Book review Sandor Ferenczi – Ernest Jones: Letters 1911-1933

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Review by Jonathan Sklar

The years 1911 through to 1933, the time of this correspondence between these two members of the first generation inner circle, published here for the first time, are of historical importance for understanding the developing field of psychoanalysis.

The letters, often tersely written and mainly from Ferenczi, are added to by their comments to one another in the Rundbriefe, as much of Jones's correspondence is lost. Letters, to Freud and to others from the two of them, adds a deeper dimension discernible beneath the manifest crust of the correspondence. Much of what is disputed between them stands, not on theoretical-political positions but the clash of their underlying character.

Early comments on the external psychiatric attackers of psychoanalysis, such as Kraeplin, then move on to the more substantial internal schisms created by Stekel, Adler, Jung, and Maeder, and show Ferenczi and Jones shoulder to shoulder with Freud in the effort to protect and guard the analytic project in which they are more than willing to see themselves implicated. When criticized by Jones, Ferenczi replies on 14 November 1911, "Freud is likely to be right & that a personal complex has played a role for me". Both our correspondents can thus be seen working as analysts although neither has yet availed themselves of a personal analysis. Rather, as of the time, they follow Freud's path of supposed self-analysis. Yet even when they embark on analysis, the problem of analysis and whether it has been sufficient becomes a background drum-beat to their correspondence. Ferenczi, in treatment with Freud several sessions daily for 6 weeks in total in 1914 and 1916, famously held that his analysis was incomplete, although the extensive correspondence with Freud contained much continuing analysis by post. Freud was left pondering on the issue long after Ferenczi's death (see Sklar J (2011). Landscapes of the dark: History, trauma, psychoanalysis. London: Karnac.).

Jones's analysis with Ferenczi in Budapest was twice daily in June and July 1913. This is prior to Ferenczi's own analysis with Freud. One of the things this correspondence makes clear is just how closely the beginning of their analyses was bound up with the intimacies of their private relationships. For Jones, the issue was his difficult relationship with Loe Kann, whom he called his wife. She was a wealthy Dutch émigré referred to him in 1906 after becoming addicted to morphine for a serious kidney ailment. We follow the intricacies of the relationship from the perspective of her treatment, requested by Jones, with Freud. Did this mean that Jones sacrificed his own desire for treatment with the master, or did he extract a price from Freud for referring him to a fellow pupil? In their own separate correspondence, we over-hear what Freud and Ferenczi thought of the relationship of the couple, as well as getting a clearer sense of how deprecating Ferenczi could be towards Jones. Ferenczi writes to Freud that Jones's "excessive kindness works as a hindrance in the analysis; his dreams are full of mockery and scorn towards me" (Falzeder and Brabant, 1994 Falzeder E, Brabant E (1994 and 2000). The correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi. 3 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP., p. 493). This early character assessment of Jones persists intact throughout and on Ferenczi's death, as we shall see later, it returns with a vengeance. Nonetheless, in the meantime, analysis helps stabilize mutual resentments by giving each of them the opportunity to speak up about their scientific disagreements.

For Ferenczi, analysis was precipitated by his apparent falling in love with his mistress's daughter, Elma, whom – as with Jones and Kann – he also directed to Freud to sort out what we can read here as Elma's Oedipal transference. Freud helps relieve both men of the difficult burdens of their female relationships. Loe Kann went on to marry another man called Jones on 1 June 1914, with the wedding witnessed by both Ferenczi and Freud, as well as Rank, in Budapest. Ferenczi was finally able to choose to marry the mother, Gizella, despite the fact that her age, 8 years senior to him, precluded the chance for the children he so desired.

