

The Cut and Building of Psychoanalysis by Carlo Bonomi Vol 1&2 Reviewed by Endre Koritar

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Carlo Bonomi's two volume tome on the historical origins of Psychoanalysis is a fascinating read for any type of reader. For the serious psycho-historian, it is an authoritative research document on the beginnings of psychoanalysis in latter part of the 19th and early 20th century. For the average analytic practitioner, it examines the significance of trauma in the etiology of psychopathology. For the relational therapist, it establishes Sandor Ferenczi as the original contemporary psychoanalyst who blazed the way for current therapeutic approaches including countertransference analysis, field theory and mutuality, shared experience, learning from the patient, role reversal, and trans generational transmission of trauma. For analysts interested in the politics of psychoanalysis, it reviews how Freud's earliest and arguably most gifted collaborators were ostracized from the psychoanalytic movement. For the general public, it is an accessible text that reads like a mystery novel gradually introducing the reader to the thrilling and dramatic plot of how the various protagonists were traumatized in a culture more ruthless than our own, and, in collaboration with like-minded researchers (and victims themselves), were able to forge new humanitarian approaches in helping those psychologically afflicted to heal their wounds.

Bonomi's major work is interesting on several levels. In the introduction to volume 1, he creates an intersubjective space where a dialogue with the reader can take place, as he explicitly declares his experience in researching and attempting to publish his work. This voice is repeated at various points in the writing which then encourages the audience to react to the author's discourse with their own evaluation and viewpoint of the debated points. The audience is drawn into an intersubjective dialogue with the author reminiscent of the literary device used in John Fowles' *French Lieutenant's Woman*, where the author turns away from the narrative and enters into a discussion with the reader about the narrative itself. This literary turn makes this well researched historical text interesting reading at the same time as very informative to a broad audience of those interested in the basic tenets of psychoanalysis and how it was founded.

A second point of interest that Bonomi develops convincingly is his analysis

of Sigmund Freud based on various materials: historical, biographical, his writings, correspondences, and in particular, dream analyses from *Interpretation of Dreams*. In revisiting what he refers to as the foundational dream of psychoanalysis, Bonomi provides an alternate and plausible interpretation of the Irma dream based on actual castration trauma which is repressed by both Freud in his personal experience of circumcision and in Emma Eckstein's experience, her memory of her circumcision, and later castration. Bonomi presents an impressive and voluminous array of publications supporting this hypothesis, namely that actual trauma is at the root of psychopathology exhibited in both Freud and Eckstein. Thus, the "Cut", in Freud's case, his foreskin, and in Eckstein's her clitoris, were repressed memories of early traumata which impelled Freud to his self analysis and at the same time his analysis of Eckstein's hysterical condition. His observations derived from these analyses led to the foundational theories of psychoanalysis.

It will be apparent to the reader by this point in the text that Bonomi is attempting to re-write the basic tenets of psychoanalytic theory in re-introducing trauma as the causative agent in the development of psychopathology, and in the process risks ostracism from the psychoanalytic community as was Ferenczi's fate when he attempted a similar move over 80 years ago. However, as Bob Dylan sang, "the times they are a-changin'". Ferenczi's views have been re-evaluated by the psychoanalytic community and in a Ferenczian renaissance, a new generation of analysts have revisited Ferenczi's theories of trauma as an etiological factor of psychopathology. But more importantly, Bonomi's 25 years of research, that has gone into the writing of this book, along with his broad review of the literature, and his convincing synthesis of the material, makes this an authoritative and credible document that will challenge the reader to re-consider his or her basic premises about the foundation of psychoanalytic theory and technique.

In volume 2, Bonomi delves deeper into Freud's unconscious, in particular the analyses of his "foundational dreams": the Irma dream, and the dream of his vivisection, which Bonomi argues are based on actual events, namely Emma Eckstein's and Freud's respective circumcisions. The impact of these traumas had a formative impact on their respective neurotic conditions: Eckstein's hysteria, and Freud's hypochondriasis. There appears to be much repetition in volume 2 of points thoroughly discussed in volume 1, however, this is not a circular movement but a spiral one. With each repetition, one gets a perspective of the same events from a different vantage point, on a

different level, until gradually a three dimensional view of Freud, his personality, his relationships, and his ideas, emerges.

Bonomi takes us on a tour of the turn of the century psychoanalytic scene and the important participants in Freud's foundation of psychoanalysis. In the process we visit places in Italy that inspired Freud in his theoretical musings of unconscious processes. We are introduced to Freud's fascination with artworks that reflect on his unconscious fantasy. We accompany Freud, Jung, and Ferenczi on their American voyage which sowed the seeds of the disruption of Freud's idealized relationship with Jung. We witness the beginning of Ferenczi's disenchantment with Freud during the Palermo trip. But more importantly, Bonomi examines in detail Freud's significant relationships and correspondences which gives the reader insight into his internal dynamics. Bonomi draws on many authoritative sources in his elaboration of the relationships with his wife Martha, sister-in-law Minna Bernays, with Fliess, Jung, and Rank, among others. But the most elaborate and fascinating part of volume 2 is his study of Freud's relationship with Sandor Ferenczi.

