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with a disease. Ecology, the civil rights movement (and its political progeny in the courts and on the streets), a new self-consciousness—all have given AIDS a cultural centrality unlike that of any other diseases in our history. To paraphrase Marx, both viruses and we make our own

history, but neither makes it as we please.

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Shrinking Authority

By ADAM PHILLIPS

The Legacy of Erich Fromm by Daniel Burston

(Harvard University Press, 288 pp., \$29.95)

Psychoanalysis teaches people a way of hearing what they say that is aimed at making them speak in new ways. In psychoanalytic treatment, through a process of endlessly redescribing his life to someone else, the patient, as he used to be called, gradually begins to talk differently. This entails making one's old vocabulary, often the words that one was brought up on; and losing some of one's favorite words for oneself can be a mixed blessing. The new vocabulary, too, is not an entirely straightforward matter. If a person ends up speaking psychoanalysis, then the treatment has failed and must be called indoctrination. If a person ends up speaking his own too idiosyncratic language, he will be deemed mad, or inauthentic, or silly. Psychoanalysis, that is to say, is torn between helping people to conform and helping them to create revolutions.

Erich Fromm, as this very useful book shows, was aware of the way in which psychoanalysis too easily made people conform to what seemed to be at its inception a new and astonishing criticism of conformism. "Consensual validation as such," Fromm wrote, "has no bearing whatsoever on mental health." And yet the psychoanalysts themselves had replaced the questioning of what constituted a good life with membership in a psychoanalytic "community" that was Olympian in its certainties and glib in its skepticism. Freud's sense that in every psychoanalysis a culture as well as an individual was being analyzed quickly began to sound simpleminded, particularly in psychoanalytic circles.

Psychoanalysis as a refuge from politics was a contradiction in terms for Fromm. It could only reinforce, in insidious ways, the kinds of suffering it claimed to alleviate. "Psychoanalysis,"

Fromm wrote in 1932,

has focused on the structure of bourgeois society and its patriarchal family as the normal situation. . . . Since they [the psychoanalysts] did not concern themselves with the variety of life experience, the socioeconomic structure of other kinds of society, and therefore did not try to explain psychic structure as determined by social structure, they necessarily began to analogize instead of analyzing.

To analogize instead of to analyze is unconsciously to reproduce in theory what you assume you are curing in practice.

Like his contemporaries Reich and Marcuse, Fromm knew that psychoanalysis needed Marxism—as it now needs feminism—to remind the always potentially rarefied and affluent world of psychoanalysis that people live in a world constituted by class interests and economic hierarchies. What Daniel Burston's book makes very clear, by implication and by quotation, is Fromm's sense that psychoanalysis could only become useful local knowledge by including the insights, if not the beliefs, generated by Marxism. One did not have to believe in an inevitable Historical Process to see the pertinence of economic conditions for an individual's development. Individual lives, he argued, get lost in the circus of grand abstractions.

It is, after all, psychoanalysis that has turned the language of feeling into jargon. Because psychoanalysts have thought it better to write psychoanalytic papers for each other than to read novels or poems, they seem always to be writing about the same two or three people with the same three or four "problems." It is one of the impressive ironies of Freud's work, which Fromm was quick to recognize, that people who take him seriously always go on talking about the things he talks about or the things that he leaves

out. The escape from freedom, to echo one of Fromm's pertinent titles, is pervasive in psychoanalytic societies, and this has consequences for the treatment of patients. As Fromm realized, those who have conformed do not find it easy to celebrate other people's possibilities. Ambivalence may be central to psychoanalytic theory, but psychoanalysts—that is, psychoanalysts who love psychoanalysis—never write about what they hate about psychoanalysis. It should be part of Fromm's legacy, as Burston suggests, to keep alive the spirit of dissent, of questioning.

Fromm was born in Frankfurt in 1900, the only child of an unhappily married middle-class Jewish couple. His early intellectual interests were impressively various. He "mixed conventional Talmudic instruction," Burston writes, "with mysticism, philosophy, socialism; and psychoanalysis, all in conjunction with conservative Judaism." After studying sociology at Heidelberg, he returned to Frankfurt to edit a small Jewish newspaper, and within a year met his first analyst, Frieda Reichmann, who became his first wife. It seems a shame, in retrospect, that psychoanalysis and journalism had to part company. In 1927 Fromm began analytic training in Berlin with Hans Sachs and Theodore Reik. The Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute was unusually progressive; non-medical analysts held senior positions, and there was a free psychoanalytic clinic for poorer people. After completing his training in 1929, Fromm spent half his time practicing analysis in Berlin and the other half working at the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. Here he began his association with Horkheimer and Marcuse and forged strong links with what became known as the Frankfurt School. It was after his immigration to the States, in 1933, that this affiliation became problematic.

Fromm, as a member of what Burston calls Freud's "loyal opposition," did a very unusual thing, unusual, that is, for a committed psychoanalyst. He tried genuinely to broaden the scope of psychoanalysis by integrating psychoanalytic theory into a more diverse cultural conversation that could include economics, philosophy, and anthropology, among many other disciplines. This, of course, has been the enduring legacy of the Frankfurt School of which he was an early member; but what Fromm did not do, unlike some other members of that school (and certain other psychoanalysts), was to promote those forms of mandarin intelligence that could produce fascinating criticisms of culture that hardly anyone in the culture was able to read.



