

the inequality of wealth among men and all that it leads to'. Matters are then more complex than Kovel allows, both at the biographical level concerning Freud's own attitudes, feelings and political values, and at the level of social theory of the kind Freud was trying to construct within psychoanalysis.

The main strength of Kovel's book lies in his attempt to trace the changes in modern capitalism and its splitting of time into work time (bound time) and leisure (unbound time) and, therefore, its splitting of the personality of people living in it into a bored worker and a narcissistic consumer. Satisfaction eludes not only patients but many others who never visit analysts or therapists. "Capitalism does not create neurosis, but it does decree that neurosis be a part of its totality. More concretely, capitalism creates awareness of neurosis, as it creates awareness of self generally. More concretely yet, capitalism creates a world in which people necessarily see themselves as individuals in search of an individuated happiness." (p 126).

Although in this review I have been critical of many aspects of Kovel's careless approach to complex issues concerning Freud, psychoanalysis and Sartre, and the lack of rigour, the book does have a number of wise ideas in it. For example, Kovel says that therapists should not bring politics into the consulting room, and that therapy is a form of praxis, although not of itself an agent of social, political change, nor is it necessarily an agent of social control. The fact that Kovel tries to combine his commitment to a humanistic Marxism with his work as a psychoanalyst in the book is excellent.

Robert J Bocock

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Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought by Erich Fromm, London: Cape, 1980, pp 160 £6.50, £1.95

On Disobedience and Other Essays by Erich Fromm, New York: The Seabury Press, 1981, pp 144, \$9.95

Although Erich Fromm was a lifelong critic of capitalist society, as well as the figure chiefly responsible for the Frankfurt School's integration of Marx and Freud, his work has often met with a hostile reaction on the left. The main source of this hostility lies in Fromm's rejection of Freud's libido theory — a construct that many radicals regarded as crucial to the critique of societal domination. By discarding this concept, Marcuse and others claimed, Fromm showed himself to be a 'revisionist' thinker who had emasculated what is best in Freud's thought.

The books here under review are of special importance because they reveal the central flaw in this reading of Fromm's work: by placing such emphasis on the question of libido theory, Fromm's critics have ignored the more radical aspects of his interpretation of Freud. And as a consequence, they have misrepresented Fromm as a conformist figure when in fact his work constitutes a sustained attempt to develop the most critical features of psychoanalysis.



Fromm's critique of psychoanalysis begins with the claim that a deep dichotomy marks Freud's thought: the daring thinker was also very much a child of his time, subject to the limitations of his class and culture. As a result, Fromm writes, Freud's most radical ideas were often conceived in terms that limit their full significance. Hence, one of the aims of Fromm's own work is to uncover what he regards as the essence of Freud's thought and to develop its radical potential. Such an undertaking requires an extended critique of psychoanalysis: first, Fromm seeks to distinguish the core of truth in Freud's theory from its culturally determined elements; secondly, he alters the professed goal of therapy from one of adaptation to social norms to that of the maximal realisation of the patient's autonomy and full humanity; thirdly, he seeks to extend psychoanalysis from an individual to a social psychology so that in combination with Marx's theory, it can be used as a powerful tool of social criticism and analysis; and finally, in order to demonstrate how psychoanalysis was "transformed from a radical theory to one of adaptation," (*Greatness & Limitations* 1980, p 133) he develops a critique of the psychoanalytic movement. The two books under consideration here address primarily the first and third of these issues.

Fromm's aim in *Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought* is to show how Freud's personal and theoretical assumptions distorted the truths he himself had uncovered and to demonstrate that once freed of their confining context, his ideas take on even greater significance.

