
Lipot Szondi (1893–1986)

Lipot Szondi died on January 24, 1986 at age 93. He was born March 11, 1893 in Nyitra, Czechoslovakia, then a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the eighth of nine siblings and half-siblings. His father, a meditative and deeply religious individual who greatly influenced Szondi's life, was a shoemaker who neglected his occupation to read Hebrew from morning to night. Consequently, the family was wretchedly poor and lived in very primitive conditions. Later, the family moved to Budapest where Szondi's father became an assistant rabbi. On an academic scholarship, and further financed by his oldest step-brother, Szondi matriculated in 1911 in the Pazmany-Peter-Universitate to study medicine, working in his spare time as a clinician in the neurological and psychiatric service of the Graf Apponyi Poliklinik. He received his doctorate in medicine from the University of Budapest in 1919.

In 1923, Szondi began his studies of the internal bodily secretions, described in his copious writings of that period, and became chief of the Experimentelle Psychologisches Laboratorium der Hochschule fuer Heilpädagogik in Budapest, which became an impetus for his later writings in educational psychology.

Szondi early addressed the German characterologic assumption that within the frame of the total personality there is a nucleus of innate, permanent psychological features that cannot be modified by environmental factors. The results of his studies, based on both genetics and psychoanalysis, led to the theory of *genotropism* and its manifestation through *operotropism* as detailed in his 1944 work *Wahl in Liebe, Freundschaft, Beruf, Krankheit und Tod* (Choice in Love, Friendship, Occupation, Illness and Manner of Death). This work, which encompasses the entire spectrum of human existence, won Szondi international fame.

Space permits only a brief sketch of Szondian psychology, recorded in 25 books and tracts and 350 journal articles. Genotropism means that through the latent, as opposed to the manifest genes, individuals are attracted to each other when there is a similar genotypal structure, and operotropism means that there is a natural propensity to choose an occupation consonant with the dynamic action of one's latent genes. These concepts have great value in educational and vocational guidance.

In the course of the development of his basic theory of drives, Szondi discovered the familial unconscious, a

construct midway between Freud's personal unconscious and Jung's collective unconscious. Szondi's four primary drives are sexual, ethico-moral, ego, and contactual, each with its antithetic components, and each component embracing a normal and morbid facet. As a method of measuring the current predominance and intensity of the facets, the Szondi Test was developed as an aid in therapy, and not primarily as a diagnostic instrument. Only within the theory and nosology of Schicksal analysis is the test diagnostically meaningful.

The reversal of the healthful and morbid drive facets is brought about through poignant psychic events as a result of bereavement, fear of imminent death, intense religious experience, Schicksal analysis (a confrontational therapy), or chemical means such as alcohol or narcotics. This reversal phenomenon has been described as the *drehende Buehne* (the revolving stage).

Epochal in Szondi's career was the founding in 1958 of the Internationale Forschungsgemeinschaft fuer Schicksalpsychologie (International Research Society for Schicksal Psychology), which conducts triennial congresses in Zurich, Paris, Brussels, and Pamplona and, from its secretariat in Zurich, publishes books and tracts. Noteworthy also was the establishment in Zurich in 1961 of the Schweizerische Gesellschaft fuer Schicksalstherapie (Swiss Association for Schicksal Analytic Therapy). At this time the Szondi Institute was also established in Zurich, where didactic and practicum training leads to a diploma.

Szondi's theory of drives (Trieblehre) constitutes a complete system of psychoanalysis, translated chiefly into French, Spanish, and Japanese, whose therapeutic efficacy is suggested through its practice in many countries. It provides psychologists and psychiatrists with an additional potent analytic modality, useful in the areas of education, vocational guidance, counseling, and behavior modification. Most hopeful, however, is its quest for freedom from genetic impediments. Szondi said, "Man is not an either/or creature. He is a both/and individual, both noble and base, both spiritual and material, both generous and avaricious, both kind and cruel. Through therapeutic intervention he is rendered free to choose. This liberation is the essence of true healing."

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