



Unfortunately, no such quotations adequately reveal the flavor of Cavell's style or the subtleties of his mind or the range of references he draws upon in elaborating a position. Given that range and subtlety and style, *The Claim of Reason* is not an easy book to place either with regard to subject or audience. I certainly believe it will (or should) find its place in the set of texts that Cavell understands to constitute philosophy, and in that set it may be taken as one of the texts provoked by Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. But this book should also find an audience among students of literature and literary criticism as well. Just the short seventh chapter, an excursus into Wittgenstein's vision of language, ought to make it valuable to such an audience.

That chapter comes almost directly from Cavell's Harvard dissertation, of which the present book was supposed to be a "revision." The long final chapter of more than one hundred and sixty pages, written nearly eighteen years after the dissertation was submitted (and accepted for publication), presents the most recent stage of development of the themes that have occupied Cavell's professional life. The attempt to draw the connections between philosophers, and between philosophy and morality, and between philosophy, morality, and tragedy that this book makes places Cavell among those writers who genuinely transcend the long-established categories that have prevented any serious dialogue between students of philosophy and students of literature. By articulating the subtleties of what I earlier called the anxiety of separateness, Cavell may be to philosophy what Harold Bloom, with his articulation of the subtleties of the anxiety of influence, is to literature.

Millersville State College, Pa.

Dan Ducker

*The Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought.* By Erich Fromm. New York: Harper and Row, 1980. Pp. 147. \$9.95.

Both a psychoanalyst and philosopher himself, Erich Fromm opens his reflections on Freud with some remarks on the nature of scientific expression and how it is inextricably bound by the conceptual modes of expression current at any given time. These forms of expression inform and limit the universal character of scientific formulations. It is ultimately Fromm's intent to discard the historically conditioned elements of Freud's thought in order to show the radical and profound character of the discovery that consciousness is not coextensive with human being. Towards this end Fromm discusses the principal components of Freud's characterology: Oedipal attachment, transference, narcissism, and the life and death instincts. Previously this book appeared in German as *Sigmund Freuds Psychoanalyse—Grosse und Grenzen* (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1979).

The first chapter explains why "every system as it is developed and presented by its authors is necessarily erroneous" (p. 1). Since truth, or at least the expression of truth, is historically conditioned and expressed in the conceptual idiom of an age, all scientific expression is erroneous to the extent that it is expressed in non-necessary conceptual structures. Freud's chief drawbacks in this respect are his bourgeois materialism and patriarchal attitude. His psychical model reflects the given social order, and his image of women is bound up with Victorian mores. With such interpretations Freud wrongly transforms specific phenomena into psychological universals. Further, since the element of human subjectivity limits the validity of psychological assertion, Freud can be criticized for constructing theories on too little evidence.

Chapter two attempts a recovery of Freud's achievements after interfering biases have been eliminated. Fromm rightly holds that Freud, while not the first to discover the unconscious, certainly was the first to formulate it as the center of his psychological system. Freud erred, though, in assuming that the conflict between being and thinking was a conflict between

thinking and infantile sexuality. With respect to the Oedipus complex, Freud was right to note the intensity of attachment to the mother but wrong in describing the attachment as sexual rather than paradisiacal. Further, the desire to kill the father seems to be socially conditioned rather than innate and linked to the attachment to the mother. After examining Sophocles' portrayal of Oedipus, Fromm revealingly concludes: "we must come to the conclusion that incest is not the main idea or even essential to the vision Sophocles expressed there" (p. 37). While this does not itself invalidate Freud's observations certainly it reveals how his biases worked to appropriate only material compatible with his larger interests.

On the subject of transference, Freud noted how attachments to the analyst could be used to work through repressions. Fromm contends that some aspects of Freud's method of transference infantilize and prevent emotional maturity. He focuses his larger criticisms, however, on the need of all people for figures who protect and love. A society whose members are helpless needs idols. In order to generate independence and maturity a society ought not supply such idols but eliminate the conditions which engender helplessness.

Fromm contends that Freud did not see how strongly narcissism was tied up with human survival; Freud took the issue primarily as a focus of orientation towards self or others. Freud failed to show narcissism as the opposite pole of love; he could not do so since he conceived of love as a form of weakening, putting, as it does, one in a position of dependence. Group narcissism, too, functions in the interest of survival. One achieves self-glorification through merging with the interests of a collective. Such narcissism can be engendered through social structure, if economic systems promote class antagonism, for example.

On Freud's "scientific" analysis of human character, Fromm credits him with focusing on the relatively permanent structure of the passions though he faults him for identifying the bourgeois man as the mature individual. Furthermore, Freud failed to distinguish between character traits which are biological givens and those mediated by social elements. This is very important since the socially conditioned psychical elements can be as strong or more dominant than those biologically given. Even when he did make reference to social conditions he never extended beyond the bourgeois family. Finally, in remarks on the significance of childhood, Freud certainly showed the origins of traumas there, but underestimated constitutional factors and events in later life as also contributing to psychical dysfunction.

