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BRUNO BETTELHEIM and Erich Fromm were two refugees from Nazism who settled in the United States and became famous there as psychotherapists and writers.

Bettelheim wrote, among other books, an important study of the psychology of the inmates of concentration camps, based on his experiences of Dachau and Buchenwald; he was later director of a celebrated school in Chicago for highly disturbed children. Fromm tried to reconcile psychoanalysis with Marxism, and wrote several best-sellers in the process. He was briefly a guru of the New Left.

Both these books are posthumous (Bettelheim died in 1990, Fromm in 1980). *The Art of the Obvious* is an edited transcript of seminars held by Bettelheim at Stanford for trainees in child psychiatry.

I confess I started out with a prejudice against the book, because it is clearly a work of filial piety on the part of its editor, Dr Rosenfeld, and filial piety, while excellent in its way, does not necessarily conduce to intellectual honesty; and also because there have been persistent rumours that Bettelheim, far

from being devoted to the welfare of children, was actually something of a sadist. My prejudices, however, were soon overturned.

Bettelheim's observations are remarkable both for their lucidity and their wisdom. One is frequently moved by the breadth of his cultural reference, and his ability to illustrate precisely a point he is trying to make with an example from literature or history. His method is truly Socratic; he leads his interlocutors to conclusions which, once expressed, they realise they knew all along. Thus the title of the book is wholly apt.

Bettelheim's wisdom, it seems to me, rested very little on a theoretical framework, but rather was the result of common sense, experience, deep reflection and a wide general culture. He counted himself a Freudian, but was not dogmatically so; and while his

Posthumous therapy

Anthony Daniels considers the writings of two psychoanalysts, one wise, the other simplistic

The Art of the Obvious: Developing Insight for Psychotherapy and Everyday Life
by Bruno Bettelheim and Alvin A. Rosenfeld
Thames & Hudson, £16.95

The Art of Being
by Erich Fromm. Constable, £10.95

opposition to generalisations was philosophically self-defeating (how can we learn from experience unless we generalise?) and one is uncertain what practical therapeutic results his approach achieved, one leaves the book enriched. Dr Rosenfeld's own tribute to Bettelheim is warm and obviously sincere.

The posthumous book by Fromm is of much lesser quality. It consists of some chapters omitted from his last completed work, *To Have Or To Be*. Fromm suggests that there are two fundamental modes of living, that which emphasises the pursuit of possessions and

power (having), and that which emphasises the pursuit of ends in themselves (being). He further suggests that our society is peculiarly materialistic and thus, as he would say, necrophiliac.

Now clearly there is something in what he says, but as a typology of the whole of human experience it is surely simplistic to the point of absurdity. I love reading; I love writing; but I doubt I should have written this review were I not to be paid for it. Am I thus living in the having or the being mode?

Fromm was one of those vain and silly philosophers who dreamed of making Man more Truly Human by

restructuring the whole of society. What is Man before he is Truly Human, I should like to know?

The 20th century has had more than enough of intellectual dreamers who found their contemporaries and all the inhabitants of previous ages insufficiently human: for their dreams have a nasty habit of turning into massacre and genocide.



Bettelheim: Socratic