Two main constellations, Fromm argues, condition much of Freud's thinking: first, a set of deeply rooted bourgeois and patriarchal attitudes, and secondly, the tradition of 'mechanistic materialism,' which seeks to demonstrate the physiological basis of all mental phenomena. The former complex, Fromm argues, largely determines Freud's views on the inferiority of women as well as his vision of love as a libidinous 'investment' in a 'love-object,' the 'possession' of which heightens one's self-regard. Moreover, Fromm writes, Freud's generally uncritical attitude towards bourgeois society explains his tendency to identify its problems with those of humanity as a whole and to some extent accounts for the failure of the psychoanalytic movement to develop the more radical aspects of Freud's thought.

The second constellation, Fromm believes, helps to explain the importance Freud placed on sexuality. Freud's subject was the realm of mental phenomena, primarily the passions. His scientific tradition required that he provide them with a physiological base. Although at the time little was known about the relationship between the physical and the psychical, there was one sphere in which the connection was well understood — sexuality. Thus, Fromm writes, "If one considered sexuality as the root of all drives, then the theoretical demand was satisfied, the physiological roots of psychic forces were discovered" (p 5).

But if this emphasis on sex met the requirements of 'bourgeois materialism,' it did so, in Fromm's view, at great cost: for it led Freud to press many of his insights into the framework of a mechanistic libido theory, thereby 'distorting' the very phenomena he had hoped to reveal. Throughout his book, Fromm tries to document this claim by showing how it applies to Freud's leading concepts. The discussion of the Oedipus complex is representative of Fromm's general approach. Here, he writes, Freud made two separate discoveries, both subject to some degrees of distortion, which were then bound together into one theory. First, Freud perceived the intensity of the little boy's attachment to his mother; secondly, he observed the hostile rivalry between father and son, so characteristic of his own culture. How over-emphasis on sex led him to mis-construe the tie to mother as sexual in nature (in fact, Fromm argues, this tie is not the outcome of sexual desire, but of the passionate wish to return to the womb — to "escape from freedom"); his tendency to regard bourgeois society as society *per se* led him to universalise the rivalry between father and son. These errors were then compounded by combining the two insights into one theory in which the boy's sexual interest in the mother results in rivalry and hatred of the father and the consequent fear of castration.



If one of Fromm's aims is to free Freud's ideas from a "confining theoretical context," his second concern is to develop those ideas' social significance. This, Fromm argues, is a task that Freud himself neglected. The discovery of transference in the therapeutic situation, for example, was, Fromm believes, one of Freud's most original insights. Yet he failed to investigate this phenomenon outside of psychoanalysis. The worship of leaders for qualities they do not in fact possess, the submission to their authority out of a sense of one's own dependency and helplessness — these, Fromm argues, are among the most important phenomena of social and political life. Yet Freud restricted their operation to the narrow confines of analytic therapy.

The absence of a social dimension in Freud's thought is most readily apparent, however, in his failure to develop a psychoanalytic social psychology. This is the task that Fromm undertook during his association with the Frankfurt Institute. That it remained the centerpiece of his thought — though it was refined and amended over the years — is made evident in his final collection of essays.

On Disobedience and Other Essays contains nine papers, all of which have previously appeared in print. In subject matter, they range from a manifesto on "humanist socialism" to a personal tribute to Bertrand Russell. Although the underlying concerns of these essays will be familiar to those who know Fromm's work, the book's interest derives from the passion with which those concerns are expressed, as well as from their juxtaposition with new subject matter. Thus, the problem of old age, for example — a new topic for Fromm — is illuminated by being placed in the context of his familiar critique of consumer society.

The book is disappointing primarily for what it omits: a number of important and as yet untranslated essays written during Fromm's association with the Frankfurt School (eg his contribution to **Authority and the Family**) and such later pieces as his review of Jung's autobiography. One would hope that some future collection of Fromm's work will contain some of this material. For the purpose of examining Fromm's analytic social psychology, "The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory" is the most important essay in the book; for it is here that Fromm restates, in its final form, the nature of his Marx-Freud synthesis.

Early in his career, Fromm saw that psychoanalysis could make an important contribution to social theory — particularly to the conception of society espoused by Marx and Engels. If Freud's psychology were used to supplement historical materialism, the result, Fromm believed, would be a refinement of Marxist theory and hence a more powerful instrument for understanding social phenomena.