Chapter three discusses the starting point of Freudian psychoanalysis, dream interpretation. Fromm claims that Freud put this subject on a "systematic and scientific basis" (p. 71), concluding that dreams function as wish fulfillments. Yet for all that, Freud eschewed interpreting dreams as *symbols* which function poetically. Freud's own dream interpretations tell nothing about himself, his goals, his identity though they do indicate paths of psychical association. Dwelling on the associations may even be a means of "resistance against understanding the meaning of his dreams" (p. 79). Further, Freud perhaps emphasized the element of censorship too much and looked past the symbolic meaning of the dream by insisting on decoding.

Fromm also discusses dreams as the province of subjective self-experience distinguishing thereby the *categories* of thought particular to that realm. It may not be possible to understand dreams in the categories of wakened experience. Dreams do rationalize, though perhaps in a way different from waking life. Dreams do express both irrational features *and* deep insights about ourselves. Dream analysis ought to distinguish and not merely presume the former function.

Chapter four reproduces the majority of an appendix from Fromm's *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. Here Fromm discusses the life and death instincts. He criticizes Freud for linking destructiveness to primary biological phenomena, making it thereby a function of the death instinct. Such a link breaks with Freud's own use of instincts and seems



locked into his bipolar mode of thinking. Such a view, too, led to a conflict between Freud the theoretician holding that man destroys himself or others and Freud the humanist who rebelled at such a tragic view.

Chapter five briefly sums up the value of Freud. Though Freud was no radical, given his discovery of the central role of repression in mental life, his thought certainly is. Freud, however, limited the scope of his achievement by concentrating on the role of sex and not considering its social causes. His identification of human malaise as being localized in sexual matters requiring psychical amelioration impeded consideration of social sources requiring political reconstruction. His model of the psyche itself reflects the ruling elite (the ego) and the uneducated masses (the id), though it seems in no way necessary that he thereby established universal categories of the mind. In this respect Freud followed uncritically the socio-economic order of the day.

It is perhaps surprising that in this assessment Fromm does not mention any clinical contributions per se. He locates the value of Freud almost entirely at the philosophical level. While Freud himself became increasingly theoretical in his writings, clearly the intent of such speculation was to pave the way for clinical success. However, Fromm wants to enlarge upon Freud by moving from an individually-oriented psychoanalysis to a socially-oriented psychology, and it is not so surprising then that he ignores the analyst/patient relation.

However, Fromm himself seems to be acting on unreflected principles in his assessment, the very charge he brings against Freud. Fromm insists that Freud was a scientist. However, both Fromm and Freud fail to recognize that evaluations of acceptable and unacceptable human behavior (even the ideal both posit of autonomous, independent human life) rest on value choices which, when not articulated, invalidate the scientific character of psychoanalysis. To the extent that Freud's characterology is scientific it must be free from the limitations of unarticulated value grounds. For example, in his analysis of Leonardo da Vinci, Freud conceived of homosexuality as resulting from the fixation of an individual along a certain psychical path of development. However, one can claim homosexuality as a fixation only if one posits heterosexuality as the normal, expected course of development. Clearly, to make such a valuation is moral and not scientific in character. Further, Freud's disposition towards religion led him to characterize those with religious beliefs contrary to his as being under the spell of a universal, obsessional neurosis. And certainly Freud's evaluations of women reflect imposition of value judgments.

Such examples show the personal, moral position of Freud himself. But *any* characterology must rest on moral positions to the extent that it explicitly and implicitly prescribes standards of human behavior. The ambiguous usage of several of Freud's key terms (sexuality and neurosis among them) masks important value grounds. These impose limitations not only on the particular judgments of Freud but on the possibility of his "scientific" enterprise generally. Also, when value judgments couched in scientific terminology are enforced or practised, they become destructive of human beings who willingly or unwillingly submit to psychological therapy. Freud claimed psychoanalysis to be as impartial as differential calculus. Yet this cannot be true if in theory or practice it serves an unacknowledged moral anthropology.

With this proviso in mind, that neither Freud nor Fromm acknowledge the presence of moral ideals in their 'science,' it can be agreed that Fromm does plot the conceptual issues which establish Freud's lasting contributions and that to enlarge upon these is to move from individual to social psychology. Though Freud is one of the principal architects of our contemporary self-image, his vision was limited, and it must be considered that a liberation of human beings requires eliminating destructive repressive forces at the personal and political levels.

*Boston College*

*Timothy Murphy*



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.



# INTERNATIONAL PHILOSOPHICAL QUARTERLY

---

AN INTERCULTURAL FORUM

[Mag 2K257]  
Theolog.

VOLUME  
XXI  
1981

---

FOR BASIC PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS

---

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY  
NEW YORK  
81/5195

1002/17057