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Ferenczi's theory on power and its *pollination* to and within Latin America

Ferenczi's originality and *pollination*

Ferenczi was well-known in his time for experimenting with different psychoanalytic techniques, such as active analysis, mutual analysis, and a therapy based on the effects of analyzing counter-transference (Ferenczi, 1997 [1932]; Fortune, 1993, 1996), as well as for engaging in clinical work with particularly difficult patients (Haynal, 2002, 2009). His advancements provided a solid ground for what later came to be the current field of relational therapy (Fortune, 2008; Tubert-Oklander, 2013).

Ferenczi's drive to set a comfortable environment for patients prompted deeper explorations of his capacity to take the contributions of the *other* seriously. In doing so, he was open as to whom he considered *an-other* with whom he could discuss his ideas. He extended the range from his peers and colleagues to his patients and his wife, with whom he, often times, conversed about his clinical preliminary results (Freud-Ferenczi Correspondence, 1908-1919). For this reason, he also sought a relationship with others who wanted to innovate, who supported divergent and diverse ways of thinking, or who were willing to try out different healing therapies such as Georg Groddeck (Fortune, 2015). To illustrate such diverse interests and an attitude of respect towards diverse identities one can cite his work with prostitutes, writings about homo- and transsexuality, and abused children; his extensive research on new technical therapeutic ways, mostly documented in his later writings (e.g. the *Clinical Diary*); his commitment to unmasking hypocrisy and understanding how adults cover up their manipulation of children (e.g. his "Confusion of Tongues" study); his writings on education and on how psychoanalysis could also inform other areas such as justice or the practice of law. These capacities and interests are core to his developing a perspective based on *mutuality*, grounded in a deep educational interest and determining his clinical approach. In this line, Ferenczi developed an approach to treat some patients through what he called *mutual analysis* (Ferenczi, 1997 [1932]). He established a relationship in which both, patient and analyst, worked together on mutual transference and counter-transference issues. Yet, mutual analysis was more than a technique to treat patients in as much as it presented a relational stance between

whoever was in a relationship with him, be that a colleague, a patient, a friend or a loved one. This kind of position acknowledged difference through dialogue, even if there were tensions. He sought to construct a community of peers with whom to think and with whom to create new possibilities for acting differently. Indeed, *mutual analysis* can be considered a political perspective, developed by Ferenczi's theoretical and clinical approach to his professional work and personal position in life. Elsewhere (Heras, 2018) I have interpreted this kind of perspective as a "power in mutuality" (translation from *poder en mutualidad*, Spanish original).

As I have been building my argument to this point, it becomes clear that I am proposing to understand the notion of *clinical* to refer not only to therapy or healing procedures with individuals but also to an attitude directed at critically interpreting society and our contribution to it. From my perspective, three themes stand out across Ferenczi's life that contributed to the shaping of his notion of *mutuality* in light of proposing a theoretical perspective to discuss power relationships. These are: his interest in siding with those who suffer and who may be not cared for by others, restoring a sense of possibility to overcome their suffering; his profound sense of relationships, based on care and mutual respect that in turn, could support a kind of non-prejudicial exchange based on honesty; and his interest in a transformative capacity that humans can resort to and build upon, which I will call an educational interest. I argue that these interests took shape in a theory of power characterized by *mutuality* and *parity* in social relationships.

From *power in mutuality* to the *intervention of institutions* through analysis

It is well documented that Ferenczi was being excluded and ignored in his last years by many of his contemporaries. Even Freud and Jones tried to stop Ferenczi from publicizing some of his ideas, technical advancements and research (Likierman, 1993). However, his therapeutic ideas and approach traversed several geographical borders in a manner that I am calling here *pollination*, following Peter Pal Pelbart's (s/d) writing, to express a dissemination of ideas that is not easily traced, nor strictly documented, but can be inferred from the identifiable effects. Amongst the medical doctors who were trained as psychoanalysts was Sándor Eiminder. He left Hungary and worked in Germany and Austria prior to seeking refuge in Spain. It was there that he met Mira i López, the famous Catalanian psychiatrist who was Tosquelle's mentor. Eiminder was Tosquelle's analyst; they also worked together at Barcelona and Reus, and it was during those years (1930-36) that they took an activist position, participating in political and educational centers for workers (e.g. Ateneo Barcelonés and Ateneo Enciclopédico Popular). García Siso (1993) has documented that it was Eiminder who introduced Ferenczi's and Bálint's psychoanalytic ideas to these Catalanian psychiatrists. Additionally, and under the guidance of Mira i López, Tosquelles started to practice what later became his approach (*psicoterapia institucional*), a way of organizing health services that included an analysis of the processes taking place at the institution. It was also a perspective oriented towards interdisciplinary work and towards establishing active links with the community.

