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Mexico*¹

by Raúl Páramo-Ortega

Pre-History

As far as I was able to discover regarding the reception of Freud in Mexico, 1922 was the year in which Freud's name for the first time appeared in print in Mexico. The well-read provincial doctor, Jose Torres Orozco, had written an essay entitled "Freudian Theory in relation to mental illnesses". The periodical in which the article appeared was called *Mexico Moderno* (Vol. 2, No.1), whose editors included the *crème de la crème* of Mexican intellectuals, among them personalities who were to attain political prominence in Mexico: e. g. the communist Vicente Lombardo Toledano and the conservative lawyer Manuel Gómez Morin. The famous poet José Gorostiza also deserves to be mentioned. Torres Orozco was able to read Freud in the original without difficulty and a few years before he had even published some essays on Nietzsche, furthermore enjoying the fame of having read the library of the *Colegio Nicolaita* (Morelia) twice. Even though the article mentioned above did not contain detailed knowledge of Freudian thought, Torres Orozco nevertheless recognized the fundamental significance of sexuality for the human being. This was above all possible because he had grown up in an open and liberal atmosphere: his father, Don Mariano de Jesús Torres, was namely a well-read, versatile and distinctive personality who edited his own opposition newspaper *El Centinela* (against the dictator Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910)). Our provincial doctor, however, was more an isolated occurrence who did not start off a movement in Mexico. The positivist philosopher Samuel Ramos, who was a friend of Torres Orozco and was the next person to try to shed light on the conflictual identity of the Mexicans by using psychoanalytical tools, does not orient himself to Freud,

* This essay is a summary of the author's more detailed portrayal of this subject: Raúl Páramo-Ortega: *Freud in Mexico. The History of Psychoanalysis in Mexico*. Munich (Quintessenz) 1992 [in German]. At this point I should like to express my gratitude to Ms Marita Zimmer de Luengas for her collaboration and without whose invaluable assistance I would not have been able to write this paper in German, a language I only learnt later in life.

¹ Dieser Aufsatz ist eine kurze Zusammenfassung meines Buches *Freud in Mexiko. Zur Geschichte der Psychoanalyse in Mexiko*, München, Quintessenz-Verlag, 1992. In der jetzigen Version habe ich einige Veränderungen vorgenommen, die aus der Perspektive vom Oktober 2006 entstanden sind. Ich möchte auch anmerken, dass der kritische Inhalt des Artikels, sowie seine Veröffentlichung in einer international verbreiteten Ausgabe (*Psychoanalysis international*, 1995, vol.2, Peter Kutter (ed.), Stuttgart (Frommann-Holzboog), S. 149-159), einige Mitglieder der *Asociación Psicoanalítica Mexicana* (APM) über die Maßen irritiert hat. Der Ursachen dafür gab es sicherlich viele, und ich möchte mich nicht damit aufhalten, im Detail auf sie einzugehen. Doch zeigte sich in dieser offensichtlich übermäßigen und hochgekränkten narzisstischen Reaktion die tief verankerte mexikanische Eigenschaft, die noch dazu nationalistisch gefärbt ist, zu mangelnder Selbstkritik. In der Tat ist die Lage der Psychoanalyse in Mexiko inzwischen, also in den letzten zwölf Jahre, noch schlimmer geworden als ich es in diesem Aufsatz beschreibe. Die Psychoanalyse ist, wie Parin bemerkt hat (s. Epigraph), ein hochsensibles Barometer für heruntergekommene Kulturen, wie es z.B. in der mexikanischen Kultur (selbstverständlich meine ich auch die Sozioökonomie) während der Amtszeiten der beiden letzten - und dem jetzigen - Präsidenten offenkundig geworden ist. Noch dazu leidet die Nation unter einem schwerwiegenden jahrzehntelangen Analphabetismus. (Hinzugefügt vom Autor am 19.1.07)

however, but decidedly to Adler, whom he briefly visited in Vienna in 1928 (Hernández Luna, 1982). Ramos also had a great influence on the well-known writer Octavio Paz. In 1950 Paz wrote an enlightened and still today fundamental book on Mexican identity, entitled *The Labyrinth of Loneliness*, which was translated into several languages. Octavio Paz, at that time still young and progressive, had in fact ideas that can be regarded as being a part of psychoanalytical thought. Curiously enough, the pioneer of psychoanalysis in Mexico, Santiago Ramirez, also wrote, independent of this, a noteworthy essay entitled *El mexicano - psicología de sus motivaciones* (1959). Mexico's identity was one of the first objects of research to be given special attention by Mexican psychoanalysts. In this connection two books by Francisco Gonzalez Pineda must also be mentioned: *The Mexican - his psychosocial dynamics* and *The Mexican - his destructivity*. Both Santiago Ramirez and Gonzalez Pineda come from the founding group of the Asociación Psicoanalítica Mexicana (APM), which is a component society of the IPA.

