

analysis, he has been sharply critical of Freudian, or "classical," psychoanalysis and has been one of the founders of what is often referred to as the "neo-Freudian" school, a school of thought of which Harry Stack Sullivan and Karen Horney have been noted representatives. He has also shown sympathetic interest in the relationship therapies developed by Rank and, in his latest period, by Ferenczi. All these interests appear to have a common denominator: the advocacy of universal brotherly love. Fromm is fundamentally an evangelist.

The book contains, first, a kind of character and pathological sketch of Freud as Fromm sees him. Freud is described as having been socially conditioned by the Enlightenment, the climate of a "decaying" Austria-Hungary,¹ the capitalist ideology, and his Jewishness. In its more individual aspects, Freud's personality is seen as lacking "emotional warmth, closeness, love and . . . enjoyment of life," but as equipped with a passion for truth and with great courage. Fromm's "analytic" considerations lead him to the conclusion that Freud was an oral-receptive person with a passive attachment to his mother, dependent and very insecure.

From this portrait of Freud, Fromm proceeds to what seems to be his main contention: Freud was not merely a scientist concerned with finding the truth; there are elements in psychoanalysis, Fromm contends, which do not go with the picture of science, viz., the talk of a "psychoanalytic movement," the concern about the preservation of a pure and unadulterated doctrine, the setting up of a "secret committee" to watch over its integrity, the alleged persecution of disciples who did not toe the line. Such features, Fromm maintains, belong to a political or religious movement. They reveal, according to Fromm, that Freud, though consciously seeing himself only as a scientist, was actually motivated by the ambition to reform the world by bringing the emotions under the control of Reason: "Neither Freud nor his followers admitted to others or to themselves that

¹ The power of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy was declining as the multinational state defended itself with difficulty against the rising tide of nationalism. There was much pessimism and resignation with regard to the long-term future. But, on the other hand, there was economic progress and a splendid intellectual and cultural life, with a broad basis in an educated and culturally alert middle class.

Dr. Freud's
dubious testimony
ap. 3/18
CHAPTER 18

Fromm
Rank
Banswery
Jones
Ferenczi

WAEELDER

Historical Fiction
(1963)

Erich Fromm, author of the book, Sigmund Freud's Mission (1959), was originally a social philosopher and critic of the social scene. He came from the small but highly influential circle of the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany, a scientific-political hybrid of left-Socialist—not Communist—orientation. He was in early contact with psychoanalysis, and has combined, in his literary work and in his therapy, his social views and his selections from, and modifications of, psychoanalytic ideas. He was professor of psychoanalysis at the University of Mexico. He is professor of psychology at Michigan State University and a member of the Washington Psychoanalytic Society.

Fromm has been an articulate critic of Western society. Though not an orthodox Marxist, he belongs to the Messianic tradition of social thought, of which Marxism is itself the most successful manifestation, i.e., he has a picture of a perfect society of complete harmony ("the sane society") and he believes that its establishment is a proposition of practical politics. Fromm is also an articulate advocate of certain measures in American foreign policy. He believes in principle in the merits of unilateral disarmament but recognizes its impracticability and advocates, as a matter of practical policy, graduated steps of reduction of armaments which he expects will be reciprocated in kind by our adversary. He is interested in Zen Buddhism. As regards psycho-

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they aimed at more than scientific and therapeutic achievements. They repressed their ambition to conquer the world with a messianic ideal of salvation" (p. 109).

Not only did they entertain such ambitions, but they apparently succeeded in founding a Church—replete not only with priests but with a laity: "Psychoanalysis became a surrogate for religion for the urban middle and upper-middle classes, which did not want to make a more radical and comprehensive effort. Here, in the Movement, they found everything—a dogma, a ritual, a leader, a hierarchy, the feeling of possessing the truth, of being superior to the uninitiated; yet without great effort, without deeper comprehension of the problems of human existence, without insight into and criticism of their own society and its crippling effects on man, without having to change one's character in those aspects which matter, namely to get rid of one's greed, anger and folly" (p. 112).²

Freud's reformist ardor did not go "to the roots" of things: "he was not questioning the basic picture of man, but, as all liberal reformers, trying to mitigate man's burden within the very framework of the traditional picture of man" (p. 100). He could not transcend the notion of man current in his society: "Freud was . . . the psychologist of nineteenth-century society, who showed that the assumptions about man underlying the economic system were even more right than the economists could have imagined. His concept of the *Homo sexualis* was a deepened and enlarged version of the economist's concept of *Homo economicus*" (p. 100).³

Yet, even so, Freud deserves honor for "his gifts, his honesty,

² One can see how one can get rid, to a large degree, of one's greed and anger or, at least, control them, but how can we humans get rid of folly? In order to do this, one would first have to know what folly is and how to distinguish it from prudence, and in many cases one knows it, if at all, only with the benefit of hindsight. Even then, our view often continues to change as the perspective of time lengthens and the story unfolds further. A passage like this illustrates the humorless claim to be in the possession of Truth and the judgmental stance which permeate Fromm's writings.

³ Fromm's view of economic theory is as prejudiced as his view of Freudian thought. The charge that "the economists" of the 19th century pictured man as exclusively motivated by greed has been made countless times, but that does not make it any more true.

For one, "economic man" has never been more than a *model*, i.e., one of

his courage and the tragic character of his life"; the last sentence of the book calls him a "truly great man," although little, if anything, in the preceding text had prepared the reader for such final evaluation.

Everybody who has ever studied myth formation and propaganda knows that it is incomparably more difficult to combat distortion, however great, than complete falsehood; for the former contains elements of truth, however warped, and therefore cannot be dismissed in its entirety. The nucleus of truth must be separated from the layers of misunderstanding and

those simplified assumptions about reality which underlie generalizing theories, in physics as well as in economics and political science. Their value lies in the understanding of the significance of one important aspect of reality, and in the approximation to the data of observation, which they provide.

The laws of classical mechanics were derived on the assumption of bodies moving in a vacuum, without friction, which was an unrealistic assumption under terrestrial conditions. The classical theory of electrolytes (Arrhenius) was based on the assumption that electric forces between the wandering ions can be ignored. Of course, this assumption was unrealistic; but weak electrolytes in which the concentration of ions is small, and the distance between them correspondingly great, approximate this marginal condition sufficiently to make the theory sufficiently accurate for them. One has to begin somewhere and can take care of the other factors later.

By overlooking certain aspects of reality, the model, or "ideal type," as it is often called in the social sciences (a term coined by Max Weber), has the effect of exaggerating other aspects, and may thereby assume the character of a caricature. Yet, the only people who have ever taken "economic man" literally, as a true and accurate picture of man's totality, have been those in Fromm's ideological camp; *there* it is widely believed that "the bourgeois," or "the capitalists," are merely personifications of monetary greed.

