in Ulm, surveys the contributions of Imre Hermann, a pioneer of attachment theory and pillar of the Budapest School of psychoanalysis. Then, in a *tour de force*, American scholar and clinician B. William Brennan, from Providence, Rhode Island, presents a comprehensive introduction to "Ferenczi's Forgotten Messenger," Izette de Forest, who underwent analytic training with Ferenczi in the late 1920s and whose 1942 paper in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, "The Therapeutic Technique of Sándor Ferenczi," was in fact the first exposition of Ferenczi's ideas in the journal of record of psychoanalysis—preceding by seven years the posthumous publication of Ferenczi's own "The Confusion of Tongues between Adults and the Child"—though de Forest's pivotal role in the transmission of Ferenczi's legacy in the United States has been almost entirely overshadowed by the limelight suffusing her contemporary, Clara Thompson.

We close our articles section with two papers addressing the vexed topic of psychoanalysis and the paranormal. Júlia Gyimesi, already an accomplished intellectual historian completing her dissertation in Budapest, argues in "The Problem of Demarcation: Psychoanalysis and the Occult" that Freud's notorious insistence on a sexual definition of libido in his conflict with Jung can be understood in the context of his effort to distinguish a specifically psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious from the spiritual meanings ascribed to it by contemporary proponents of the occult. Conversely, Mikita Brottman, trained at Oxford and currently chair of the Humanities Program at the Pacifica Graduate Institute, contends in "Psychoanalysis and Magic: Then and Now" that, even according to Freud himself, the oc-

cult is “inextricable from psychoanalysis, which, he believed, in order to be effective, had to embrace those manifestations of thought and emotion that are normally excluded from rational, scientific study.” Brottman’s wide-ranging disquisition rescues from obscurity the figure of Jule Eisenbud, a graduate of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute but also a charter member of the Parapsychological Association, who sought to persuade analysts that telepathy “rests on a foundation as firm as anything in the realm of empirical science.” Brottman herself concludes that “no compelling evidence of such phenomena has yet been found,” though she cautions that psychoanalysis, dependent as it is on symbolic thinking, “cannot, by definition, be strictly scientific—or even, for that matter, strictly rational.”

Unlike our other contributors, Mikita Brottman was not a participant in the Miskolc conference. But I think it fitting to include her paper in this issue not only because it forms a pendant to Júlia Gyimesi’s but also because, if our theme is “Sándor Ferenczi Returns Home,” that home is now the world. Their complementary perspectives, moreover, hearken back to Ernst Falzeder’s insistence on the need for a dialectical sensibility in approaching Ferenczi. Gyimesi quotes, on the one hand, Ferenczi’s critique of Jung in a 1913 letter to Freud for seeking to smuggle in “*occultism* in the guise of science” and, on the other hand, his self-characterization three years earlier as “*a great soothsayer*” because “I am reading my patients’ thoughts (in my free associations). The future methodology of Ψ A must make use of this.” Is this mysticism or simply Ferenczi’s prescient anticipation of how contemporary analysts rely on countertransference as an instrument for gauging what is going on with their patients?

After a hiatus for our annual guest-edited Fall special issue, our regular columnists are back with their helpings of dessert. Ellen Handler Spitz emulates Ferenczi in a courageous self-analysis of her experience as the child of a “mother-artist,” while Warren Poland explores the exquisitely Ferenczian theme of “the *patient’s* empathy.” Finally, Aleksandar Dimitrijevic, of the Belgrade Psychoanalytic Society, graces our pages for the third time with his eloquent review of Franco Borgogno’s *Psychoanalysis as a Journey*, a repository of historical scholarship and clinical wisdom by a training analyst and professor of clinical

psychology in Turin whose heart and mind are no less capacious than Ferenczi's own.

Reference

Borgogno, Franco. 1999. *Psychoanalysis as a Journey*. Trans. Ian Harvey. London: Open Gate Press, 2007.

