

SÁNDOR FERENCZI'S EPISTEMOLOGIES AND THEIR POLITICS: ON *UTRAQUISM* AND THE ANALOGICAL METHOD.

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UTRAQUISM AND THE CRITIQUE OF THE SCIENCES

There are still many paths to explore when it comes to the epistemologies that are specific to the field of psychoanalysis. It is a worthwhile endeavor for psychoanalysts to ask questions about how knowledge is produced in their own field. But it is equally worthwhile for the social sciences more broadly, which are yet to discover all that psychoanalysis has to offer through its reflection on the encounter between the knower and the known. During the 1960s and 1970s, psychoanalysis was arguably lagging behind literary studies and the social sciences in terms of letting itself be transformed by the feminist movement and other movements for rights and forms of radical politics, with their profound epistemological implications. A closer look at the contributions of some of the early psychoanalysts, however, at the beginning of the twentieth century, can prove refreshing and can point to the radical edge of psychoanalysis.

In this chapter, I reflect on the epistemological underpinnings of some of Sándor Ferenczi's writings. As part of the Budapest intelligentsia at the turn of the century, Ferenczi received and filtered a number of radical ideas through his own clinical work. As a creative thinker, he proposed a series of innovations in psychoanalytic theory and technique around the notions of tact, empathy, and active technique. What is less acknowledged, however, is that his trauma theory and many of his other theoretical propositions are relevant not only for psychoanalysts. They also ground a political vocabulary. This is the case of his concept of *utraquism* (*Utraquismus*, *Utraquistische Arbeitsweise*), which I discuss below.

Already at the turn of the twentieth century, Ferenczi was very hopeful about the possibilities for a less rigid and less dogmatic materialism that would permit the emergence of a productive psycho-physical parallelism (Ferenczi 1900). As I see it, it is from this early hopefulness that Ferenczi comes to develop the idea of the *utraquism of the sciences* over two decades later.

What is *utraquism*? Derived from the Latin *utraque* meaning “one and the other,” it is the work of establishing relationships of analogy between distinct elements that belong to distinct fields of knowledge and strata of reality with the aim of discovering or going deeper into the *meaning* of certain processes (Ferenczi 1924b). For Ferenczi, *utraquism* is a method. It is an epistemologically consistent disposition.

Ferenczi borrowed this term from a sixteenth-century Protestant group, the Utraquists. What distinguished the Utraquists among the Protestants was their belief that it is not only the clergy that should have the privilege of taking both the bread and the wine during communion, but this symbolic reuniting of the flesh and blood of Christ should be extended to laity. As Martin Stanton (1990) notes, Ferenczi's interest in this term is quite a curious event in itself, given the fact that he was an agnostic Jew. I believe that Ferenczi's attraction to the Utraquists rests in his own strand of materialism, which is succinctly and poetically formulated in a 1921 essay: “[T]he symbol -a thing of flesh and blood” (Ferenczi 1921a, 352).

Ferenczi differentiates “unsubstantial allegory” from “the symbol”. Not every analogy is symbolic in a psychoanalytic sense. The symbol emerges from a particular kind of affectively charged non-arbitrariness. First, the symbol has a physiological basis; it “expresses in some ways the whole body or its functions” (Ferenczi 1921a, 355). Second, one of the two terms (things, ideas) of the analogy, which can be considered symbolic, is invested in consciousness with an inexplicable overcharge of affect. This surplus of affect is

rooted in the unconscious identification with another thing (or idea) to which it actually belongs. Construing analogies emerges as Ferenczi's method in both knowledge and healing.