There are many interesting and diverse strands of this correspondence to follow, such as the impact on psychoanalysis of World War I or telepathy, or Roheim's journeys to central Australia and Africa supported by Marie Bonaparte, albeit always with Freud's advice. One moment stands out for me which shows the precarious and defensive position of Jones in relation to the psychoanalytic community, which, particularly in Freud's absence, he may have thought was his to inherit. In 1923, Jones is at the centre of a storm after a disagreement with Rank that led to him making anti-Semitic remarks during the San Cristoforo meeting of the Secret Committee. Freud, recovering from surgery for his cancerous jaw, was absent. In the excellent notes we read in a letter of 26 August 1923 that Jones writes to his wife Katharine (pp. 92–3): "We have spent the whole day thrashing out the Rank-Jones affair. Very painful but I hope our relations will now be better and believe so, but on the other hand expect Ferenczi will hardly speak to me for Brill has just been there and told him that I had said Rank was a swindling Jew (stark ubertrieben [greatly exaggerated])&. A Jewish family council sitting on one sinner must be a great affair, but picture it when the five are insisting on analyzing him on the spot and altogether!" (BPAS archives) It seems clear from this letter home that Jones had said something nefarious as he does not deny the charge, only its apparent exaggeration, but the tension between the non-Jew and the rest of the group is clear (what could be worse than being analysed by 5 Jews), intensified by unspoken concern about Freud's longevity. If I were to speculate on the direction of Jones's anti-Semitic eruption towards Rank, it would seem that Jones is concerned that Ferenczi will hear the attack as against him personally, but that his anxiety is also revealing of Jones's own relationship to the absent, ill, Jewish Freud.

In a letter of 7 October 1923, following that meeting, Ferenczi writes: "I do not consider you an out and out neurotic either, but am firmly of the opinion that you are in need of analysis, not only because of your, as I believe, unconsciously motivated actions, but also because I must consider your previous analysis incomplete just on the grounds of my technique having been far less perfected at the time" (p. 91). The implication is that what Ferenczi learned about the enactment of transference with Elma from his own analysis meant that he was more clearly attuned to the transference. One can also hear Ferenczi's complaint against Freud for not completing his analysis now being turned around, as Ferenczi offers to complete Jones's analysis. Ten months later on 7 August 1924, Jones replies to this offer clearly defensively and also ambivalently: "I still have a strong desire to continue the analysis, chiefly because the most perfect attainable is the ideal we should all aim at in connection with psycho-analysis. On the other hand, the continuing expenses of my life and arrangements here make it absolutely impossible to be away from my work for more than the shortest time, which would obviously not be satisfactory. I can only console myself with the thought that anyone who is so happy in his love-life as I am and able to work so satisfactorily cannot be in urgent need of further analysis, and I am sure you would agree with this criterion". Jones's recent difficulties working with his colleagues from the previous summer seem to have been ablated in the glow of 'wellness'. The superficiality, the delay in reply to a serious question from his analyst gives some credence to Ferenczi's earlier diagnosis of Jones's character in terms of mockery and scorn. Contrast this

with Rickman. First analysed by Freud in the spring of 1920 to 1922, from August 1928 into late 1930 he was in analysis with Ferenczi in Budapest, having temporarily left his practice and his important committee work at the British Psychoanalytic Society. So analysis in a foreign city could be done when the patient felt moved to pursue the work.