Sándor Ferenczi between Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy

Ferenczi was both an orthodox follower of and a creative rebel against Freudian psychoanalysis. This paper tries to investigate this double, and conflicting, stance in the Freud-Ferenczi relationship and to place it in the broader cultural context of the “-isms” prevalent during that period.

“Somehow, something always went wrong with him.”
—Michael Balint, “Sándor Ferenczi, obiit 1933”

When I wrote my doctoral thesis on Sándor Ferenczi and Michael Balint some twenty-five years ago, I was still justified in stating: “Today it needs indeed a very close study of psychoanalysis to realize how important a role Ferenczi played at the time, so rarely is he quoted, and so few of his ideas have been incorporated into psychoanalysis under his own name” (Falzeder 1985, 50). In the meantime, the situation has changed completely. Important sources have been published, such as his *Clinical Diary* (Dupont 1985), his correspondence with Freud (Brabant, Falzeder, and Giampieri-Deutsch 1993; Falzeder and Brabant 1996; Falzeder and Brabant 2000), the circular letters of the so-called Committee (Wittenberger and Tögel 1999; 2001; 2003; 2006), and, quite recently, his correspondence with Ernest Jones. Other primary sources, such as his correspondence with Otto Rank, are available in archives. A number of books and many articles have been devoted to his life and work. There are now panels on Ferenczi at congresses of the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA), and quite a few international meetings have been exclusively focused on him.

Simultaneously, the writing of the history of psychoanalysis, too, has undergone considerable changes. First of all, during the past two decades or so many more primary sources have been published or made accessible than in the fifty preceding

years. With only very few exceptions, practically all the “big” correspondences of Freud have been published, or will be published in the near future; in addition, a wealth of other documentary material has surfaced (see Falzeder 2007). The same is true, to a somewhat lesser extent, for his disciples and followers, most of whom have been the subject of full-scale biographies.

Secondly, the general tenor of historical works on psychoanalysis has also changed. After an initial period of a predominantly idealizing attitude toward Freud, and then of so-called “Freud bashing,” an increasing number of authors are now trying to paint a new, balanced picture, based on original research and primary documents, trying to avoid the trap of succumbing to idealization on the one hand or simply relegating psychoanalysis to history’s ashcan on the other. Leading journals, such as the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* or the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, to name only two prominent examples, print articles that are critical of Freud and of central aspects of his theory. The whole intellectual climate, creating the conditions under which this writing of history is taking place, has changed. Historian John Burnham has aptly spoken of the advent of an era of what he calls the “New Freud Studies” (2006).

In the course of these changes, the general image of Ferenczi, too, has undergone an evolution. Formerly often stigmatized, ostracized, silenced to death, or even declared crazy, he himself has now become, at least in certain circles, something of an icon. Were he still alive, I think he would be surprised, if not appalled, at seeing that some analysts call themselves “Ferenczians,” or that they use him as their principal witness, forefather, or patron saint in their own fights against other viewpoints in psychoanalysis, and even against Freud himself. Although I myself have contributed, and still try to contribute, to this renaissance of Ferenczi, and to his rehabilitation as one of Freud’s most important and creative disciples whose influence on contemporary psychoanalysis can hardly be overestimated, I have somewhat mixed feelings about the fact that the pendulum now sometimes seems to swing to the other extreme. Ferenczi of all people seems particularly ill-suited to be worshiped as the founder of a new school. On

the contrary, it was precisely his conflict between an unqualified dedication to a School, to a Cause, to the alleged Truth, on the one hand, and his nonconformist, rebellious, and creative spirit, on the other, that threatened to break him. He did not choose the easy way out, as others did—that is, to found new schools of their own, only then to exclude others from them, just as they themselves had been marginalized before.