Tosquelles worked first in Spain and later in exile, in France (he fled during the civil war), inspiring the work of Guattari later on (Berti et al., 2012). These orientations are also similar to the framework and group techniques applied by Grinberg, Langer, Rodriugué and Pichón Riviere in Argentina in the late 1950s, 1960s and 1970s (Fabris, 2014). However, these changes from 1950 onwards may be traced back in several divergent lines, which, as I am arguing, do not form an established set of historical framework, transmitted by generations in an orderly fashion, but rather a complex, open network of diffuse links. I present some resemblances between Ferenczi's perspectives and the perspectives in Latin America, point out its characteristics, and illustrate it with some examples as follows.

Firstly, there is the issue of multilingualism, multiculturalism and diversity, as a theme traversing both Ferenczi's practice and theoretical perspectives, and of those who practiced a kind of psychoanalysis that sought to intervene in society in Latin America. For this matter, it is interesting to note that Ferenczi, as we said, grew up in a multilingual household and pursued multilingualism over his life for professional matters. He translated continuously from German into Hungarian and vice versa, and used English and French to communicate his ideas when he traveled; it is also documented that he translated his ideas into French so that someone could help him present to a Spanish-speaking only audience when he travelled to Spain, reading from French. Even though multilingualism was common for his generation, profession and cultural background, his emphasis in understanding languages and using linguistic difference to think and conceptualize his ideas was notorious. Not by chance one of his last pieces is called "Confusion of Tongues between the Adult and the Child". This kind of multilingual and multicultural upbringing is also similar to Pichón Riviere's and to Emilio Rodriugué's – two main exponents of Argentinean psychoanalysis and social psychology and group dynamics, respectively. Both of their family background includes speaking a language other than Spanish (the "official Argentinean language") and using several languages as a way of communication for personal and professional reasons.

Secondly, both Riviere and Rodriugué traveled and expanded their theoretical background by connecting to frameworks other than the most current or accepted ones at their times. Dagfal (2009) traces Pichon Riviere's introduction of psychoanalysis in Argentina, explaining that he studied Melanie Klein's theory and started integrating it in her work. One must remember that Klein was born in a town which belonged to Hungary in that time, she was analyzed by Ferenczi at first, prior to going elsewhere, and that – according to her words – it was Ferenczi himself who supported her to explore her ideas and her interest in analyzing children. Similar to Ferenczi, Pichon Riviere was also interested in matters beyond his professional domain (medicine and neuropsychiatry after he got his degree). He published pieces about visual art, culture, politics and society since he was very young; he was also interested, as was Ferenczi, in understanding the contributions of psychoanalysis and psychology to the educational system (schools) and to education in general (families and society).

A third issue is to reflect upon Emilio Rodriugué's (2000) reconstruction of Marie Langer's journey. She was a psychoanalyst, born in Vienna, who went to Spain to participate in the civil war and had later to migrate to Uruguay. After five years, she

established in Buenos Aires and participated in the creation of the Argentinean Psychoanalytic Association. She had a central role in developing the theoretical elements of clinical group therapy. This perspective, together with social psychology and group dynamics, which were deepened during the 1950s-1970s in Argentina, relates to the lineage of perspectives that sought to question society's institutions as they were, and pursued a way to work with groups to promote social change. Both Rivière and Rodrigué sought to integrate their first studies in psychiatry to a development in psychoanalysis, which they consequently integrated with other disciplines. Pichon-Rivière termed it *epistemología convergente* (Saidón, 1982; Montecchi, 2018) as a way to acknowledge that his orientation was to study humans in their (cultural, social, historical) context and that this “study” could be done in groups. He created a term (“grupos operativos”) working together with José Bleger. Here one can see a similar approach to that of Ferenczi's in the sense that the group members working together with a coordinator (psychoanalyst, educator, social psychologist) can help make the power relations at play and the ways to work within them visible. Such perspective turned into *social psychology*, the term he used to describe his approach later.

