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Sándor Ferenczi.



Thierry Bokanowski,
Paris: PUF- coll Psychanalystes d'aujourd'hui, 1997,
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Belonging to a new series called “Psychanalystes d’aujourd’hui” and published by the Presses Universitaires de France, this little book by Thierry Bokanowski, a psychoanalyst and member of the Société psychanalytique de Paris, could be considered an introduction to the life and thought of one of the major figures of the psychoanalytic movement, Sandor Ferenczi (1873-1933). Twenty pages of a rapid biographical survey stress almost entirely the relationship between Freud and his Hungarian disciple, from the “coup de foudre” (p. 12) of the 1908 encounter in Vienna, to the final dissensions, partly theoretical, partly personal, of the early 1930s. After Freud’s break with Jung, Freud presented Ferenczi as the official heir to the Freudian legacy, but Ferenczi soon opposed the father-founder, especially regarding technical aspects of the cure - maybe a way for him to transcend his own analytical failure with Freud. Reading the correspondence between the two men, which is abundantly cited by the author, one cannot help being fascinated by the interpretative bias they both demonstrated in their understanding of each other. This is perhaps one of the best examples of a psychoanalytic reconstruction of the history to the psychoanalytical movement, reconstructed by the very actors of the story.

Bokanowski then turns, for about fifty pages, to a more conceptual approach to the work of Ferenczi. As far as chronology is concerned, three main periods could be identified within the intellectual career of our thinker. The first period, from 1908 to 1914, a “period of contribution to freudian discoveries” (p. 31), gave birth, among other things, to the concept of “introjection”. In a second period, from 1914 to 1925, Ferenczi displayed a great interest in technical and clinical matters (numerous articles dealing, at that time, with topics concerning the possible improvement of the analytical procedure for certain types of patients rebellious to the classical *modus operandi*), but also in more theoretical concerns. As is well known, his theoretical orientation was condensed in the small and provocative essay, *Thalassa*.

A Theory of Genitality (1924), a “phylogenetic fantasy” (p. 18), boldly mixing geological, biological and psychoanalytical insights, to be compared to Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) for the speculative bent of the author. From 1926 to his death, Ferenczi returned to more pragmatic concerns, trying to define one more time what kind of modifications had to be introduced within the analytical cure in order to get a better understanding of the patient’s situation and, consequently, to an appropriate treatment. Our author always insists on the therapeutic aspects of the psychoanalytical treatment, and one should not forget, according to Bokanowski, that the “innovative and productive theoretician” of *Thalassa* was first and foremost a “clinician praised for his unusual skill as a therapist” (p. 5), eager to propose new ways of dealing with complex cases and, at the same time, willing to preserve individuals from psychological wounds caused by overzealous practitioners. If Psychoanalysis is not only a theory, but also a therapy, the psychoanalyst should always keep in mind Hippocrates’s words: *Primum, non nocere*. Ferenczi, in contrast to some others, did.

Maybe sometimes a bit too esoteric for the layman (at least for this reviewer), Bokanowski’s examination is nevertheless a valuable introduction to Ferenczi’s thought for the French-speaking reader, a well-documented contribution (one will appreciate the selected bibliography of Ferenczi’s works available in

French, as well as some indications concerning secondary literature, also in French, dans the few excerpts presented at the end of the volume), and a convenient and accessible guide for new readers and nonspecialists.

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