

Rita Corsa

## Edoardo Weiss a Trieste con Freud: Alle origini della psicoanalisi Italiana

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Trieste has had a particular place in the history of Southern Slaves, not only during the times of the communist Yugoslavia, as a mythical „shopping destination“. Very similarly to Rijeka, the city, however, was experiencing its real climax in the period between the mid of the 18th century and the WWI. A harbour with enormous hinterland and market, was attracting the best and the bravest of Slovenes (57,000 in Trieste in 1910, while only 34,000 in Lubliana in the same period), Italians, Croatians, Greeks, Germans, Jews, and Serbs, resulting in unprecedented dynamic development of commerce, industry, navigation, and, as usually, of science, arts, and culture (according to one calculation, the life standard in Trieste was six times better than the one in Vienna).

Into such a fervent community, Rita Corsa, physician, psychiatrist, and psychoanalyst, locates the intriguing person of Edoardo Weiss (1889-1970), a young medicine doctor of Trieste Jewish origin (his father arrived to Trieste in 1882). Corsa is herself from Trieste, but teaches psychiatry at University of Milan. She co-authored *Fundamentals of Criminology* and other works, and started the adventure of founding and analysing patient records compiled by Weiss in the 1980s, turning back to the theme around 2012.

Edoardo Weiss came back to his native Trieste immediately after his schooling in Vienna, his experience as war physician, and the collapse of the Hapsburg monarchy. He got job in the then about ten years old *frenocomio* (madhouse) of Trieste, and remained here for another decade (precisely, until 1929, when he declined the offer to become *primario* if he would italianise his family name).

After she depicted the twilight of the mighty Trieste after 1918, Corsa devotes her Chapter 2 to the history of the institution where Weiss was working in the 1920s. The *Conservatorio dei poveri*, established in 1773, functioned as a kind of hospital,

orphanage, and prison at the same time. In 1841, the institution, now devoted to the mentally ill only, moved to the old bishop's palace beneath the hill of San Giusto, thus becoming the first Trieste mental hospital (*manicomio*). The final location of the psychiatric hospital, where the young Weiss will be working, will be in a new building, ceremonially opened in 1908, under the name Frenocomio Civico ed Ospizio (since 1924: Ospedale Psichiatrico Provinciale) *Andrea di Sergio Galatti*, after the last will of the Greek industrial benefactor. At the time of Weiss, the hospital directors were professors Luigi Canestrini and Guglielmo de Pastrovich, respectively.

In Chapter 3, Weiss' days at the Vienna Faculty of Medicine are followed, including Weiss' first encounter with Sigmund Freud, in 1907, and his joining of the Viennese Psychoanalytic Society in 1914.

The psychoanalytical career of Edoardo Weiss in Trieste is the topic of Chapter 4. After he left the hospital, Weiss opened his own office in Via San Lazzaro (in 2002, marked by a memorial plate). He is in continuous correspondence with Freud, collaborating with his teacher on several cases. He is recognised as the pioneer in psychoanalytics, and invited by Italian Association for Psychology to deliver lectures at congresses in Florence and Trieste. In 1931, Weiss publishes the textbook *Elementi di psicoanalisi*, with a preface written by Freud. About the same year, however, Weiss decided to transfer to Rome (Chapter 5): in a letter to his colleague Federn, Weiss states that he be in Trieste „very respected, known, and occupied, but not payed entirely.“

Chapter 6 returns us back in time, to the war years of Weiss, especially the importance of the 4th International Congress of Psychoanalysis, held in September 1918 in Budapest. Due to the fact that the Congress was focused on war psychoses and neuroses, Corsa correctly notices the odd „scotoma“ in the later Trieste career of Weiss, who was marginalising the relation between his casuistry and the „Great War“.

Final four chapters are devoted to Weiss patients, among them to Bruno Veneziani (brother-in-law of Italo Svevo), the painter Arturo Nathan, and the writer and journalist Vladimir Bartol. Some of those last chapters are co-authored by Corsa's colleagues, the psychologist Giuliana Marin, the criminologist-anthropologist Pierapaolo Martucci, and the pediatrician Vlasta Polojaz, while the afterword is written by Pietro Rizzi.

Beside the long list of praises to Rita Corsa and Alpes for this dynamic reconstruction of the crucial elements of the biography of Edoardo Weiss, but also of Italian psychoanalysis, we might suggest three additions for a second edition of

the book: first, an index of names would be most appreciated; second, one might like to read something on Giovanni Dalma (1895-1977), the psychiatrist from Fiume/Rijeka, who was among the founders of Italian Psychoanalytical Society in the 1920s and later, in the 1930s, a collaborator of Weiss in the *Rivista di psicoanalisi*; and third, it would also be nice to add a few lines on Sigmund Freud's days in the Trieste *Stazione zoologica*, where he studied eels in the 1870s.

One of many lessons from Corsa's work is the importance for an idea (and, of course, for its ideator) to find appropriate network of passionate collaborators and followers, in order to propagate the teaching. Such a network has proved crucial for the survival of Freudian psychoanalysis, with, for example, Sándor Ferenczy in Hungary, and, of course, Edoardo Weiss in Italy, as well as for some other new disciplines, like Van Rensselaer Potter's (global) bioethics in the 1990s. Thus, Corsa successfully confirmed that there is no better and more efficient institutionalisation of an idea than the generations of convinced students.

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