
„The roar of cannons and the smell of gunpowder”¹

Power and Exclusion in Early Accounts on the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement

"Ágyúdörgés és puskapor". Hatalom és kizárás a pszichoanalitikus mozgalom korai történetírásaiban.

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Abstract:

Jelen tanulmánnyal a célom az, hogy felmutassam, miként tekinthetőek a pszichoanalízis történetének korai leírásai – Sigmund Freud: *A pszichoanalitikai mozgalom történetéhez* (1914), *Önéletrajz* (1925) és Wilhelm Stekel: *Zur Geschichte der analytischen Bewegung* (1926) – a szerzők hatalomért folytatott harcának dokumentumaiként is. Míg Freud írásai a vezetői pozíciót hivatottak megszilárdítani a hierarchikus szerveződésű pszichoanalitikus közösségben a pszichoanalízis atyja számára, addig Stekel az analitikus mozgalom történetének saját verziójával a pszichoanalízis történetében önmaga számára kívánt méltónak vélt helyet biztosítani. A szövegek rávilágítanak arra, hogyan alakíthatják hatalmi viszonyok a tudományos életet is.

Key Words: Freud, Stekel, institutionalization, power relations, hierarchy, exclusion

Kulcsszavak: Freud, Stekel, intézményesülés, hatalmi viszonyok, hierarchia, kirekesztés

The focus of the present paper is on the following accounts of the history of psychoanalysis: Freud's *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement* (1914) and *An Autobiographical Study* (1925) and Stekel's *On the History of the Analytical Movement* (1926). The aforementioned narratives of Freud do not need to be presented. Stekel's voice, however, can be regarded as a marginal one in the mainstream psychoanalytic historiography.² His essay

¹ Stekel 2005: 120

² On the marginalization of Stekel see Bos 2005 and Bos & Groenendijk 2007.

had never been reprinted until 2005, when it was republished and translated into English for the first time since its first appearance in 1926 (Stekel 2005). There is no difference between the dominant perspective of Freud and the marginal perspective of Stekel in the sense that both writers aim to establish their position in the hierarchy of the psychoanalytic collective with their own version of the history of psychoanalysis. To Freud, this meant maintaining his top position in the hierarchy of the psychoanalytic community. Stekel's motive of writing his history of the analytical movement was „to serve the truth and to answer attacks” (Stekel 2005: 99), and thus to be acknowledged and gain a place in the history of psychoanalysis as „a loyal yet independent student” (Bos 2007: 14). As far as hierarchy is concerned, it is important to mention that what used to be a movement was turning into a formal organization, where not every participant of the movement could fit in. In 1910, the International Psycho-Analytical Association was founded, and it was divided into local groups. A president was appointed to oversee the whole association, while the branch societies had their own directors. Statutes were made, and a bulletin was to „link the Central Executive with the local groups” (Freud 1925: 43). Journals devoted to psychoanalysis were started, and the association had an official organ. During the process of the institutionalization of the science, a number of new posts became available (president, secretary, chairman, deputy, editors, reviewers, etc.).

The present paper argues that the mentioned accounts of the history of psychoanalysis can also be seen as documents of Freud's and Stekel's fight for power in the psychoanalytic community. My exploration of the texts is restricted to the parts of the movement's history of which Freud and Stekel give a different description, and – inspired by Stekel's remark that Freud's autobiography „is even more interesting with respect to what it does not say than to what it does say” (Stekel 2005: 106) – of which either of them does not give a description at all. Here I am going to discuss three points in relation to which the fight for power becomes evident: (1) the names of the prominent representatives of psychoanalysis, (2) the events at the Nuremberg congress, and (3) the Zentralblatt affair.

*The names of the prominent representatives of psychoanalysis.*³

The number and the importance of disciples and supporters are decisive criteria in having and getting a respectable place in the hierarchy and history of psychoanalysis. It is thus not surprising that we can find a great emphasis put on the quantity and quality of followers in both Freud's and Stekel's account. Freud writes in 1914:

„[I]n contrast to those who have left me, like Jung, Adler, Stekel, and a few besides, there are a great number of men, like Abraham, Eitingon, Ferenczi, Rank, Jones, Brill, Sachs, Pfister, van Emden, Reik, and others, who have worked with me for some fifteen years in loyal collaboration and for the most part in uninterrupted friendship.” (Freud 1925: 52)

Stekel replies with a critical comment on Freud's loyal supporters:

„Freud liked to pose as the great conciliator of men, referring to the large number of followers that remained loyal to him. He recounts their names: Eitingon, Ferenczi, Rank, Jones, Brill, Sachs,

³ Here I am going to draw the attention to a mistranslation in Freud's *An Autobiographical Study*. The sentence in the German original text „Ich habe an anderer Stelle [...] die Etappen ihres Fortschrittes verfolgt und dort auch die Männer genannt, die sich als ihre Vertreter hervortaten.” sounds in the English translation like this: „I have elsewhere [...] followed the stages of its growth and given the names of those who were its first representatives.” (Freud 1925: 50). An accurate translation of the last part of the sentence could be: who were its prominent representatives.

