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Sigmund Freud, The Origins of Psychoanalysis and its Relevance to Modern Times

 Alessandra Balloni explores the origins of psychoanalysis by interviewing four voices from the Società Psicoanalitica Italiana (SPI). She calls on an outsider, the philosopher Carlo Sini, to provide the historical background to the birth of psychoanalysis in the light of the social and cultural context of the times.

Among the video’s merits, is to make you feel intense emotions: I still feel them after seeing it three times. My enthusiasm is for the sophisticated film clips, music, and commentary. In addition, the complex concepts and notions are treated with simplicity, highlighting the masterly direction.

Diverse points of view emerge, showing the different cultural and scientific relationships that Italian psychoanalysts share in their community.

For example Antonino Ferro, argues that the principle of the transformation of emotive contents through narration is the cornerstone of psychoanalytic treatment.

Cono Barnà asserts the importance of the hermeneutic process.

Tiziana Bastianini underlines the importance of creating links.

Anna Ferruta reflects on the fundamental elements of the setting.

The film underscores the idea of a dynamic scientific community dedicated to enriching research in the analytic field. This depends on the particular Institutional structure of the SPI in Italy, which has no equivalences in other countries.

When you think of it, a small country like Italy has eleven Psychoanalytic Centres! These are in Torino, Pavia, Milano, Genova, Venezia, Bologna, Firenze, Roma, Napoli and Palermo. Each local Centre has its Executive Board and Scientific Programme, but they all remain branches of the SPI.

As I was saying, this particular situation gives a sense of belonging to the Members who participate to the Institutional life of the Centre and its scientific activity. At the same time participating to the national scientific programme of the SPI. There is a good climate of cooperation, even when ideas and models tend to differ. This is a remedy against the tendency to split which has come about in other IPA Societies.

At this point I would like to make a brief excursus: Stephen Mitchell in “Hope and Dread in Psychoanalysis”(1) asserts:

(Mitchell S.A.(1993). Hope and Dread in Psychoanalysis, New York: Basic Books)

 *“psychoanalysts, are principally called upon to face the atemporal and universal dimension of the human experience that lies beneath the surface, rather than the superficial waves of cultural ch*.*ange and the latest scientific and social trends. For psychoanalysts it is important to believe there has only been one revolution, the Freudian one, and that all other research and studies have gradually contributed to the works of the founder. Many analysts identify themselves as direct descendants of Freud and are bound by this close affinity, partaking of his genius and authority.”*

I believe that a strong sense of belonging to a theoretical *corpus* and to its founder satisfies an enriching symbiotic need of its members; it gives validity and substance to the group and to the idea that sustains it; and in my opinion the members feel protected from hate and guilt.

The other work I would like to propose for comment is Joseph Sandler and Dreher’s, What Do Psychoanalysts Want? (2) (Sandler J., Dreher A.U. (1996). What Do Psychoanalysts Want? London: Routledge.)

 *“Since the Second World War, psychoanalysis has witnessed the development of an incredible variety of new theoretical orientations. Groups of analysts have given rise to Ego-psychology, Self-psychology, object-relation theories, the Kleinian school and others. New formulas appear that differentiate from the initial aims of psychoanalysis. For instance, the elaboration of depression, the increased cohesion of the Self, the achievement of a major autonomy of the Ego, and the development of a capacity to ‘worry about’ the object,…..”*

As we can see, a distinct gap has emerged between these new orientations and the position described by Mitchell.

What Alessandra Balloni’s video highlights is the interweaving between the dependence on the exegesis of Freud’s thought, and the determination to break away from it. This can be seen in the elaboration of theories and models aimed at interpreting mutating social, cultural issues and pathologies, and the different philosophical views of contemporary society.

1. *Mitchell S.A.(1993). Hope and Dread in Psychoanalysis, New York, Basic Books*
2. *Sandler J., Dreher A.U. (1996). What Do Psychoanalysts Want? London, Routledge*