In the same letter, part of the same delayed response, Jones's possible plagiarism of Ferenczi is also an issue. Ferenczi had previously reproached Jones for apparently plagiarizing him on the question of suggestion in psychotherapy, a reproach that was deflected by Jones through an expression of thanks. (Ferenczi felt the part of his paper on suggestion in his paper of 1909 Ferenczi S (1909). Introjection and transference in contributions to psychoanalysis. London: Hogarth Press, 1916, 35–93. 'Introjection and transference' was plagiarized in Jones's 1911 Jones E (1911). The action of suggestion in psychotherapy. J Abnormal Psychology 5:217–54. paper 'The action of suggestion in psychotherapy'). Now he feels not properly credited in Jones's 1923 Jones E (1923). Cold, illness and birth. In: Papers on psychoanalysis, 320–324. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1961. paper 'The nature of autosuggestion'. Ferenczi may have had grounds. More than once, Freud called Ferenczi's attention to Jones's "real defects in character and behaviour with which one can't confront him quite honestly and which he must conceal by means of some arrangement or other" (Falzeder and Brabant, 2000 Falzeder E, Brabant E (1994 and 2000). The correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi. 3 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP., p. 313). As Peter Rudnytsky points out in his excellent foreword: "Notwithstanding the olive branch extended by Ferenczi, Jones's letter of 7 August 1924 shows him attempting to turn the tables & His weapon is Ferenczi's collaboration with Rank, now stigmatised as a heretic destined to go the way of Jung. As Jones needles Ferenczi in the guise of reassuring him, 'No one identifies you with him in this respect, though it is a great puzzle to know how you came to write a book in common'" (p. xvi). The book in question is *Developmental aims of psychoanalysis*. Nearly a year later Ferenczi distances himself from Rank's book *The trauma of birth and its importance for psychoanalysis* (1924 Rank O (1929, 1924). The trauma of birth and its importance for psychoanalysis. London: Kegan Paul.), describing it as a "neurotic phantasy" as well as being different from his own ideas about birth in his *Genital theory*. Now he appeals to Jones: "I think it is time, now the scientific-political hatchet has been buried, we re-establish our previously good personal relations" (29 May 1925, p. 116). This is an interesting invitation that makes one think of so many scientific-political hatchets in analytic societies that continue to fester with no recognition of the fact that good personal relationships need to be rebuilt. A few months later (13 December 1926) Ferenczi also adds a poignant sentence in his certification of Dr Franklin, an English analysand, for membership of the BPAS against Jones's wish: "Of course, she still has some personal difficulties in her character but her capacities and scientific knowledge are so valuable that we must be lenient, all the more since she is constantly improving. And who of us is quite free from character difficulties? Of course, she needs the friendly support of her colleagues." In this kindly response one can hear Ferenczi offering a light interpretation to his former analysand. It is also a comment on how fraught and tense internal relations often can become fixed in analytic societies, and what might be perceived as Ferenczi's slight offer of kindness, as part of the solution, is an attempt to return the environment to a more creative position.

In the British Society the other main analysands of Ferenczi, apart from Jones were Rickman and Melanie Klein. Jones invited Klein to London in 1926 and supported her work whilst Ferenczi leant towards Anna Freud. Despite Jones's pressure, Ferenczi declined to openly take sides, "I refused, and said that that was a scientific and not a partisan matter&" (Falzeder and Brabant,

2000 Falzeder E, Brabant E (1994 and 2000). The correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi. 3 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP., p. 313). Ferenczi was working on the early environment of the mother and the baby. For instance, his 1929 Ferenczi S (1929). The unwelcome child and his death-instinct. Int J Psychoanal 10:125–9. paper 'The unwelcome child and his death instinct' was a reply to Jones's contribution to Ferenczi's 50th birthday festschrift, entitled 'Cold, illness and birth'. Ferenczi was now engaged in describing historically and eventually in the transference and counter-transference, the vicissitudes of infantile trauma. Jones's paper is about the sensation of coldness for the infant as a physiological account of infantile distress. Here begins the rift between Jones's non-relational death instinct at the beginning of psychic life, which contrasted with Ferenczi's more complex early dances of the relationship of mother to infant and infant to mother that becomes the font of early object relations theory. The correspondence thus provides an early window into the very different analytic directions, which will solidify at the time of the Controversial Discussions held between 1942 and 1944 when the British Society, chaired by Jones, divided into three groups (Independent, Anna Freudian and Kleinian) sharing power in the Educational Committee.

There is another important thread in the correspondence, this time in relationship to lay analysis. Here we see Jones's political tactic of being on both sides of a debate whilst trying to gain capital from the centre. Jones is president of a society with lay analysts, yet he is firmly against Freud's position on lay analysis, whilst siding politically with the Americans by placating them (Freud-Eitingon's correspondence, pp. 549–50). Ferenczi writes openly about this on 6 January 1930, "The ambivalence of which you speak is undeniable, but the feeling is quite mutual. Your ambiguous behaviour with regard to the question of lay analysis has contributed a great deal to the increase in negativity on my part & you have acted not infrequently in a manner designed to encourage the opponents of lay (analysts) e.g. at the Innsbruck conference". Later in this letter the severe distance between their views crystallizes: "Seeing as we are exchanging home truths, I must make a comment on your writings, too. I do not read your work with undivided pleasure either. If my papers are wild and fantastical, yours often give the impression of a kind of logical-sadistic violence since the, by the way, equally fantastical papers appeared. I have not been enamoured by your English group." Yet Ferenczi ends this letter with: "this exchange will mark a beginning of an improvement in our relationship". Ever the optimist!