Rodrigué coined several different terms for the type of work he undertook, and was always open to establish a relationship amongst the socio-political and historical context, the way group-therapy could be a place where the social and the intra-psychic could be explored, and the actions by which these clinical perspectives could also act in transforming the institutions which we create and inhabit. He was part of the group that challenged the *statu quo* in the Psychoanalytic Association in Argentina through the group *Plataforma*.

Discussing the traces presented

It seems then that Ferenczi's ideas, even if not acknowledged explicitly, can be considered as pillars or orientations of what later became a practice and theory of power directly linked to the action of transforming society. What seems distinct in these approaches is the orientation to deepen everyday democracy by analyzing and challenging the institutions of society as we know them and inhabit them.

The theories and approaches to which I am referring to have adopted, over time, different names depending on who developed them, for what purpose, under what conditions and within what discipline(s). In Latin America one can think of art-based therapy (Da Silveira), social psychology (Pichon-Rivière), group dynamics and learning (Bleger), psychodrama (Pavlovsky), innovative techniques related to the work with groups (Rodrigué), psychology of liberation (Baró), and a version of schizo-analysis (Baremlitt and Saidón). These theories, practices and developments, situated in Brazil, Argentina and El Salvador, provide a succinct notion of the fact that several professionals put their energy into analyzing the interface between psyche and society, and into transforming society as a result of this analysis. These perspectives take “the group” as the place where an analysis can be achieved and where what occurs in society and in the institutions of society can be interrogated and worked upon. For example, in Latin America, writing as early as in the mid-50s, Grinberg, Langer and

Rodrigué (1957) have shown that some of the theories regarding clinical group analysis, analysis of institutions of society, and transformation oriented by these approaches, were conceived of and developed at, almost contemporary, in Latin America, in the United States and in Europe as well. It is however true that, at least in Argentina, several of these developments were intertwined with experiences held in Spain (e.g. Tosquelle's), France (e.g. Oury and later Guattari), and the United States (e.g. Kurt Lewin). It is also important to acknowledge that several political refugees had to establish themselves in the United States or Latin America, bringing different perspectives with them that were thus taken up.

Grinberg et al. (1957) highlighted similarities and differences between the perspectives at play in Great Britain and the United States, and those in Latin America; they stated that the local (i.e. Latin American) perspective was grounded in some of Freud's original works (in particular with regards to the links established by him across psyche and society), but also in the developments taking place at that point in Argentina. These developments and approaches paid great attention to issues of face-to-face interaction and to how they could be interpreted in relation to larger societal structures. On the other hand, they explored society's institutions as they were internalized by singular psychic constructions, in particular subjects that participated in group therapy. As for the personal relations, Emilio Rodrigué received his psychoanalytic training in London with Paula Heimann where he met Winnicott and Klein. Additionally, Klein supervised one of Rodrigué's cases.

The Argentinean psychiatrist Armando Bauleo wrote *Contra institución y grupos* in 1977, in exile in Spain, and in his book he pointed to the relationships between group dynamics, group clinical work, institutional analysis, social psychology and the intervention of society as a whole. In his opinion Pichon-Rivière was the one who was capable of bringing together several threads that had not been put together in a framework prior to his developments. Bauleo (1977), as well as Fabris later on (2007; 2009) trace the beginnings of Rivière's social psychology framework and methodology back in the mid-fifties, but, as we have been pointing out, the traces go further back. Therefore, once again, we are witnessing that these developments took place in Latin America often parallel, or in some cases, even prior to the emergence and expansion of psycho-sociology, institutional analysis and social psychology in Europe, specifically in France.

Baremlitt, the Argentinean psychiatrist and psychoanalyst living in Brazil since 1976, compiled a volume on group dynamics in 1982. He provided a brief historical account of that field (European and Latin American schools of thought and practice, different disciplines that contributed to these schools, e.g. sociology, anthropology, psychology, psychoanalysis, philosophy, and aesthetics). Both his and Bauleo's writings have to be put in biographical context: both of them had to leave Argentina because their lives were threatened by the military regime. They had to re-establish their professional life as psychoanalysts, institutional analysts and group-therapists in Brazil and Spain, respectively. It is in this context that they researched the field of group dynamics in Latin America, linking this field with others such as institutional analysis, counter-asylum practices, counter-hegemonic psychiatry and political change in Latin America.

