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The Legacy of Sándor Ferenczi

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The Discovery of the Budapest Writings

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"IT'S PURE GOLD" SAID FREUD ABOUT SÁNDOR FERENCZI'S articles (Freud, 1933). He was referring most certainly to the dense, original writings that the Hungarian psychoanalyst had been lovingly preparing for discovery since their first meeting in 1908. I had read Ferenczi's psychoanalytic works and felt that he had a different concept—one that came from a forgotten lineage that needed to be restored to history. Thus, with this great dream overshadowing my small passion, I decided to leave for Hungary in August 1976. I was encouraged by my own analyst in this spiritual migration to discover the unpublished writings. In Paris, rumor had it that they had been broken up and might no longer exist. Therefore, with neither a specific assignment nor any other great illusion, I left to explore the Budapest writings. What irritated me profoundly was that the destiny of these writings, about which we knew so little, could be of so little interest to some.

So, first to Budapest via Vienna (where Sándor had practiced medicine) and then Vác and Esztergom, where I met Györgyi Kurcz. She was delighted to hear a little "talk about France." On to Bakony with its wild forest in which I lost my way, left me with rough memories of roving shadows that leaned toward me and make strange noises in the clear blue evening. Permeated with my studies of Novalis, Shelling, and Goethe at Nanterre, I imagined the King of the Aulnis. In the region of the Balaton Lake, I could feel the presence of spirits which increased my understanding of Ferenczi's interest in "spiritism."

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Matters were not helped by the strangeness of the Hungarian anguage with which I had to come to terms. My head was filled with ıundreds of Black Forest legends containing a tormenting Bartok heme. It was unlikely that I would find "gold" in such a place, so I eft. I went to Kaposvár and then Pecs and finally Szeged, where I met ıp with my friend Györgyi. Györgyi agreed to help me in my research ınd we moved quickly on to Budapest. One beautiful afternoon in August, I followed Györgyi's advice and visited a specialist library/ ookshop on my own. In faltering Hungarian, I asked the young sales- girl if she had Sándor Ferenczi's works in stock. She disappeared into he back of the shop and an old, pale-visaged man appeared. He was Ferenczi's namesake. We eventually managed to make ourselves ınderstood in German. As luck would have it, the old bespectacled nan with few remaining teeth was vaguely familiar with the works of ıis "double." With an intense laugh he told me where I might eventu- ılly find the *other Sándor Ferenczi's* writings.

My excitement was such that I confused my parting words. I meant o say "I'll take the tramcar home," but I used the word *lustwagen* which, if it existed in German, would mean literally "pleasure car") nstead of *lastwagen* (or van). As Tennessee Williams would say, I eturned that day on *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

The old man's directions were either out of date or false, since ıours of searching through mountains of books, gazettes, and maga- ines proved futile.

Two days later, in front of the absent Imre Hermann's house, Györgyi said she had seen one of Hermann's articles (published two 'ears earlier in 1974) in the magazine *Orvosi Hetilap*—a specialist nedical review which had, according to my information, also ıublished at least some of Sándor's previously unpublished works. We lecided to go to the library. Having listened nonchalantly to Györgyi's precise explanations concerning my research, the librarian ılacidly put down his poppy-cake and said, *"Talán."* (Maybe.) I vaited. He went on: *"Talán . . . Maybe they are here. I don't know. ook for yourselves."* We found ourselves in front of an unlikely pile f reviews from which we unearthed obviously not a single copy ontaining the early writings but rather a series of the medical gazettes *Gyógyászat* and *Orvosi Hetilap*. Although haphazardly separated and ttered with mistaken references, the yearly classification of the two

gazettes nonetheless revealed the early writings! I fingered the reviews and—with eyes only for their words, their articles, those letters printed in black ink—I dreamed of making them known *in extenso* so that they could finally live their own life. On going through the editions of 1899 with Györgyi I found "Spiritism," Sándor's first astonishing philosophic article dealing with the thorny and mystic problem of belief in spirits. Then I discovered articles discussing illnesses and strange cases: hyperdactylia, hypospadia, pemphigus, lead-poisoning, and tabes. . . . The Ferenczi Story was beginning.

I went back day after day, each new discovery throwing me into an intimate state of jubilation. I collected the theoretical articles in order with the aim of isolating them in a walled enclosure of pure neuropsychiatry. Györgyi and I quickly deciphered five essential articles: "Love in Science," "Consciousness and Development," "Reading and Health," "Paranoia," and "Feminine Homosexuality."

It was on returning to Paris that my real problems began. I wrote to Gerard Mendel at Payot Editions, who in turn put me in touch with Judith Dupont. As she was regarded as guarantor of Sándor's interests, I rushed to see her with the texts under my arm. Unfortunately, we were not able to agree on terms for the translations. Perhaps it was a matter of a personality clash. Disappointed, I continued my quest to publish the "Ferenczi Gold." My frustrations were compounded when I received rejection from two other French publishers, Payot and Gallimard. A similar rejection came from Jacqueline Rousseau, the friendly and courteous director of the "Freud and His Times" collection at Denoel.

At the time, I was 27 years old and had been undergoing analysis for a little more than two years. I was not a psychoanalyst. I had neither written nor published. Who, after all, could give credit to my approach? After having followed Lacan's lectures and clinical presentations, I decided to make contact with him. I had already, in fact, engaged him in conversation on the subject of Saint-Augustin, on a train that was taking us to the Strasbourg Congress. The meeting with Lacan, however, never took place. The secretary of the Freud school, my friend Nicole Sels, asked me to translate an unpublished work of Hermann and Roheim (Hermann, 1980; Roheim, 1979). All the same, I was disappointed. Was I the only one to cherish the

unpublished writings—the only one to want to give them a few noble recommendations?

