



FERENCZI'S INFLUENCE ON CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOANALYTIC TRADITIONS



LINES OF DEVELOPMENT Evolution of Theory and Practice over the Decades



EDITED BY
ALEKSANDAR DIMITRIJEVIĆ,
GABRIELE CASSULLO,
AND JAY FRANKEL



Ferenczi's Influence on Contemporary Psychoanalytic Traditions

This collection covers the great variety topics relevant for understanding the importance of Sándor Ferenczi and his influence on contemporary psychoanalysis. Pre-eminent Ferenczi scholars were solicited to contribute succinct reviews of their fields of expertise.

The book is divided in five sections. 'The historico-biographical' describes Ferenczi's childhood and student days, his marriage, brief analyses with Freud, his correspondences and contributions to the daily press in Budapest, exploration of his patients' true identities, and a paper about his untimely death. 'The development of Ferenczi's ideas' reviews his ideas before his first encounter with psychoanalysis, his relationship with peers, friendship with Groddeck, emancipation from Freud, and review of the importance of his *Clinical Diary*. The third section reviews Ferenczi's clinical concepts and work: trauma, unwelcome child, wise baby, identification with aggressor, mutual analysis, and many others. In 'Echoes', we follow traces of Ferenczi's influence on virtually all traditions in contemporary psychoanalysis: interpersonal, independent, Kleinian, Lacanian, relational, etc. Finally, there are seven 'application' chapters about Ferenczi's ideas and the issues of politics, gender and development.

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For ease of reading, “he” is used throughout for general reference to the infant, the patient, or the individual, and “she” for general reference to the analyst, or the student, but at any point the opposite gender can be substituted.



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de l'Ecole de Budapest (Toulouse, Erès, 2007); *Michael Balint: El nuevo comienzo de la Escuela de Budapest* (Madrid, Sintesis, 2003); "Michael Balint: An introduction (*The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 2002); "Healing boredom: Ferenczi and his circle of literary friends (*Ferenczi and his world: Rekindling the Spirit of the Budapest School*, Karnac, London); and "The founding of the Budapest School (*Ferenczi's Turn in Psychoanalysis*, New York and London Press, 1993). She is editor, with Judith Dupont, of three special issues on "The life and work of Michael Balint of *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*.

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Abbreviations

IPA International Psychoanalytical Association
IJP *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*

Correspondence is shown in the form: “Fer/Fr” (Ferenczi to Freud)

Abr Abraham
Fer Ferenczi
Fr Freud
Grod Groddeck
Jo Jones
Ju Jung

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Series editors' Introduction

In February 2017 a most successful four-day conference took place in Washington DC. Entitled “Lines of Development” it celebrated the four published volumes in this series to date, and three books in proof stage, including this one on Ferenczi. The conference revisited historically controversial issues with lively dialogues between representatives of different schools of thought – Ferenczi-Freud; Klein-Fairbairn; Klein-Anna Freud; and Winnicott-Bion.

Coincidentally, Washington had also featured large in Ferenczi’s own American experience, as in 1925 he delivered five lectures there under the auspices of the Washington Psychoanalytic Association, founded by Clara Thompson (who later travelled to Budapest to become his analyst and until his death, and was instrumental in keeping his posthumous influence alive in the USA).

While in Washington, one of us joined the three co-editors of this Ferenczi volume on one of their exploratory jaunts to the famous Library of Congress, to mine the Freud Archives for the unexpected.

We fancy that Ferenczi would have approved that our journey to this source of hidden knowledge was preceded by a sumptuous meal in a Serbian restaurant nearby, accompanied by far-reaching transcultural discussions. And indeed, at the library, several interesting documents and passionate *cris de cœur* emerged from the archive’s ordinary-looking office box-files, to enrich this book.

Apart from their shared excitement in psychoanalytic scholarship and meticulous attention to detail, what struck us most about this lively threesome was their caring camaraderie, humour, and all-roundedness – qualities that make for productive co-editing. You the reader, will enjoy the bountiful fruits of this fertile collaboration.