Like Freud himself, his followers too, including Ferenczi, were in search of the “Truth.” They wanted to be intellectual *conquistadores* and to introduce a new paradigm in science. As a young doctor, forensic expert, physician of prostitutes, criminals, and the impoverished, as a friend of liberal journalists, politicians, poets, and painters, as a *bohémien* in the Hotel Royal, and long before his first meeting with Freud, Ferenczi had been interested in new, exciting, even taboo topics and movements. He had already written about spiritism, love in science, female homosexuality, sexual intermediary states, premature ejaculation, sex education, hypnosis, neurasthenia, and the psychoses when he learned about C. G. Jung’s new association experiments. Fascinated by them, he began to study Freud’s theories, which, as he wrote to Freud in his very first letter, on January 18, 1908, from then on “occupied [him] constantly” (Brabant, Falzeder, and Giampieri-Deutsch 1993, 1)—and, indeed, continued to occupy him to the end of his life.

In Freud, Ferenczi found a spiritual father and brother, a radical role model, the nearly ideal type of an iconoclast, ready to question virtually everything that had until then been seen as traditional wisdom. In joining the Cause, the “wild horde” (Honegger 1974, 14), of this intellectual *conquistador*, Ferenczi, himself an iconoclast, was increasingly faced with an inherent dilemma. For however much Freud was willing to question everything else, just so little was he inclined to let himself be questioned, and he requested unconditional loyalty in his campaign to conquer the “Truth.” Even if the troop he commanded was a “wild horde,” for him authority and discipline were at least as important as in a regular army.

For a long time, Ferenczi submitted unconditionally to this discipline, for which he was rewarded with special sympathy and appreciation by the Master. It was Ferenczi who was chosen by Freud to propose the foundation of the IPA, including its nearly

incredibly authoritarian statutes: the permanent seat of the Association should be moved to Zurich, Jung should become its president for life, and he should furthermore be endowed with extraordinary powers, such as the right to veto any psychoanalytic publication. Freud had Ferenczi's unconditional support in the conflicts with Adler, Stekel, and Bleuler. When the conflict with Jung, too, came to a head, it was Ferenczi who (as Jones reported to Freud on August 7, 1912) proposed "the possibility of a few men being analysed by [Freud], so that they could serve as representatives in different places to teach other beginners" (Paskauskas 1993, 149), so that they could watch over, and guarantee, the "purity of teaching and the exactitude of the technique" (Caruso 1975). He himself became one of the first to fulfill this requirement, and went to Vienna to be analyzed by Freud (Dupont 1994; Falzeder 1996; May 2006). For some time he could even harbor hopes of becoming Freud's successor and crown prince. In his obituary of Abraham, Freud wrote that it was "likely that the boundless trust of his colleagues and pupils would have called [Abraham] to the leadership," and "that only one other name could be set beside his" (1926, 277). There is no doubt whom Freud had in mind.

In a circular letter to the Secret Committee, dated September 20, 1920, Ferenczi stated that he saw in their efforts an instrument of "psychoanalytic . . . propaganda" (Wittenberger and Tögel 1999, 47). He later excluded a follower of Stekel's, Sándor Feldmann, from the Hungarian Society, and on this occasion he presented his views on orthodoxy and dissidence in a letter to Freud dated December 30, 1929: "I gladly . . . buy into the reproach of orthodoxy; *Feldmannism*, on the other hand, wants both advantages: that of the cheap revolutionary laurels, but also that of the mimicry of orthodoxy" (Falzeder and Brabant 2000, 377). Let us also recall that Ferenczi was elected president of the IPA in 1918, which means that he was ready and willing to be a representative of unadulterated Freudian psychoanalysis. In this role of a stalwart follower he could also, as Anton von Freund wrote to Freud on March 15, 1919—and von Freund was undoubtedly sympathetic toward Ferenczi—"show an intolerance towards others that was certainly not noticeable to himself."¹ As we know, his favorite enemy, Ernest Jones, not only diagnosed him as psychotic but also attributed to him "a masterful or even domineering attitude" (1955, 158).

