

## INTRODUCTION. FERENCZI'S RESEARCHES IN TECHNIQUE.

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### INTRODUCTION

This third special issue of papers presented and discussed at the Ferenczi in Firenze Conference in 2018 (Koritar, 2018, 2019) will focus on psychoanalytic research. Both Freud and Ferenczi were interested in studying the mind and the process of thinking. In a sense they can be considered as psychoanalytic conquistadors exploring the hidden reaches of a dark continent: the Unconscious. Their discoveries would guide generations of psychoanalytic researchers and clinicians in their praxis.

Close collaborators in their early careers, they parted ways in their theoretical and clinical perspectives in the mid-1920's. Whereas Freud contributed to our understanding of the underlying psychic mechanisms of the mind in the development of his sophisticated Metapsychology; Ferenczi, focused his psychoanalytic researches on the technical aspects of clinical practice (Haynal, 1988). The two had quite distinct approaches in their research. Freud, at heart a biological researcher, strove to develop models of the mind and thinking based first on a topographical and later, a structural paradigm. His was a rational and Cartesian approach based on concepts of the economic distribution of psychic energies and their repression. Ferenczi was more interested in discovering approaches to work with mentally afflicted individuals and searched for cures for their disturbances. Freud's research methodology was based on the ideal of objective observation of mental phenomena, and concept formation that represented a hypothesis of the underlying cause of the phenomenon, then conceptual elaboration through inductive reasoning and application to other situations in order to verify the validity of the hypothesis. Ferenczi's approach to observation of mental phenomena was experiential: that of a subjective immersion in the psychic field generated in the relatedness with another, then through empathic attunement and analysis of the transference and countertransference (T/CT), developing an empirical conclusion of the experiential field phenomenon. Ferenczi's approach was based on using deductive reasoning in order to elaborate a theoretical conclusion of the origins of the phenomenon. Whereas Freud's approach was focused on making the unconscious conscious, thereby dissipating psychic conflict and suffering, Ferenczi's project was based on the clinician's subjective immersion in the analytic field and through a dynamic regression and neocatharsis, to work out the patient's unconscious conflicts in a repetition of the past repressed traumas in the T/CT, but with a different object relationship in the analysis, and ultimately, a different outcome.

A debate may be undertaken on which approach one espouses in one's research and practice, yet this writer suggests that it would be a mistake to privilege one position over the other. The work of psychoanalysis involves both subjective immersion in the field experience and objective examination of the phenomena encountered in the experience. Emphasis on either the conceptual metapsychology or the subjective field experience may lead to an ideological positioning that elides the polar view. The conceptual a priori inductive reasoning must be in dynamic interaction with the a posteriori deductive reasoning in arriving at a conceptual hypothesis of the empirical experience which can then be tested in the form of an

interpretation or intervention. The outcome of the intervention then will produce more empirical data which itself can be the object of conceptual reflection. The ongoing dynamic interaction between the empirical and the conceptual results in a dialectical progression towards the transcendental thinking (in the Kantian sense) of a self-aware individual. Freud and Ferenczi represent the bi-polar perspective of a contemporary psychoanalysis that acknowledges the constant flux between the experiential and the symbolic, the semiotic and the semantic, the subjective and the objective in the psychoanalytic project.

Although we are presenting papers in this issue, inspired by Ferenczi's researches in clinical technique in the foreground, an unspoken fact remains that in the background, Freudian metapsychology provides a scaffolding for these discussions.