For this book is a treasure trove of revelations. As the story unfolds against the backdrop of a Budapest heady with new hopes and poignant spoilage, we come to know a complex man riven by contradictory needs to provoke and be loved.

Early chapters in this volume explore his origins as eighth child in a large family growing up above the eighteenth-century Baroque-style bookstore on the main street of Miskolc, run by their father, and later, their widowed mother – which served as a hub for the Budapest intelligentsia of famous writers, poets, artists, and middle class radicals. We see how the bereaved award-winning adolescent’s admixture of intellect and flesh prefigured the adult’s intricate personality: adventurous yet compliant; fiercely loyal and kind yet provocative and vengeful; gregarious yet intensely private.

Throughout the following chapters we come to realise that despite exceptional qualities that rendered him so uniquely imaginative with patients and inspiring to his students, he was hampered by the antagonism he aroused among envious peers regarding his status as “crown

prince" to Freud. Notwithstanding his professional standing and one hundred pre-Freudian publications, and despite his significant organisational efficiency and prescience in founding an international body with standardised training requirements (including a personal analysis), as a psychoanalyst Ferenczi was under-appreciated in his own time. Indeed, positive recognition of his exquisitely fine-tuned clinical skills in work with traumatised, borderline and extremely difficult patients was stalled for decades during his lifetime, both by conservative forces and his own ambivalence, and after his death by malicious gossip and political undercurrents that denied him publication.

The psychoanalytic movement as a whole was deprived by writing this most creative member out of its history. His radical understanding of countertransference and theories regarding the crucial role of the preoedipal mother and pernicious long-lasting after-effects of early trauma are pertinent today. His discovery of the defence mechanisms involved (e.g., splitting, dissociation, fragmentation (atomisation), denial, and projection) are often ascribed to his analysand Melanie Klein, while introjection, internalisation of split identifications, and identification with the aggressor are still attributed to Abraham and Torok, Fairbairn, and Anna Freud respectively.

To redress this deficit the three co-editors commissioned the topmost Ferenczi scholars in the field all over the world to contribute to this book by retracing the evolution and eventual acceptance and dissemination of Ferenczi's controversial ideas, way beyond their Hungarian origins – especially regarding the reality of early trauma and the potency of emotional regression/re-living in therapy.

These chapters describe how, although impaled on the barbed conventions and prejudice of his era and the prevailing rivalries between Vienna and Zürich, political rifts, and ugly Christian/Jewish schisms within psychoanalysis, Ferenczi's ideas managed to survive. We see their enormous influence on theory and technique in contemporary psychoanalytic traditions – amongst the British Independents, the French schools of Lacan and Laplanche, the American interpersonal theorists, intersubjectivists, self-psychologists, and relational schools, as well as within social science and the humanities, across disciplines such as social psychiatry, ethnography, psychotherapy, gender studies, social work, pedagogy, attachment theory, and infant mental health.

In our multifaceted twenty-first century, almost 150 years after Sándor Ferenczi's birth, we have finally stopped denying the widespread reality of childhood sexual abuse. His explanatory system of intergenerational transmission of trauma remains apposite, delineating the dynamic confusion between the child's desire for tenderness and imposed adult eroticism, inducing the victim's assumption of guilt. Likewise, Ferenczi's modifications of technique have primed our own expectations of therapeutic authenticity and the importance of sincerity in the reparative acknowledgment of mistakes.

Although we shall not know his like again he can be glimpsed between the covers of this fine book.

Editors' Introduction

The *Lines of Development* series opened with a volume examining the contributions of Anna Freud. The following books in the series were devoted to other pioneers of psychoanalysis: W. R. D. Fairbairn, Donald Winnicott, W. R. Bion, Melanie Klein, Jacques Lacan. Direct your gaze to the psychoanalytic skies and these will certainly be the brightest objects you see; a couple more psychoanalytic stars and the skies might be pretty well mapped.