One possible path into Ferenczi's analogical method would be to look at his 1924 work, *Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality*. Here, he speaks of *bioanalysis*, a science of origins, which affirms that every biological phenomenon also has a hidden meaning that can only be decoded via an interpretive path, where various overlaid historical strata are uncovered. In *Thalassa*, the principal phylogenetic-ontogenetic analogy is between the "intrauterine existence of higher mammals" and the type of existence characterizing the "aboriginal piscine period" (Ferenczi 1924, 45). As he puts, "birth itself [is] nothing but a recapitulation on the part of the individual of the great catastrophe which at the time of the recession of the ocean forced so many animals, and certainly our own animal ancestors, to adapt themselves to land existence" (1924, 45). Moving back and forth between ontogenesis and phylogenesis, Ferenczi elucidates the elements in his analogy:

The possession of an organ of copulation, the development within the maternal womb, and the circumvention of the great danger of desiccation -these three thus form an indestructible biological unity which must constitute the ultimate basis of the symbolic identity of the womb with the sea and the earth on the one hand, and of the male member with the child and the fish on the other. (Ferenczi 1924, 50)

In this chapter, I take a different path into Ferenczi's analogical method; I discuss a series of much smaller analogies embedded within his trauma theory and his conception of narcissism. Through a closer look at these analogies, we can arrive at a better understanding of Ferenczi's epistemological innovations.

In 1926, in "The Problem of the Acceptance of Unpleasant Ideas," Ferenczi makes an important connection between the stages in the development of the sense of reality in any individual and the development of the sciences:

As the last stage [in the development of the capacity for objectivity], that of insight derived from painful experience, I regarded the final and complete surrender of omnipotence -the scientific stage, so to speak, of our recognition of the world. In psycho-analytical phraseology, I called the first phase of all, in which the ego alone exists and includes in itself the whole world of experience, the period of introjection; the second phase, in which omnipotence is ascribed to external powers, the period of projection; the last stage of development might be thought of as the stage in which both mechanisms are employed in equal measure or in mutual compensation. . . .

When ... I attempted ... to bring some light to bear critically on the manner in which our present-day science works, I was compelled to assume that, if science is really to remain objective, it must work alternately as pure psychology and pure natural science, and must verify both our inner and outer experience by analogies taken from both points of view; this implies an oscillation between projection and introjection. I called this the "utraquism" of all true scientific work. In philosophy ultra-idealistic solipsism means a relapse into egocentric infantilism; the purely materialistic psycho-phobic standpoint signifies a regression to the exaggerations of the projection-phase. (Ferenczi 1926, 373)

What we find in Ferenczi is a critique of science that is much ahead of its time. Ferenczi cautions against the perils of a medical science that proceeds rigidly by looking, as if hypnotized, into the microscope (1933, 146–147). Ferenczi also proposes a horizontal model of the encounter between the sciences, where each scientific discourse has the attribute of bringing insight into a particular semiotic code, while none of the codes is deemed superior. The final chapter of *The Development of Psychoanalysis*, co-authored by Ferenczi and Otto Rank, brings a utopia of the unification of the natural and mental sciences, with psychoanalysis taking up the role of making the integration. Even within this utopia, utraquism, oscillating between "one

and the other” of the perspectives at hand, is central. We could argue that Ferenczi adopts a nomadic disposition in science, where knowledge is created by straying off from one point of perspective to another, from one stratum of reality to another. As he writes in his commentary on Freud’s *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, “[l]ooking at scientific advance as a whole, we see that direct, rectilinear advance keeps coming to a dead end, so that research needs to be resumed from a completely fresh and improbable angle” (1922, 371).

But what is perhaps most remarkable in Ferenczi’s critique of science -and what anticipates decades of feminist interventions and voices such as Sandra Harding (1986) and Donna Haraway (1988)- is that the act of making knowledge and the relationship to the object of study is seen as having its own erotics. What Ferenczi does is anchor his critique of science in his metapsychology, speaking of “the scientific stage” as one of the stages in the development of the sense of reality. The scientific stage is, by definition, the utraquistic oscillation between introjection and projection. It is the capacity of letting yourself be partly undone by the object, and then taking distance from it.