But whatever the role of the model may have been in the first half of the 19th century, economic theory underwent considerable refinement during Freud's lifetime, i.e., during the later 19th and earlier 20th centuries—a development in which Vienna, home of the theory of marginal utility, with Lausanne and Cambridge as centers of economic thought, played a prominent role. The theory was no longer based on the model of "economic man"—nor indeed, on any assumption about human motivation—but merely on the assumption that in the area relevant for economics, men act *rationally*, i.e., make considered choices between alternatives according to their preferences. The case of a man choosing more leisure in preference to more income; or of a man choosing voluntary service in preference to remunerative employment, cases which would have been outside the model of economic man, are fully covered by the later, more refined, version of the theory which, in psychoanalytic language, merely postulates that all action, or at least all action relevant for economics, takes place under the direction of the preconscious ego.



distortion—a process which requires detailed knowledge and painstaking labor. The casual reader cannot evaluate such subtleties and is left with the impression that there is some truth in the matter: *semper aliquid haeret*.

Let us consider the basic contention that Freud and his disciples were actually founder and apostles of a quasi-political or quasi-religious reform movement. It can be seen immediately that the ambition which Fromm attributes to Freud, and a political rather than scientific orientation, is true of Fromm himself and the Frankfurt group from which he comes; they are primarily social reformers. But is it as true of Freud and his disciples?

It is true that Freud and his disciples gradually came to think that the value of psychoanalysis transcended that of a therapy of the neuroses. We felt—I beg permission to include myself in this group—that the discovery of the unconscious not only offered the key to psychopathology but also opened a new dimension in the understanding of all things human; and that the enlargement of consciousness not only offered a therapy of the neuroses but might in the long run turn out to be a step in human progress.⁴

Furthermore, we felt that this discovery was threatened with submergence again in an ocean of misunderstandings and distortions—like a tract of land that had been cleared in the midst of the jungle and needed constant effort to keep the jungle from moving in again. We *did* have a sense of mission: first, to see to it that psychoanalytic insight did not disappear; and then to do what we could to enlarge it.

Fromm contends that “Neither Freud nor his followers admitted to others or to themselves that they aimed at more than scientific and therapeutic achievements” (p. 109). This is completely untrue. These hopes and expectations, such as they were, were a conscious part of our lives. They were also often discussed in publications. In a little book Ferenczi and Rank (1924) offered their estimate of the future of psychoanalysis in all its aspects,

⁴ I believe that this expectation was quite realistic as far as ego development is concerned, but perhaps not enough thought was given to the fact that higher ego development does not necessarily mean more humane aspirations, and that without the latter, the former is not an unmixed blessing. See Waelder (1939b) and (1960a, p. 250f.).

and ended with this statement: “The most important advance in psychoanalysis consists finally in a great increase of consciousness, or expressed according to our metapsychology, in raising the instinctive unconscious mental content to the level of pre-conscious thinking. This, however, from our point of view, means such an important step in the development of mankind that it may actually be regarded as a biological advance, and indeed as one which for the first time takes place under a kind of self-control” (p. 67f.). This is a rather far-reaching expectation. An extensive discussion of the cultural impact of psychoanalysis, with somewhat less enthusiastic expectations, can be found in Chapter 21 of this volume. Other aspects of the same matter were discussed by Alexander (1925). The most beautiful formulation of these humanizing potentialities of psychoanalysis came from the writer Thomas Mann. While some analysts would find such perspectives inspiring, others found them too “metaphysical.”

But all this does not add up to a political or religious movement, or to an ambition “to conquer the world with a Messianic ideal of salvation” (p. 109). Freud was far too skeptical—or should I say: too civilized?—a mind to put much faith in salvation of mankind by any means, at any time. He belonged in the humanistic, not the Messianic, stream of European thought.

Fromm’s chief arguments to demonstrate the political or religious character of the psychoanalytic movement are like this: “Is there any other case of a therapy or of a scientific theory transforming itself into a movement, centrally directed by a secret committee, with purges of deviant members, with local organizations in an international superorganization? No therapy in the field of medicine was ever transformed into such a movement. As far as psychoanalysis as a theory is concerned, the nearest comparison would be Darwinism; . . . yet there is no Darwinian ‘movement,’ no directorium which leads that movement, *no purges which decide who has the right to call himself a Darwinist and who has lost such a privilege*” (p. 82; italics mine).

These or similar arguments have been voiced time and again, and it may be appropriate to take them up at some length.

A movement need not be political or religious; we often

speak of movements when a doctrine is advocated by some and rejected by others. It is true that there are no movements in physics or physiology today; but this is simply due to the fact that there is current agreement on fundamentals in these disciplines. In earlier times, these sciences were also subject to controversies on fundamental points; and there we may speak of movements in these disciplines, too. In the 17th century when the geocentric and heliocentric systems faced each other, one may speak of a "Copernican movement." There was a movement for vaccination in the 19th century. There is talk today of the movement of logical Positivism, or for the unity of science, etc.

As far as the "committee" is concerned, one cannot play Hamlet without the prince. Psychoanalysis was, and still is, surrounded by a sea of misunderstanding;⁵ it was highly problematic whether it could be kept from being submerged by them. Under such circumstances it does seem odd to me that a few disciples, well versed in psychoanalysis, should make it their business to say, if need be, in Freud's words: "All this nonsense has nothing to do with psychoanalysis" (quoted by Fromm, p. 91). In itself such a situation has nothing to do with dogmatism; the unadulterated preservation of an idea is a prerequisite of its rational discussion and evaluation.

As far as the main piece of Fromm's argument is concerned, the claim for authority of accreditation in psychoanalysis, it should be clear that the claim to be a Darwinian is no analogy to the claim of being a psychoanalyst. The proper analogy to a Darwinian would be a *Freudian*; it has never occurred to Freud or the rest of us to try to lay down any laws as to who may, or who may not, call himself a Freudian. But to call oneself a psychoanalyst implies that one presents oneself to the public as a competent practitioner of an investigative method and a thera-

⁵ Fromm's book itself provides many examples of such misunderstandings. Above all, Fromm shares the two most common of them, viz., the misunderstanding of the meaning of "sexual" in psychoanalysis, and the misunderstanding of repression. When Fromm speaks of Freud's concern with the sexual, he takes it in the pre-Freudian sense, as referring to bedroom stories. If he is aware of the fact that it means sensuality in a wider sense, this awareness is not brought out in the book. And, more often than not, he confuses repression with frustration (e.g., p. 113).

penicillin technique invented by Sigmund Freud, and it is not outlandish for the man who invented and named a thing to request the right to inspect the products offered by others under this name, and to judge whether they are correctly so labeled.