The key to this new synthesis lay in the psychoanalytic theory of character. Freud and his followers (notably, Karl Abraham) had tried to show how character is formed and had argued that it is the individual's character structure that largely determines his or her consciousness. Fromm's aim is to use these insights — in combination with Marx's theory — to explain the attitudes, actions and ideologies of social classes and entire societies. How is this synthesis of Marx and Freud to be achieved?

First, Fromm argues, analytic social psychology focuses not on the individual but the "social character" — ie the character traits common to the members of a group. Secondly, it "assumes that the fundamental factor in the formation of the social character is **the practice of life as it is constituted by the mode of production and the resulting social stratification**" (p 29). In other words, it seeks to integrate into analytic theory Marx's claim that the economic and social structure of society is the most powerful force shaping human consciousness. Hitherto, psychoanalysis had failed to comprehend the influence of socio-economic conditions on the formation of character. By integrating one of the basic tenets of historical materialism, Fromm seeks to rectify this error.

Once this revision of Freud's characterology has been made, its value for social theory becomes evident. First, Fromm's synthesis provides some insight into the processes by which society shapes the individual's psyche. Primarily through the agency of the family and its educational institutions, society shapes the social character in such a way that



"the average person must **want** to do what he **has** to do in order to function in a way that permits society to use his energies for its purposes" (p 27). From this point of view, social character may be regarded as "**that particular structure of psychic energy which is molded by any given society so as to be useful for the functioning of that particular society**" (p 27)

In addition, the concept of social character can fill important gaps in Marxist theory. Marx had argued that a society's ideological superstructure arises from its material base, but he had failed to indicate precisely how this process comes about. Fromm's account of social character attempts to provide the explanation: it argues that social character is the mediating link between the economic substructure and the prevalent attitudes and ideologies. Specifically, it claims that "human nature" adapts to socio-economic conditions: that the product of this process is the social character; and that character is what directly determines consciousness — ie, the ideas and ideals dominant in a given society.

Finally, Fromm's theory can be used to study empirically the character structure of large social groups, thus enabling one to predict whether a given social character will resist or facilitate social change.

Twice in his career Fromm conducted such empirical investigations. Under the auspices of the Institute of Social Research in 1931, Fromm and his colleagues (Ernest Schachtel, Paul Lazarsfeld and others) studied the incidence of authoritarian versus democratic-revolutionary character types among German workers and employees. If one knew the deeply rooted political attitudes of these groups, they reasoned, one could predict whether, in the event of Hitler's ascension to power, the workers would become Nazis or fight against Nazism. By developing an "interpretive questionnaire" which enabled the researchers to apply psychoanalytic methods of interpretation to the study of large groups, they sought to pierce below the workers' surface opinions to the political convictions rooted in their character structure. Their findings, in Fromm's view, were confirmed by later historical developments. (This study was finally published in 1980 under the title **Deutsche Arbeiter und Angestellte am Vorabend des Dritten Reiches**, edited by W Bonss).

In 1970, Fromm and Michael Maccoby, having refined the methodology of the original German study, published their investigation of **Social Character in a Mexican Village**. The results, they argued, confirmed Fromm's theory of social character (especially the claim that social character is essentially shaped by the socio-economic structure) and provided insight into the psychological and economic factors determining the possibilities for social change.

Fromm first formulated his project for a Marxist social psychology within the framework of Freud's libido theory. That is, he accepted the view that the formation of character was to be explained in connection with the various phases of libidinal development. By the time of **Escape from Freedom** (1941), he no longer held this view; for, among other reasons, he had come to regard this account of character as incompatible with the very tenets of Marx he had originally sought to integrate. What should be noted about this change — especially in light of the charge that the rejection of libido theory signals Fromm's transformation from a radical to a revisionist thinker — is that it in no way alters the central aim of the Marx-Freud synthesis. From **The Dogma of Christ** (1930) to **Social Character in a Mexican Village** (1970), Fromm's main concern remains the same: to explain the dominant character traits and ideologies of a society or class in terms of the adaptation of "human nature" (whether it is defined as "libidinal strivings" or — as in the later Fromm — "existential needs") to the requirements of a specific socio-economic system.

