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Reviewed for H-Soz-Kult by

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Apocalypse does not mean the end of the world. ἀποκάλυψις literally means "unveiling" and so the Italian psychoanalyst Carlo Bonomi does not herald the downfall of psychoanalysis, but instead reveals its genesis. In this book, Carlo Bonomi combines a careful and innovative re-reading of the works of Sigmund Freud and his contemporaries with the narrative of Sandor Ferenczi's reorientation, which not only identified the blind spots in Freud's views but also sought to eliminate them. Bonomi can show that Freud did not recognize the genital circumcision of his patient Emma Eckstein and the associated trauma. However, the story of this genital mutilation did not leave him at peace, as it returned to psychoanalytic treatment and developed into the secret source of Freud's theory of castration anxiety. Freud's countertransference and the memory of his own circumcision brought to the fore the recognition of his conflict with his father in the context of an openly anti-Semitic Viennese culture. Freud thus developed his analytic theory not so much from solipsistic self-analysis but from the unacknowledged wound of his mutilation. Freud, who readily admitted to his readers that the feminine was an unknown continent for him, transferred the "castration" of his patient to himself and passed it on to his collaborators without accounting for it.

Sandor Ferenczi, for a long time, something like Freud's crown prince and closest collaborator, fell out of favor and was ostracized by Freud and his close students because he changed his analytical technique. In 1924, Ferenczi proclaimed a more active treatment technique with greater involvement from the analyst. He increasingly emphasized the empathic element in treatment, an idea that contradicted the ideal of the therapist's unaffected scientific "observation." Freud's statement that the patients were nothing but trash and that their only raison d'être was to provide material for the development of psychoanalysis was described by Ferenczi as "therapeutic nihilism."

Ferenczi also contributed to the break with Freud through other views, including by shifting the theoretical focus from infantile sexual fantasy to real damage caused by exogenous factors. Freud and his bubble emphasized exogenous traumatization as a theoretical regression. Freud pathologized Ferenczi's position as paranoia, and Jones and

others subsequently treated Ferenczi as mentally disturbed. It is to Carlo Bonomi's credit that he not only rehabilitates Sandor Ferenczi, an undertaking he has been pursuing for years in the course of the Ferenczi Renaissance but that he also traces and deconstructs the subtleties of Freud's theoretical development concerning the Hungarian psychoanalyst. This deconstruction takes place in four parts, which in turn are divided into two to four sub-chapters. There are twelve chapters in total, which are loosely connected.

In the first part, Bonomi addresses Freud's theory of woman as a castrated man and explains Freud's misogyny in detail, which culminates in the proclamation of the "dark continent" of woman, an analogy to the dark, "uncivilized and wild" continent of Africa. This chapter once again explains the psychiatrists' fascination with the surgical "cure" of hysteria by removing the ovaries, an operation that was by no means harmless and during which numerous women died in the middle of the 19th century. Robert Battey in the USA and Alfred Hegar in Germany developed a new technique of ovariectomy in 1872 so that doctors now believed they could more easily use the removal of the ovaries to treat hysteria. (p. 55) Freud was skeptical about this treatment. For a short time, he favored Wilhelm Fliess' method. This nasal reflex theory postulated a connection between the sexual organs and the nose and attempted to cure hysteria by removing the turbinate. The 30-year-old Emma Eckstein agreed to undergo such an operation. Eckstein had previously undergone an ovariectomy. The operation by Wilhelm Fliess failed, and Eckstein almost bled to death. Freud subsequently had a dream in 1900, a countertransference that led to rejecting the seduction theory. Until 1897, Freud believed that neuroses were triggered by the repressed memory of a sexual attack during childhood. In connection with the treatment of Emma Eckstein and his dream about this event, this now led to a rejection of the seduction or rape scene as a trigger for neurosis. The immediate consequence of this paradigmatic shift was the rejection of external triggers for trauma and the associated empathic distance from the patient.