What is persistently overlooked in the discussion of this issue is the fact that psychoanalysis was not a word of the common language which Freud had found and tried to usurp; that, of course, would have been presumptuous. But psychoanalysis is an artificial name which was coined by Sigmund Freud to label the therapeutic technique which he himself had developed, just as penicillin is an artificial word coined by Sir Alexander Fleming to name the drug he developed. And just as nobody questions the moral right of the discoverer of a drug to protest when the name of his drug is used for the sale of another product, I fail to see how one can question the right of Freud, or of the legitimate executors of his intellectual estate, to protest if the word psychoanalysis is used for procedures which, whatever their merits, have little or nothing to do with the psychoanalysis invented by Sigmund Freud.

Medicine as well as other professions have accrediting boards and similar certifying agencies, with the corresponding restrictions in the use of designations implying special competence. It is true that in the great majority of cases the test of competence does not imply the acceptance of a particular doctrine, but, once again, this is due only to the agreement on fundamentals now prevailing in the physical sciences and medicine, and was not always so. In the rare cases in which some assumptions are not universally accepted, the test of qualification *does* imply the acceptance of a position not universally endorsed.

The science of genetics is based on the assumption that the genes are the atoms of inheritance; this proposition is very widely, but not yet universally, accepted. A man who does not accept it cannot be called a geneticist, although he may, of course, be called a biologist or a student of inheritance. Psychoanalysis is based on the proposition that there is an effective psychic unconscious which is withheld from consciousness by repression. Psychoanalysis is a method designed to facilitate the rise of the unconscious into consciousness and a procedure to treat emotional illness by making its unconscious aspects con-

perusal makes it obvious that considerations of practical effects did not determine his preferences.

The simple fact is that Freud's outlook was very close to that of most, perhaps all, pure scientists, somewhat like what Henri Poincaré once expressed in these words: "I do not say science is useful because it helps us to build machines; I say machines are useful because as they work for us they will some day leave us more time for scientific research." In a quite similar way, Freud thought that it was fortunate that psychoanalysis had a therapeutic value because that alone made it possible for people to offer themselves for psychoanalytic research. Ernest Renan once said that the only thing that really mattered was the emancipation and progress of the human mind; Freud's feelings were not very different. Freud, it must not be forgotten, came from a Mediterranean, not a Calvinist, tradition, and contemplation, in the Mediterranean tradition, does not carry the stigma of sin.

His mind was, in fact, forever on a quest for new knowledge and new understanding in all things human. I remember his developing ideas on the most varied subjects, quite remote from any thought of practical—therapeutic, political, ideological—application. This is one aspect of Freud which has entirely escaped Fromm, perhaps because it is alien to the latter's own bent of mind.

Before leaving the subject of the alleged quasi-religious character of the psychoanalytic movement, an amusing detail in Fromm's argument may be reported. In order to demonstrate "how far the symbiotic, quasi-religious attachment to Freud went," Fromm quotes the following statement by Sachs: "I had found the one thing worth while for me to live for: many years later I discovered that it was also the only thing I could live by." And Fromm comments as follows: "We can easily imagine somebody saying that he lives by the Bible, the Bhagavad-Gita, or by the philosophy of Spinoza or Kant—but to live by a book on the interpretation of dreams makes sense only if we assume that the author has become a Moses and the science a new religion" (p. 67).

Here Fromm steps into a trap of his own making. What Sachs meant was, of course, that after many years he found out that psychoanalysis—viz., the practice of psychoanalysis—was

scious. A person who does not believe in the existence of unconscious processes; or, although believing in their existence, does not believe that their unconsciousness is due to repression; or, although believing this, does not think that certain emotional illnesses are advantageously treated by bringing this unconscious to consciousness—cannot be called a psychoanalyst. He may, of course, be a psychiatrist, a psychotherapist, a psychologist, a behavioral scientist, etc.

The real question is not why we try to set up standards and criteria but rather why those who reject the basic propositions on which psychoanalysis rests insist on calling themselves psychoanalysts and their various treatment methods psychoanalysis.

To sum up the argument: Fromm's picture of Freudian psychoanalysis as a quasi-political or quasi-religious movement seems to me to be quite out of focus. But it appears as distorted in an even more fundamental sense, inasmuch as it sees Freud as exclusively practically oriented, toward what psychoanalysis can do in the world, and entirely overlooks the fact that the practical did not hold first place in Freud's mind.

The whole idea of Freud as a would-be world reformer was at all arguable only *after* it became apparent that psychoanalysis could have consequences and applications beyond the treatment room, i.e., after Freud was well along in his fifties. But that could not have been anticipated in the beginning. What role should Freud's alleged ambition of world reform have played earlier, e.g., in Freud's most productive years in his early forties? What role could it have played when he suggested to Dr. Breuer that they follow up together the clues in the case of Anna O. and urge hysterical patients in hypnosis to remember the forgotten beginnings of their symptoms, and how could he have fathomed that this work could lead to a reform of the world? How could he have expected it when he grasped the fact that dreams had a meaning and devoted some years to dream studies? Later, up to the end of his life, he was often occupied with problems that had no conceivable application to a program of changing reality. I believe that *Totem and Taboo* (1913) was among the works he liked best; the later continuation of it, *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), was also close to his heart. Whether or not posterity will agree with his selections, their



the only way he could make a living; he was not a physician and when he joined the circle around Freud, nobody had as yet thought of lay analysis.

Another charge that has been levied against Freud and that seems to fit well with Fromm's basic contention is that of Freud's alleged authoritarianism. Freud, it is said, was intolerant of opposition, "expecting others to follow him, wait on him, to sacrifice their independence and intellectual freedom to him."

This picture of Freud has so often been drawn, and has been so widely disseminated, that it seems fitting that one of those who knew Freud sufficiently well to have an informed opinion in this matter should try to set the record straight. Not that I believe that truth will prevail if given a chance; but it may at least be rescued from being wiped off the map entirely.

If I were a lawyer and had to conduct the defense of Freud in a trial like that of Socrates, I would strongly advise my client against correcting this distortion of his personality, and for pleading guilty on this count. Juries do not like it if a defendant who is accused on many counts does not accept any guilt whatever; they do not like to believe that widespread accusations can be entirely without foundation; and in any case, they prefer their defendants humble. It is better to plead guilty on some minor count.

But I am not a lawyer, and I am not trying to plead a case, but to state a fact to the best of my knowledge. Be it therefore said that there is no truth whatever in the legend of Freud's authoritarianism, and that it was very easy to contradict him as long as contradiction did not involve personal attack.

