The Biology of Transcendence – A Blueprint of the Human Spirit

Joseph Chilton Pearce,

Park Street Press, Rochester, Vermont, USA, 2002 $22 (HB)

In this book we are presented with a very different and exciting explanation of human behaviour based on a biological explanation of the natural development of the human brain. This, in turn, is set in the context of how we are influenced by religion and culture.

In the first part of the book Pearce gives a very thorough presentation of the latest research and biological understanding of the evolution of the human brain and why and how it has developed. We learn how nature has 'designed' our natural behaviour to match the development sequences of the different parts of our brain – the reptilian, the mammalian and the neo-cortex and frontal lobes. To match the brain's development, our children will benefit from a natural birth (rather than caesarean and/or drug-controlled), breast-feeding because it helps the child to set a framework for their visual impressions etc. We also learn that the latest brain research also identifies not only four neural centres of the brain but also a fifth centre located in the heart.

Pearce then moves on to look at how the development of the brain matches how we bring up our children and the impact of our social and cultural environment, linking this to what he calls the anatomy of evil where he looks at what parts of our cultural conditioning lead to negative behaviour despite good intentions. Pearce explains that nature has made us, quite literally, designed for transcendence, and how it is the dynamic interaction between head and heart that allows us to transcend from one evolutionary place to another. It is the breakdown of this interaction that causes evil to occur. Breakdown occurs when cultural dictates in society or religion move children away from their natural development. As a consequence children grow up and become violent adults involved in ongoing conflicts and crises within society and between people.

The final part of the book deals with a situation beyond enculturation. Here Pearce reminds us that we are not doomed to endless cycles of hatred and hurt. We now have access both to transcendent teaching to guide us on our path and to biological research that will confirm the right way forward.

The book presents a fascinating and original account of the very basis of our societies. I agree wholeheartedly with Jean Houston's comment on the book that here 'in brilliant and incisive words, is the foundation for a new mind and a new world.'

Gunnel Minett

Ferenczi-Groddeck Correspondence 1921 - 1933

Edited and annotated by Christopher Fortune.

Translated by Jeannie Cohen,
Elizabeth Petersdorff, Norbert Ruebsaat.
Open Gate Press, London 2002. 158 pages £17.95

Anyone approaching the work of Ferenczi and Groddeck will find in this one volume an open road to the great controversies of psychoanalysis in the twentieth century, and at the same time a refreshingly candid insight into the lives, loves and relationships of these seminal figures. What appears to be a modest volume of letters between Ferenczi and Groddeck, at closer inspection, is a collective labour of love between translators, historians of the psychoanalytic movement, annotators, and finally, the restoration of the sound of two resonating hearts whose messages, sometimes confused, sometimes crystal clear, speak volumes for the humanistic voice of psychoanalysis. Moreover, this book is a major event for the rediscovery of the Budapest school of psychoanalysis under the leadership of Ferenczi and Groddeck's influence on psychosomatic medicine. This book is also a contribution to the rehabilitation of the early pioneers of the psychoanalytic movement. 'The literature on Sandor Ferenczi's work and life is rapidly growing' writes Christopher Fortune, 'as many of his controversial ideas on the analytic relationship, early trauma, and countertransference, are enthusiastically rediscovered and debated after being suspended and in some cases repressed by the psychoanalytic establishment, for more than seventy years' (p.viii). The question which many will ponder after reading the *Ferenczi - Groddeck Correspondence*, is why has it taken so long for the 'glasnost' and 'perestroika' of the psychoanalytic world to begin and bear fruit? Some answers may be gleaned from this volume[1]. Both Ferenczi and Groddeck have been 'marginalised' and are finally, after a long night of icy forgetting, receiving the attention they so richly deserve. Fortune reminds us that, 'of the early psychoanalysts, Sandor Ferenczi (1873 - 1933) was considered the most brilliant therapist - acknowledged by Freud to be a 'master of analysis.' Georg Groddeck (1866 - 1934), a German physician, was the source for Freud's concept of the 'Id' and has been referred to as the 'father of psychosomatic medicine'' (p.vii). Although there have been previous French, German and Italian editions of *the Correspondence*, Fortune asserts that 'this edition is the most accurate and complete rendering of the Ferenczi - Goddeck letters in any language' (p.viii), making it essential reading for anyone interested in psychology, biography and history.

New insights are gleaned from this correspondence regarding Ferenczi's professional and personal life mainly because Ferenczi's relationship with Groddeck was more open and

friendlier than it was with Freud the professor. 'They explored ideas, including self analysis, mutual analysis, the mind – body relationship, and wrestled with the question of whether psychoanalysis could be a science.' And as Fortune rightly comments: 'The letters resonate with critical theoretical and clinical issues today' (p.vii).

Although cast in the role of psychoanalytic dissidents, Ferenczi and Groddeck pioneered many concerns with theory and clinical debate that became anathema to the psychoanalytic establishment but were taken up in the United States by figures such as Wilhelm Reich, Clara Thompson, Harry Stack Sullivan, Erich Fromm, Freida Fromm-Reichman, Karen Horney, and the Adlerian analysts: the work of these individuals, in many ways, reflected concerns and independently developed aspects of the Budapest school.