Why, then, continue the series with a volume on Sándor Ferenczi? Does his work, scientific or clinical, make him important enough in the world of contemporary psychoanalysis to be granted a place among the psychoanalytic stars? As editors of this book, we are grateful to the series editors, Norka Malberg and Joan Raphael-Leff, as well as Oliver Rathbone of Karnac Books, for providing us with this extraordinary opportunity to show, with a “little” help from our friends in the “Ferenczi community”, why the answer is a resounding “Yes!”. Ferenczi’s place in the psychoanalytic firmament, then, as well as now, is so fundamental that without him psychoanalysis would not be what it is. If it were possible, for the sake of argument, to eschew his contributions to theoretical and clinical psychoanalysis, the edifice would crumble and be unrecognisable. We are grateful that the generous contributions of our more than forty Ferenczi experts demonstrates that this is so, making possible what we believe is a comprehensive overview of Ferenczi’s life, work, and legacy.

To name only a handful of points demonstrating Ferenczi’s pivotal place in the development of psychoanalysis, for any sceptics, it was Ferenczi—hailed by all, Freud included, as the best clinical psychoanalyst of his time—who came up with the idea of an international society of those devoted to Freud and psychoanalysis, and became one of its early presidents; who developed a radical new understanding of psychological trauma, introducing new conceptions of identification, splitting, regression, traumatic progression, and others, that remains cutting-edge; who was far ahead of his time in his efforts to extend the reach of psychoanalytic treatment, and whose experiments in technique were the first, pioneering forays of some of today’s most influential clinical psychoanalytic approaches; and who analysed the founders of what would turn out to be the object-relations and interpersonal traditions in contemporary psychoanalysis.

And if Nietzsche’s idea that each theory is half drawn from autobiography was ever an understatement, Ferenczi is a case in point. To a significant extent, Ferenczi’s psychoanalytic ideas grew out of his endless efforts to overcome the emotional wounds of his childhood and his profound disappointment in his three brief periods of analysis with Freud. This prototype of a wounded healer gave his best, and more, to providing his patients what he himself had not received—either from his harsh mother or from his analyst, who was also his intimate friend with whom he travelled, exchanged family secrets and love troubles, and shared

professional endeavours as well as gossip and personal intrigues. Barely anything significant happened in the world of psychoanalysis between 1908 and 1933, the year of his death, without Ferenczi's involvement and, often, his personal initiative.

Towards the end of his life, Ferenczi himself became the source of profound—and it turns out, enduring—controversy. It should come as no surprise that a central figure as controversial as Ferenczi was “disappeared” from the history of psychoanalysis for several decades. A search of PEP-Web shows that between the end of the Second World War and 1985 there were only forty-eight papers with the name “Ferenczi” in the title. The contributions of Ferenczi's final years were long dismissed not just as different from Freud's, a legitimate scientific difference, but as a consequence of Ferenczi's mental deterioration. Specifically, it was the efforts of Ernest Jones that led the psychoanalytic world to believe that Ferenczi had grown psychotic and that his last papers were worthless (Bonomi, 1998). Ostracism and censorship are, unfortunately, not unfamiliar to the world of psychoanalysis (and Ferenczi himself was actively involved in enforcing a few such campaigns, for instance, against his friend and collaborator Otto Rank). But, as psychoanalysts know better than anyone, repressed contents start appearing everywhere, in thin disguises. Indeed, Ferenczi became an inspiration to the next generation of dissidents, like Sullivan, Bowlby, and Lacan, as well as a silent presence in the work of everyone who treated traumatised patients or paid special attention to countertransference.