For a psychoanalyst who knows that repressive processes are not always complete and that fragments of the repressed truth can often be detected in odd places, it is not surprising that the truth in this matter can even be detected in Fromm's book if one only scans it carefully enough. In his discussion of Freud's "rigid authoritarianism" Fromm calls Freud "intolerant of other opinions or revisions of his own theories." Fromm continues: "It is hard to ignore the bulk of evidence which supports this view . . . Even Sachs, in his frankly idolizing biography of Freud, admits this: 'I knew it was always extremely difficult for him to assimilate the opinions of others after he had evolved his own in a long and laborious process . . . If my opinion was opposed to

his, I said so frankly. He always gave me full scope to expound my views, and listened willingly to my arguments, but *was hardly ever moved by them*" (p. 62; italics by Fromm).

I wonder how many of those who have read this passage in Fromm's book have noticed that the quotation from Sachs does not bear out Fromm's contention. The story was *supposed* to show that Freud was *authoritarian*, that he was "intolerant of other opinions"; what the story *actually* tells us is something quite different, namely, that Freud was *tolerant* of his disciple's opinions but *did not surrender his own views to him*. There is not the slightest hint that Freud attempted to impose his views on Sachs, or even to influence him in any way whatsoever. To call Freud authoritarian *because he did not follow the lead of others* reminds me of the words of the emperor Tiberius to his stepdaughter: *si non dominaris te iniuriam accipere existimas*.⁶

This is, in fact, the *whole* reality behind the charge of Freud's authoritarianism. Freud was what is now called an inner-directed person, whose course in life comes from inner impulsion rather than being merely a reflection of shifting outside pressures. Such a person has won his opinions himself, laboriously; hence they are not easily surrendered under the influence of others. But there is all the difference in the world between an inner-directed person who concedes the same right to others, and a tyrant.

These facts appear clearly in the correspondence between Freud and Rank at the critical time following Rank's publication of his *Trauma of Birth* (1924).⁷ In these letters, we see Rank urgently pleading with Freud for the acceptance of his ideas. Freud does not see eye to eye with Rank in this matter and would let the matter rest there; one can agree to disagree. He actually pleads with the younger man, who has been something like an adopted son to him, to continue their relationship without Rank's pressing him any further on this issue. Freud writes:

My observation has, as yet, not permitted me to make a decision, but up to now has furnished nothing that would correspond to your interpretation . . . Your ex-

⁶ If you do not dominate, you consider yourself injured.
⁷ The correspondence, or as much of it as we know, can be found in Taft (1958).

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periences are different; do they therefore cancel mine? We both know that experiences permit of many explanations, hence we have to wait for further experiences.

After all, the right to have an opinion of one's own prevails for me, too. I have endeavored to respect it with each of my friends and adherents,⁸ as long as we could preserve a common ground. . . . I was not and I am not in agreement with Ferenczi's statements on homosexuality and with many points of his active therapy. In my opinion he puts a *too great store on complete agreement with me*; I do not. Suppose you had told me one day that you could not believe in the primordial horde and the primordial father, or thought the separation into Ego and Id to be inexpedient, do you really believe that I would not have invited you for meals or would have excluded you from my circle? It is true, you were always very reserved in taking a critical stand, *probably too much so*. And now you are shattered and offended that I refuse your *Trauma of Birth*, though you have my admission that it is never easy for me to follow a new train of thought that somehow does not go my way or to which my way has not yet led me [Taft, p. 106f.; italics mine].

If this is tyranny, it is tyranny of a very special kind.

But Rank cannot let go. One is reminded of a feature of adolescence to which Anna Freud once called attention: adolescents who complain bitterly that their parents do not recognize them as adults are quite often not content to live their own lives and let their parents go on living theirs, as adult sons and daughters would do. They are often bent on reeducating their parents, and the resistance with which *these* attempts meet in the older generation registers with them as oppression. Their mind has not yet been really emancipated from the childhood setting of a family ruled by the parents, and they visualize their own emancipation as adults not as the abolition of the whole pattern but merely as a change of place within the pattern; for

⁸ A somewhat awkward rendering of what in German was obviously *Anhänger*. A better English translation would be: follower.

them, adulthood means that the role of parents has fallen to them, while the parents will be reduced to children. There are analogies to this in some of the former colonial, now independent, countries. The correspondence between Freud and Rank shows that this was the case with Rank in the disagreements following the appearance of his *Trauma of Birth*.

There is an item in this correspondence which may show those whose mind has not been closed that there is not only no basis for the allegation of authoritarianism, but that there is actually strong evidence for a unique absence in Freud of that tacit play of authority and superiority which is a universal undercurrent in the relation between different generations. Freud had told Rank of a dream of his, and Rank wrote him the same day, suggesting an interpretation of the dream:

“Dear Professor, This evening an interpretation of the witty dream you told me today has occurred to me, which is apt to be withheld from you and which, I hope, will amuse you” (Taft, p. 78).

So Rank puts himself without invitation in the position of psychoanalyzing his teacher, and we may wonder what the tyrant's answer will be. Here it is:

It is a long time since you have tried to interpret one of my dreams in such a powerful analytical way. Since then much has changed. You have grown enormously and you know so much about me. . . . I cannot confirm everything you write. . . . but I do not need to contradict you anywhere.

[Freud then continues by giving his associations and concludes with his interpretation: the dream, he thinks, indicates his fear lest a young man like Rank might supersede him:] The super-ego merely says to this process: “All right you old jester and boaster. This is not true at all! . . . you (the dreamer) are not David, you are the boasting giant Goliath, whom another one, the young David will slay.” And now everything falls into place around this point that you (Rank) are the dreaded David who with his *Trauma of Birth* succeeds in depreciating

my work. . . . Thus I can continue your interpretation [p. 78f.].

Where is there on record a man, sixty-seven years of age, in the evening of a life of great labor and productivity, who will accept an uninvited and apparently embarrassing interpretation of his unconscious from a young man, his disciple, not only with good grace but as a matter of course and with scientific objectivity, will applaud the young man for his insights and will freely discuss with him his own jealousies and fears?

The same picture emerges from the correspondence which Ludwig Binswanger (1956) has published. The whole lifelong relationship between these two men belies the myth of Freud's authoritarianism. Binswanger started his professional life as a disciple of Freud's but in middle life became increasingly involved with the philosophy of existentialism, until he became, and still is, the leader of the existentialist movement⁹ in psychiatry. Freud, to be sure, did not follow Binswanger along this road, but Binswanger, different from Rank, did not press him to do so and did not attack Freud personally. Their relationship remained cordial to the end.

There is a moving letter, published by Binswanger, which shows that Freud, far from trying to force the younger man into the fold, expressed his gratitude to him for not having allowed their intellectual disagreement to interfere with their personal relationship:

Quite different from so many others [Freud writes], you have not allowed your intellectual development, which has more and more removed you from my sphere of influence, to interfere with our personal relations, and *you do not know how much one is touched by such delicacy* [p. 103].¹⁰

⁹ The word comes naturally—I do not think it means that Binswanger is actually leading a political movement.