In the conflict around Otto Rank, Ferenczi's role was ambiguous. On the one hand, some—especially Karl Abraham and Ernest Jones—suspected him of having dissident views; on the other hand, for a long time he could be sure of Freud's support and approval. Ferenczi himself assured Freud on January 30, 1924 that he and Rank “did not deviate from psychoanalytic ground by a hair's breadth” (Falzeder and Brabant 2000, 119) in their jointly authored book, *The Development of Psychoanalysis* (1924). When Freud changed his opinion, however, and Ferenczi then had to make a choice between Freud and Rank, he did not hesitate for long in rejoining the Freudian camp. It was Ferenczi who—after consultation with Freud—suggested the resumption of the Committee's circular letters, this time excluding Rank from them (Wittenberger and Tögel 2006, 195). Interestingly, it was also Ferenczi who coined the term “classical” technique (170).

However, from early on there were also conflicts between Freud and Ferenczi. Let me just review the most notable ones: their difficulties during the trip to Sicily in 1910, culminating in the famous “Palermo incident”; Ferenczi's love triangle with Gizella and Elma Palós, in which Freud interfered through his analysis of Elma and by expressing his wish—which became Ferenczi's command—to break off the affair with Elma and to choose Gizella; the three failed *tranches* of analysis in 1914 and 1916, whose consequences were to occupy Ferenczi until the end of his life (and which, by the way, were a far cry from ridding him of all impure and inexact tendencies); the conflicts in the Committee, which ended with the victory of Abraham and Jones, the break with Rank, and the marginalization of Ferenczi; his technical experiments, including the joint book with Rank; Freud's reproach of Ferenczi for his alleged “kissing technique”; and, finally, the views on trauma expressed by Ferenczi in “The Confusion of Tongues between Adults and the Child” (1933), which alienated him from Freud for good. For more than twenty years, we have also known the *Clinical Diary* (Dupont 1985) of his last period, a unique document in the psychoanalytic literature.

There is a fragment from Ferenczi's analysis with Freud, which he himself recounted, initially under the guise of speaking of someone else:

On the day after the death of his adored father . . . he could not resist the temptation of appropriating a small flask of ether, which had been used as a stimulating medicine for the dying father. He locked himself into a secluded room, and set the ether alight, which could have easily resulted in a conflagration. He was completely aware of the blasphemous and forbidden nature of his action. He still remembered the nearly audible throbbing of his heart, brought about by the terrible deed. He reacted with contrition, and vowed that for as long as he lived he would have to think of [his father] at least once a day. . . . In final analysis, the motive for lighting the triumphant fire on the occasion of his death was the undying rivalry with the father.

Ferenczi then lifts the veil and continues: "I will no longer make a secret of the fact that I myself was this person, and I have no doubt that . . . under unfavorable circumstances I could easily have developed into a murderer and incendiary. Fate was kind enough to let me become a psychoanalyst, however" (1928, 419–20).²

In the *Clinical Diary* we find an echo of these blasphemous tendencies. In it, Ferenczi describes his dilemma: that he had to confront the realization that the one who had fascinated him because he systematically called everything into question was not willing to have *himself* called into question. This posed no major problem so long as Ferenczi did not insist on doing so, even when the wish did surface from time to time—whether it be when he refused to be dictated to by Freud in Palermo, and then after this incident he saw Freud standing naked before him in a dream, which he interpreted in a letter of October 3, 1910 as a "longing for absolute mutual openness" (Brabant, Falzeder, and Giampieri-Deutsch 1993, 218); or when he thought that in his analysis with Freud the latter had not analyzed the latent (or not so latent) negative transference;³ or when for some time he joined Rank in exploring new paths; or when he went to America in 1926–1927 for nearly a year, something that Freud was not at all happy about. In all these cases, however, Ferenczi eventually found his way back to Freud, and remained at most a "secret rebel," as his analysand Clara Thompson (1944) called him, without ever becoming an open one.