The book's second part explains Freud's identification with Emma Eckstein ("Irma") in his dream. In the course of this dream, Freud saw the word "triethylamine" in his mind's eye, a colorless poisonous gas, which in Bonomi's interpretation of this scene contained not only "three amens" but also the term "brit milah" (Jewish circumcision of boys) in a single "scientific" formula. (p. 88) The circumcision ritual also included a part in which the mohel sucks the child's blood after removing the foreskin ("metsitsah b`peh"), a ritual that is essentially no longer practiced today. Freud, who wanted to rid himself of

the stigma of his "Eastern Jewish" origins and learned Latin and Greek for this purpose, no longer had his sons circumcised, a decision that brought him into conflict with his father Jacob, whom he suspected of sexually abusing his younger brother. It was not far from here to the Oedipus theory. "[By] embracing the Oedipus myth, Freud managed to dissociate himself from his subjective experience of circumcised, effeminate, and passive Jew." (p. 115). Diametrically opposed to this complex is the sexual initiation scene by his (Catholic) nanny, which was actually a sexual assault but, in Freud's memory, was reinterpreted as a "sexual conquest" (p. 121). From then on, Freud interpreted the acceptance of the Oedipus complex as a touchstone for separating real psychoanalysts from the rest, despite criticism even from followers of the Freudian school (p. 124).

The third part focuses on the transmission of responsibility for psychoanalysis to his students, Carl Gustav Jung and Sandor Ferenczi. The self-proclaimed Moses, who can only glimpse the promised land of psychoanalysis from afar, passed on his calling to the "Joshuas" Jung and Ferenczi (p. 148). The phase of close exchange of ideas with Jung coincided with Freud's intense preoccupation with his death (around 1909). This phase also included Emma Eckstein's second analysis, who was now working as a psychoanalyst herself, which was disastrous because Emma Eckstein insisted that her psychological problems were the result of a somatic illness (p. 169). Ferenczi, who observed the whole affair closely, concluded that the analyst's denial of a patient's trauma was even more destructive than the trauma itself (p. 172). It was, therefore, in dealing with patients' traumas that Ferenczi rebelled against Freud in the famous Palermo scene, in which Freud accused Ferenczi of intellectual theft. Ferenczi went on to develop the framework for Thalassa, probably his most important writing, in which he attempted a theory of genitality (1924) and which, in some respects, anticipated Jacques Lacan's approach to the logic of the unconscious. The text marked the high point and the zenith, followed by a descent in Ferenczi's association with Freud and vice versa. It is an undeniably phallocratic writing that made the penis the hero of a cosmic drama (p. 184).

The book's fourth part finally closes the complex and broken circle of Ferenczi's thinking, with which he dismantled Freud's system from the inside. What was new was the idea that under stress or imminent danger, a part of the child's self could split off and become an instance of self-observation to help itself (p. 191). The split-off part then takes on the role of the mother or father. "The person splits into a psychic being of pure knowledge that observes the events from the outside, and into totally insensitive body."

(p. 192) What was new about this sentence was that Ferenczi applied it to the history of psychoanalysis itself and understood it as "pure knowledge". He consequently attempted to heal this split in psychoanalysis. In the second chapter of the fourth part, Bonomi discusses Sergius Pankejeff, the Wolf Man, probably Freud's most famous case after Emma Eckstein. Freud treated the Wolf Man, a wealthy aristocrat from Odessa, between 1910 and 1914 and between 1919 and 1920. Until 1926, the Wolf Man underwent further treatments, this time by Freud's pupil Ruth Mack Brunswick and Brunswick's pupil Muriel Gardiner.

In the final chapter, Bonomi, therefore, returns to the nose as a fetish, to Wilhelm Fliess's nose, which almost killed his patient Eckstein, and to the Wolfman's nose, which was connected to the trauma of his sister's suicide. (p. 216) Freud's fascination with the nose stemmed to a large extent from his contradictory identification as a Jew. The nose thus became a fetish for the penis, and the "abhorrence of castration was memorialized in the creation of this substitute." Bonomi states that this revulsion is the point of origin of psychoanalysis (p. 222). However, Bonomi also points out that Freud failed in his discussion with Emma Eckstein due to an epistemological obstacle: he did not have the terminology necessary for understanding (p. 223). He had not understood that Eckstein's nose operation had repeated and deepened the trauma of her genital circumcision. On the other hand, Ferenczi understood that analysis always involves the danger of re-traumatization.

Carlo Bonomi's book is a journey into the history of psychoanalytic theory and practice. It is disturbing and inspiring at the same time. Historians working on the history of the body would be particularly well advised to read Bonomi's book carefully, even if I am still somewhat helpless before the mass and depth of the material laid out. Only one thing helps here: read it yourself! My only critical comment is that the publisher has done a miserable job of correcting the German quotations, which are teeming with errors.

Note:
[1] Jeffrey M. Masson, The Abolition of Psychotherapy. A Plea, Munich 1993, p. 119.

Citation

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