¹⁰ Jones repeatedly pointed out that the stories of Freud's authoritarianism were myths. Fromm dismisses Jones's testimony in this matter contemptuously: "Jones is of a psychological naiveté in these assertions which ill fit a psychoanalyst. He simply overlooks the fact that Freud was intolerant to those who questioned or criticized him in the least. To people who idolized him and

That this man, of all men, should be called authoritarian, demonstrates how baseless the common belief is that widely accepted views must have some element of factual, as different from mere symbolic, truth. It was possible thirty years ago to convince the majority of a nation as highly educated as the Germans that the Jews were responsible for all their misfortunes and frustrations. It is possible to convince vast masses in Latin America, Asia, and Africa today that the United States is responsible for their poverty. So it is also possible to persuade people that Sigmund Freud was "authoritarian" and "not a man who loves."

All this, of course, is not to gainsay the fact that there may have been people who *felt* Freud to be oppressive. Perhaps Rank was one of them. He received a great deal from Freud, who provided for his higher education, started him on his career, first in applied psychoanalysis and later in analytic practice, and gave him the impetus for his creative work—perhaps more than a man can accept from another man—and it would be understandable if Rank, oppressed by this abundance, attributed to Freud's person what was inherent rather in the situation.

Enough, I believe, has been said about this subject, and it

never disagreed, he was kind and tolerant; just because, as I have emphasized before, Freud was so dependent on unconditional affirmation and agreement by others, he was a loving father to submissive sons, and a stern, authoritarian one to those who dared to disagree" (p. 66).

When Fromm published these lines (1959), Binswanger's report of his lifelong relationship with Freud, which survived their scientific disagreement entirely unscathed, had already been available since 1956. Since this report completely contradicts Fromm's contention that "Freud was intolerant to those who questioned or criticized him in the least," and completely corroborates Jones's testimony, which Fromm calls naive and ill-fitting for a psychoanalyst, it is deplorable that Fromm did not mention, and deal with, the testimony adverse to his thesis.

We cannot be completely certain that Fromm knew Binswanger's book. True, he quotes from a letter published therein (p. 29) but since he does *not* give the origin of this quotation—as he otherwise always does—we do not have complete evidence that he was familiar with the book.

It may finally be mentioned that Jones was anything but a yes-man, as he is pictured by Fromm. Scientifically, he largely shared the views of Melanie Klein, and he favored her school of thought, which was certainly not in conformity with Freud's thinking. In other matters, Jones was a rather willful man, and this trait manifested itself, respect and admiration notwithstanding, in his relation to Freud, too.



administration of an analgesic will improve the well-being of people in physical distress; but it interferes with diagnostic studies. Twenty years before Ferenczi made his suggestions, Freud had considered this possibility and dismissed it for these reasons (1912, p. 115).

But Fromm does not understand the problem for which these considerations attempt to give an answer; as usual, he castigates what he does not understand: "Freud's reaction to Ferenczi's idea that the patient needed love as a condition for his cure" is for him "one of the most drastic examples" of the dogmatism of "'official' psychoanalytic thought" (p. 107). But the issue at stake is not whether a patient "needs" love or, for that matter, drugs or electroshock, but whether these administrations are compatible with the conduct of a psychoanalysis.

There was nothing new in the theoretical position either; it was a revival of the pre-Freudian concept of an asexual childhood and of Freud's own early trauma theory.

For many of us young men who had admired and loved Ferenczi, the final phase in his development was bewildering and distressing. It was distressing to see the man to whom we had looked up as a leader in what appeared to us a less than admirable light; and when we learned, only a few months later, that Ferenczi was dying from pernicious anemia, then an incurable disease, the sorrow over his premature demise was at the same time mixed with a sense of relief at the realization that the strange occurrences of the last few months had obviously to be written off as the consequence of a severe organic disease, and therefore would not detract from the picture of the wise and inspiring leader which we had acquired earlier.

Ferenczi visited Freud in the summer of 1932 on his way to the Psychoanalytic Congress in Wiesbaden, and it was on this occasion that Freud's famous intolerance was so "drastically" displayed. Fromm has his information from Mrs. de Forest, a student of Ferenczi's, who told him what Ferenczi had told her more than twenty years previously about his visit with Freud. A court of law would not accept this kind of hearsay in evidence, and a trained historian would treat it with great caution. But let us assume that it gives a complete and accurate picture of the events. It would then indicate that Freud warned Ferenczi

might well be closed were it not for the fact that Fromm's "most drastic example" of Freud's authoritarianism and intolerance, viz., his relation to Ferenczi, should not remain uncontested, because of the importance of this episode for a history of psychoanalysis. For years, Ferenczi had been experimenting with psychoanalytic therapeutic technique, hoping thereby to achieve what can, if at all, only be expected from deeper insight into the pathological process. The total yield of various such attempts had not been great. But toward the end of his life, Ferenczi presented the proposition that it was necessary to "spoil" the patients, i.e., to treat them tenderly like small children in distress. They had fallen sick, he argued, because of a lack of love in their childhood, and this was true not only of some but of all patients. The child had been holding out its hand for love—nonsexual love—and the adult, instead of giving it, had satisfied his own sexual urges at the expense of the child. In this way, Ferenczi returned to the pre-Freudian concept of a fundamentally asexual childhood, and to Freud's early trauma theory of the neuroses. The whole development of theoretical thought and therapeutic technique which followed Freud's realization of the fact that the stories told by patients of their sexual seduction by parents were usually untrue, the discovery of childhood sexuality and its vicissitudes, was thereby discarded.

There was nothing new about any of these ideas. To treat one's patients with tender kindness is probably the oldest psychotherapeutic device, used instinctively by every good nurse, indeed by every normal mother. Ferenczi went to considerable length in this matter; a middle-aged man may have been encouraged to sit on his lap, call him grandfather and talk to him in baby language.

But showing one's patients more than friendly interest and the serious desire to help were not considered advisable in psychoanalysis, for the simple reason that psychoanalysis is exploratory psychotherapy, and that the display of love, or any other emotional attitude toward the patient on the part of the analyst beyond what is required by civilized standards and professional obligation, will of necessity influence what kind of material will appear and offer itself for exploration. To love and to spoil one's patients may make them feel better just as the

ambition” he made it clear that he thought that his ambition *predated* his father’s remark; for how could there be an affront to something not yet in existence? In this case Fromm demolishes the proverbial bogeyman of his own making.

Furthermore, Fromm quotes from a letter that Freud wrote to his friend, Fliess, in January, 1900: “The new century—the *most interesting thing about which for us is, I dare say, that it contains the date of our death—*.” For Fromm, this proves that Freud was egocentric and could not love: “Here again we find the same egocentric concern with his own death and none of the feeling of universality and solidarity” (p. 37).

There is no reason why awareness of the finiteness of human existence—*memento mori*—should indicate egocentricity and inability to love, unless it is assumed that love means total abandonment of all self-concern, all the time, which would be a completely unrealistic expectation.