Martin Cabré (2022) examines the Freud/Ferenczi dialogue in the convergence and divergence of their respective visions and revisions of the theory and practice of psychoanalysis. Ferenczi initially deferred to Freud as "Herr Professor" who defined the basic premises of psychoanalytic thinking and research in his early works, and inspired Ferenczi in his own analytic ruminations, yet he diverged from Freud's metapsychological elaborations after Ferenczi and Rank (1924) published *The Development of Psychoanalysis* in 1924. With the publication of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud affirmed his investment in a metapsychological orientation of psychoanalytic theorizing, defining the parameters of the economic distribution of psychic energies based on the management of the excesses of energies penetrating the stimulus barrier and a tendency of a biological system in dynamic flux to return to its steady state of zero stimulus, i.e. the death instinct. He based his metapsychological speculation on the idea that the only logical explanation of the repetition compulsion resulting in self-destructive phenomena was the opposition of death instinct to life instinct. Ferenczi and Rank however suggested an alternate perspective that brought into question Freud's theorizing on the death instinct. They suggested that repetition compulsion represented a repetition of past traumatic object relations in the transference and acted out in the analytic situation, hence emphasizing the working out of the transference and countertransference (T/CT) dynamics as a healing process in the analysis. The vision of the psychoanalytic project in this scenario emphasized the object relationship in the T/CT situation in contrast to the working through of the intrapsychic economic dynamics. Ferenczi was later to arrive at an object relations theory of death instinct with the publication of "The Unwelcome Child and His Death Instinct" (1929). But Freud was not completely wed to his intrapsychic theory of internal structure formation. In 1921 he published "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego", where he argued that internal structure was defined through an identificatory process with external objects (Freud, 1921). This was reminiscent of Ferenczi's (1909) paper "Introjection and Transference". Freud's and Ferenczi's visions and revisions of their theory and practice converged and diverged throughout their careers as psychoanalytic visionaries and theoreticians. However, their paths irrevocably diverged after 1926 when Freud published his major work on the intrapsychic significance of signal anxiety in "Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety" (Freud, 1926), by contrast, Ferenczi signaled his increasing interest in the significance of environmental trauma in the determination of psychopathology in his 1926 paper, "The Problem of Acceptance of Unpleasant Ideas" (Ferenczi, 1926). Further drifting away from Freud's vision was evident in his later works. In "The Elasticity of Psychoanalytic Technique" (1928), Ferenczi emphasized the importance of countertransference analysis, which he called tact, in the working through of repressed trauma which resurfaces in the analytic space. In "Relaxation and Neocatharsis" (1930), he advocated for the relaxation of the basic tenets of standard technique: neutrality and abstinence, especially with severely traumatized patients. In "The Unwelcome Child and His Death Instinct" (1929), he proposed an object relations theory of death instinct in contradistinction to Freud's metapsychological definition. In his penultimate paper, "Confusion of Tongues Between Adults and the Child" (1933), he outlines in detail the devastating impact of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse on the still fragile personality of the child. This last paper brought him into conflict with Freud who denounced Ferenczi's paper as a misguided return to an old and discarded theory which had been superseded by the Structural Model. Over the ensuing 50 years, Ferenczi's ideas would be officially proscribed as a deviation from the orthodox Freudian vision of theory and technique. Recently, however, clinicians are finding that Ferenczi's vision of analytic theory and technique is quite relevant to contemporary psychoanalytic praxis.

In an interesting account of an analysis, Koritar (2022) uses Ferenczi's ideas of the connection of an unwelcome child and death instinct to interpret the dynamics of the unfolding clinical, historical, and transference material. The sense of being unwelcome can be communicated unconsciously generationally or in actuality, as an unwelcome birth. This was experienced as not belonging, alienation, meaninglessness and emptiness by his patient. He attempted to fill this inner void with spiritual, mystical, and fundamentalist beliefs. But in an interesting turn in his life, his patient decided to search for meaning in the external,

not the inner world. He went on a quest to re-discover his roots in his birthplace, from which his family fled as refugees, and where he met the extended family who actually raised him in his first years after a dangerous birth when his mother almost died. Koritar interprets this search for belonging as a manifestation of self-preservative instinct that Ferenczi calls Orpha in the *Clinical Diary* (1932). The former spiritual fundamentalist death instinct path was neutralized by the latter self-preservative life instinct path and so the death instinct was a path not taken. In an interesting conclusion, Koritar speculates that the unwelcome child is a not uncommon social phenomenon and may represent an underlying dynamic in potential terrorists seeking meaningful deaths in a tragic manifestation of their excessive death instinct; consequently, the phenomenon should be considered by social scientists in the psychological profile of potential terrorists.

Another interesting conclusion that Koritar (2022) proposes is the centrality and impact of co-constructing an explanatory dynamic narrative for the analysand's unconscious fantasy and conflict. He outlines his analysand's search for his roots but when the truth of his having been an unwelcome child as was his mother, is revealed to him, he represses the narrative details which eventually did surface in the analysis gradually over the ensuing years with a concomitant affective neocatharsis, which represented a welcome enlivening of a previously deadened analytic space. In the process of constructing his dynamic narrative, the analyst and his patient's wife became interested participants in the process, and ultimately witnesses of historical and trans-generationally transmitted trauma. This represented a new type of connectivity in his life that was not available to him until the analysis. The working out of trauma, whether actual or generationally transmitted, in the context of analysis with a new object can bring light into the dark spaces in the psyche and infuse the analysand with life drive, generativity and creativity.

