A New (2009) Introduction to

Aron and Harris (1993)

Sándor Ferenczi: Discovery and Rediscovery:

An Introduction to: The Legacy of Sándor Ferenczi

Talking again about Ferenczi in the year since opening the Sandor Ferenczi Center at the New School University in 2008, we are struck by several matters. The work of this extraordinary thinker/researcher analyst clinician is still fresh and potent. And yet, Ferenczi is still too unknown to too many educated and thoughtful psychoanalysts. His work remains in need of fresh translation and requires an edited, annotated, more accessible edition, and there is still no worthy biography of this pioneer analyst.

We have a new and perhaps mournful reading of a comment of Balint, "The historic event of the disagreement between Freud and Ferenczi acted as a trauma on the psychoanalytic world" (1968, p. 152). At first encounter, one thinks of the loss to those of Ferenczi's followers who were left so adrift at his death. One thinks of the loss of a rich trauma theory to the entire field of psychoanalysis, a loss of great consequence to many adults and children who experienced actual abuse,

whether physical, mental, or sexual. The denial of the reality of abuse was repeated at the level of the family, the analytic dyad, and the institution of psychoanalysis.

But most particularly, it has struck us that the loss that is most acute and palpable is the collapse of the possibility of dialogue. Dialogue across many points of difference. So we might think trauma and fantasy; intrapsychic and intersubjective; transference and countertransference; oedipal and pre-oedipal, analysand and analyst as subject and object; desire and attachment; father and mother. For over 80 years, we have too frequently in psychoanalysis lurched between polarities, conducting our debates over theoretical and clinical difference as some horrid version of Grand Auto Theft, incinerating people we did or do not agree with; free to launch ad hominem or ad feminen arguments without a second thought. This polarizing and villainizing form of argumentation is a process that certainly does not solely involve Ferenczi and his lineage. (It should not escape notice that the suppression of Ferenczi's contributions occurred just as millions of people were in fact incinerated. For a historical take on the relevance of Hitler's rise to power see Meszaros, 2003.) Even in his last years when his theoretical and clinical approach took him in new directions, even at his most rebellious, Ferenczi never

stopped thinking of himself as a psychoanalyst and a follower of Freud.

But Freud and Ferenczi were voices and minds and hearts that were linked and divergent and instead of braided debate and dialogue we have had exile and loss.

We began our work on Ferenczi immediately after the publication in English of the <u>Clinical Diary</u> (1932, English translation, 1988). This led us, by 1991, to organize the first international conference on the legacy of Sandor Ferenczi, in an attempt to try and repair this vacuum in the United States. We were building on the courageous work of many Europeans from Balint on down, who kept Ferenczi's actual work and papers and his ideas alive and transformative.

There are probably many answers and theories as to how this loss occurred and why it has been hard to rectify. One thinks certainly of the terrible events in Europe after Ferenczi's death and of the understandable conservatism in the émigré generation, whether settling in England or the United States. How to understand Balint's reticence in translating the Clinical Diary (Ferenczi, 1932)? The post war period, with the long Soviet occupation meant that Ferenczi's work in Hungary was virtually an underground text. The postwar period in the United States in psychoanalysis and in the larger culture, saw various forms of

conservatism and constriction, from the hegemony of ego psychology and the 'age of certainty', through McCarthyism and the black listing that begins in the late 1940's and goes on for a decade. We know something of the chilling impact on culture and education, perhaps on medical psychiatry and psychoanalysis as well, of these movements of intimidation and silencing.

It is probably entrepreneurial to claim that the relational tradition is part of the sea change in which we may become reacquainted with Ferenczi. But also accurate. To think of the new (now decades long) renaissance of Ferenczi's work and thought is hopefully to bring into focus a dialogue within psychoanalysis in which both/and trumps polarity and alienated difference.

In the fifteen years since the conference that yielded the book <u>The Legacy of Sandor Ferenczi</u> for which this essay was written there are some powerful new voices: Jay Frankel, Therese Ragen, Carlo Bonomi, Meira Liekerman, Benjamin Kilbourne, Rogelio Sosnik, and Zvi Lothane, Peter Rudnytsky, among others, whose scholarship and generative application of Ferenczian ideas show the past, present, and future of Ferenczi's work. We remain very grateful for the European and in particular the Hungarian analysts who have maintained and breathed

ongoing life into the Ferenczian tradition: Judit Meszaros, Andre Heynal, Bolognini...

We think the conception we worked out for our Introduction still holds up, hopefully offering for new readers a guide to this amazing thinker and psychoanalyst. Truly, Ferenczi was thought of, in his lifetime, as the analyst of last resort, the "specialist in peculiarly difficult cases" (1931, p. 470) and because of his unique and deep clinical experiences, Sandor Ferenczi has still an enormous amount to teach and engage with.

We should end this brief introduction by noting our most recent effort toward rediscovering and passing on Ferenczi's legacy, namely the creation of The Sandor Ferenczi Center at The New School for Social Research. Founded by the two of us with our colleague Jeremy Safran, setting the Sandor Ferenczi Center in The New School has historical significance. Ferenczi spent 8 months in New York in 1926, centered on a series of lectures given at The New School, after being invited to the United States by Alvin Johnson, the President of The New School. From his correspondence with Freud in this period, we know that he lectured, saw patients, and was involved in key issues in the development of psychoanalysis and training in the United States. Linking the Ferenczi

project to The New School reconnects American psychoanalysts to important features of our own history.

It is also of some significance that we established the Ferenczi Center precisely 100 years after Ferenczi's first meeting with Freud in 1908. It is also of historic import that the Ferenczi Center is housed in a major university since Sandor Ferenczi himself was the first to have been appointed as a Professor of Psychoanalysis at the University of Budapest in 1918. We are thrilled that the Ferenczi Center will now host our book as a download on the Ferenczi Center website and will contribute to further thinking about Ferenczi's legacy, making his contributions and insights accessible to new generations of psychoanalysts. It was Freud, after all, who said of Ferenczi that he "made all analysts into his pupils' (Freud, 1933, p. 228).

When downloading these files from the website please make a contribution to the Ferenczi Center:

http://www.newschool.edu/nssr/subpage.aspx?id=24638

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