In this volume, exceptionally, there is a short but fascinating excursus upon the problem of historiography, which is so often obfuscated today by the intellectual impostures of 'post-modernist' philosophy. The reader is reminded of the days when 'psychoanalysis was a real revolution' (Dupont, p.xvii), and the fact that Ferenczi was himself a major instigator of the creation of the International Association of Psychoanalysis. But, as Dupont comments, in time 'revolutionary temperaments are replaced by organisational temperaments' as the discovery and conquest of new territories of knowledge are defended against 'backsliding' by institutional arrangements (ibid). However this raises the question regarding the way in which new movements objectively need the dissidents to revitalise the leaders and followers whose development is retarded by institutionalisation. Ferenczi felt that he was fighting for a cause but he hoped, no doubt naively, that the organisation required to ensure that personality conflicts and interests did not act and interact to destroy the 'central idea', could at the same time be like a family headed by a benevolent father figure.

But if Ferenczi's wish to be loved by Freud got the better of him at times, he was nonetheless aware of how this transference intruded into his thoughts, feelings and relationships. Moreover it was his way of exploring the significance of the transference and the counter transference, which marks him out, especially in his relationship with Groddeck, for his openness and honesty, which is essential to the creative and scientific spirit of psychoanalysis. If Ferenczi and Groddeck made mistakes there is nothing automatically in this to cast aspersion on their methods or their personalities. On the contrary, it is only in a relationship unhampered by competitiveness and rivalry, superiority and envy that a 'mutual analysis' or indeed a 'mutual supervision', requiring a sense of scientific adventure and exploration, can flourish.

Although there were significant differences in theory, emphasis, focus, clinical techniques, temperaments, and social backgrounds, such was the relationship between Ferenczi and Groddeck – a unique fission of adventurous and revolutionary souls - whose purpose it was to remove the barriers to the health and well being of their patients. But this was to be

accomplished by a basic recognition of the role of the psychiatrist or psychoanalyst in the therapeutic relationship. Moreover Judith Dupont notes 'what is more, both of them were perfectly aware that through the analyses an analyst conducts, he continues to analyse himself, and not just with the aim of achieving professional conscientiousness, but to cure himself' (p.xxii). Containing many of the themes and issues that were to characterise their correspondence, Ferenczi's letter written in Budapest, Christmas Day 1921, seeks to understand his resistance to Groddeck's friendliness, uncovering inhibiting factors in his family constellation, lack of affection combined with parental 'severity,' and his fruitless protests as a child. Ferenczi then contrasts his relationship with Groddeck and Freud – it is Freud's professorial manner that leaves him out in the cold and misunderstood. 'It is then, even objectively speaking, amazing in view of these antecedents that I can declare myself totally vanquished' he wrote to Groddeck, 'by your unpretentious manner, your natural kindness and friendliness.' (p.8) Ferenczi then goes on to recount a significant difference with Freud when working together on the Schreber text on holiday in Palermo. When Freud 'started to dictate something, I jumped up in a sudden rebellious outburst, exclaiming that this was no working together, dictating to me. 'So this is what you are like?' he said, taken aback. 'You obviously want to do the whole thing yourself.' That said, he now spent every evening working on his own, I was left out in the cold...'(p.9). Ferenczi then interprets his 'bitter feelings' which 'constricted my throat' in relation to his need 'to be loved by Freud' - showing in self-analysis how he made connections between his early recollections, current relationships, and the interaction of mind and body.

Ferenczi speaks candidly of his myriad of symptoms, the frustration of his sexual impulses, of the love for his wife *and her daughter*, and a certain resentment directed at Freud, who had frowned upon his love of the daughter; a frustration that grew when he found himself childless (his wife being older than him) and marriage to the daughter consequently out of the question. That Groddeck looked upon these cries of anguish kindly and with understanding was not just a personal revelation for Ferenczi, it also encouraged him to take seriously the real experiences and sufferings of his patients which the orthodoxy in psychoanalysis was assigning more or less exclusively to the influence of endogenous drives and phantasy. This brought Ferenczi into conflict with Freud and the defenders of Freudian orthodoxy, notably Ernest Jones, who characterised Ferenczi as 'insane' for having developed his ideas in opposition to the 'centre'. But these letters support the view of Balint, Fromm, et al, that Ferenczi was indeed suffering from the symptoms of 'pernicious anaemia', which naturally were quite severe around the time of his death, but not in fact from mental illness, as subsequent witnesses were also able to testify.[3]

This is not to say that Ferenczi denied altogether the role of phantasy, but that subjective experience is related to the interpersonal world, a conflict which still befogs the progress of psychoanalysis today[4]. Instead Ferenczi tended to maintain a more balanced viewpoint. In this respect his idea of acknowledging the suffering of the patient

found its disparate influence in Scotland and England in the work of such analysts as Ian Suttie, Ronald Fairbairn, R.D. Laing, the Balints, John Bowlby, Donald Winnicott, Harry Guntrip, and George Frankl.

