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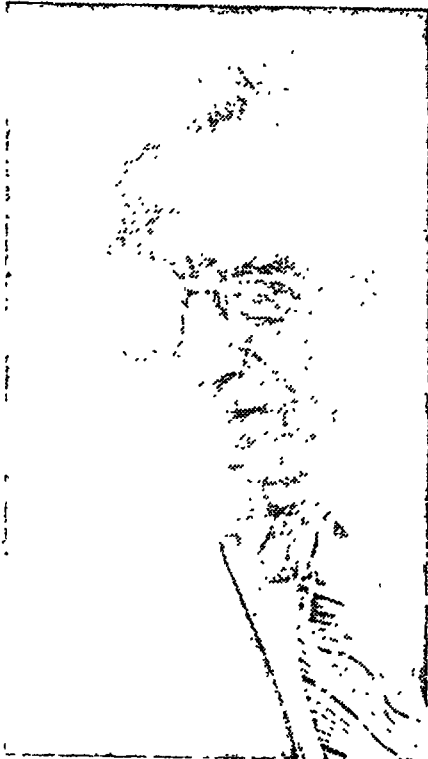
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Erich Fromm: a middle ground
for man's evil

Malignant aggression not inborn



THE ANATOMY OF HUMAN
DESTRUCTIVENESS. By Er-
ich Fromm. Holt Rinehart and
Winston. \$10.95.

By JOHN BARKHAM

Is Man inherently aggressive, with destructiveness in his genes, as Nobel laureate Karl Lorenz would have us believe? Or is he conditioned to aggressiveness by his environment and by social influences, as suggested by B.F. Skinner? Whatever the answer, there's no denying that Man is the only species which destroys its own kind in mass killings.

So far the definitive answer to this crucial conundrum is and remains elusive. But the scores of biologists, analysts, animal psychologists, anthropologists, and even paleontologists quoted by Erich Fromm in this, probably the most important of his books, give some notion of the complexity of the problem.

Fromm takes a position somewhere between Lorenz and Skinner. To begin with, he refuses to regard man as inherently aggressive. Man, he concedes, possesses an innate but harmless aggressiveness directed to survival, which he shares with his animal ancestors. Fromm calls this **BENIGN** aggression. **MALIGNANT** aggression is not performed out of necessity or for biological reasons. It is an acquired human characteristic and not instinctive.

Here Fromm makes an intriguing point. Primitive so-

cieties were most likely not the brutal, destructive, and cruel prototype of man the killer who evolved later. These early groups were matriarchal, whereas man's full measure of destructiveness was reached in patriarchal societies. One is tempted to believe that if women had headed the governments in-

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involved in the two world wars, they might never have occurred. (This, of course, is pure conjecture. It should be noted parenthetically that in the two most recent wars — India-Pakistan and the Middle East — women leaders were involved.)

Necrophilia base

Fromm also parts company with Freud in his view that sexuality is the basis for most human passions. Instead he substitutes necrophilia (a love for the dead, for killing), and as exemplars he gives us Stalin, Hitler, and Himmler, through whom Hitler had his mass killings performed. Fromm's detailed analyses of these three men are fascinating studies in psychohistory.

Stalin's behavior, Fromm argues, is a textbook example of physical, nonsexual

sadism. Stalin's behavior demonstrated the wish to show people that he had absolute power and control over them, Fromm says.

By his word he could kill them, have them tortured, have them rescued again. He had the power of God over life and death.

In reaching his conclusion that man is not genetically aggressive but acquires a **MALIGNANT** aggression, Fromm has what seems to me a logical and persuasive answer to a problem which grows more perilous and insistent with each generation. He quotes figures to show that in the 17th Century there were 239 battles; in the 18th, 781; in the 19th, 651; and in the 20th, 892 up to 1940. Since then the number has appreciably increased. Obviously Man's inherited characteristics as aggressor are not responsible for this startling increase but rather Man's acquired aggressiveness backed by new technology.

Psychiatric and or psychological expositions normally are enunciated in a professional battlegab that the general reader finds confusing and intimidating. I can report that "The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness" is not only a landmark book but one written in English comprehensible to any intelligent reader.

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