Freud's Late Reception in Mexico - a Hypothesis

Four interwoven factors were above all responsible for Freud's late reception in Mexico:

- a) The obvious language barrier.
- b) The breaking-off of diplomatic relations between Austria and Mexico, as well as scanty contacts to Germany and Switzerland.
- c) The intense "Frenchifying" of Mexican culture.
- d) Universal resistance to the new shattering insights brought forth by psychoanalysis.

Regarding a): Relations between Germany and Mexico were not particularly well-developed or not directed specifically to cultural matters but more to commercial ones. This applies to the period between 1900 and about 1950. Even the associations run out of an interest in culture (such as the Jewish lodge B'nai-B'rith, which in Mexico in the thirties published a bulletin in Yiddish, *In Kamf*) imparted no information on the Jew Sigmund Freud (cf. Zarate, 1986). Despite the fact that Freud himself was active in this association in Vienna (Jones, 1962, III, from p.151), no approaches were made to him.

Regarding translations, the first Spanish translation of Freud's work is dated as late as 1923, not in Mexico but in Madrid. In addition to this, the

two most used translations (Lopez Ballesteros and José Luis Etcheverry) contain numerous and fundamental errors.¹

Regarding b): After the assassination of Emperor Maximilian in 1867 diplomatic relations between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Mexico were broken off and not resumed until 1901 (Vavrik, 1989). These interruptions had an effect for many decades to come and only in the sixties do we find Mexican students interested in getting into contact with the German-speaking world. The first and second world wars were naturally an insuperable obstacle in the way of any possible cultural influence.

Regarding c): The first intrusion by France into Mexico's history was of a military nature, following the refusal of the president at that time, Benito Juárez, the wise Oaxakenian Indian, to repay Mexico's financial debts (1861). Thus Napoleon III decided, in 1861, to use his military power. From the beginning the French were very careful to secure their cultural influence, which was expressed, for example, in the founding of the Academy of Sciences (1864). Soon afterwards many Mexican intellectuals (above all medical doctors) went to

France in order to widen their knowledge. They included the influential Gabino Barreda (1820-1881), himself a pupil of August Comtes, who later took on a leading position in the Mexican Ministry of Education. In the Medical School Daniel Vergara Lopez (cf. Gortari, 1963) introduced both the French school of medicine as well as Pavlov's theories. For the Mexicans, Pavlov epitomized Europe.

Up to the present-day psychoanalysis in Mexico has, by and large, been influenced above all by the psychoanalysis of North America, France and Argentina (in that order; Argentina, incidentally, has also been considerably influenced by the French). It is therefore impossible to speak of these three influences having any kind of unity. By comparison, Freudian texts have come off badly. Moreover, opinions of Freud frequently appear in Mexican literature, which, due to poor translations, have nothing to do with Freud. Influence from the German-speaking world in terms of quantity is very small. To sum up, psychoanalysis is inevitably second-hand, so to speak.

1 See a number of examples of this in Paramo-Ortega et al. 1982 and Paramo-Ortega / Perez-Robles 1987.

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Two Pioneers: Erich Fromm and Santiago Ramirez

The first attempts at institutionalization were made in the fifties. A number of psychiatrists, including Guillermo Dávila, José F. Diaz, Abraham Fortes, Raúl González Hennquez, and Alfonso Millán, who had heard about hypnosis, hysteria and the unconscious during a lecture trip by Pierre Janet (in 1925), knew that the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm was staying at a health resort near Mexico City and arranged to meet him. In the original group we find (among others and besides those mentioned above) Aniceto Aramoni, Jorge Derbez, Arturo Higareda, Armando Hinojosa, Ignacio Millan and Jorge Silva García (in alphabetical order). A little later, in 1951, Fromm was given a lectureship at the National University of Mexico (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, UNAM). Many prominent patients went to him and at the same time he also started to give seminars, above all for medical doctors who were interested in getting to know more closely and practising the new method of psychoanalysis (cf. Millan, 1965; Silva García, 1988).