A selection of Freud’s letters ranging from 1873 to 1939 that was recently published (E. Freud, 1960) will give the unprejudiced a picture of Freud as he really was—of the breadth of his culture, his enthusiasm, the depth of his humanity, the originality of his thinking and, as the years rolled on, his mellowness. Since Freud is persistently pictured by Fromm as “lacking in emotional warmth” and “egocentric,” I should like to quote a few lines from Freud’s correspondence. In all the world’s literature I know of no more moving expression of sympathy to a bereft one than the words which Freud wrote to Binswanger upon the death of the latter’s son:

Although we know that after such a loss the acute state of mourning will subside, we also know we shall remain inconsolable and will never find a substitute. No matter what may fill the gap, even if it be filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else. And actually this is how it should be. It is the only way of perpetuating that love which we do not want to relinquish [E. Freud, p. 386].

Gravely distorted though Fromm’s picture of Freud is, it is still possible, as in a caricature, to recognize the sitter. The same can hardly be said of the picture of Freud and psychoanalysis found

against dangers in his new technique, that he urged Ferenczi not to publish the paper, and that he terminated the conversation abruptly. That is all. That Freud did not try to prevent the publication is borne out by the fact that the paper was actually published by the *Zeitschrift*, in which Freud, as *Herausgeber*, held the power of decision. Nor did he try to interfere with the presentation of the paper at the Wiesbaden Congress. Who would accuse the chief of a university department or a hospital of intolerance merely because he advised his assistant against the publication of a paper which he considered embarrassing to the institution?

In order to put things into proper perspective, it is also necessary to add that repeated later references to Ferenczi’s latest position, both in Freud’s writings and in his conversation, while clearly stating his disagreement, were always cordial and gave warm recognition to Ferenczi’s contributions and personality.

I have discussed some parts of Fromm’s book at considerable length. It would fill as much space again merely to list all the various inaccuracies and arbitrary interpretations that can be found in this brief volume. I should only like to mention two examples to show the kind of reasoning through which Fromm arrives at his conclusions.

Fromm refers to the scene in which Freud, at the age of seven, was reprimanded by his father for having urinated in the parental bedroom in his parents’ presence, and reports the father’s remark, “That boy will never amount to anything.” He thereupon quotes Freud: “This must have been a terrible affront to my ambition, for allusions to this scene occur again and again in my dreams and are constantly coupled with enumerations of my accomplishments and successes, as if I wanted to say: ‘You see I have amounted to something after all’” (p. 56).

On this Fromm comments as follows: “This explanation given by Freud that the father’s remark was the *cause* of his ambition is an error which one can find frequently in orthodox analytic interpretations” (p. 56). It is impossible to see where Fromm could have got the idea that Freud suggested this “explanation.” Freud neither said nor implied that he considered his father’s remark to be the cause of his ambition; on the contrary, by calling this remark “a terrible affront to my



in a book, *The Freudian Ethic* (1959), by Richard LaPiere, a professor of sociology at Stanford University.

LaPiere's first thesis is that something is very wrong with contemporary America, that the nation is in a serious moral predicament. What has made this country and has made it strong was the "Protestant Ethic," in the sense of Max Weber's famous essay: initiative, devotion to hard work, self-reliance, a strong sense of responsibility. LaPiere sees these virtues disappearing; he sees a new generation of Americans, wont to rely on others and to have things done for them.

LaPiere is, of course, not the first to feel this country has gone soft. Many others have sounded the clarion call. Whether or not their diagnosis is correct is very difficult to judge. In a very large country and in a free and hence very diversified society, it is possible to give numerous examples that seem to bear out the thesis; it is equally possible to give numerous examples that seem to contradict it. It is one of the most difficult things to judge the moral fibre of a large nation; individual data can often be interpreted in different ways, the range of individual attitudes is enormous, and attitudes are not stable but depend to a great extent on external circumstances, such as the nature, clarity, and degree of the challenge and the quality of leadership. When the Oxford students, in 1935, swore that they would never, under any circumstances, fight for king and country, many people took it as a sign of the decay of British morale. It was disastrous that the leaders of Germany shared this interpretation. Yet, only five years later, these same youths manned the fighter planes of the R.A.F. and thwarted Hitler's ambitions at the price of their physical extinction—the modern parallel to the 300 of Thermopylae.

Happily, it is not the task of this review to evaluate the soundness of LaPiere's diagnosis of the nation's morale. But it can be said *prima facie* that the complaint about the loss of ancestral virtues is neither new nor specifically American, that it predates by far the "Protestant Ethic," and that the warning has been heard since the early days of recorded history. Most self-respecting Roman writers were what Horace called *laudatores temporis acti*. Horace himself was no mean representative of the species; he wrote: "The age of the parents, worse than that of the grandparents, bore us who are more worthless than they

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were and who are about to bring forth an offspring even more corrupt."

These lines were written at the time of Augustus—ever since considered the golden age of Rome. Lest anyone think that, since Rome did eventually fall, Horace's diagnosis may have been a remarkable example of acumen and foresight, let us remember that at the time of Horace the Roman Empire had still five centuries to go in the West and fifteen in the East. Moreover, we can go further back to, say, Homer, and listen to old Nestor saying that the heroes of the Trojan war could not stand comparison with the heroes of his youth (*Iliad*, 1:260f).

So common is the view of progressive degeneration that various thinkers have seen in it a general characteristic of advancing civilization (i.e., advancing in the sense of increasing control by man over his environment): in this view, civilization brings about its own undoing through its very consummation, by means of the ease and security of life which it achieves. The young no longer go through the hardships and are no longer confronted with the challenges deemed necessary to develop the qualities of toughness and endurance which brought the civilization into being in the first place, and which are needed to maintain it. This is one of the basic points of the many cyclic theories of history which proclaim an intrinsic necessity of the rise and fall of civilizations. In essence, it is the philosophy behind the old saying that it takes three generations from shirt sleeves to shirt sleeves.

It is a fundamental element, e.g., in the theory of history of the great medieval Moslem historian, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) who thought that "Bedouins are more disposed to courage than sedentary people" because "the reliance of sedentary people upon laws destroys their fortitude and power of resistance" (*Muqaddimah*, 2:5/6). But, unlike LaPiere and other contemporary writers who think along similar lines and seek the cause for the loss of "fortitude" in modern welfare measures, Ibn Khaldun saw clearly that *civilization as such*, i.e., the *existence of a legal order* as such, offers protection to the weaker ones and thereby diminishes the pressures under which the sterner habits of self-preservation develop.

