

From Miller's account, Rousseau emerges as the dreamer "to whom the dangers of action were intolerable." Yet he was man who "fitfully charted the uncertain region between dream and reality, between impossible ideals and remote possibilities." It is to Miller's credit that he has analyzed these dreams at a time when few scholars have the wisdom or courage to draw upon such visions for the possible ordering of our social and political perplexities in the present.

Gertrud Lenzer  
Brooklyn College of the  
City University of New York

**THE WORKING CLASS IN WEIMAR GERMANY: A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY.** By Erich Fromm. Translated by Barbara Weinberger. Edited and with an Introduction by Wolfgang Bonss. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984, pp. 291.

Although Erich Fromm's analysis of the psychic structure of the working class in Weimar Germany was completed in 1936, the issues it raises are surprisingly contemporary. Fromm's attempt to develop a materialist social psychology, based primarily on Freudian theory, that could serve as a foundation for a marxist theory of ideology, has recently been repeated by Louis Althusser in *Lenin and Philosophy* (1971, New Left Books). His more specific concern with the role of ideology in the rise of fascism in Germany has also been the focus of important contemporary debates. The publication of this work in English in 1984, although 48 years after its completion, is thus very timely.

As Wolfgang Bonss notes in his very informative introduction, there were two main reasons for the long delay in the publication of this book (it was first published in German in 1980). The primary reason was that Fromm and others at the Frankfurt Institute were uncomfortable with the political implications of the book's conclusion that there were significant authoritarian tendencies in the character structure of the German working class. Moreover, serious methodological problems make Fromm's findings questionable. Due to a low initial re-

turn rate (33%) and the fact that many questionnaires were lost when the Institute was forced to move to the United States, Fromm was left with only 18% of his initial sample. Fromm spends most of the second chapter of the book trying to convince the reader that despite its small size, and with the significant exceptions of its underrepresentation of women and rural workers, that the sample is basically representative of the German working class.

In the third chapter, Fromm presents a series of mostly very predictable findings on the effects of political party membership, social class fraction, and age on attitudinal and personality variables. Perhaps his most interesting finding is the significant and consistent difference in the attitudes of party and union officials and those of the other members of these organizations, suggesting a wider gap between the "party line" and the attitudes of members than one might expect. The main problem with this chapter is that Fromm presents only two-way tables (probably due to the small sample size and the large number of categories for most variables) which leaves the reader wondering about the relative strength of the effects of party, class, and age.

The real heart of this book is its final chapter, in which Fromm analyzes the structure of responses by combining attitudes into scales, which he argues reflect total personality "syndromes." He divides respondents into four main personality categories: radical, authoritarian, compromise-oriented, and neutral, although he is primarily interested in only the first two. Fromm's general conclusion is that working class support for leftist parties was more broad than deep, due to their insufficiently radical character structure. He found that 20% of the supporters of working class political parties had some authoritarian tendencies. These authoritarian tendencies were stronger among the membership than among party officials, and strongest for white, collar workers, workers in small firms, and workers who grew up in rural environments. Thus, according to Fromm, the rise of fascism in Germany was due in part to the lack of consistent radicalism and the presence of authoritarian tendencies in the character



structure of significant fractions of the working class.

In spite of its methodological flaws, and its tendency toward psychological reductionism, this book should be of interest to all sociologists studying the relationship between social class and ideology and the rise of German fascism.

Edgar Kiser  
University of Arizona

AMERICA'S QUEST FOR THE IDEAL SELF. By Peter Clecak. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. xii + 395.

The sub-title of Peter Clecak's latest replay of the politics and culture of recent decades in the U.S. (Dissent and Fulfillment in the 60s and 70s) registers the decisive, optimistic shift in his reading of this kaleidoscopic period that is acknowledged in a brief biographical note. As in earlier volumes, Clecak takes pains to state his central themes forthrightly at the outset.

"I argue . . . that the quest for fulfillment constituted the central metaphor of American civilization in the sixties and in the seventies; that this quest yielded stunning successes evidenced in the widening and deepening of personhood and in an enlargement of cultural space" (p. 28).

The elaboration of this argument requires the author to distance himself from social critics of every stripe who would deny any such stunning triumphs to Americans in the large in the last twenty-five years. Moreover, since Clecak does not directly identify with any of the groups alleged to have experienced fulfillment in these years, it requires him to testify about the new forms of self-realization at a vital remove from the lived varieties of salvation said to be reaching large numbers, if not majorities, in every quarter of the society. These tough constraints combined with a skeptical posture vis-a-vis all evidence ("everything is half true," we are reminded in chapter three) often make for an elusive, circuitous, at times even capricious exposition.

The several chapters in which critics of the U.S. -- left, liberal, and neo-conservative -- are confronted are

the more engaging. Despite some temporizing words for "plain Marxists" of the old left in his earlier *Radical Paradoxes* (1973), the 1970s left is dismissed here as inept, isolated, and fragmented. Locked into a bitter sensibility -- angry, self-righteous and resentful -- left critics are dubbed as inveterate naysayers, unable to reject or discipline extremist voices in their own ranks or to acknowledge the tempering powers of democratic-pluralist ideas and forces on left excesses. These very democratic and pluralist forces are, however, themselves bankrupt, moving "toward a muddled, volatile, and comparatively conservative mix in the amorphous center . . ." (p. 70). Having lost faith in the

state, corporate power and technological progress, academically cloistered liberals are now patently out of touch with the real America, though still susceptible to the counter-culture, minorities and the underclass. Specifically liberals remain hostile to evangelical Christians, unassimilated Jews and southern European ethnics, lack cultural ties to the working or middle classes and disparage libertarian ideas now espoused by relatively dispossessed individuals (pp. 72-73).

Neo-conservatives, characterized by Clecak as mainly second generation Jews caught in the sixties by student rejection, precisely in the full flush and flower of imagined acceptance to academic elitism, provide only feeble anchorage for a more appreciative, forward looking vision of America's true accomplishments and promise. Neo-conservatives are partially redeemed by their loyalty to a bourgeois ethos: belief in economic progress, the vitality of pluralism and the easing of repression (p. 84). Unfortunately, ". . . many of them . . . lack the stomach for a sustained political alliance with the authentic, native American conservatives of the New Right" (p. 91).

Here as in his earlier *Crooked Paths* (1977), Clecak argues for an ecumenical, ideological spirit. This alone will free thought across a broad spectrum from the reigning pessimism, felt powerlessness, nostalgia, utopianism and reckless self-justification afflicting U.S. intellectuals. All of the ideological traditions reviewed are necessary to an understanding of the present moment; none is adequate

Propriety of the Erich Fromm Document Center. For personal use only. Citation or publication of material prohibited without express written permission of the copyright holder.  
Eigentum des Erich Fromm Dokumentationszentrums. Nutzung nur für persönliche Zwecke. Veröffentlichungen - auch von Teilen - bedürfen der schriftlichen Erlaubnis des Rechteinhabers.