Truth be told, many were not aware of Ferenczi's ideas, and he could have ended up as a footnote to psychoanalytic history were it not for two flame keepers. In January, 1939, Bálint Mihaly emigrated to Manchester, and Ferenczi's widow Gizela asked him to bring Ferenczi's manuscripts with him to safety. As soon as Balint became Michael, he translated into English Ferenczi's *Clinical Diary* and several papers written by Ferenczi after 1928. While the papers were published, though only in the late 1940s and during the 1950s, the *Diary* was considered unpublishable—Jones, Anna Freud, and Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich all believed it would only reinforce the belief that Ferenczi had been mad (Dupont, 2015). With Balint's death, in 1970, Ferenczi's stepdaughters gave the role of Ferenczi's literary executor to Judith Dupont, a Hungarian-born psychoanalyst, living, since her youth, in Paris, who as a child played in Ferenczi's garden while her grandmother, Vilma Kovacs, and her aunt Alice, later to become Mrs Balint, discussed serious topics (Dupont, 2016). It was through the efforts of Mme Dupont that the *Diary* was published in French, in 1985, and three years later in English, followed by the translations of the complete correspondence between Freud and Ferenczi in the following decade.

Despite earlier predictions, the book received a unanimously positive reception and triggered what Emanuel Berman would soon term the Ferenczi Renaissance (1996). The number of scholarly papers about Ferenczi increased greatly after the 1980s; since the late 1980s, international conferences focused on Ferenczi have been held roughly every three years somewhere in the world; many books and special journal issues have been devoted to Ferenczi in English, French, Hungarian, Italian, and Spanish. Ferenczi came to be recognised as a predecessor of all those who searched for more comprehensive clinical perspectives and more effective clinical approaches, and who dared to look outside conservative psychoanalytic doctrine to find these. His ideas, sometimes jotted down at the end of a long workday as mere diary notes, were rediscovered, their value newly appreciated, and they were tested out in the consulting room: for instance, the importance of tenderness and of honesty, in the family and in the analytic relationship; the reality of trauma, in such forms as rejection, sexual abuse, what Ferenczi termed the “terrorism of suffering” and hypocrisy; the reappearance of

often-disavowed trauma in the analytic relationship; and traumatic consequences, including dissociation, regression, traumatic progression, and identification with the aggressor.

This book is the culmination of a great effort made by a community of scholars—our authors—with the most diverse psychoanalytic trainings. Unsatisfied with the power of many psychoanalytic theories to explain their observations in daily analytic practice, these scholars converged on Ferenczi—an early guide whose contributions continue to light the way for those who attempt to heal others' psychological suffering. Part I of the book traces Ferenczi's life from his childhood in Miskolc and his medical studies in Vienna to his untimely death at the age of fifty-nine, via the major turning-points of his life—his pre-psychoanalytic papers, his analyses with Freud, the complicated dynamics of a love life that became enmeshed with his relationship with Freud, collaboration and competition with his analytic colleagues, his role in the public life of Budapest and in the international and local psychoanalytic communities, along with detailed descriptions of many of his patients, even those whose identity had been hidden. Equally encompassing is the presentation, in Part II, of Ferenczi's clinical contributions, by authors who have devoted years to studying them: his conceptions of trauma, dissociation, regression, the “unwelcome child”, the “wise baby”, identification with the aggressor, mutuality, countertransference... Succinct presentation of all Ferenczi's major ideas can now be found in one place. Following this, in Part III, the focus turns to Ferenczi's influences on contemporary psychoanalytic traditions. (Un)surprisingly, most analytic traditions are, in some way, descendants of Ferenczi: the Independents and Klein, Lacan and Laplanche, the interpersonalists, self psychology, and relational psychoanalysts. Indeed, there are contemporary schools that consider Ferenczi, rather than Freud, their true originator; and more and more psychoanalysts understand their patients in ways that derive more from Ferenczi than from Freud. Finally, Part IV shows how Ferenczi's ideas can be applied beyond the analytic consulting room. There we meet Ferenczi the political thinker, and we see how his ideas have been enlisted to deconstruct authoritarianism and illuminate the treatment of mass social trauma. We find out how Ferenczi's ideas have been put to use in helping new parents become better attuned to their infants. We learn about Ferenczi's thinking regarding the nature of sexuality, the feminine, and the maternal. And we discover how Ferenczi influenced the development of the field of clinical social work.

