

Chapter I

The democratisation of psychoanalysis. Sándor Ferenczi, from forced disappearance to resurrection

Throughout history, we find several examples of great thinkers who have been buried alive. This was especially true during the 20th century and amongst them, Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx constitute the most outstanding examples of that very peculiar phenomenon. We are talking, of course, of thinkers whose ideas are officially considered not valid without ever been really disproven. Sometimes, like in the case of Freud and Marx, those ideas together with their authors are buried alive, but not disappeared. Clear example of that is how the great Frankfurt school brought to light not only the two individuals, but also the intrinsic links between the two. Everybody talks about them, mainly against them, frequently without having read them. They were certainly not disappeared. In other cases, people and their ideas are not just buried alive. They are also subject to forced disappearance. Sándor Ferenczi was a clear example of that, until he had a forced resurrection mainly due to the publication of his *Clinical Diary* (1932) and to all that we learned through the analysis of Elizabeth Severn. It is worthwhile to remember some details about the way that Ferenczi's ideas disappeared in so far as it shows a procedure that has been used again and again in psychoanalytic societies belonging to the most diverse schools of thought.

It seems that Freud and other analysts played an active role in omitting the publication in English of Ferenczi's paper "Confusion of tongues between the adult and the child" (1932)

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(see Rachman, 1989). Ernest Jones told Ferenczi that he had translated the paper and that it would be published in the following volume of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. After Ferenczi's death in May 1933, Jones wrote to Freud telling him that he was against the publishing of the paper:

Since [Ferenczi's] death, I have been thinking over the removal of the personal reasons for publishing it. Others also have suggested that it now be withdrawn and I quote the following passage from a letter of Mrs. Riviere's with which I agree: 'Now that Ferenczi has died, I wondered whether you will not reconsider publishing his last paper. It seems to me it can only be damaging to him and a discredit, while now that he is no longer to be hurt by its not being published, no good purpose could be served by it. Its scientific contentions and its statements about analytic practice are just a tissue of delusions, which can only discredit psychoanalysis and give credit to its opponents. It cannot be supposed that all Journal readers will appreciate the mental condition of the writer, and in this respect, one has to think of posterity, too!' I therefore think it best to withdraw the paper unless I hear from you that you have any wish to the contrary" (unpublished letter, Jones Archives, London, cited in Masson, p. 152; Rachman, 1989, p. 199, Gutiérrez-Peláez, 2018.)

There is no evidence of Freud's response to Jones' and Riviere's petition, but the truth is that the paper was not published. It will be until 1949, 16 years later that a version of the paper in English, translated by Michael Balint, will be finally made public. Those who have been disappeared and/or buried alive are typically people that up to a certain point have been slightly ahead of their own time. We emphasise slightly, because they usually say things that are about to be said by others. They are let's say preconscious, to use Freud's language or the objective conditions for them to flourish are there, if we prefer to use the language of historical materialism. We find that ideas that have been buried alive and disappeared are many years later published by another analyst, frequently without quoting the initial one. It can be

accepted that this can happen because of real ignorance, due precisely to the fact that they were in fact disappeared. Not every disappeared analyst has the luck Ferenczi had in being subjected to a process of resurrection. Many will probably remain disappeared forever like it happens in most wars. A colleague of ours, who read the manuscript of this book, said that our affirmation of disappearance would also be subject to a similar process of disappearance. We hope not, and if you are reading this right now, it certainly means that this did not happen.

Amongst other reasons, what we have just described led us to develop the concept of a “Viennese Psychoanalysis” to describe not only Freud’s ideas, but the developments that happened during the early stages of psychoanalysis, including the first and second generation. Most of those contributions were certainly also buried alive and some were disappeared as we have stated. Ferenczi is an outstanding representative of that group, but certainly not the only one. The attitude, the energy, the connection with the real world that Viennese psychoanalysis had, which in fact did spread throughout other countries in the region, was later repressed in what Jacoby called the repression of psychoanalysis, especially when that repression created so called “orthodox psychoanalysis”, which was certainly not Freudian analysis as it was clearly shown by Beate Losher and Peter M. Newton (1996) in *Unorthodox Freud*. The revolution of psychoanalysis included not only a very active participation in politics and progressive social movements, but it changed forever all the human sciences including art and philosophy, and sociology, as it was nicely pointed out by Carlos Alberto Castillo Mendoza (2005). The importance that Ferenczi gave to the relation between psychology and the social was very deep. Adorno had already stated that Ferenczi was the most firm and free spirit within the psychoanalytic movement (Adorno, 1986, quoted by Castillo Mendoza, 2005, p. 56). Sociology had to rethink itself after Ferenczi. Partial disappearance of the ideas and emery of some psychoanalysts happened following similar dynamics in particular when they were forced to “behave properly” especially from a political point of view. This was, of course, dramatically increased once many of them had to fly into

exile due to Nazi persecution. The case of Otto Fenichel, beautifully described by Russell Jacoby (1983), was of the most typical examples.

Ferenczi began what we would like to call a process of democratisation of psychoanalysis in its theory, its technique and, up to a certain point, in the way Institutes and Societies function in psychoanalytic societies. His acceptance of mutual analysis is a much wider and I would like to say revolutionary concept, than what it has generally been accepted. Mutual analysis is present in every psychoanalytic process. Every analysand does it although it is done in a somewhat unconscious and covered manner. Frequently they use basically the same analytic technique that the analyst is using. What happened with Elizabeth Severn and Ferenczi is just a more explicit and open way to something that up to a certain way always happens in a somewhat clandestine way between them and later it became public. While writing this book, we became conscious of the way through which we have practiced mutual analysis in every analysis. Through our work with Accompanied auto analysis (later called accompanied self-rehabilitation) (Fergusson, 2015b), we practiced mutual analysis consciously in most instances. We came to think that this was something we did only while working with so-called homeless mentally ill people. We now acknowledge that we do it all the time in a not so explicit way. It is only through explicit mutual analysis or through Accompanied Auto analysis (self-rehabilitation) that the psychoanalysis can overcome its hierarchical and authoritarian attitude in theory, in practice and, as we pointed out, in the way our Societies function. On the other hand, it has been recognised by others that one of the earliest experiences in mutual analysis was that of Jung and Otto Gross in 1908. Mutual analysis, and its implicit democratisation, implies that the idea that the analyst is the healthy person and the analysand is ill becomes irrelevant to the process and is easy to overcome. As analysts, we owe our gratitude to our analysands who are also inevitably also our analysts. All of us as analysands know perfectly well how we analysed our analysts, but that was never acknowledged. Ferenczi had the courage to be honest and call things by their name. He opened the door to the analysts to do the same thing.

Both the external and the internal world of Ferenczi was full of innovation and creativity. The fact that Ferenczi was the first university professor to be elected democratically says many things about those who elected him but also about him. But even more significant is the fact that in general analysts trained in different psychoanalytic institutes connected with the *International Psychoanalytic Association* (IPA) never really studied Ferenczi in depth, at least not as part of the official curriculum of their institutes. As we know, Ferenczi played a crucial role in organising the IPA.

This book is a way to pay tribute to Ferenczi. Many of us, who have shared his views and, most important of all, his attitude, have found in Sandor Ferenczi's life and work great examples that gives us the strength to carry on in a struggle that by its nature has to be a rather lonely one.