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BOOKS

around the academic cabbage-patch: a book without skill in argument, nor depth of conviction, nor breadth of experience. It is number 12 in a series from the publishers. Maybe series have to be kept going if publishing is to survive. But so careless is the publication that at least seven pairs of pages in this reviewer's copy were practically illegible because of over-inking. But they weren't much missed.

## Aggression

### THE ANATOMY OF HUMAN DESTRUCTIVENESS

By Erich Fromm.  
*Cape. 537 pages. £4.50.*

Erich Fromm has been writing books on human character, society and politics from a psychoanalytic point of view for 40 years and now gives us a major work of argument and reflection on human aggression. Freud's death instinct is now embarrassing and ignored, and his writings on aggression have not been his most illuminating, as the author rightly argues. Lorenz's book on the instinctual basis of aggression is then demolished by Dr Fromm as being inaccurate, being based heavily on analogy from geese to men, and as being idolatrous of evolution and demeaning of

humanity. Lorenz is said to be poor because he appeals to people who find it more comfortable to believe that our aggression is biological rather than social and political. Both Freud and Lorenz thought that aggression needed an outlet, although the general feeling of Freud seems to be sceptical pessimism, and that of Lorenz superficial optimism. Next the up-to-date and sophisticated version of behaviourism promoted by Skinner is criticised and dismissed (this has been done before) and then Dr Fromm can proceed to his own discussion.

His message is surely a wise one, although it is not clearly argued, and considerable effort and moving to and fro among the chapters is needed to extract it from a book which is shapeless in its total form and padded with unoriginal but long biographical accounts of Himmler and Hitler.

Destructiveness and cruelty are said to be not instinctive in the biological sense but "passions rooted in the total existence of men". Some defensive fighting is self-preservative and may be a programmed response, but this is much less so in humans than in animals. We are more influenced by society, we are aware of our awesome responsibility, and we are, as Sartre said, "condemned to be free to choose". So sadism, the

lust to control people and achieve some power and certainty that way, is "one of the answers to the problem of being born human when better ones are not attainable". Or, pithily, "man's humanity makes him so inhuman". This sounds pessimistic, but the author emphasises that he finds reasons for hope.

He is a radical humanist critic of present society and believes that widespread malignant aggression can be reduced and in fact made to disappear, except as an individual sickness, but only when exploitative control of any class, sex or minority group has been done away with. So we can build a peaceful society. We do not have to change our style of toilet training. Social engineering is what is needed.

## Benefits of illness

### CREATIVE MALADY

By George Pickering.  
*Allen and Unwin. 327 pages £5.25.*

More than half of this book by a former regius professor of medicine at Oxford, and the better half, is devoted to a fresh account of the lives and work of Charles Darwin and Florence Nightingale and to a reinterpretation of their