

Ferenczi's Footprints at The New School

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Perhaps it is through one of Irvin Yalom's writings that I first got to know Sándor Ferenczi's name. His name was associated with the concept of "mutual analysis," which sounded fascinating, though I had little knowledge as to its exact meaning. I speculated that if the analyst analyzes the patient, perhaps in mutual analysis the patient also analyzes the analyst. My speculation was, in fact, not too far from the actual meaning of mutual analysis: one of Ferenczi's patients, who was sexually abused by her father, "demanded that the patient should also have the right to analyze the analyst" (Ferenczi, 1988, p.3). Ferenczi, with his relentless experimental spirit, embarked on this attempt of mutual analysis, by alternating "analyzing" positions/roles session by session (Myers, 1996).

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Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Stephanie Wakefield and Kristina Krause for their kind assistance.

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Sándor Ferenczi was born on July 7, 1873 in Miskolc, in Hungary, a town not too far from Budapest. His father, a Polish Jew, was an owner of a bookstore which occupied the first floor of the family's residence. He was greatly influenced by his father and his associates, and felt great agony when his father passed away when he was 15. On the other hand, it is said that he had a difficult relationship with his mother, a sort of maternal deprivation that he felt on his part, to a certain extent because of the great number of siblings, 10 or 11. The record is not accurate enough to specify the number, but Sándor was either the third or the fifth son. Some of his siblings and their offspring were killed during the Holocaust, some scattered around the world, and yet others remained in Hungary (Rachman, 1997).

At the age of 17, he started his medical study and soon became fascinated by the psyche. His early interest included hypnosis and Jung's association test. His clinical career can be divided into five phases (Rachman, 1997). First, he treated rather atypical individuals, such as prostitutes and the poor in hospitals. In this period he treated a lesbian patient, Rosa T., who, because of the social mores at that time when homosexuality was considered a degenerative disease, suffered from a great sense of isolation and persecution. In the second phase, he became more or less like a Freudian psychoanalyst. In the third phase, he experimented with "active psychoanalysis" within Freudian frames. In the next phase, he made a distinctive departure from Freudian psychoanalysis and continued his experimentation with the concepts of confusion of tongues, mutual analysis, etc. In the final and fifth phase, he developed relaxation therapy and furthered his exploration into the psyche.

Perhaps because of his unusual training (e.g., working with prostitutes and criminals) Ferenczi's style was characterized by great compassion. He usually blamed himself, not his patients, for any

lack of progress, tirelessly exploring possible new techniques in psychoanalysis (Rachman, 1997; Aron & Harris, 1993).

In 1926, Ferenczi came to the United States to teach a course at The New School for Social Research. By doing so, he infuriated psychoanalysts in New York, because he not only taught lay analysts at The New School but also ignored formally trained analysts (Rachman, 1997). His visit to the United States, which was perhaps approved by Freud, was before his famous "Confusion of Tongues" paper (published in 1932).

I discovered that Ferenczi taught at The New School from a footnote in his Clinical Diary (Ferenczi, 1988) that said, "Clara Marvel Thompson (1866-1934), born in Providence, Rhode Island, studied medicine at John Hopkins University. She was referred to Ferenczi by Harry Stuck Sullivan, the leader of psychologically oriented medicine in America, after Ferenczi's lectures at the New School for Social Research in 1926-27" (p.3).

I investigated further and my research revealed a catalog from Ferenczi's time at Fogelman Library. During that period, Ferenczi taught "Course No. 10. Selected Chapters in the Theory and Practice of Psychoanalysis" on Tuesdays from 8:20pm to 9:50pm. The course description was: "This course is designed primarily to meet the requirements of the intelligent laymen, although it will present much material of value to the special student and psychoanalysis practitioner. Among the topics to be discussed are: suggestion and psychoanalysis; the development of the ego and the instincts; the ego and the personality; the Freudian metapsychology; the technique of psychoanalysis (transference and resistance); the main forms of neurosis and psychosis; character and its possible changes through psychoanalysis (p.14)."

According to the biographical notes in the catalog, Ferenczi's

background was described: "S. Ferenczi, M.D., University of Vienna, 1896; graduate studies in hospitals, 1896-1903. Sometime President of the International Psychoanalytical Association; and editor of *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse* [International Journal for Psychoanalysis]. Author, *Versuch einer Genitaltheorie* [Attempt for a Genital Theory]; *Zur Psychoanalyse von Sexual-gewohnheiten* [On Psychoanalysis of Sexual Behaviors]; *Hysterie und Pathoneurosen* [Hysteria and Pathoneurosis]; *Populare Vorträge über Psychoanalyse* [Popular Lectures on Psychoanalysis]; *Contributions to Psychoanalysis*. Author with Dr. Hollos of *Entwicklungsziele der Psychoanalyse* [Developmental Goals in Psychoanalysis]; with Dr. Rank, *Zur Psychoanalyse der paralytischen Geistesstörung* [On Psychoanalysis of Paralytic Mental Disorder]. (p.25)"

The catalog description confirms that Ferenczi attempted to teach psychoanalytic concepts and techniques to lay people. Along with psychoanalytic tradition in the clinical program at The New School, it is interesting that Ferenczi was one of the pioneers who tried to teach psychoanalysis to non-analytic, non-medical audience. Recent relational psychoanalysis movements bring attention and interests back to his works. Additionally, his name is definitively added to the lengthy list of great intellectual figures who taught at The New School, forever to be remembered by past, present, and future New School faculty and students.

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