According to Baremlitt's interpretation, what is distinct in Latin America – in Brazil and Argentina in particular –, is that many of the above perspectives were taken into account by the *Movimiento de trabajadores de salud mental* (MTS) or mental health workers' movement, which took up the initiative of introducing these perspectives within the public health system, and through that, also insisted in a critical stance towards hospitals, asylums, mental health institutions and therefore, in a very critical stance, towards capitalist society at large. In other words, a relation was established between these perspectives on health that took into account not only the "individual" psyche and its treatment.

It is in this regard that, for all these health practices (the ones listed above, that developed in Latin America, such as psycho-drama, social psychology, schizo-analysis, group dynamics and learning, and so forth), it seems appropriate to see them as frames that questioned the power-relations at play, and the way in which the institutes could be interrogated and transformed. And, additionally, these perspectives were introduced in the public health system, and in the education of new generations of professionals – at least until the Latin American dictatorships stopped these ways of doing things.

My interpretation of Baremlitt's account is that his review allows us to support the hypothesis of a *pollination*, of a type of psychoanalytic perspective held by Ferenczi, and in particular, his position with regards to power relations and to the analysis of the institutions of society. Rodrigues De Barros is another historian of psychoanalysis who specialized in understanding how *análisis institucional* ("institutional analysis") relates to other clinical theories and practices. In her chapter (1999) regarding the intricate problem (as she has termed) of reconstructing work with groups and organizations, she takes up an interpretive line that emphasizes precisely the difficulty of establishing clear genealogies. She concludes that it is indeed possible to trace cartography of the ways in which this history has been researched. She mentions four approaches which in turn present a different argumentative lineage each. These are: chronological and geo-chronological; theoretical; model-types; socio-institutional ones. She emphasizes the fact that it is important to not over-theorize but to indeed try to look for traces that may allow us to understand why and how a way of working with groups emerges at a certain point in time and for what purposes. However, she also recognizes the fact that the work with groups with a combined (psychoanalytic, sociological, psychological, anthropological, etc.) approach has developed in Latin America from a distinct perspective.

Ferenczi's *pollination*

It has been already documented that Ferenczi's novel ideas traversed Europe as a result of the diaspora of several Jewish intellectuals. Ferenczi's theories on power were not explicitly cited many times, yet they were used and further developed in many countries also beyond European borders (carried out and extended throughout diverse geographies, that expanded beyond Europe), giving birth to important bodies of work in later generations of thinkers and practitioners. For example, following the

thread that we have presented that links Eiminder – Tosquelles – Fannon – Guattari, it is possible to recognize some of Ferenczi's traits in other parts of the world such as Africa and Latin America. In Europe, one can identify institutional psychotherapy (Tosquelles), institutional analysis of society (Castoriadis), and later, after 1968, schizo-analysis (Guattari and Deleuze), socio-analysis, institutional analysis (Lourau), and *autogestion pédagogique* (Lapassade) as perspectives that took into account the difficult relationship between psyche and society while acknowledging that the institutions of society could be analyzed in the shape they were embodied in singular subjects. Such an analysis could be better performed in groups (be those *natural* groups, e.g. groups who worked or practiced some activity together, or *laboratory / artificial* groups, i.e. groups that were specially assembled to do something together). Didier Anzieu was one of the first who wrote about the history of group dynamics in French and traced the history of such techniques and approaches. He did so in 1968 (in his book *La dynamique des groupes restreints*), and yet we need to acknowledge that Grinberg et al. had done so ten years prior to Anzieu.

Ferenczi's practice (in everyday life relationships, in the psychoanalytic institution, and in his clinical work) built a distinct theory on power that needs to be more clearly elucidated and communicated in as much as it can work as a crucial contribution to current issues in regards to social change. We have here traced some of the effects of his views and some effects of what I have termed *pollination*, in hopes that we can continue to deepen this type of research to show the connections more clearly.

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