During this difficult time, I continued to study Hungarian, and Györgyi and I progressed with the translations. I finished the translations of the articles, and kept them under archival conditions for further reference and publication. At the Institute de Psychanalyse I began to identify with Ferenczi as "the lost son of the psychoanalytic community." At heart, I was deeply aware of the fact that Ferenczi remained "a corpse in the psychoanalyst's cupboard."

I continued to have difficulties with getting the early Ferenczi papers published. Sibony, for example, replied that the writings were "too medical" and some time after dutifully sent me a subscription form to be filled out and returned to the Freudian "cause"! Maria Torok, who welcomed me with genuine kindness, preferred not to keep the writings at her home to read because "if ever there's a fire," the "gold" would have melted. At that point, I had not made copies of the articles. With a short letter, Mme. Torok thanked me for having given her the opportunity to get to know the texts. Finally, I made photocopies which I sent to Ilse Barande and I continued to translate, with Györgyi, the Budapest writings. My friendship and correspondence with Györgyi during this time sustained me.

Finally, a happier time arrived. I published "Spiritism" in a French translation *(Nouvelle Revue Française d'Ethnopsychiatrie)*. Piera Aulagnier, whose lectures I had attended at Saint-Anne's, published "Paranoia" and "Two Diagnostic Errors" in the review *Topique*. My friend and colleague Jacques Postel saw to it that my commentary on "Love in Science" appeared very quickly in *l'Evolution Psychiatrique*. Jean-Francois Reverzy agreed to publish *in extenso* a percussive social critique: "Assistant Doctors' Contributions to Hospital Organization" as well as a few extracts of Ferenczi's work on paralysis in the review *Transitions*. But that was all. In May 1982, I wrote to Rene Major insisting on the fact that Ferenczi's first writings threw as much light on the birth and history of psychoanalysis as on the Hungarian doctor's personality and later works. I specified the fact that 1983 was the 50th anniversary of Sándor's death. I was not disappointed. He decided to publish the essay (Major, 1983). Encouraged by this, I wrote to Michel Foucault from whom I was looking for the

extreme honor of a preface. At the College de France, I discovered a man who admired my solitary approach, a being who was the prelate's opposite. He gave himself a few days to think my proposition over and then sent me this letter on the 15.10.82: "The quality of your work entitles you to publish it without the editor needing any sort of benediction or encouragement. I consider it a respect that we owe to work that has reached maturity to allow it to present itself with its own authority." Contrary to certain trissotins of psychoanalysis, Michel Foucault did not accept being fawned on. I liked that—and in spite of his refusal, I was exultant.

Once the book had been published (Lorin, 1984), I feverishly awaited the critics. There were many favorable reviews in France for which I was grateful. The reaction was also favorable among the Americans, Canadians, and Hungarians.

I continued my research and took up hope again on the day when I received an extremely cordial letter from Professor Arnold Wm. Rachman, who had contacted me through the intermediary of my first editor (Aubier) and to whom I had replied asking for photographs of the young Ferenczi. "I contacted an acquaintance who works in photographic research," he replied in impeccable French. "She assures me that no photograph of a young Ferenczi exists in the American archives" (Lorin, 1991). Such was the warmth of this letter that I was delighted, enthusiastic, and deeply touched to discover that he had published several serious articles on Ferenczi. I made a point of making them known at the university and I included them on the reading list for my third-year students.

At the University of Grenoble, the entire collection of the first writings was finally brought together and put on computer file in the clinical psychology and pathology laboratory. It was at this moment that I was spontaneously contacted by M. Alian Geoffrey on the advice of my theses (State Doctorat) director, professor Tobie Nathan. The hope of publishing the "Unpublished Budapest Writings" with the "Pensée Sauvege" publishing house filled me with joy. I still had to edit a dozen critical footnotes, allowing me to put each of the young Sándor's articles in chronological order. It had taken all these years to restore, classify, put in order, collect, translate, and even have certain texts retranslated by my friend Katalyn Berenyi at the Hungarian Institute, who lent me a supportive hand. I had to seek technical

advice from specialist doctors on the anatomical and physiological terms that run through the texts.

Certain colleagues, surprised by the adventures I have just related, asked me the question: "Are you really a Ferenczian disciple?" I replied that I was not Ferenczian, Winnicottian, or even Augustian, despite the attraction I feel toward the thoughts of each of these authors. I like Ferenczi and it's true I would be delighted to see these collected writings one day published in the United States.

I believe it essential to have no one guiding style but rather glean from every cartel, institute, or school anything that benefits one in order to enrich, season, and finally elaborate one's own theory. It seems to me, in fact, that all theory is good from the moment I can use it to progress to a higher level. It cannot be by chance that Ferenczi was never a schoolman. The young Sándor, open to everything, was a nomad who became a tzigane of psychoanalysis, an innovator, certainly not a docile zealot taking the writings of Freud as dogma. I would even add, although it will take years for the scales to fall from our eyes, that "the real wise man lives without a master," as Epicure said. To have the passion to be oneself at any cost; to sculpture one's life without emulating anybody; to search incessantly for facts without using the theory of some docile confederate expressing someone else's ideas, these were Ferenczi's "gold." In my opinion, the publication of these early writings is a way of paying homage to the fructuous independence of such thought.

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