

Book review

Sigmund Freud in the tropics. The first psychoanalytic dissertation in the Portuguese-speaking world (1914)

Sigmund Freud nos trópicos. A primeira dissertação psicanalítica no mundo lusófono (1914)

Author: Hannes Stubbe

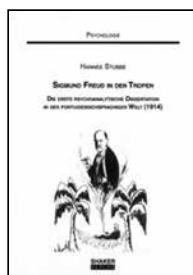
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An important centenary in this country's intellectual history is about to be commemorated: in 2014, the scholarly discourse on psychoanalysis in Brazil will turn 100 years old. It was in 1914 when Genserico Aragão de Souza Pinto from the state of Ceará received his doctorate by the Faculty of Medicine in Rio de Janeiro for his dissertation *Da psiconalíse (A sexualidade nas nevroses)* and thus inaugurated the field for the reception of psychoanalysis in the decades to come. After a long period when this document was not available, the German Hannes Stubbe, professor for anthropological psychology at the University of Cologne, Germany, and at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, traced it in the faculty's archives and published it as a 129-pages reprint. Hannes Stubbe is an outstanding expert on Brazil and has for many years held various professorships in Rio and São Paulo as well as in Mozambique and in China. He released his discovery in Germany and equipped it with a thorough commentary explaining both the Brazilian and the European context to the reader.

Thereby it becomes obvious how much Pinto is indebted to his supervisors, in particular to Antônio Austregésilo Rodrigues Lima who five years later published his own paper *Sexualidade e psico-neurose*, but also to the famous Juliano Moreira, denoting him as a *psicoanalista* in his acknowledgements. Moreira had established a tie to German-speaking psychiatry at the beginning of the century when travelling through Germany for several years. There he had also met Emil Kraepelin whose classification system for mental diseases he publicized upon his return to Brazil. It seems remarkable that even back in 1899, i.e. before his journey, Juliano Moreira had lectured on psychoanalysis at the Faculty of Medicine in Bahia. Pinto too proves well informed and quite familiar with numerous, yet not all of Freud's works existing back then. Apparently he had some basic knowledge of the German tongue which enabled him to at least partially overcome the barrier between Romanic and Germanic

languages called the "Latin wall" by Hannes Stubbe. For a number of central psychoanalytic terms Pinto makes first suggestions for their translation into Portuguese. Moreover he adequately classifies elements of Freud's doctrine as relying upon his teachers Charcot and Breuer. He does not mention a single Brazilian paper but is all in all notably familiar with the contemporary German and French discourses albeit apparently having adapted some of Freud's works as reviewed by French colleagues.

Pinto's dissertation comprises nine theoretical chapters, a preface, and an appendix with five exemplary case reports. He focusses on the comprehension of neurosis and perversions within the framework of drive theory as available in those days. The merits of his pioneer work are by no way diminished by the comment that his theoretical conception does not refer to the patient's inner experiences or phantasies, not to speak of oedipal phantasies. The core of psychoanalysis, the dynamic unconscious, was apparently unknown to Pinto and his teachers. So he perceives psychoanalysis essentially as a type of sexual medicine dealing with masturbation and other manifestations of dissatisfactory sexuality. In his case reports he furnishes interesting insights into his clinical work that aims at helping provide to his mostly female patients a more satisfactory sex life.

From a German point of view it is one quality in particular that arouses admiration for Pinto and his instructors: their capacity to merge the psychiatric with the psychoanalytic discourse on an academic level. Such an interdisciplinary dialogue is yet to come in Germany and took a long time to get started in other countries like France, the UK, the USA or Scandinavia. So the presented volume combines various pioneer achievements: of the doctoral candidate Pinto, of his academic environment, and last but not least of the editor and commentator Hannes Stubbe. Hopefully the "Latin wall" will not hamper its reception in Brazil.

Book review

Exploring frontiers of the mind-brain relationship

Explorando fronteiras da relação mente-cérebro

Editors: Alexander Moreira-Almeida & Franklin Santana Santos

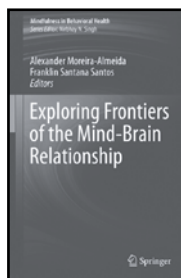
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The investigation and understanding of consciousness (self-awareness) is a fascinating subject that has always attracted the interest of different professionals and laymen. No less important is the idea of the continuity of consciousness beyond the functioning of the brain/body, which has had great impact on the history of humanity.

Various religious, philosophical and scientific theories and interpretations have emerged over the centuries to understand the formation and continuity of consciousness. More recently, starting from the nineteenth century, a new ideology known generally as “scientific materialism” has established itself as the main line of thought. Its premise is that everything in nature, including the origin of thought, is derived from the material world and is the product of an interaction between atoms and molecules. Although this approach is direct, objective and understandable, it has not been able to explain some phenomena related to the human mind. The consciousness itself remains a great enigma and mystery.

In order to present an academic and stimulating broad discussion on this subject, the psychiatrist Alexander Moreira-Almeida, a leading scientist in health and spirituality in Brazil, and the geriatrician Franklin Santana Santos, a Brazilian national reference in palliative care management and thanatology, invited leading thinkers and scientists to an international symposium. The main ideas and arguments presented during this symposium were edited in a book “Exploring frontiers of mind-brain relationship”, published by Springer in 2012.

The book is divided into 12 chapters (16 authors) and organized in four parts. The first part deals with the philosophical and historical aspects, followed by explanations of physics, which includes concepts of quantum physics. Then the functional neuro-imaging studies in mystical and meditative states are discussed. The last section presents reports of various human experiences as promising areas of research in understanding the mind-brain relationship.

The chapters are well written, clear and concise, with accessible language for the general public. Although they can be read individually, the different chapters have been integrated to allow the reader

to follow the argumentation, leading them to the main point of the book which is a critique of the use of a purely reductionist and materialistic view to understand certain experiences of the human mind. The different authors, in their own lines of thought, attempt to highlight the weaknesses and inappropriateness of this approach.

The book also comments on the issue of spirituality/religiosity in people's lives. There are already a large number of scientific studies showing that the more religious/spiritual people are, less ill they become or faster they will recover from illness compared with the general population. However, studies to understand specifically what is meant by mystical experiences, religious, spiritual or other anomalous experiences or altered states of consciousness are still very limited and small in number.

By way of illustration, some types of experiments are mentioned, found recorded in different cultures and different periods of humanity. Phenomena that occur at different times of human life, such as reports of children describing their alleged memories with details of past lives, children or adults who claim to communicate with dead people (often referred to as medium), adults in mystical or meditative states with anomalous perceptual experiences (out of body experience, clairvoyance, among others), reports of people who had cardiac arrest or severe brain ischemia (near death experiences) or experiences of those who are dying (experiences of end of life).

While the observation of these different phenomena that occur over the life of a significant portion of the population has been reported throughout the centuries, the difference today is that these phenomena are better described and recorded. However, these human experiences continue to be neglected from a scientific point of view.

I congratulate the editors and authors for this work and recommend this book not only to those interested in this topic, but also to those who want to have a broader view on a variety of human experiences and their implications for clinical practice. A Portuguese translation would also be very welcome to reach an even wider audience in Brazil ... and overseas.