Certainly Fromm's critique of psychoanalysis is open to important objections. He naively discusses the "time-bound" aspects of Freud's thought without ever seriously exploring the issue of whether his own views are similarly determined. Moreover, he fails to provide a sufficiently detailed defense of his claim that a characterology based in libido theory is essentially incompatible with Marx's theory of consciousness. In addition, his critics (eg



Marcuse) are correct to point out — in contrast to Fromm — that some of Freud's ideas are inherently sociological. The instinct theory, for example, does indeed have explosive social implications. These critics are, of course, right again in asserting that Fromm abandoned this theory early in his career. Where they go wrong, however, is in their belief that Fromm's radicalism stands or falls with the rejection of libido theory. They can arrive at this view only by ignoring the basic tenor of Fromm's analytic critique (especially the theory of social character) and the fact that the aims of the Marx-Freud synthesis remain unchanged even after the libido theory has been abandoned.

If Fromm differs from others on the Freudian Left, it is not because he is "conformist" while they are "radical." Rather it is because he is not convinced of the truth of the instinct theory and so turns his attention to other analytic concepts. Near the end of **Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought**, Fromm writes that in his view, Freud's "theory of sex was not radical nor were his metapsychological speculations" (p 133). What was radical — and what rang true for Fromm — was Freud's "insistence on the central role of repression and the fundamental significance of the unconscious sector of our mental life" (p 133). Consequently, for his own inquiry into Freud, it was these discoveries, together with the dynamic concept of character, that proved to be of fundamental importance.

John Rickert

The Sociology of Art by Arnold Hauser, Translated by Kenneth J Norcott, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982, pp xxi + 776, £19.95

Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art by Janet Wolff, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983, pp 120, £10.95

The state and the status of the sociology of art is a happily complicated one, the variety of perspectives currently on offer reflect the healthy plurality of approaches taken towards and within the discipline. It is not so many decades since the choice seemed to be between a materialistic one-way determinism, of the kind associated with Plekhanov's **Art and Social Life**, or more recently, Fischer's **The Necessity of Art** and a 'softer' two-way determinism stemming in part from Weber's comments on the rational and social foundations of music. If it is possible, however naively, to talk in terms of the 'relationship' between art and society, the vulgar reader on the subject can trace a development from considerations based upon the necessity of art, through those based upon the social production of art, the title of Janet Wolff's 1981 survey of the field, towards those perspectives which take the category of art to be the independent variable in the relationship and which talk in terms of the social limits of art, the title of John Manfredi's recent contribution. The complication, or complexity, of debate in this area may be metaphorically indicated by suggesting that the old determinisms, whether of the 'hard' or 'soft' variety, which traded in large, unwieldy conceptual categories such as 'art' and 'society' and which traded them off against each other as to which was to be the determining and which the determined factor have given way to schemes more associated with Chinese boxes or Russian dolls. Thus, the acknowledged inter-relations pertaining between structural factors and artistic institutions, experience, productions, codes and conventions are themselves considered to be as much social products as the artistic phenomena themselves. All of this is to the good insofar as disciplinary plurality initiates and stimulates debate and, one hopes, progress. A less happy aspect of the growth in both interest and publications in the field is a noticeable tendency away from empirical research and towards 'purely' theoretical speculation. This may well be an exaggerated claim, although there is some substance in the claim that two much-read recent examples, Raymond Williams's **Culture** and Janet Wolff's **The Social Production of Art** are less about art than the sociological understanding of it. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this, except for the tendency to have empirical data used as supportive of theoretical schema. Data can thus come to have the status of example or