In editing this book, we took special efforts to avoid romanticising Ferenczi, to avoid setting him up as the new unquestioned saint of psychoanalysis, much the way Freud has often been treated, or to position him one-dimensionally as the good psychoanalyst, as opposed to Freud, the bad one. We strove for a balanced, appreciative but appropriately critical, view of the man and the oeuvre, where weaknesses of character and mistakes in his work are not hidden. We hope our comprehensive, systematic, grounded approach to our subject can become a foundation for close reading (and re-reading) of Ferenczi, and for future research that extracts what is most valuable in his work for our understanding of people's psychological struggles and how to help people who suffer from them.

What do we think is most essential in Ferenczi's legacy? Ferenczi was a model clinician in important ways: highly motivated to find better cures for his patients; audacious enough to learn from his own experience, to experiment and to take risks, despite conformist pressures; and scrupulously, rigorously critical towards his own new ideas and techniques. And this approach led him to a radical new understanding of the psychoanalytic process. He was the first to realise that psychoanalytic treatments inevitably include the unconscious of the analyst in an unconscious dialogue with the patient, and he worked on countertransference deeply and openly, and decades before anyone else. The result was that the comfortable

position of the anonymous and detached analyst gave way to a new, more mutual approach, characterised by the analyst's openness and honesty. And, through his new way of working, which welcomed aspects of the patient that may remain unobserved in a more classical approach, he reached a more profound understanding of trauma and its consequences than any of his contemporaries; in the opinion of some, he was even able to help some patients seen as hopeless.

Careful reading, especially of the *Diary*, suggests that there is still more to be digested. Drafted, almost in passing, are gems that clinicians and researchers of today have yet to hone and polish; for instance, the idea that the perpetrator of sexual abuse is not looking for satisfaction, but to "steal" the last moments of the child's innocence.

We leave this endeavour to new teams, feeling our current mission has been accomplished.

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Prologue

The need for Ferenczi's voice in psychoanalysis

Franco Borgogno
for Judith Dupont

The need for a volume that traces the tradition originated by a psychoanalyst emerges as we identify the presence of a noteworthy body of thought or knowledge, with its own set of ideas and concepts, and a terminology that arises from it. In our own field—in addition to the many studies of this kind dedicated to Freud—Jung, Klein, Winnicott, Bion, Lacan, and others have been deemed to merit such volumes; Adler and Sullivan would surely also be more than worthy candidates on the basis of their role in advancing psychoanalysis in Europe and North America. Anna Freud is another who developed a specific body of thought and knowledge that changes her father's psychoanalysis in small but also in major ways—a fact that is often not grasped (see Malberg & Raphael-Leff, 2011). Moving across the Atlantic to North America, we should also doubtless consider ego psychologists like Hartmann, Kris, Loewenstein, and Rapaport, as well as those from different traditions: Horney, Thompson (a pupil of Ferenczi), and Fromm. Moving a little forward in time, we might think of Erikson and (still later) Kohut's self-psychology and Kernberg's antagonistic response thereto.

When it comes to placing Ferenczi's contribution within such an articulated historical, geographical, and theoretical development of psychoanalysis, I should immediately state my opinion that he too is clearly a worthy subject for such a study. Ferenczi's thought and knowledge are in no way less significant than that of the aforementioned authors; and even though it was not to Ferenczi's liking to present his concepts and ideas within a systematic structure (indeed, these were often mere flash-images, associations, sensations, impressions, intuitions, or analogies), his unique and vibrant expressive style, and the extraordinary freshness of his themes for psychoanalysis itself, are unparalleled in our field ("He was always able to look at ... things and ... phenomena, without bias and as naively as if he were seeing them for the first time" (Balint, 1949, p. 216)).

In Ferenczi's case, moreover, Freud himself has justified our taking such a line. His obituary of Ferenczi describes the latter not just as a pupil but as a master—and not only to all other psychoanalysts, but also to Freud himself (Freud, 1933). Freud reserved this kind of recognition for very few—perhaps for no other. Ferenczi had a uniquely intimate place in Freud's professional and personal life—they shared "an intimate community of life, feelings and interests" (Fr/Fer, 11 January 1933, p. 446).