In 1932, Ferenczi becomes ill with an undiagnosed and an untreated subacute combined degeneration of the spinal cord (pernicious anaemia) due to vitamin deficiency (the simple treatment by taking vitamin B12 was unknown in 1932) and died on the 22 May 1933. Jones's well-known calumny that his former analyst was mad as he approached his death has been well documented (Haynal 2002 Haynal A (2002). Disappearing and reviving: Sandor Ferenczi in the history of psychoanalysis. London: Karnac., Bonomi 1998 Bonomi C (1998). Jones' allegation of Ferenczi's mental deterioration. Int Forum of Psychoanal 7:2019–6., Sklar 2011 Sklar J (2011). Landscapes of the dark: History, trauma, psychoanalysis. London: Karnac.). Less than two weeks later, Jones writes to Freud on 3 June 1933:

I hoped that Ferenczi himself would not publish it, but when I received the proofs of the ZEITSCHRIFT I felt he would be offended if it were not translated into English and so asked his permission for this. He seemed gratified, and we have not only translated it but set it up in type as the first paper in the July number. Since his death I have been thinking over the removal of the personal reason for publishing it. Others also have suggested that it now be withdrawn and I quote a letter of Mrs Riviere's with which I quite agree: 'Now that Ferenczi has died, I wondered whether you will not reconsider publishing his last paper. It seems to me it can only be

damaging to him and a discredit, while now that he is no longer to be hurt by its not being published, no good purpose could be served by it. His scientific contentions and statements about analytic practice are just a tissue of delusions, which can only discredit psa. And give credit to its opponents. It cannot be supposed that all JOURNAL readers will appreciate the mental condition of the writer, and in this respect one has to think of posterity too!'

Jones stands behind Riviere's vicious letter whilst fully agreeing with wiping out his rival. At the same time, he allies himself to Freud's wish for the paper to be neither given, nor published, although, despite Freud's severe reaction, he did not intervene to stop Ferenczi giving the 'Confusion of tongues' paper at the 1932 Wiesbaden conference (Ferenczi S (1955 [1933]). Confusion of tongues between the adults and the child-the language of tenderness and passion. Int J Psychoanal 30:225–30.[1933]). Nor by implication did Freud interfere with publication. With the paper translated as well as having been set in type, Jones intervenes to censor the dead Ferenczi, expecting to have Freud's implicit support and at the same time deals with his former analyst and colleague by censoriously wiping Ferenczi out, with character murder and silence. Perhaps in the end, then, Ferenczi's early diagnosis of mockery and scorn was right.

The collection is accompanied by two brief essays. The first by Gabor Szonyi highlights the willingness of Ferenczi to face honesty in analysis, particularly on the part of the analyst. This hardly brought much support from Freud or from friends and colleagues in the analytic community, notably when Ferenczi warned of the necessity for the analyst to be analysed down to rock bottom. He was the first to call for deep analysis to be central to training, yet in stating it thus, he implied that colleagues were remiss in taking patients into treatment prior to themselves, although this was after all the early analytic pattern. The second essay by Andre Haynal concentrates on Ferenczi's desire for 'sincerity', what would later be called authenticity in the analyst confronting the feelings that a patient might provoke (a point on which Freud agreed). Haynal writes: "He conceptually opposed this to 'hypocrisy, meaning, to him, hiding one's true personality" (p. liii). For Haynal, finally, "Ferenczi's concerns rested on his practice and his striving to ameliorate psychoanalytic activity, while Jones' reflected his institutional and academic preoccupations." Perhaps in the end the differences between these two collaborators who became rivals was about desiring different goals within the complexities of their very different characters.

The editors, Ferenc Erős, Judit Szekacs-Weisz and Ken Robinson are to be congratulated on this book of correspondence, as well as their very impressive introduction and notes accompanying each letter.

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