Consequently, for the classical philosophers of a cyclic theory of history like Ibn Khaldun, the disaster of civilizations has the

quality of a Greek tragedy; it is the inescapable consequence of characteristics which are only the reverse side of the very virtues of civilization. But this is not the case in LaPiere's picture. For him, America's real or alleged moral disease is due not to forces intrinsic in progress but rather to an extraneous factor, an invasion by a germ of spiritual decay. The decline of America's moral stamina is due to what LaPiere calls the "Freudian ethic," viz., an ethic of universal irresponsibility alleged to have been taught by Sigmund Freud. Here is what LaPiere thinks of psychoanalysis:

"The psychoanalyst...strives to relieve the patient of all responsibility for his difficulties and to shift it to society in the person of the patient's mother, father, sibling, husband, wife, son, or daughter, or all of these together" (p. 69). To this shifting of the blame he attributes what therapeutic relief there may be in psychoanalysis.

"Freudian doctrine" is, in LaPiere's view, "a doctrine of social irresponsibility and personal despair" (p. 53). What the author calls "Freudian ethic" is defined in the words: "absence of strong social motivations (the inescapable urges of the libido are, of course, antisocial drives), lack of constraining or inhibiting social principles, lack of supernaturalistic or other fixed faiths (except, of course, the Freudian version of the self), lack of set goals, lack of any rigorous system of personal-social values and sentiments, and complete absence of any sense of obligation toward others" (p. 64).

The new ethic, according to LaPiere, demands that man be taken care of by society: "This new ethic presupposes that man is by inherent nature weak, uncertain, and incapable of self-reliance and that he must, therefore, be provided by society with the security that is his greatest need."¹¹ Since the most outstanding and most popular proponent of this view of man has been Sigmund Freud, the newly emerging ethic has been designated by his name" (p. 285). It is also antagonistic to society: "Freud, like his patients, believed that they were victims of social circumstances; and, like them, he was in all respects antagonistic toward society" (p. 53).

LaPiere's picture of contemporary history finally assumes

¹¹ At this point one wonders whether LaPiere did not get his picture of Freud confused with his picture of Franklin Roosevelt.

apocalyptic dimensions; once again, there is a doctrine of history as the battlefield of the forces of light and darkness, the struggle between Ormuzd and Ahriman, incarnated respectively in the "Protestant Ethic" and the "Freudian Ethic." The formal setting is the same as in previous devil theories of history, but the actors have changed; the evil is no longer represented by the Jews, Jesuits, Freemasons or capitalists, but by the ethic of irresponsibility said to have been proposed by, of all people, Sigmund Freud.

Those with even the most modest knowledge of psychoanalysis may wonder how anybody could get this impression of psychoanalysis. It is conceivable that because Freud deals in his works with many aspects of human behavior, including those we consider evil, and does so, as a rule, without emphasizing his condemnation of the latter and without moral exhortations, some may have formed the idea that he approved of them. However, Freud's apparent detachment is due, first, to the simple fact that he was engaged in scientific work, and felt—correctly, I submit—that moral exhortations and condemnations have no place in a scientific treatise; in his own words: "For the purpose of an investigation...one may perhaps be allowed to wear a mask of assumed detachment" (1933a, p. 213). Besides, he took it for granted that he addressed an audience of responsible people, and was allergic to the self-righteousness and hypocrisy of most of this kind of preaching. He subscribed, as he wrote to J. J. Putnam, to "Th. Vischer's excellent maxim: *Das Moralische versteht sich immer von selbst*" (E. Freud, p. 308).¹²

But Freud's allegiance to the principles of civilized morality is immanent in every page he ever wrote; when the context requires it, he may become quite articulate, e.g., when he says this about the educability of man:

Probably a certain percentage of mankind (owing to a pathological disposition or an excess of instinctual strength) will always remain asocial; but if it were feasible merely to reduce the majority that is hostile towards civilization to-day into a minority, a great deal would

¹² The above quotation from Th. Vischer is rendered there as follows: "What is moral is self-evident." Actually, the meaning of the phrase is not merely cognitive but rather like this: Morality must be taken for granted.

have been accomplished—perhaps all that *can* be accomplished [1927a, p. 9].

How can anybody think that the man who wrote these lines preached a “doctrine of social irresponsibility and personal despair,” of a “complete absence of any sense of obligation toward others?”

Freud’s sense of personal responsibility did, in fact, go beyond the Protestant Ethic; let us look at what Freud said about moral responsibility for *one’s dreams*:

Obviously one must hold oneself responsible for the evil impulses of one’s dreams. What else is one to do with them? Unless the content of the dream (rightly understood) is inspired by alien spirits, it is a part of my own being. If I seek to classify the impulses that are present in me according to social standards into good and bad, I must assume responsibility for both sorts; and if, in defence, I say that what is unknown, unconscious and repressed in me is not my ‘ego,’ then I shall not be basing my position upon psycho-analysis, I shall not have accepted its conclusions—and I shall perhaps be taught better by the criticisms of my fellow-men, by the disturbances in my actions and the confusion of my feelings. I shall perhaps learn that what I am disavowing not only ‘is’ in me but ‘acts’ out of me as well [1925a, p. 133; italics mine].

It is difficult to conceive of a clearer or more complete refutation of the views which LaPiere attributes to Freud. According to Freud, one is morally responsible even for mere wishes *expressed only in dreams*, and those who think otherwise have not based their position upon psychoanalysis; that one could doubt responsibility for one’s actions had obviously not occurred to Freud.¹³ This is the Freudian ethic, viz., the ethic of Sigmund Freud.

¹³ Behind this discussion is the ancient question of determinism and its relation to responsibility—an age-old problem of philosophical speculation. I have discussed the position in this question which is implicit in classical psychoanalysis in Ch. 17.

It is worth noting that in this matter of responsibility for one’s dreams, the ethic of Sigmund Freud goes beyond the view of St. Augustine. This Church father and moralist, who was also a man of great psychological insight, speaks of our “recapturing the peace of conscience” if, after having succumbed to sinful urges in a dream, we discover upon awakening, much to our relief, that we had not actually carried out *quod tamen in nobis quoquo modo factum esse doleamus*—what we yet deplore as something that had *somehow happened in us* (*Confessiones*, 10:30). Augustine’s expression—“something that had somehow happened in us”—is much weaker than Freud’s straightforward statement: “it is a part of my own being.”

There is a humorous Latin expression used to characterize false etymologies: *lucus a non lucendo*, it is called a meadow (*lucus*) because it does not shine (*non lucet*). “Freudian ethic,” apparently, is such a *lucus a non lucendo*; it is called Freudian ethic because it has no similarity with the ethic of Freud.