Although 'only three of Groddeck's letters to Ferenczi, and one to Gizella (Ferenczi's wife), have been preserved' (p.6), we can gain sufficient insight into these characters on the human stage, and their endeavours to understand and treat their patients. From the photographs provided we get a candid impression of how Ferenczi, Groddeck, their spouses, friends and colleagues lived and how their lives unfolded. Moreover an often used photograph of Ferenczi, in dressing gown and beret, is identified as having been taken on the veranda of Groddeck's beautiful Villa Marienhohe, which doubled as a sanatorium for his patients, and was frequented by the Ferenczis. In addition to the Ferenczi's account of their stays at Villa Marienhohe, extracts from letters of Frederic Kovacs 'who was taking a cure at Baden-Baden in Dr Groddeck's sanatorium, to his wife Vilma Kovaks', the latter becoming a prominent member of the Budapest Psychoanalytic Association, are included in this volume. Kovacs' letters, written in early 1927, give an inside view of Groddeck as doctor and his therapeutic regime. Groddeck's idea of a treatment at his sanatorium would perhaps today be described as 'holistic', the treatment of mind, body and soul through diet, massage, and psychotherapy.

In a crucial letter of 1922 Groddeck outlines his philosophy to Ferenczi which dazzles in its resonate dialectical opposition to that of Freud, and must have been a challenge to Ferenczi's scientific assumptions (p.34-38). Groddeck's 'das Es' is the force of life entwined with the mischievousness of human nature: prefiguring Wilhelm Reich's work by over a decade, Groddeck wrote (1910) 'Of the Ego I hardly need to speak: it is a mask used by the It to hide itself from the curiosity of mankind'.[5]

Groddeck's faith in the 'Es' can be contrasted with Freud's rationalism and his view of 'libido' as primarily a disruptive force that needs to be tamed. For Ferenczi the archaic libido is an expression of the child's repressed cry to be heard and to experience the understanding and affection of the parents as an affirmation of the evolving self. It seems that in today's hustle and bustle, the frenzy to compete, achieve, and consume, the self feels too fragile even to slow down or reflect for fear of failure and illness. And any parental preoccupation with children is experienced as a burden[6]. Thus, in this daily struggle for power and money we are likely to forget how to listen to our personal 'Es', or that of our children, and our unheard cry for love and solidarity is often lost or forgotten.

The *Ferenczi – Groddeck Correspondence* is a significant contribution to our understanding of the history of psychoanalysis and stands as a profoundly human document. Moreover it implores us, across the decades, despite all the din of our 'busy' lives, to learn to listen again. Could it be that we are in need – and this time as a society - of a longish stay in the Villa Marienhohe?

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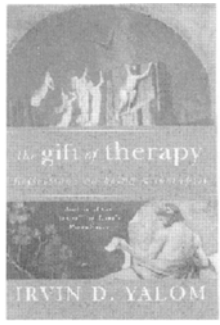
the gift of therapy

Irvin D. Yalom

Piatkus Books, 2001, £12.99 264pages



The lower case title may hinder budding therapists from treating this book as a Bible. Like the Bible, *the gift of therapy* is inspired by faith: faith in the efficacy of the human existential encounter with death, aloneness, individual responsibility and relationship. It is written in clear simple language with short chapters and verse like St Mark's Gospel.

As a Humanistic therapist, there is much to agree with in this book; the emphasis on the exploration of the here and now relationship between therapist and client to discover the nature of the client's struggles and as a crucible of change; the inestimable value of dreams as a source to be plundered in the co-creative endeavour that is therapy; and the need for care and compassion, loving kindness for yourself and your clients. I find compassion can be deepened by an appreciation of a client's biography as the author states.

Yalom knows what therapy is like for the practitioners; how we cradle secrets; how we change, continually; the dangers of social isolation and awkwardness; the struggle between feelings of attraction and repulsion and the need for care and compassion for ourselves and our clients in our work together. The author helps me feel proud of being a therapist as part of a healing tradition that, for him, includes mystics and philosophers like Jesus, Buddha, Socrates and Plato. I would include people like Rembrandt, Bach, Mozart and Shakespeare as well as elements from nature such as trees, flowers, cats, dogs, and breathing. Irvin Yalom, in this book, fulfils the role of mentor.

There is a picture of Prometheus on the cover. I feel that he sees therapy largely as an exploration of the tragic in life; full of despair yet heroic, serious and solemn with the possibility of gaining some individual meaning and purpose in the face of suffering and fate. There is a sense of the comic, as well. Additionally one finds a sense of play and acceptance, surprise, farce and foolishness in the face of the vicissitudes of life, especially when he talked of dreams, which may have taken him out of his brief. Now isn't that just like dreams?

This book is a must to put beside you in your therapy room in order to read if not revere.

David Jones