As early as 1915, Ferenczi was concerned with correcting the anthropocentric bias of the psychological sciences and preventing psychoanalysis from falling into the trap of naive animism. I read this as a thoroughly post-humanist disposition in Ferenczi:

There is a safeguard . . . against the psycho-analyst falling into the error of such naive animism. Naive animism transferred human psychic life en bloc without analysis on to natural objects. Psychoanalysis, however, dissected human psychic activity, pursued it to the limit where psychic and physical come in contact, down to the instincts, and thus freed psychology from anthropocentrism, and only then did it trust itself to evaluate this purified animism in terms of biology. (Ferenczi 1915, 256)

Ferenczi thus proves awareness of the dangers of working with psycho-physical parallelism as a preferred method in psychoanalysis. He nevertheless states that an analogical or utraquistic disposition is required from the psychoanalyst in their work. Mere observation of the attitude or the behavior of the patient is not sufficient. What is needed is an untiring sensitivity to the patient’s ideational associations, his emotions, and his unconscious process. To achieve this sensitivity, the psychoanalyst relies on the flexibility and the plasticity of their own mind (Ferenczi 1933, 153).

FERENCZI’S BIOLOGICAL METAPHORS

Some of Ferenczi’s most important and original ideas on trauma are built around a series of biological analogies. What is remarkable is how Ferenczi records vignettes on animal behavior; how he humbly learns from them; and how he construes the psychoanalytic observations in dialogue with them, in the spirit of a clinical empiricism. Meaning springs from his own utraquistic oscillation between the examples in biology (or sometimes chemistry or physics) and his thesis in trauma theory. We can argue that his metapsychology is the fruit of these forms of utraquistic elucidation. This type of minute observation of animals and cells is close in spirit to that of philosophers and social theorists such as Donna Haraway (1976), Gregory Bateson (1979), and Félix Guattari (2011) in the sense of acknowledging the plurality of semiotic codes that traverse the living being. I am, therefore, not insisting that Ferenczi’s theory of trauma has a biological substratum, but rather that Ferenczi is able to take insights from biology through his own utraquistic method.

In what follows, I will discuss three of these biological vignettes: the first one is about animals who leave behind wounded parts of their bodies and Ferenczi’s original and illuminating system of terms alloplastic adaptation/autoplastic adaptation, autosymbolism, and autotomy; the second one concerns the creation of new organs and Ferenczi’s ideas on the relationship between creation and destruction; and the third one is about the teratoma, the growth of a tumor, which Ferenczi uses as a crucial image for the elaboration of his conception of narcissism.

“BITING OFF A PAINFUL LEG”: AUTOTOMY

There are two kinds of responses of the ego to the trauma for Ferenczi. The first one, corresponding to a highly developed sense of reality, he terms “alloplastic adaptation,” which means that the ego is able to alter the environment, the world outside, in such way that self-destruction and self-reconstruction are not necessary, and the ego maintains its equilibrium (1930a, 221). The second one he calls “autoplastic adaptation,” which means that the ego does not have or loses its capacity to mold the external world, and proceeds to operate on itself.

Perhaps the most tragic form of autoplastic adaptation is autotomy -where the ego cuts off, fully detaches, and leaves a part of itself behind. It is here that Ferenczi relies on the image of the animal shedding a body part that has been wounded- let us think of lizards cutting off their tails or mammals known to bite off a painful leg. In “Psycho-analytical Observations on Tic” Ferenczi writes:

Here I will touch on the analogy of the third kind of tic, i.e., the motor discharge (“turning against one’s own person,” Freud), with a method of reaction that occurs in certain lower animals, which possess the capacity for “Autotomia”. If a part of their body is painfully stimulated they let the part concerned “fall” in the true sense of the word by severing it from the rest of their body by the help of certain specialized muscular actions; others (like certain worms) even fall into several small pieces (they “burst asunder,” as it were, from fury). Even the biting off of a painful limb is said to occur. (Ferenczi 1920, 160)

In one of the entries of the *Clinical Diary*, Ferenczi introduces another curious vignette on animal behavior, when the adaptation to the anticipation of unbearable pain is suicide:

As an analogy I refer to a reliable account of an Indian friend, a hunter. He saw how a falcon attacked a little bird; as it approached, the little bird started to tremble and, after a few seconds of trembling, flew straight into the falcon’s open beak and was swallowed up. The anticipation of certain death appears to be such torment that by comparison actual death is a relief. (Ferenczi 1932, 179)

Ferenczi derives crucial metapsychological reflections from these images. In the first one on autotomia, we see “an archaic prototype of the components of the masochistic instinct” (1920, 161). In the second one, we see the limits of passivity and a certain primacy given to activity, in that an active death is preferred to the anticipation of complete surrender to the aggressor.