Pfister, van Emden, Reik.⁴ Four of them are laymen! And what do these names mean compared with Jung, Stekel and Adler? The names of the most important students who dared to give voice to their own ideas are actually missing from that list. I only need refer to Professor Paul Schilder, who lectured at Vienna University on psychoanalysis, and to Pözl, and many others.” (Stekel 2005: 122)

It is not to be explained why the name of Abraham is missing from Stekel’s list. It seems to be uncanny that Abraham died later in the same year.

Both Freud’s and Stekel’s papers mention the first gathering of psychoanalysts in Salzburg, of which Stekel’s account contains a detailed description:

„There I met Bleuler, whose work *Affektivität, [Suggestibilität,] Paranoia [1906]* I had studied with great interest, as well as Jung, Jones, Ferenczi, Brill, Riklin, and the highly gifted Otto Gross. Freud spoke on doubt, and defined doubt as doubt in love. I spoke on anxiety neurosis. Sadger spoke on the psychological roots of homosexuality. It was a truly unforgettably wonderful time. There was not a single sign of the subversion that was soon to set in. Gross's speech was formidable. He was at that time a lecturer in neurology in Graz. Freud was put on a par with Nietzsche and hailed as the trail-blazer of a new morality.” (Stekel 2005: 110)

With the mentioning of Otto Gross, Stekel gives a place in his history of psychoanalysis to someone who had not been involved in the psychoanalytic community for a long time. Otto Gross, though formerly praised as „the most significant” (Brabant et al. Vol. I. 1993: 154) follower of Freud, was one of the very first dissidents of the analytical movement. His works were mostly ignored by the psychoanalytic community⁵, but cited and acknowledged by Stekel.⁶ There are also other participants of the psychoanalytic movement that can be found in Stekel’s but not in Freud’s account(s): for example Fritz Wittels, who sympathized with Stekel, and Viktor Tausk, by whom, however, Stekel was seriously attacked (See below.⁷).

In a letter written to Freud twelve years after their break, Stekel finds it necessary to mention that „[t]here are already some 60 members in my organization of independent medical analysts because individual freedom of research is not hampered” (Letter from Stekel to Freud, dated Vienna, 22.1.1924. Quoted in Bos 2007: 195).

One year later, praising his own circle of students, he proudly declares in his account:

„[T]oday I can already say that I have the majority of medical doctors at my side. The society of independent medical analysts, only 2 years old, already has more doctors than the old Freudian organization. Of the 41 members of the Vienna analytical society, 13 (!) are lay analysts!” (Stekel 2005: 126)

Even though Stekel was a master of his own circle of students himself, he was unsatisfied with the position Freud offered to him in his account, referring to him only „as someone who has gone ‘totally astray’”(Stekel 2005: 119). Nine years after the publication of Freud’s *On the History* we can read in a letter of Rank to Freud:

⁴ The name of Abraham, who died later in the same year, is missing from Stekel’s list.

⁵ But see Ferenczi 1920.

⁶ Gross, anarchist and cocaine addict, was not invited after the Salzburg Congress to any psychoanalytic meeting. He was a patient of Stekel in 1914, and a paper of him was published in Stekel’s *Zentralblatt*. (Gross 1914) Cf. eg. Hurwitz 1979.

⁷ On Tausk see Roazen 1969.

„Regarding his book⁸ [the Freud biography of Wittels] a correspondence with Wittels developed (open for your review) in which he's behaved in a very conciliatory way until asking that I reconcile with Stekel, who strongly wishes it, or that I at least tone down the reference in History of the Psa. Movement [1914] („initially so commendable, later become completely misguided”) soon to be re-published.” (Letter from Rank to Freud, dated 29.12.1923. ed. Liberman&Kramer 2011: 180)

To Stekel it was impossible to accept the place in the history of psychoanalysis Freud destined for him.

The Nuremberg events.

