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Márta Csabai

Development of Psychosomatics and the Therapeutic Relationship: The Impact of the Budapest School of Psychoanalysis

Summary:

Among the theorists connected to the Budapest school of psychoanalysis presumably Franz Alexander and Michael Balint received the widest scientific recognition. Nevertheless they enjoyed much success and reputation in medicine, the significance of their psychoanalytic theories has not been acknowledged adequately. On the other hand, in psychoanalytic theorizing, their names are primarily connected to certain concepts, and the more general medical relevance of their work is neglected. Further, the fact that George Engel, the founder of the biopsychosocial model, and Thomas Szasz, pioneer of the antipsychiatry movement, were both students of Alexander is almost unknown, and the significance of their “Budapest” inheritance has neither received enough attention. This paper attempts a common understanding of the fragmented evaluations of these theorists. It argues that not only the roots of Alexander’s and Balint’s concepts are common – both can be originated from the theories of Ferenczi – but they have other strong intellectual ties, too. They can be characterized equally by the emphasis on the relational/ emotional aspects, and a psychosomatic orientation.