A turning point was finally reached in his last desperate efforts to help seriously ill people, in his attempts to adjust his technique in a sometimes extreme and reckless manner, and with his own terminal disease. In the end Ferenczi realized that he had never felt truly and fully understood by Freud, but rather that he had essentially been used by him, and he asked himself the shocking question: "will I be forced (if I'm able to at all) to develop a new basis of my personality, if I have to give up the previous one as wrong and unreliable? Is my choice here between dying and a new adjustment—and this at the age of 59? On the other hand: does it make sense always to live only the life (the will) of someone else—isn't such a life already nearly death? Will I lose too much if I risk this life?" (Dupont 1985, 278).

Freud's interpretation was that Ferenczi never got over the fact that he received too little love from his mother, and that he would try to find this love from his patients. There may well be some truth to this. But Freud did not even dream of giving Ferenczi some of this love *himself*. No, Ferenczi should get a grip on himself, stop acting like an obnoxious child, and should, as Freud admonished him on May 5, 1932, "leave the island of dreams which you inhabit with your fantasy children and mix in with the struggle of men" (Falzeder and Brabant 2000, 433).

The first part of the twentieth century was the era of movements, of "isms," of socialism and communism, of Zionism, later of National Socialism, Leninism, etc. Ferenczi was far from being the only person in his own or the following generation to devote his life to one of those high and venerable ideals, only to become ultimately increasingly disillusioned and sobered. Let us just think of Arthur Koestler, and his final reckoning with communism in *Darkness at Noon* (1940) . . .

The leaders of these movements were obsessed by their ideals, and were ready to sacrifice very much, even people, to their attainment. Freud was no Lenin, of course, and his sacrifice of others took much milder forms, but still he did not hesitate to break with anybody who seemed to him to deviate from the "Truth" as he understood it. There was no way back. The names of the traitors were no longer to be mentioned in Freud's household . . . But in all fairness let us also not forget that if Ferenczi was faced with a dilemma, so was Freud. It is true

that in Jung's view Freud had lost his authority the moment he had declared that he could not risk losing it, by disclosing his innermost secrets in an analysis with Jung. But it is equally clear that Freud was quite justifiably reluctant to accept the various offers from his disciples to analyze him (in addition to Jung, e.g., by Groddeck and Ferenczi), and that he was fighting for what he felt was an important and truthful discovery.

Ferenczi had retained some of both the tenderness and the rebellion of a child, of the child's pleasure in playing and experimenting, but also of some of the darker sides of the "wise baby," as he sometimes called it (Ferenczi 1923). I remember seeing some film footage from the IPA congress at Wiesbaden, the last congress the terminally ill Ferenczi attended. There are shots of Ernest Jones, immaculately dressed and in a very earnest and stiff posture, of Melanie Klein with her new hat, of the still-rich Max Eitingon taking himself quite seriously, and of many other very respectable participants, who all pose before the camera and are full of their own importance. Ferenczi is sitting on a bench, deep in conversation with a little boy. He suddenly notices that he is being filmed, looks up for a moment, then laughs, and goes on talking with the boy.

Ferenczi could not solve the dilemma. He was denied the chance to choose a new adjustment over death. The price that he paid was enormous. He was in conflict with Freud, and he had become an outsider in the psychoanalytic community. Even his friend and analyst, Groddeck, distanced himself from his last "flight to the stars," as Groddeck called it (Giefer 2006, 290). And even his wife Gizella found at some point that he was "no longer quite what he used to be" (169), and that he was "mentally ill" (161).

In my opinion, it is time to stop either *pathologizing* this *existential crisis*, by seeing it as the result of a psychotic disposition (and thus also to declare his late work the outcome of an insane mind and rubbish), or *trivializing* it by calling it a malevolent invention of his enemies (and thus also to sentimentalize Ferenczi as a blue-eyed nice guy). As the storm clouds gathered, Jung had already quoted Nietzsche to Freud in a letter of March 3, 1912: "One repays a teacher badly if one remains only a pupil. . . . You respect me; but how if one day your respect should tumble? Take care that a falling statue