An important differentiation between Freud and Ferenczi is their consideration of the etiology of psychopathology. Whereas Freud's focus of research centered on the intrapsychic economic dynamic distribution of psychic energies, Ferenczi considered environmental experience and trauma to be causative in maladaptive developmental processes. Of the two approaches, Ferenczi's would prove to be the most applicable to the study of social, political, and cultural contributions to individual psychopathology, as its emphasis is on the environmental impact on intrapsychic development while Freudian metapsychology focuses on the dynamics of psychic mechanisms as described in the Structural Model.

Commenting on Koritar's (2022) paper, Eekhoff (2022) provides a metapsychological interpretation combining elements of Ferenczi's and Klein's ideas concerning life and death instincts. Klein's intrapsychic dynamic formulation focuses on the importance of the introjection of a loving relationship with an external object to balance an abundance of death instinct engendered by an unwelcoming environment. In the absence of a welcoming environment, introjection is compromised, and the death instinct is magnified and expressed as lifelessness and passivity. Introjection is an important mode of learning from experience (Bion, 1962) and for the elaboration of internal object relations which consequently remain impoverished. Furthermore, symbolic representation of external experience is compromised since they are considered traumatic. The infant and child regress to more primitive adhesive identification as an object relations style, and experiences with external objects remain unmentalized. Communicative projective identification between mother and child is compromised in favor of relating at a symbiotic level. Ferenczi introduces interpersonal and interpsychic communications between the infant and its entourage as vitally important in modulating the death instinct. He writes, "The child has to be induced, by means of an immense expenditure of love, tenderness, and care, to forgive his parents for having brought him into the world without any intention on his part; otherwise destructive instincts begin to stir immediately." (Ferenczi, 1929, p. 105). Having missed out on a welcoming environment in his early environment, Koritar's patient A., has a second chance at introjecting a welcoming object in the analysis. The initial field experience was what Eekhoff terms a symbiotic transference and countertransference relationship (Eekhoff, 2021), with Koritar experiencing A.s' sense of alienation and meaninglessness as sleepiness and dissociation. Eekhoff (2022) argues that when Koritar became active, he was calling forth the lost infant of the parent (Alvarez, 2010, 2012; Eekhoff, 2019), and mentalizing A.s' previously unmentalized liveliness. In constructing the narrative of A.s' first year of life, he was introjecting the analyst's lively interest in his internal object world, which then became

enriched with new animate introjects. Ferenczi provides an object relations theory of life and death instincts which has clinical significance. Both the conceptual metapsychology of the clinical encounter and the empirical experience in the analytic field are essential in restoring balance in the life and death instincts.

Kupermann (2022) uses concepts elaborated by Ferenczi in “The Confusion of Tongues Between Adults and the Child” (1933), and applies them to the dynamics of trauma, disavowal, and testimony of victims of the Holocaust in his study of artist Maryan S. Maryan’s artistic expression of his experience in the concentration camps, in his analysis. This is an incisive study of the dynamics underlying the interplay of polarities: between the tender inflections of Ferenczi’s mother tongue, Hungarian, and the cold objective tonality of the language he published his papers, German; between the language of tenderness of the child and the language of passion of the adult; between the victim and the perpetrator; and intrapsychically, between the silence of disavowal, and the expression of testimony. On display in the testimony of Maryan’s art is the brutal, primitive, barbaric experience of the dehumanized victim in the Holocaust, but Kupermann, equally eloquently expresses the trauma inflicted by an inhuman other, and its consequences: the fragmented self, the identification with the aggressor, the sense of guilt, and the silencing of one’s voice in the face of unspeakable horror. Maryan remained silent in his analysis, unable to voice his profound pain. His analyst suggested that he express his experience in drawing, which then provided an outlet for expression of his unspeakable Holocaust trauma. Psychoanalysis provides a sensitive other to act as witness to the testimony of a victim whose voice had been silenced by the inhuman indifference of the perpetrator, whose experience had been disavowed and truth repressed. The analysis, in being a receptacle for the victims horrifying experience, can also become a place of neocatharsis and healing in the presence of an analyst who shares the victim’s suffering in real time. Recognition and representation of the traumatized victims’ experiences, gives the sufferer agency and gives a voice to their formerly unspeakable experience and in some small measure to dispel phantoms dwelling in crypts in the psyche that haunted the victims in their nightmares, triggers, and flashbacks. Maryan’s analyst, faced with a mute patient, had the novel idea of suggesting that he express his narrative through drawing. A nonverbal medium became the medium of expression of his traumatic experiences in the Holocaust. In the spirit of Ferenczi’s research into the right technical approach for treating the most difficult patients, Maryan’s analyst experimented with technique in attempting to facilitate communication of the unspeakable in his severely traumatized patient.