Ferenczi was Freud's closest collaborator after Freud's terminating his relationships with Breuer, Fleiss, and Jung respectively. Bonomi notes that Freud had a tendency to distance himself from those with whom he had a close connection, including his wife. Observations such as this are made throughout both volumes which provide the reader with interesting clues into the understanding of Freud's inner world. True to his usual tendency, Freud eventually cuts off his relationship with Ferenczi as well.

The latter part of volume 2 examines the Freud-Ferenczi relationship in detail from Ferenczi's initial infatuation with Freud's works, his collaboration with Freud on the development of psychoanalytic theory and technique, and their eventual divergence along different paths in their understanding of causative and curative factors of psychopathology.

Ferenczi diverged from Freud's vision of psychoanalytic theory and technique on three important points.

Firstly, Ferenczi contended that in analysis, it is the relationship with the patient that has a therapeutic impact on the patient, and past relational conflicts are repeated in the analysis with the analyst but a different outcome is possible as the analyst represents a benevolent and reflective other who helps the patient co-construct a narrative of previously unrepresented traumatic experiences, leading to the healing of the traumatically fragmented self.

Freud on the other hand, asserted that making the unconscious, conscious and consequently developing insight into unconscious conflicts and phantasies resulted in internal change. In this perspective, the elucidation of a metapsychological framework of the unconscious mind leads to ongoing self examination and self awareness.

Secondly, Ferenczi bases his theory of psychopathology on actual environmental trauma in the form of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, impacting self development. Freud had repudiated the trauma theory as origin of psychopathology in the late

1880's in favour of phylogenetic drives and resulting unconscious phantasy leading to compromise formation and psychopathology.

Thirdly, Ferenczi favoured elasticity and relaxation as technical approaches in analysis. This emphasis placed countertransference analysis and attunement to the patient's needs for both frustration and relaxation as central for their growth in the analysis. Freud emphasized the objective application of standard psychoanalytic technique, specifically of abstinence and neutrality, thereby frustrating the patient's drives which then leads to the recrudescence of unconscious conflict in the transference and its interpretation.

Bonomi goes on to describe in detail how Ferenczi was systematically ostracized by Freud's inner circle for his divergent views. It was a travesty then and remains so today, to actively stamp out viewpoints that are in conflict with one's own. Yet we still find this practice in our contemporary psychoanalytic scene. We are fortunate to have a multiplicity of psychoanalytic groups distinguished by their own theoretical and technical orientations producing a wealth of interesting and stimulating research. Yet, it is not uncommon for adherents of one school of thought, be it Ego Psychology, Self Psychology, neo-Kleinians, the British Middle School, American Object Relations, Intersubjectivists, or the Relational School adherents to disparage and shun the work of the other schools of thought. Contemporary psychoanalysts may be following in the footsteps of the fathers of

Psychoanalysis, not only in the spirit of the discovery of the unconscious but also in the political infighting of entrenched dogmatic adherence to the views of their own schools. I believe that we all should be actively pursuing the former but struggling against the latter in promoting active dialogue among the many tongues of Psychoanalysis.

Bonomi's work is fascinating on several levels and draws the audience into

an intersubjective dialogue with the author which makes of this text an experience in reading as well as a broad and deep survey of the life and times of the early beginnings and foundation of Psychoanalysis. We are introduced to the important founding fathers and mothers in such intimate detail, that the reader is left feeling that they have actually met and known Freud, Ferenczi, Jung, Rank, and many others. The most fascinating aspect of this work is Bonomi's analysis of Freud and Ferenczi. Analysis based on historical material is not a novel exercise. Freud's analysis of Schreber was based on the memoirs of his psychosis. Likewise, Bonomi uses materials from his extensive research to base his interpretations of Freud's and Ferenczi's psychodynamics.

Whereas Freud focused his work and ideas on developing a scientific approach to the study of the mind, Ferenczi was more interested in helping to heal the traumatized and fragmented self using relational dynamics repeated in the analysis but in the presence of a different, more benign parental surrogate, making possible a different outcome. Whereas Freud represented the authoritative father who provided a metapsychological theory of the mind, Ferenczi represented the maternal matrix that provided soothing and affection in helping to heal, in a relational context, traumatized individuals' fragmented selves through measured elasticity, frustration, relaxation, and mutuality in the analytic situation.

Both father and mother are essential in psychological development. This book will help the reader in developing deeper insights into the underlying dynamics of the founding fathers and mothers of Psychoanalysis.