Ferenczi for Our Times

Part 1: Trauma and the Confusion of Tongues

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Course Programme:

Part 1: Trauma and the Confusion of Tongues

Day 1: Sunday, June 2
10:00-11:20: [1] The Ferenczi Revival
11:40-13:00: [2] Introjections and Their Vicissitudes. The Memory of the Id. Traumatic Dreams
15:40-17:00: [4] Hypocrisy and the Confusion of Tongues
Ferenczi for Our Times

Part 1: Trauma and the Confusion of Tongues

Course Description:
Trauma remains central to psychoanalytic theory and practice. Sándor Ferenczi, a psychoanalyst of the Budapest School, formulates an original and compelling trauma theory. While Ferenczi was “forgotten” for many decades, we are currently traversing a “Ferenczi revival”, where many psychoanalysts around the world are exploring the implications of his ideas on theory and technique for their clinical practice. We start from Ferenczi’s “pre-trauma theory” period, looking at his ideas on introjection, memory and the symbol. We then approach his metapsychology of fragmented psyches, and analyse his conception of the “confusion of tongues” between the adults and the child, which is at the heart of his trauma theory. Ultimately, Ferenczi’s trauma theory is also a theory of the subject.

Method:
We aim for a historically-situated and critical discussion of Ferenczi’s work. We read Ferenczi’s texts closely, reflecting on how his metapsychology differs from the Freudian one, and on his main innovations in psychoanalytic theory and technique. We also work in dialogue with various theoretical and clinical perspectives (such as Klein, Winnicott, Balint, Lacan, Green, Laplanche). In so doing, we give significant space to clinical discussion, working with vignettes from Ferenczi’s own writing and from contemporary clinical practice.

Session Themes:

[1] The Ferenczi Revival


Main readings:
Contemporary texts:


Further readings:


[2] Introjections and Their Vicissitudes. The Memory of the Id. Traumatic Dreams


Main readings:


Contemporary texts:


Further readings:


Ferenczi, S. (1926/1994). The problem of acceptance of unpleasant ideas–Advances in knowledge of the sense of reality. In Further contributions to the theory and


Main readings:


Contemporary texts:


Further readings:


[5] Hypocrisy and the Confusion of Tongues

Themes: Ferenczi’s trauma theory. The seduction/phantasy debate and its vicissitudes. The confusion of tongues between the language of passion and the language of tenderness. The grammar of the scene of trauma: two temporalities and three presences. The Other as internally differentiated category. Pluralising trauma. The experience of being “unwelcome”. The experience of being “dropped”.

Main readings:


Contemporary texts:


Further readings:


Dr Raluca Soreanu is a psychoanalyst, effective member of Círculo Psicanalítico do Rio de Janeiro, and Wellcome Trust Fellow in Medical Humanities, Department of Psychosocial Studies, Birkbeck, London. She is the author of Working-through Collective Wounds: Trauma, Denial, Recognition in the Brazilian Uprising (Palgrave, 2018), which formulates a theory of collective trauma, drawing on the work of Sándor Ferenczi. In the past four years, she has studied the Michael Balint Archive, found at the British Psychoanalytical Society. Her most recent project is a monograph looking at psychic splitting and temporality, The Psychic Life of Fragments: On Splitting and the Experience of Time in Psychoanalysis (forthcoming, 2019). She is part of the Waiting Times project, supported by the Wellcome Trust, and exploring the connections between time and care.