LOEB’S FERTILIZED EGGS: DESTRUCTION, CREATIVITY, AND THE CREATION OF NEW ORGANS

Ferenczi is aware of the importance of the point of contact between autoplastic and alloplastic adaptations for clinical thinking. In other words, he observes how self-fragmentation and splitting are at times bound up with the creation of new organs and new capacities, or, as he calls them, “neoformations.” In his 1926 essay on “The Problem of the Acceptance of Unpleasant Ideas” (1926, 377), he discusses how certain kinds of self-destruction lead to an enlarged recognition of the surrounding world and draw us closer to the formation of objective judgement. Here Ferenczi cites Sabina Spielrein’s (1912) paper on destruction as a “cause of being”, which is in itself notable given the lack of acknowledgement of her ideas at the time, and also the fact that her ideas, as Adrienne Harris (2015) notes, seem to have been absorbed rather than referenced, turning her into a ghost rather than an ancestor. Resonating with Spielrein, Ferenczi argues that a partial destruction of the ego is tolerated, but only for the purpose of constructing a stronger and more resilient ego from that which remains. We here encounter another biological analogy. He writes:

This is similar to the phenomena noted in the ingenious attempts of Jacques Loeb to stimulate unfertilized eggs to development by the action of chemicals, i.e. without fertilization: the chemicals disorganize the outer layers of the egg, but out of the detritus a protective bladder (sheath) is formed, which puts a stop to further injury. In the same way the Eros liberated by instinctual defusion converts destruction into growth, into a further development of the parts that have been protected. (Ferenczi 1926, 377)

As he notes four years later in 1930, in a short writing on “Trauma and Striving for Health,” fragmentation as a result of trauma does not appear to be a sort of mechanical consequence of shock; instead, it is already a form of defense, an adaptation. Here too, he makes another analogy with lower animals, which, subjected to extreme stimulation, break up and continue their existence in fragments. He goes on to imagine the logic of defense by splitting. As he writes:

Fragmentation may be advantageous (a) by creating a more extended surface towards the external world, i.e. by the possibility of an increased discharge of affects; (b) from the physiological angle: the giving up of concentration, of unified perception, at least puts an end to the simultaneous suffering of multiple pain. The single fragments suffer for themselves; the unbearable unification of all pain qualities and quantities does not take place; (c) the absence of higher integration, the cessation of the interrelation of pain fragments allows the single fragments a much greater adaptability. (Ferenczi 1930b, 230)

The connections that Ferenczi makes between destruction, creativity, and the creation of new organs should not, however, seduce us into a celebration of fragments, a sort of enthusiasm for a post-catastrophic subjectivity that emerges from Ferenczi’s work. Ferenczi remains lucid about the dark implications of splitting, which pass through a particular kind of narcissism where the deadened fragments of the ego are denied. The ego becomes a kind of mosaic of dead and still-alive parts, but the deadened and de-libidinized ones are “forgotten”. Some of the fragments “assume, as it were, the form and function of a whole person” (1930c, 222). Here, Ferenczi construes another analogy with the animal world. As he writes in “Child Analysis in the Analysis of Adults”:

I have been told little tales like the one about the wicked animal which tries to destroy a jelly-fish by means of its teeth and claws, but cannot get at it because the jelly-fish with its subtleness eludes each jab and bite and then returns to its round shape. This story may be interpreted in two ways: on the one hand it expresses the passive resistance with which the patient meets the attacks of his environment, and on the other it represents the splitting of the self into a suffering, brutally destroyed part and a part which, as it were, knows everything but feels nothing. (Ferenczi 1931, 135)

In the analytical situation, the traces of this sort of splitting resurface when the patient feels hurt and disappointed, and as a result “he starts playing by himself like a lonely child” (Ferenczi 1931, 135). It seems that a part of the person is able to take up the role of mother or father in relation to the whole. As Ferenczi tells us:

In this play various parts of the body -hands, fingers, feet, genitals, head, nose, or eye- become representatives of the whole person, in relation to which all the vicissitudes of the subject’s own tragedy are enacted and then worked out to a reconciliatory conclusion. It is noteworthy, however, that over and above this we get glimpses into the processes of what I have called the “narcissistic split of the self” in the mental sphere itself. (Ferenczi 1931, 135)

Ferenczi's biological analogies allow him to extend his trauma theory and to observe that new faculties emerge at the time of the trauma. This opens new paths in psychoanalytic theory in terms of how we think of repair and how the "new organs" created in traumatic times can be part of this repair.