All this is not to say that the trends which LaPiere describes do not exist in the world of today. There is a tendency to favor the weak—the less gifted at the expense of the gifted, the lazy at the expense of the industrious, the wasters at the expense of the thrifty, and the irresponsible at the expense of the responsible. In criminology there is a tendency to exonerate the lawbreaker under all circumstances and to blame his behavior on “society,” i.e., on the rest of the citizens who did not break the laws. Many a psychiatrist is opposed to both punishment and deterrence in dealing with the lawbreaker and would allow only for rehabilitation, preferably through psychiatric treatment. This would, in effect, amount to providing at public cost what other, inoffensive, members of the community can only have at considerable sacrifice to themselves.¹⁴ Or, many child psychiatrists claim that all mental and emotional illnesses of children are due to culpable acts of commission or omission on the part of the parents, according to the saying: there are no problem children, only problem parents.

It is all part of a tendency to take all pressure off the weak

¹⁴ Some years ago, I heard of a child in a “progressive” school who, when asked what happened in his school to a child who had been “bad,” replied: “He gets to sit on the teacher’s lap.”



and inferior and thereby, in effect, lay ever greater burdens on the shoulders of the gifted and responsible, on the theory that the former are weak and therefore in need of support, while the latter are strong and therefore capable of carrying, and duty-bound to carry, the load of humanity. This tendency is far less outspoken on the domestic scene than it is on the international one, among the so-called underdeveloped nations.

This emotional climate is probably a reaction to the conditions that prevailed at earlier times. Then the strong had the world at their feet and the weak were left to get along as best they could or to perish; and the lawbreaker found no mercy. But the laudable compassion for the weak and the humble has now often gone to the opposite extreme. "Human beings," as Sir Richard Livingstone (1959) put it, "rarely walk in the center of the road; they reel drunkenly from the ditch on one side to the ditch on the other."

What else may have contributed to this modern trend is a question worthy of the best efforts of serious social scientists. M. Polanyi (1960) speaks of "moral passions overreaching themselves" (p. 1). Perhaps, one of their roots are the teachings of Scripture, taken literally, not moderated by Church and tradition, and deprived through secularization of any supranatural meaning.

Be this as it may, the process has little to do with psychoanalysis. The movement was well under way before Freud was born. J. L. Talmon, the prominent historian of ideas, places the birth of the idea that "frustration is the source of all evil" in the middle of the 18th century. He has devoted himself to the study of the history and the consequences of this belief; so far, two sizable volumes have appeared without his having reached the year of Sigmund Freud's birth.

Freudian thought itself offers no comfort to this philosophy. It considers it a half-truth which, for itself alone, is misleading. It maintains that frustration can do much harm to an immature organism if it overtaxes its carrying capacity at the time, and so may lead to lasting regressions or to an irrevocable withering of the drive; or if it comes as sudden shock, leading to traumatic neurosis. On the other hand, it also maintains that without

frustration there is no development of frustration tolerance just as organisms reared under sterile conditions acquire no immunity. Hence, the psychoanalytic advice to education is not to try to protect the child against frustration but rather to time and dose it correctly, i.e., as I formulated it on another occasion, "to find for each situation the proper balance between satisfaction and frustration, in the light of the general principle that we have to search for the optimal mixture between two equally important but partly conflicting ingredients of healthy development, viz., love and discipline" (1960a, p. 254).

The idea that psychoanalysis is destructive of moral values is, of course, an old one. It is based on the most universal and most stubborn of all misunderstandings of psychoanalysis, viz., the misunderstanding of the concept of repression. The repression of an impulse means that the impulse has become unconscious without thereby losing its power to influence psychic activities; undoing repression means to bring the impulse back to consciousness where its further destiny is decided by a contest of strength between the impulse and other tendencies which are active in the person. Elementary though this is for psychoanalysts, it is little understood outside the psychoanalytic group. There, it is widely believed that repression refers to the obstacles, external or moral, that stand in the way of gratification of an impulse, and that the undoing of repression therefore means the removal of these obstacles and, consequently, the free expression of impulses in action. All this has been explained in psychoanalytic writings innumerable times, but the message does not carry.

There is also the ambiguity of the word "understanding." Psychoanalysis suggests that we should try to understand human affairs and their conditioning before passing judgment on them and before responding to them. But "to understand" means in this context strictly: to grasp the nature, significance, and causes of something; it does not imply what many people seem to take for granted: to exonerate, to condone, and to sympathize with it. Our valuation of human conduct, and our way of dealing with it, will not remain unaffected by such a serious effort at understanding it, but the change does not necessarily, nor even most

frequently, go in the direction that is indicated by the popular saying: *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*.¹⁵

Despite its dissociation from facts—or, perhaps, because of it—LaPiere's doctrine has some of the ingredients of mass appeal. The drawing in stark contrasts of black and white, the view of human events as a struggle between light and darkness, with the former represented by ancestral virtues and the latter by an intruding alien creed; and the picture of the antagonist as at once immeasurably dangerous and yet basically insignificant and easily reduced to impotence once it has been recognized—all this is what people like to believe. So we read in a recent article about the alleged aimlessness of American life by Vice-Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, the prominent naval engineer and strategist, in a magazine of mass circulation, the *Saturday Evening Post*: "The so-called 'Freudian ethic' has led us astray by encouraging us to blame our personal inadequacies on 'society.'" So-called by whom? I have not met this expression except in LaPiere's book—Admiral Rickover seems to have taken his clue from LaPiere.

If we look at both books together, it appears that they attack Freud and psychoanalysis from opposite sides, with opposite arguments. Fromm criticizes Freud because, as he sees it, the latter was deeply rooted in 19th-century bourgeois culture—which to Fromm is something evil and contemptible—and because his psychology appears to Fromm to be an apology of this culture. LaPiere condemns Freud because, as he sees it, Freud has undermined this very culture which he finds very valuable. Fromm sees in Freud an inhibited Victorian, a Puritan, incapable of enjoying himself; LaPiere sees him as subversive of the "Protestant Ethic" and as the sponsor of irresponsible self-seeking and hedonism. Fromm thinks that psychoanalysis was eagerly embraced by people who did not want to make the serious effort of "criticism of their own society and its crippling effects upon man." LaPiere thinks that psychoanalysis preaches the doctrine that "society" is responsible for all frustrations.

¹⁵ There is a widespread view that, in a criminal trial, the psychiatric expert will always tend to exonerate the defendant and so support the efforts of the counsel for the defense. The actual impact of psychoanalytic consideration of questions of criminal responsibility is discussed in Ch. 29.

The two books are therefore likely to find their major resonance in different quarters: Fromm's ideas will delight what Rose Macaulay called the not-so-very intelligentsia; LaPiere's ideas will appeal to people with a fundamentalist bent of mind.

But that does not mean that there could not appear, one of these days, another book that combines the arguments of Fromm with the arguments of LaPiere, without any awareness of the fact that they contradict each other. If such a book should appear, this much is predictable: it will be respectfully reviewed by papers and intellectual magazines and quoted by representative men in all walks of life.



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Selected Papers of Robert Waelder

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