Other medical doctors, who were not interested in the theory of a revisionist (Fromm) but more in so called orthodox theory, received psychoanalytical training at one of the training centres of the IPA.

Thus the pioneer Santiago Ramírez², who later epitomized Mexican psychoanalysis, went to Argentina (where Marie Langer was his training analyst). His friend Ramón Parres, as well as Francisco González Pineda, Alfredo Namnum and Fernando Césarman went to the United States. Avelino González, Jaime Tomás, Jose Luis González Chagoyán, José Remus Araico and Estela G. de Remus went to Argentina. The ways of Rafael Barajas and Carlos Corona Ibarra led to Paris. The former lived after his return in Monterrey and the latter in Guadalajara. Fortunato Castillo decided to go to England, where he then settled. None of the first pioneers even thought of learning the original language of psychoanalysis, let alone of going to Germany, Austria or Switzerland. We must not forget, however, that psychoanalysis in the German-speaking world at that time was in the difficult post-war phase. The earlier golden age in Berlin and Vienna as centres of training was already past. No Mexican, as far as I am informed, had taken any notice of the "good times" in Berlin and Vienna. Thus psychoanalysis in Mexico (let it be mentioned once more) was decidedly influenced by the USA, France, Argentina and, to a lesser extent, England.

2 Santiago Ramírez died at the age of 68 on 14 April 1989 in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

The first two pioneer groups failed in their attempt to start a common movement. Power struggles, as nearly always, were an insuperable obstacle. So each group went its own way: the so called orthodox Freudians and the Frommians. After their return the former joined together and founded the Mexican Psychoanalytical Association (Asociación Psicoanalítica Mexicana, APM), which was officially accepted as a member of the IPA at the 20th IPA Congress Paris in 1957 (cf. Parrés / Ramírez, 1966). In the meantime this association has developed very well and grown stronger, today (1989) having 18 life members, 47 full and 16 associate members. The number of training candidates, according to official information, is 26 (Velasco, 1989). The APM has the training centre with the highest standards in the whole country. (Most of the candidates who do not come up to the required standards are - let's say tactically and *de facto* - referred to the recently opened *Centra de Estudios de Postgrado*, where they have the opportunity of gaining a *Maestria* in psychotherapy. This *Maestria* is officially recognized by the Ministry of Education). Originally the APM consisted almost entirely of medical doctors, with one exception, the psychologist Luis Feder, who later attracted attention with a number of investigations into the ambivalent affectivity of parents, under which children are frequently born. He coined the term "pre-conception phase" and also published quite a lot on creativity, acting out and committed incest. From the conflict between medical doctors and so called laypersons (there were of course other kinds of conflicts too) different branches came into being which were founded by members of the APM themselves in 1965: the Asociación Mexicana de Psicoterapia Psicoanalítica (AMPP), supported by Santiago Ramírez, at the beginning had only female psychologists as members (of these Raquel Berman later made a name for herself). Another offshoot worthy of mention is the Asociación Mexicana de Psicoterapia Analítica de Grupo (AM PAG, founded by Jose Luis González, Gustavo Quevedo and Frida Zmud in 1967), as well as the Instituto Mexicano de Psicoterapia Psicoanalítica para la Adolescencia (IMPPA), under the directorship of Armando Barriguete. The conflictual and momentous splitting away of the APM crystallized in the forming of the Sociedad Psicoanalítica de Mexico (1978), led by Avelino González and Amapola González de Gaitán (see González de Gaitán, 1980), who later formed the Asociación Psicoanalítica Jalisciense in Guadalajara as an offshoot of the above mentioned association, led by Enrique Torres Acevedo and Manuel Fernández Villanueva. In Monterrey, the third most important city in Mexico, a study group which was recognized as such by the IPA was formed, a leading role being played by Rafael Barajas, Ricardo Diaz Conty and later Rubén Tamez Garza and Hernán Solís Garza.