The events of the second congress of psychoanalysts at Nuremberg are depicted by Freud and Stekel as well. Freud does not mention Stekel by name when reporting the resistance of the Viennese against Ferenczi's proposals:

„The scheme was strongly opposed only by the Vienna group. Adler, in great excitement, expressed the fear that 'censorship and restrictions on scientific freedom' were intended. Finally the Viennese gave in, after having secured that the seat of the Association should be not Zurich, but the place of residence of the President for the time being, who was to be elected for two years.” (Freud 1914: 43)

Stekel gives a long description of a secret meeting organized by him and Adler in a hotel room:

„We convened a secret meeting of our Viennese colleagues, so as to oppose the proposals and secure a leading role for Vienna. There were about 15 Viennese present and we were deliberating on counter-proposals when the door opened and Freud stepped in. He was ashen and more agitated than I had ever seen him before in my life. [...] Freud tried to persuade us and to justify himself. [...] [He] worked himself up into such a state - something I still cannot understand to this day. Tears were in his eyes. 'My very existence is at stake,' he exclaimed. 'They will not leave me the clothes I stand up in.' We were all deeply shocked. We deliberated and finally proposed a compromise, to which Freud was forced to submit. For the first period we would vote for Zurich, but afterwards another society (Vienna) would have to take the lead. Scientific censorship had to be dropped.” (Stekel 2005: 113-114)

Stekel's report is concluded with the following words: „To this day Freud has not forgiven me for being stronger than him at that time” (Stekel 2005: 114). This time, Stekel seemed to have won the battle for power. After the Nuremberg congress he still had, as the deputy of the newly formed Vienna Psycho-Analytical Association and the editor of the *Zentralblatt*, a stable place in the psychoanalytic collective.

The Zentralblatt: „an important weapon to hand”⁹

Soon, it came again to „a test of strength” (Freud to Ferenczi, October 20, 1912. Brabant et al. Vol. I. 1993: 413-415) between Freud and Stekel, which finally resulted in the break between them.¹⁰ In his 1914 account, Freud mentions Stekel by name five times altogether, and four out of them are in connection with the *Zentralblatt*. The *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse* has had „a stormy career” (Freud 1914: 46) – and Stekel played not a minor role in this.

⁸ Wittels, who left the Vienna Society in 1910 and sided with Stekel in 1912, wrote a critical Freud-biography (Wittels 1924). Cf. Bos 2005.

⁹ Stekel 2005: 120

¹⁰ On the *Zentralblatt* controversy and the „trial of strength” see Clark-Lowes 2010, Timms 2013.

In 1914, Freud recalls the main stages of the story of the journal. Its founding in September 1910 was one outcome of the Nuremberg Congress. In July 1911 „on account of scientific differences of opinion with the director, Dr. Alfred Adler had decided to withdraw voluntarily from the editorship. After this Dr. Stekel remained the only editor (from the summer of 1911). (Freud 1914: 46) At the Weimar Congress in September 1911, the *Zentralblatt* „was raised to the position of official organ of the International Association” (Freud 1914: 46). Stekel withdrew from the society in November 1912.¹¹ In the same month (on November 24), at the Council in Munich, the *Zentralblatt* was divested of its official character:

„From the third number of the second volume onwards (winter [December], 1912) Stekel became solely responsible for its contents. His behaviour, of which it is not easy to publish an account, had compelled me to resign the direction and hurriedly to establish a new organ for psycho-analysis—the *Internationale Zeitschrift für ärztliche Psycho-analyse* [International Journal for Medical Psycho-Analysis].” (Freud 1914: 46)

Freud’s remark on Stekel’s behavior is received by the latter with a harsh criticism. He accuses Freud of avoiding „telling the truth here.”¹² In his own account, he brings light to the cause of the break.¹³ Stekel was constantly attacked by Tausk, who is „used by Freud as a mere battering-ram to stronghold ’Stekel’” (Stekel 2005: 120). Freud let Stekel feel his power this way (Stekel 2005: 121). Freud’s proposal to set up a review-board with Tausk was taken by Stekel as a „declaration of war” (Stekel 2005: 121). Freud demanded Stekel to „surrender unconditionally” (Stekel 2005: 121).¹⁴ Stekel, however, was not going to capitulate:

„Now came the incident, the humiliation, for which Freud has never forgiven me. He wrote to Bergmann, asking him to choose between us, and Bergmann chose me. Deuticke too didn’t want to hear about a *Zentralblatt*. So Freud was forced to publish the *Internationale Zeitschrift für [ärztliche] Psychoanalyse* with Heller, a member of his society. This is the mysterious cause of my break with Freud, of which it apparently was so difficult to give an account.” (Stekel 2005: 122)¹⁵

Freud did not shrink from the test of strength. He asked, almost begged, each of his friends and followers to retire their names and withdraw collaboration from the *Zentralblatt* and to cooperate with the new organ.¹⁶ In the neutrals he could not recognize the friends of

¹¹ His resignation from the Society was announced on November 6. He ran the journal alone until September 1914.