TERATOMA, THE DOUBLE INSIDE, AND (DEATH) NARCISSISM

One of Ferenczi's most powerful medical analogies -and one that I would argue has yet to reveal all its richness for understanding trauma and narcissism- is that between neurotic functioning and a teratoma, that is the growth of a tumor. In his 1929 paper, "The Principle of Relaxation and Neocatharsis," Ferenczi notes:

For it is no mere poetic licence to compare the mind of the neurotic to a double malformation, something like the so-called teratoma which harbours in a hidden part of its body fragments of a twin-being which has never developed. No reasonable person would refuse to surrender such a teratoma to the surgeon's knife, if the existence of the whole individual were threatened. (Ferenczi 1929, 123)

It is worth noting that Georg Groddeck (1923) used a similar term in a literary context, when he spoke of "horror stories": teratoma were a particular type of monster, either constructed from parts of different bodies like Frankenstein, or the result of fantasy and the transformations of the body that fantasy brings (Stanton 1990, 174). The implications of the Ferenczian teratoma are, however, much broader. Ferenczi argues that in some cases of neurosis (often as a result of profound trauma in infancy), the greater part of the personality becomes a teratoma, while the task of adaptation to reality falls upon the (smaller) fragment of the personality that was spared. I would argue that the work of the psychoanalytic process is to deal with this very disproportion, where the deadened twin-being occupies most of the psychic space. This is perhaps the Ferenczian uncanny: a meeting with the "twin-inside." The act of the (Ferenczian) narcissist is that of denying the existence of the teratoma.

The teratoma can also be subject to a politicized reading: it is Ferenczi's version of alienation. The primary alienation is the confusion of tongues between children and adults, where the language of passion -the register of adult sexuality, which has known repression and guilt- intrudes into the language of tenderness -an experimental, playful, and expansive register. Later in life, all ideological seductions that succeed in bringing submission and alignment appeal to this initial seduction. Ideology needs the teratoma, the dead "twin-inside," the parasitic formation that is bred in the unconscious. The teratoma creates "introspective blindness," which is preserved through moralizing education. Through the "prohibiting and deterring commands of moralising education" (Ferenczi 1908, 287), the person settles into a state akin to that of hypnosis, with diminished mental energies flowing into the conscious part of the ego and a considerably impaired capacity for action.

CONCLUSIONS

The psychoanalyst emerges from Ferenczi's works as a maker and holder of analogies. These analogies pertain to the sphere of theoretical construction, but also to the sphere of healing. The psychoanalyst establishes analogies between different strata of reality, but she also contains the analogies of the patient. Furthermore, the psychoanalyst induces the patient into the art of making analogies. A completed analysis, for Ferenczi (1928, 99), is one where the elasticity of the analyst's mind extends to the patient.

As I have shown, Ferenczi's writings point to an erotics of objectivism and offer important insights on horizontalizing the encounter between the knower and the known. As he writes: "The last and logically irrefutable word of the pure intellectuality of the ego on the relationship to other objects is a solipsism, which cannot equate the reality of other living being and the whole outside world of personal experience, and speaks of them as more or less living phantoms or projections" (1921b, 229). The alternative to this kind of solipsism is what he calls "conviction." Conviction, as opposed to mere belief, cannot be derived

solely from logical insight. Instead, it needs to be lived as an affective experience and even felt in one's body (Ferenczi 1912, 193–194). In other words, it is embodied knowledge. Through this conception of felt knowledge, Ferenczi proved to be a thinker ahead of his time, anticipating epistemological ideas that would be articulated by feminist voices decades later.

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