

Author observes weaknesses of Freud's works

GREATNESS AND LIMITATIONS OF FREUD'S THOUGHT. By Erich Fromm. Harper and Row. \$9.95

Reviewed by
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Erich Fromm, Swiss philosopher-psychiatrist and author of 20 books, completed this critique of Freudian thought shortly before his death last March. While Fromm's observations of the weaknesses and inconsistencies of Freud's work are no longer surprising, they are expressed with particu-

lar authority by this celebrated colleague who acknowledges Freud to be one of the three or four geniuses to dominate the thought of this century.

Fromm believes Freud's "mistakes" stem from the very limitations of the middle-class milieu in which he lived and worked.

The discoveries were great, but they were narrowed and distorted because Freud's observations were of patients who came exclusively from his own social class.

Freud inaccurately perceived soci-

ety to be relatively static and failed to understand the innumerable social structures possible for tribes and nations.

Fromm acknowledges that Freud's chief contributions include the theory of narcissism, the concept of character as a relatively permanent structure of passions, a scientific and systematic basis for dream interpretation, the identification of life and death instincts and their dominance over our lives, the revelation of the intensity of attachments of a boy to his mother, the concept of trans-

ference and startling other revelations of the mysterious workings of the subconscious.

In each area, Fromm finds the limitations of bourgeois thought and its attendant materialism.

Freud, as women's liberationists have not been slow to observe, devalued and misunderstood women, despite his own positive relationships with his caring wife, his intelligent daughter, his sympathetic sister-in-law, and devoted, creative students such as Marie Bonaparte.

In limiting the role of women to nurturer and keeper of the hearth and in suggesting that women at an early age view themselves as castrated, incomplete men, Freud misread one-half of the human race and, consequently, fell into his most embarrassing error.

Fromm's concise analysis of Freudian thought, while never startlingly original, is thoroughly readable, and its final assessment is generous. *The Interpretation of Dreams and The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*

are acknowledged to be writings of inventive brilliance, whatever their excesses. Lesser men, Fromm realizes, continue to stand on the shoulders of this founding genius. Though his thought needs to be revised, purified and completed, Freud remains the great detective and poet of the human psyche.

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