¹² The full sentence says: „Freud clearly avoids telling the truth here, just as he did on the previous page of his aforementioned article when he wrote [Freud 1914: 47] that ‘[On] account of scientific differences, Dr Adler had decided to withdraw voluntary (sic!) from the editorship.’” (Stekel 2005: 119) He adds: „Such mysterious allusions verge on insults and slander because anyone would understand this expression to be as if I had stolen his silverware, as Wittels aptly remarked in his book on Freud [Wittels 1924: 216].”

¹³ On the cause of the split see Clark-Lowes 2001, Bos & Groenendijk 2007.

¹⁴ Freud wrote the same thing to Ferenczi: „If no complete capitulation comes from him, and if Bergmann's response is doubtful, then I will immediately resign as director of the journal, request all of our friends by means of a circular to withdraw their names and collaboration from the journal, and I will proceed unhesitatingly to found a new one” (Letter from Freud to Ferenczi, October 27, 1912. Ed. Brabant et al. 1993, Vol. 1: 417-419).

¹⁵ In a letter to Abraham, Freud's gives not the cause, but the occasion of the parting: „The occasion for the split was not a scientific one, but a presumption on his part against another member of the Society whom he wished to exclude from the reviews in “his paper”, which I could not permit” (Letter from Freud to Abraham, November 3, 1912. Ed. Paskauskas 1993:165-166).

¹⁶ Here is a small collection of the examples. **Freud to Abraham:** „I of course have in mind starting a new journal to take the place of the *Zentralblatt*, and ask you to withdraw your name from the latter and no longer to direct the papers from your group to it. In the next few days a circular letter will ask you to take these steps and to cooperate with the new organ.” (Letter from Freud to Abraham, November 3, 1912. Ed. Falzeder 2002: 165-

psychoanalysis.¹⁷ The execution of the Zentralblatt was necessary in order to get rid of Stekel – and to deprive him of power. „[A] quick collapse of the Zentralblatt cannot be but most appreciable to all of us.” – he wrote to Jones (Letter from Freud to Jones, November 8, 1912. Ed. Paskauskas 1993: 170-172). Anyone who disagreed or did not withdraw his support from the Zentralblatt (with which Stekel was identified) had to be expelled: „one Viennese has also expressed certain reservations. But the bliss of being rid of Stekel is worth some sacrifice” (Letter from Freud to Abraham, November 21, 1912. Ed. Falzeder 2002: 167-168). Stekel calls this Viennese by name: „Analysts who kept company with me were excommunicated or fell from Freud's grace. (An example of this is the brilliant Herbert Silberer.)” (Stekel 2005: 124). In Freud's 1925 account, the only information Freud gives of Stekel is that he had left him and that the Zentralblatt was edited by him. With his account, however, Stekel was able to establish a place in the history of psychoanalysis not only for himself but also for other neglected participants of the movement (O. Gross, F. Wittels, V. Tausk).

„Still not much new from the theater of war.” (Sigmund Freud to Sándor Ferenczi, November 3, 1912. Ed. Brabant et al. Vol. I. 1993:424) – as Freud writes it in a letter to Ferenczi. The language of the documents confirms the hypothesis that both parties perceived their relation to each other as a kind of war. Military expressions like enemy, battle, declaration of war, battering-ram, weapon, attack, to join forces, traitor, surrender, capitulation, desertion cannot escape our attention.

„[T]his weapon would soon be taken from me.” (Stekel 2005: 120) – and, indeed, Stekel was disarmed. He could keep the Zentralblatt and his independence, but not his collaborators, his membership, and his former place in the psychoanalytic community. Yet, Stekel was not the first and not the last to be expelled and made into an outsider in science. The case of Freud and Stekel serves as an example of how power relations and fights for power have had an effect on science, too. The reader of the history of the psychoanalytic movement can still hear „the roar of cannons” (Stekel 2005: 120) and smell the gunpowder.

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166) **Freud to Binswanger:** „All my friends will shortly be withdrawing their names from his masthead. I would ask you too not to send any contributions over which you have any influence to the Zentralblatt but to reserve them for my new journal.” (Letter from Freud to L. Binswanger, October 28, 1912. Ed. Fichtner 2003: 103) **Freud to E. Jones:** „We want the papers for our own organ and a quick collapse of the Zentralblatt cannot be but most appreciable to all of us. So I beg you will do the same.” (Freud to E. Jones, November 8, 1912. Ed. Paskauskas 1993: 170-172)

¹⁷ Freud to H. Blüher: „Wir können [...] in den »Neutralen« unsere Freunde nicht erkennen.” (Freud to Blüher, 9. August 1913: 146)

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