A much less intense but arguably more widespread source of sociopolitically induced trauma is the experience of displaced persons. Current world crises have caused the unprecedented geographical displacement of millions fleeing war, genocide, political persecution, famine, and environmental catastrophes. Exiles, refugees, migrants, and emigrants face many forms of hardship on their hazardous flight from a no longer nurturing mother land, arriving traumatized in the “welcoming” country facing new challenges in acclimating to a strange culture. Lijtmaer (2022) provides the reader with an in-depth analysis of the individual dynamics of displacement considering both adaptive and maladaptive aspects. She distinguishes the differing impacts on individuals of forced versus voluntary migration, of expected versus unexpected shocks, of departure versus disappearance. Being traumatically uprooted from the familiar container of culture and motherland is a loss that can be managed well or poorly. Lijtmaer explores both types of response where nostalgia can lead to comforting linking objects or become fixated on the lost idealized past. Mourning of lost relationships can lead to a gradual detachment of lost objects and embracing new connections, or to a melancholic despair that becomes a blight in the immigrant’s internal world. The resolution of an adequate mourning process for losses sustained in emigration can result in the development of a new hybrid identity resulting from the integration of elements from the mother culture with that of the new homeland into a bicultural structure. However, those that have an inadequate mourning process may find themselves rejecting acculturation resulting in idealization of the “good old ways” of the lost mother culture, thus remaining alienated outsiders of the new culture and customs. Lijtmaer concludes that psychoanalysis can help to conceptualize the exile and immigrant experience as a challenge that may lead to enriching the ego and personal growth, or as a psychologically damaging experience leading to a maladaptive fixation on the lost culture. In the latter situation, therapy can help to facilitate an arrested mourning process in a movement towards embracing aspects of the new cultural experience into a new hybrid identity.

Ferenczi was widely known, in his circles, to work with the most difficult patients. He had a reputation for not giving up on the patient as exasperation set in when standard analytic technique was ineffectual. Instead, he experimented with altering the parameters of technique, adapting it to suit his patients' needs. Dal Molin (2022) referenced Ferenczi's "The Principles of Relaxation and Neocatharsis" (1930) in his work with a challenging patient, when he found it necessary to extend the duration of sessions in accommodating to a slow-moving client. He, like Ferenczi before him, argues for adapting analytic technique to facilitate the analytic process. He cites Bollas' (1987) suggestion that each patient has a unique idiom which the analyst needs to ascertain in providing a facilitating analytic environment. The analyst will need to attune to the nonverbal communication of the other, much as a mother digests beta elements projected by the infant in attempting to intuit its need. The mother/analyst will need time to digest the projection before responding to it, a phenomenon Birksted-Breen (2003) called reverberation time, describing an aesthetic experiencing of resonance and echo when the mother/analyst and child/patient use semiotic communication to make contact with each other. In being receptive to the rhythm of the other, the analyst may need to relax the parameters of standard technique, which can, if rigidly adhered to, result in a repetition of trauma and a paralysis of the analysis. Dal Molin's idea of analytic technique is that it should be tailor made to suit the reality situation of the patient, and not a one-size-for-all type of technique which requires the patient to adapt to the structure defined by the analyst. This is especially true for regressed or traumatized patients, while neurotic patients may be more amenable to standard technique.

One of the more difficult demographic groups to work with are adolescents. Franca (2022), outlines her work with a difficult adolescent boy, informed by Ferenczi's ideas expressed in "On The Technique of Psychoanalysis" (1919), and "The Elasticity of Psychoanalytic Technique" (1928). Adolescents commonly do not respond well to the tenets of standard technique finding the principles of free association, neutrality, and abstinence simply rules to be challenged often precipitating countertransference reactions in the analyst. Ferenczi and Franca counsel patience and forbearance in the face of unruly acting in and acting out behaviors, much as a parent might tolerate the idiosyncrasies of their child's protests. Reacting to outrageous behavior can lead to termination of the treatment, while acting as a container to the evacuated aggression fosters positive transference and progress towards a more structured analytic frame. The analyst must rely on their tact, countertransference analysis, and sense of when and how to intervene in order to respond appropriately to the adolescent's material whether semiotically or semantically communicated.