The Frommian group overcame all its difficulties and became firmly established. At its training institute 93 psychoanalysts had completed their studies by the end of 1989. The number of teaching staff is 19 (see Silva García, 1988). The Instituto Mexicano de Psicoanálisis published a yearbook that propagated Fromm's humanistic psychoanalysis. The Mexican Psychoanalytical Circle (Círculo Psicoanalítico Mexicano, CPM) was founded by Armando Suárez and Raúl Páramo-Ortega in Mexico City in 1969. This has helped to reduce further the monopoly of medical doctors, although Páramo-Ortega, and Jaime Cardeña, who joined later, are both medical doctors themselves. Jaime Cardeña had completed training at the APM. Yet he was soon to view this association (APM) critically, which was why he made the decision to leave it. The founders mentioned above, Suárez and Páramo-Ortega, had in the tradition of their teacher Igor Caruso tried very hard to emphasize the socio-critical aspects of Freudian theory and its connection with sociology (of a Marxist slant) and ethology. They

both saw themselves as true Freudians and were virtually the only and the first ones to seek to do their training in German-speaking countries. The present director of the CPM (1992) is José Perrés. According to official information the CPM has at present (November 1989) 74 training candidates and a teaching staff of 15. In Guadalajara there has been a branch of the CPM since 1987, led by two pupils of Armando Suárez, Fernando González and Juan Diego Castillo. The pendulum has swung so far in the other direction that nowadays hardly any medical doctors are to be found at the various training centres in Mexico. Only the APM continues to have almost only medical doctors in its ranks. In recent years - in my opinion rightly so - it has not been in principle opposed to psychology as a prerequisite for training, but opposed to qualitative shortcomings in the study of psychology. Freud pleaded for the inclusion of non-medical analysts, but the so called laymen of the pioneering period at that time had - compared to Mexico - a tremendously good educational background with which a Mexican diploma in psychology simply cannot compete. The logical consequence is that for some time now a doctorate (and not only a licence) in psychology as well as certain psychiatric experience have been called for. Added to this is the fact that - in view of the financial crisis over the past ten years - the study of medicine (much more expensive, longer and more demanding) is hardly possible. This is an insuperable obstacle for Mexican students, helping to bring about a drop in the standards of training candidates in psychoanalysis. The surfeit of psychotherapists of all descriptions in Mexico City has also caused many to move to other cities where they hope to keep their heads financially above water. The worst thing is yet to be mentioned: The flourishing of so called "psychoanalytical training

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centres", where many people try to save their difficult financial situation by "acquiring" a formerly highly esteemed profession (that of psychoanalyst). The laws governing the practice of any profession cannot keep up with the situation that is currently prevalent in all professions. And we must not forget that in Mexico a law is very often a useless law.

Catholicism and Psychoanalysis: the Lemerrier case - from about 1960 until 1970

In the early sixties, the Belgian benedictine priest, Gregorio Lemerrier, played an indirect, yet noteworthy role in Mexican psychoanalysis. Initially he had come to Mexico full of missionary Christian-Eurocentric zeal to found a monastery. Only by chance, namely that he had unexpectedly had a visual hallucination, did he come across psychoanalysis. The visual hallucination finally turned out not to be psychogenic, so to speak, but a symptom of cancer of the retina. At any rate, the friend he consulted (the psychoanalyst Santiago Ramirez) had advised Lemerrier, besides the opthalmological examination, to undergo psychoanalysis with Gustavo Quevedo. The personal analysis was so enlightening for Lemerrier that he tried, full of enthusiasm, to apply psychoanalysis to the whole monastery. With the help of Frida Zmud and later of José Luis González Chagoyán, Quevedo applied psychoanalytical group therapy. Because of this Lemerrier got into difficulties with the Vatican, in the end losing his struggle. The Vatican closed the monastery because it, perhaps rightly, feared that the spiritual vocation and/or even the Christian faith might be lost through psychoanalysis. Lemerrier, on the other hand, maintained defiantly that psychoanalysis could and should only enhance the faith. After the break between the Vatican and Lemerrier, the Belgian priest enthusiastically undertook, together with Quevedo, the Utopian-mystical project, Centro Psicoanalítico Emmaus, of applying psychoanalysis to everything one can think of (e. g. factories, hospitals etc.). The project was, however, tactically and technically, too out of touch with reality and at the same time so imbued with Salvationist zeal and phantasies of omnipotence that it was quickly

doomed to failure. Quevedo, who had been trained in Argentina, paid for this by becoming mentally unbalanced. He suffered from deep depressions at that time. A little later he died in a car crash, for which - in the opinion of many people - his state of mind was also to blame. For all its tragic nature, a side-effect of the whole experiment "psychoanalysis in the monastery" was that it provided a tremendous impulse for the application of group therapy and for psychoanalysis in general. For the

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first time psychoanalysis came into the public eye and the analysts' consulting hours were heavily booked.

