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Review E. Fromm, *Sigmund Freud's Mission*

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Source: *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol. 29 (1960), pp. 252-254.

Fromm has written this book on the assumption that understanding and analyzing the creator of psychoanalysis will throw true light on 'its achievements and defects'. He feels the time has come for an 'objective' biography of Freud. He considers Jones's three volumes to be an idolizing, naïve document by a disciple who could not bear to face negative, undesirable qualities in his master.

In contrast to Jones's biographical method of eliciting Freud's personality from his work and letters, Fromm abuses such material to advance his personal theory about Freud and his mission.

The ten chapters of the book contradict one another. When the facts do not agree and truth cannot be distorted to accord with his theory, Fromm reaches for the unconscious and resorts to speculation and interpretation. By abusing the tools of analysis, he manages in one paragraph to prove that Freud was helpless and overdependent; in the next that he is provokingly authoritarian. He charges him both with passionate love and inability to love.

Fromm's undynamic approach, compounded with 'wild analysis', reveals little about Freud but a great deal about this interpreter. To Fromm, Freud's statement, 'My character is little suited to the role of a protected child. I have always entertained a strong desire to be a strong man myself', is proof of Freud's repressed and unresolved oral dependence on his mother. Freud's relationships with Breuer, Fliess, Adler, Jung, Ferenczi are all dependencies on the mother, displaced to men. Although Freud at one time regarded Jung as his son and intellectual heir, Fromm decides that Jung was a mother image to whom Freud clung and whom he dropped when his dependency needs were frustrated.

Fromm theorizes that Freud had a pathological mother attachment which he not only concealed from the world but from himself. Fromm concedes the discovery of the Oedipus complex as a basic contribution but he treats it as the result of repression and resistance and as Freud's inability to face the overwhelming impact of the strongest drive in man—Fromm's own great 'revelation'—the need to be nursed by 'Mother'.

Throughout the book Freud's theories are interpreted as expressions and rationalizations of his character disorder and personal conflicts. The fact that psychoanalysis developed as an empirical science, based on clinical data, is ignored.

It puzzles Fromm that the discoverer of infantile sexuality did not become a sex maniac, but lived an exemplary life of supreme discipline. He is indignant that Freud, an ardent lover in his



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youth who was tempted to put his love above his career, became a scientist who devoted the largest part of his libidinal life to his work. Fromm considers Freud's concepts of female sexuality insulting to the fair sex, born of the need to devalue women. Fromm quotes Freud's response to the plea of a young American colleague for equality of the sex partners: 'Equality of the partners is a practical impossibility. There must be inequality, and the superiority of the man is the lesser of the two evils.' This is proof to Fromm that Freud expressed the patriarchal prejudices of his time; yet elsewhere he classifies Freud as a rebel.

The last chapters are devoted to 'the quasi-political character of psychoanalysis'. Fromm sees in Freud a frustrated political leader who has subserved his science to tyrannical ambition. He concedes Freud insisted that psychoanalysis is a branch of science and not a *Weltanschauung*, but Fromm 'can only come to the conclusion that this is what Freud consciously believed, and what he wanted to believe, while his wish to have founded a new philosophical, scientific religion was repressed and thus unconscious'. As proof he declares that Freud's ardent wish to protect his work has no counterpart in the history of science.

There are probably two reasons why this book has been so favorably received in some quarters: first, Fromm, like others before him, needs to minimize the significance of the sexual instinct in human development; second, the great man, whose very existence is disquieting, is reduced to the status of a dependent child craving for 'Mother'.