If one might be asked in a word, to sum up Ferenczi's fundamental philosophical position on the type of reasoning required to arrive at reliable and valid interpretations of observed phenomena, it would be *utraquism*: a term used that may refer to its physical or mental referent and its ambiguity is left open to the interpretation of the individual reader or listener. Ferenczi wrote of *utraquism* in his 1926 paper "The Problem of Acceptance of Unpleasant Ideas"

When, however, I attempted much later to bring some light to bear critically on the manner in which our present-day science is working, 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." (Ferenczi, 1926, p. 373)

In his *utraquistic* approach to the study of the human experience in the world, he advocates that both natural science and psychology principles be applied in dialectical amalgam of both elements. Both inner and outer experiences, both internal psychic reality and external actual reality, both introjection and projection are constantly oscillating in the determination of the unique individual's experience of the world.

This type of research approach is evident in the papers cited above.

Martin Cabré (2022) compares and contrasts Freud's elaboration of the metapsychology of intrapsychic mental functioning to Ferenczi's emphasis on the environmental impact on psychic development. In a

positivist observational paradigm, the two approaches seem opposed to each other, while in an utraquistic approach both internal and external reality, both projection and introjection are in constant oscillation. Martin Cabre' concludes that both the intrapsychic and environmental contributions in dynamic flux with each other defines the contemporary psychoanalytic situation.

Whereas Martin Cabree's paper presents a theoretical discourse between Freud and Ferenczi, Koritar's (2022) paper is a clinical illustration of an analysis which unearthed the fact of "the unwelcome child" dynamic underlying his analysand's death instinct path. However, this was countered by his self-preservative survival instinct that Ferenczi called "Orpha". His Orpha led him to seek analysis and a search for a historic past, providing a sense of meaning and belonging that fueled his desire for connectedness. Here, the utraque is oscillating between life and death instinct, inside and outside, alienation and connectedness, meaninglessness and meaning. This circular inner/outer, introjection/projection, psychic reality/actual reality oscillation creates a dynamic interweaving of an environmental and intrapsychic tapestry representative of past, present, and future narratives in the individual's life trajectory.

In Maryan's case (Kupermann, 2022), the object self-had been forcefully introjected. The artist's projection of his abjection into his Holocaust drawings was Maryan's attempt at having the external world bear witness to his devastating internal experience. The witness' avowal of the trauma gives voice to what had previously been silenced.

Lijtmaer (2022) shows the utraquism of old and new culture, mourning the loss of homeland or melancholic fixation on the past, progression towards a new hybrid identity versus a regression to idealization of the past and resistance to adaptation to a new reality.

Both Dal Molin (2022) and França (2022) demonstrate in their clinical work a role responsiveness to external environmental demands leading to a shift from standard technique to elasticity and relaxation which was an essential strategy in being able to form a therapeutic alliance and work with difficult clients. Here the utraquistic flux is between classical technique and relaxation of technique.

Whereas Freud's scientific research approach is based on a positivist, natural sciences, a posteriori empirical deduction from observation of phenomena in an experimental situation, Ferenczi's utraquistic approach combines rational objective observation of phenomena in the natural sciences (body), with the irrational subjective impression of the phenomenon in the individual's internal psychic space (mind). The interweaving of external objective and internal subjective perspectives in arriving at a combined perspective can arguably be called a contemporary analytic paradigm in contrast to the more positivist metapsychological classical paradigm.

Revisiting Ferenczi's explorations of the dark continent almost a century later has led us to conclude that Ferenczi was an early harbinger of contemporary psychoanalytic theory and technique. His reflections in the 1920's and 1930's echo contemporary discourse in psychosomatics, field theory, the analytic third space, trauma theory, Laplanche's discourse on the enigmatic signifier, and relational theory. His writings remain a wealth of psychoanalytic insights that may inspire a new generation of contemporary psychoanalysts in a deeper understanding of the machinations of the human mind in its utraquistic dynamic flux.

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**Published in:** "The American Journal of Psychoanalysis", 82, pp. 210–221, 2022. Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis 0002-9548/22. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-022-09358-7>

**Electronic version:** <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s11231-022-09358-7>  
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