

SÁNDOR FERENCZI

(1933)

We have learnt by experience that wishing costs little; so we generously present one another with the best and warmest of wishes. And of these the foremost is for a long life. A well known Eastern tale reveals the double-sidedness of precisely this wish. The Sultan had his horoscope cast by two wise men. 'Thy lot is happy, master!' said one of them. 'It is written in the stars that thou shalt see all thy kinsmen die before thee.' This prophet was executed. 'Thy lot is happy!' said the other too, 'for I read in the stars that thou shalt outlive all thy kinsmen.' This one was richly rewarded. Both had given expression to the fulfilment of the same wish.

It fell to me in January, 1926, to write an obituary of our unforgettable friend, Karl Abraham. A few years earlier, in 1923, I could congratulate Sándor Ferenczi on the completion of his fiftieth year. To-day, scarcely a decade later, it grieves me that I have outlived him too. In what I wrote for his birthday I was able to celebrate openly his versatility and originality and the richness of his gifts; but the discretion imposed on a friend forbade my speaking of his lovable and affectionate personality, with its readiness to welcome everything of significance.

Since the days when he was led to me by his interest in psycho-analysis, still in its youth, we have shared many things with each other. I invited him to go with me to Worcester, Massachusetts, when in 1909 I was called upon to lecture there during a week of celebrations. In the morning, before the time had come for my lecture to begin, we would walk together in front of the University building and I would ask him to suggest what I should talk about that day. He thereupon gave me a sketch of what, half an hour later, I improvised in my lecture. In this way he had a share in the origin of the Five Lectures. Soon after this, at the Nuremberg Congress of 1910, I arranged that he should propose the organization of analysts into an international association - a scheme which we had thought out together. With slight modifications it was accepted and is in force to this day. For many successive years we spent the autumn holidays together in Italy, and a number of papers that appeared later in the literature under his or my name took their first shape in our talks there. When the outbreak of the World War put an end to our freedom of movement, and paralysed our analytic activity as well, he made use of the interval to begin his analysis with me. This met with a break when he was called up for military service, but he was able to resume it later. The feeling of a secure common bond, which grew up between us from so many shared experiences, was not interrupted when, late in life unfortunately, he was united to the outstanding woman who mourns him to-day as his widow.

Ten years ago, when the Internationale Zeitschrift dedicated a special number to Ferenczi on his fiftieth birthday, he had already published most of the works which have made all analysts into his pupils. But he was holding back his most brilliant and most fertile achievement. I knew of it, and in the closing sentence of my

contribution I urged him to give it to us. Then, in 1924, his *Versuch einer Genitaltheorie* appeared. This little book is a biological rather than a psycho-analytic study; it is an application of the attitudes and insights associated with psycho-analysis to the biology of the sexual processes and, beyond them, to organic life in general. It was perhaps the boldest application of psycho-analysis that was ever attempted. As its governing thought it lays stress on the conservative nature of the instincts, which seek to re-establish every state of things that has been abandoned owing to an external interference. Symbols are recognized as evidence of ancient connections. Impressive instances are adduced to show how the characteristics of what is psychical preserve traces of primaeval changes in the bodily substance. When one has read this work, one seems to understand many peculiarities of sexual life of which one had never previously been able to obtain a comprehensive view, and one finds oneself the richer for hints that promise a deep insight into wide fields of biology. It is a vain task to attempt already to-day to distinguish what can be accepted as an authentic discovery from what seeks, in the fashion of a scientific phantasy, to guess at future knowledge. We lay the little book aside with a feeling: 'This is almost too much to take in at a first reading; I will read it again after a while.' But it is not only I who feel like this. It is probable that some time in the future there will really be a 'bio-analysis', as Ferenczi has prophesied, and it will have to cast back to the *Versuch einer Genitaltheorie*.

After this summit of achievement, it came about that our friend slowly drifted away from us. On his return from a period of work in America he seemed to withdraw more and more into solitary work, though he had previously taken the liveliest share in all that happened in analytic circles. We learnt that one single problem had monopolized his interest. The need to cure and to help had become paramount in him. He had probably set himself aims which, with our therapeutic means, are altogether out of reach to-day. From unexhausted springs of emotion the conviction was borne in upon him that one could effect far more with one's patients if one gave them enough of the love which they had longed for as children. He wanted to discover how this could be carried out within the framework of the psycho-analytic situation; and so long as he had not succeeded in this, he kept apart, no longer certain, perhaps, of agreement with his friends. Wherever it may have been that the road he had started along would have led him, he could not pursue it to the end. Signs were slowly revealed in him of a grave organic destructive process which had probably overshadowed his life for many years already. Shortly before completing his sixtieth year he succumbed to pernicious anaemia. It is impossible to believe that the history of our science will ever forget him.

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