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In a consumer culture, accessibility inevitably leads to obsolescence. It was the more hermetic members of the Frankfurt School, Adorno and Benjamin in particular, who had more staying power than Fromm. Those who wanted life after death had to be difficult. Fromm, however, wrote accessible and widely popular books—books that could inspire adolescents, which is always a good sign—about psychoanalysis, about psychoanalysis and Marxism, and most interesting I think, about psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism. His most famous books, *The Sane Society* (1955), *The Art of Loving* (1956); and *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973), were best sellers; and yet, or therefore, Fromm is rarely talked about or taught by the Owners of Culture.

Psychoanalysis, when it is not hidden away as dogma, is genuinely pluralistic and democratic, in a way that Fromm appreciated, because it encourages us to take seriously those things we are inclined to dismiss. For that reason, *The Legacy of Erich Fromm* is a timely book, since Fromm's work has virtually disappeared from intelligent consideration. And with it has gone an often penetrating criticism of the idolatry that constitutes the culture industry: In all his writing Fromm was trying to keep alive the possibility of being authoritative without being authoritarian. All idols, by disarming pertinent forms of criticism, distracted their worshippers from more problematic but interesting desires. And psychoanalysis, like any other cultural artifact, if it was to be useful, also had to be protected from the potential worship of its admirers. With these preoccupations; of course, Fromm was at once traditionally Jewish and radically secular.

Because psychoanalysis has one father, unlike, say, the novel or philosophy, it became a convenient oasis for rebels and conformists alike. For Freud to become a certain kind of authority, or even idol, he needed to surround himself with people who wanted a little authority in their lives. But it is often forgotten, and again Burston is informative about, how many of the early analysts were also Marxists, or had been Marxists in their youth. Like the other great early Freudian Marxists (Reich, Federn, and Fenichel the most notable among them), Fromm brought to psychoanalysis, among many other things, an uneasy relationship to his own authoritativeness.

They were interested in the individual, but not in the cult of the individual. The cult of the individual, by denying dependence, the multifarious links and involvements, the social context, that makes a life possible, and by praising in-

vulnerability, promoted the notion of people as obstacles to each other. For Fromm and his colleagues, certainly, the cult of the individual, by encouraging the submissions of envy, and replacing the idea of the good life with the idea of the enviable life, actually diminished the possibilities for individuality, and constricted its scope as something profoundly communal. These were not the preoccupations of the newly emerging psychoanalytic orthodoxy that by the '60s had turned into a Limited Company that was, so to speak, patenting its product.

Burston suggests that the combination of Fromm's family history as a traditional (in the religious sense) middle-class Jew growing up in Germany and the events in Germany in the '20s and '30s made him a socialist. His "pious upbringing" was to make him a generous admirer of unusual men and at the same time a severe critic of all forms of idolatry. For idolatry was simply a way of pre-empting a personal life. Throughout his own life, Burston tell us, Fromm retained an interest in Hasidism and the Scriptures alongside an abiding respect for Trotsky as "revolutionary thinker, as general, as exile."

If Burston sometimes worries that Fromm is not quite as sound as he should be—"he is often characterized," he writes nervously, "as some sort of Pollyanna" (intellectuals are rarely impressed by people who are happy)—the man who emerges from between the lines of this book is a vividly complicated man; indeed an extraordinary man. We need only note that Fromm's second wife was the woman with whom Walter Benjamin fled from the Nazis in 1940, and that Fromm's devoted friend Ivan Illich helped bury him when he died in 1980, to see the disparate worlds with which Fromm's life connects. And Fromm's extensive writings, to which Burston gives detailed attention, are remarkable for their range and for certain insistent preoccupations. Fromm's persistent interest in idolatry, the nature of aggression, and the need for mutuality, both in psychoanalytic treatment and lived life is not easy to dismiss. These rightly remain issues that are still germane to the theory and the practice of psychoanalysis, and of interest to people who do not care for it. Fromm was certainly writing for both kinds of people.

Since the most exhilarating psychoanalytic theory now idealizes incoherence, the pleasures of common sense in psychoanalysis can easily be lost. The commonsense analysts—Anna Freud, Kohut, Fromm himself—tend to be accessible and reassuring. Their virtue is that they

are often comforting, which is their vice to the more inspired bizarre analysts like Bion, and Lacan, who demand not that their patients get better but that they pursue Truth. The commonsense analysts know what it is for someone to get better. For the bizarre analysts, the whole notion of getting better smacks of omniscience. After all, how could one know if someone was better unless one already knew what a good life was?

Fromm is particularly interesting in Burston's understated account because of the unusual mixture of the bizarre and the commonsensical in his work. As a writer he is calm and intelligible, but he is so wary of mystification that he never allows himself to get into a muddle, and he rarely takes the chance of being a bit weird. Still, if the commonsense analysts, unlike the bizarre analysts, never really intrigue us, they do focus our attention. So, for example, Fromm could observe lucidly, for those who were not already too knowing, that societies "develop a system, or categories, which determine the forms of awareness. This system works, as it were, as a socially conditioned filter; experience cannot enter awareness unless it can penetrate this filter." In Fromm's version, it was the aim of psychoanalysis to make socially proscribed emotional experience available and by so doing to modify the forms of awareness. Fromm is at his most radical in his commitment to alternatives. He never becomes a bizarre analyst, though, because he never stops wanting to help us.

At his worst Fromm had the deadly piety of the committed iconoclast, and Burston's book does not evade this. But Fromm's apparent banality could be provocative and engaging, and his writing makes us notice things. He was drawn to Zen Buddhism, I imagine, partly because of its lightness of touch, something not easily found in psychoanalytic theory. Psychoanalysis rarely makes one smile. But Fromm, I think, wanted it to provoke a smile, at least occasionally.

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icide, and other maladies are "caused" by overdoses of rock and MTV, more than a few of these pious Christian soldiers might go ballistic if they felt "the Jews" were behind it all.

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