The Immigrants: From 1974 to the Present

In 1974 a wave of emigrants, mainly from Argentina, came to Mexico, fleeing from their politically and economically unsettled country. This emigration set a lot in motion, some of it not only of a positive nature. There were serious and well trained people who enriched the psychoanalytical movements in Mexico, but also, unfortunately, less serious people, who caused a certain amount of chaos in psychoanalytical identity. In no time many "Psychoanalytical consulting rooms" came into being. The influence from Argentina only increased the grave economic and spiritual crisis that prevailed in Mexico.

Among the emigrants there are some outstanding personalities, such as Marie Langer, Juan Carlos Plá, Ignacio Maldonado, Silvia Bleichmar, Frida Saal, Miguel Matrajk and Armando Bauleo, as well as the more controversial Néstor Braunstein, to mention but a few. Initially Braunstein was regarded very highly because of his fundamental book *Psicología: ciencia e ideología* (Braunstein 1975), but later took a controversial direction, as already mentioned. He was very active, publishing many books, and in the most recent phase has oriented himself decidedly to Lacan. He formed, with unusual financial support, the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Psicoanalíticos (CIEP). In this connection the Escuela Lacaniana de Psicoanálisis should also be mentioned, whose followers are almost entirely Argentinians. Irrespective of what the Lacanian school has to offer in terms of content, many psychoanalysts (or those who consider themselves as such) have looked for a new identity figure in the Frenchman Lacan. The figure of Freud as an ideal image was already occupied, so to speak, in their elected country Mexico. The situation of exile (a lack of roots, shattered identity, new surroundings, and precarious finances) was for some people more the basis of an opportunistic impetus to follow a modern direction in psychoanalysis (Lacan).

Psychoanalytical Literature

Mexican psychoanalytical literature is not extensive and has not in fact produced anything remarkable in terms of quality. Among the books published by members of the APM, however, there are some that are worth

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mentioning, though I shall naturally dispense with making a complete list: *La infancia es destino* by Santiago Ramírez (1959); *La técnica psicoanalítica* by Agustín Palacios, Santiago Ramírez and Gregorio Vainer (1963); *La práctica del psicoanálisis* by Marco Antonio

Dupont (1988); also the book by Guiseppe Amara, *El hombre imposible: anatomia de un psicoanálisis* (1987).

I cannot go into Erich Fromm's extensive publishing activities in a summary such as this article. Beyond that, reference is made to the double issues 1 and 2, January-June 1984 (Vol. XVII) of the *Cuadernos de Psicoanálisis* (journals on psychoanalysis edited by the APM). They give us an invaluable view of psychoanalytical practice as the Mexicans see it, an amalgam, in fact, of Mexican and North American psychoanalysis. Regarding periodicals, it is important to mention that the Argentinian, Silvia Bleichmar, edited eight issues of a periodical of a very high standard during her time in Mexico (from about 1981 to 1987). The periodical is called *Trabajos de Psicoanálisis* (freely translated: *Working through psychoanalysis*). In it, French influences are apparent, above all the ideas of Laplanche. In Guadalajara the *Cuadernos Psicoanalíticos* (*Psychoanalytical journals*, 11 issues up to 1992) appear at irregular intervals. The editors are the small Sigmund Freud Study Group, who, as the name says, see themselves as Freudians. They emphasize the ideological-critical aspects of psychoanalysis (that is, psychoanalysis as a cultural theory) and have drawn attention to the poor Spanish and English translations of Freud's works. In Monterrey, again at irregular intervals, the periodical *Imago* is edited, and in Morelia *La Nave de los Locos* (*The Ship of fools*).

Summing up I should like to add that Mexico, in my opinion, is too close to North American psychoanalysis and too far away from European psychoanalysis (particularly from the German-speaking world - the language of Freud). Psychoanalysis in Mexico is of necessity a transcultural product. The grave economic and spiritual crisis in Mexico is of course also reflected in our profession. Psychoanalysis in Mexico represents a distinct kind of "therapeutically"-centred psychoanalysis, which, as Erdheim (1988, p. 9) says, "creates the unconsciousness in society which (the analyst) - seeks to reduce in patients".

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