
OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY by Stanley Milgram. Harper & Row. 1974. $10.00

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THE theory of an unconditioned ("instinctive") human disposition to individual and group hostile lethal "aggression" has long since recognized that Freud's hydraulic analogy is not helpful. Pressure does not seem to be released by the unperiodic and unnecessary fights and wars which have characterized human experience. In disposing of the pressure theory, Erich Fromm at first appears to argue that he thus dispenses with the unconditioned propensity theory. It is not until well along in his book (page 187) that he makes it clear what seems a considerable concession, at least, to that theory.

Dr. Fromm persists in an error about the meaning of the theory which is opposite to one element of Freud's own doctrine. The unconditioned is identified with the uncontrollable, and the theory is thought to be one of despair for peace. But sexual dispositions are unconditioned, and it is characteristic of Freud's views that he thought they could be — not eliminated — but controlled. Much of his writing, teaching, and therapeutic practice dealt with their control. Common observation confirms Freud's views to this extent. Family planning, if not population control, is a fact of life.

Finally, in considering the most troublesome objection to an unconditioned propensity theory, Dr. Fromm makes a further questionable contribution to his own theory. The physiology of sex is obvious, but the physiology and biochemistry of hostile lethal ag- tion and its treatment of the familiar alternative to the unconditioned propensity theory, that is the "environmental" theory, which Dr. Fromm on the whole favors. He is rather severe on the believers in unconditioned propensity theories for their supposed pessimism, and probative for environmentalists on the ground that by preserving hope they save us from possibly fatal hopelessness. But in the end his summary makes their hopes depend on the possibility of restoring the condition of mankind as of six thousand years ago, before the corrupting influences of civilization had begun to operate. (Page 217, compare page 356.)

The interactions of nature and nurture, of hereditary and environmental factors, of the unconditioned and the conditioned, are such that any ideal of the "excluded middle" (if it is an ideal) is here unattainable, and the debate on this ground that by preserving hope they save us from possibly fatal hopelessness.

The debate, if one does not allow it to become a preoccupation, does however have some interesting aspects. The
writes. "We believed in the message of Caryl virtually genuflected to Montionaries bringing news of some dis sions, but it was a price set by a served the comeuppance they were sure the secular saints changed. Teen-age to get."

Glamour and Catholic piety blended to story on her triumphal return to some murky Gothic yesterday under God, a universe with order, and a re

sence of style." For her, that style was of a relationship between man and endures, she writes, in "an awareness of human beings have to a time template the church's "instinctive sense of style." Her awareness of that role of a fellow creatures, all tied up for

Why did Caryl's Catholicism sur

Some of her contemporaries were not so lucky. "There were two kinds of kids in school," an old classmate tells her in "fuzzies" — the girls around the glamour of the excitement that brings the prospect of new horizons 

for the ordinary reader brought into focus for the logical richness of such devotions as the Rosary.
culture pattern anthropologists' search for a warless Eden appears to have been abandoned. The warless primitive groups are either deluded, or withdrawn to what would be for others sub-marginal lands and faced by obvious overwhelming odds of fighting force, or both. Nineteenth century Switzerland and Scandinavia have been protected by a balance of power and faced with overwhelming odds.

Apart from such cases, warfare of some degree has been universal. We may however contrast the relatively mild militarism of the Pueblos with the habits of Apache, Plains Indians, Inquisition, and other Inland man, and the pacifism of isolated pygmies with the wars of other Africans, and we may notice the "mildless" of wars in parts of Australia. Dr. Fromm speaks at times as though "mild" wars were as harmless as other games, but he does remind us of the possibility of going back six thousand years, to some ideal part of the world to recapture a supposed relative innocence.

Dealing more narrowly with his own field of psychotherapy, Dr. Fromm has some particularly interesting observations. He does not sufficiently inform us of his relationships to the observations of others. Durbin and Bawley are mentioned, but not Dr. R. W. West, whose Conscience and Society can be compared briefly. Dr. Dr. Koestler approaches the psychosocial problems which concern Dr. Fromm with an emphasis different from his. Dr. Kestler is dealing in an interesting and persuasive view in which narcissism, healthy and unhealthy, plays a major part. Dr. West relates obsessional characteristics to the war-making tendencies of the species. In the final reflective chapter of Remembrance of Things Past, Fromm included a perceptive passage on paranoia, in looking for the face of his neighbor the God who has disappeared.

These observations remind us that in Dr. Fromm's own general scheme of things, there are alternative or supplementary emphases which require attention. His own emphasis, as in one of his earlier books, is on sadism and necrophilia. Sadism is, for Dr. Fromm, an expression of satisfaction in causing pain as a manifestation of domination or power. Stalin in his principal example. Necrophilia is love of the dead, or death. Himmler is a German example of sadism. Hitler is Dr. Fromm's principal example of necrophilia. It has been objected to his treatment of Hitler that his account of childhood and youthful influences on Hitler is not sufficient to explain, or indeed to indicate, the effects of early factors in experience. Dr. Fromm, however, notices this point himself, and his response is a general doubt whether early factors have not been overemphasized in psychanalytical theory, in comparison with later factors. Knowledge of early factors is systematic, and Dr. Fromm notices some of them in his study of Hitler. But
he observes that Hitler's parents, for example, were not markedly exceptional, and his childhood, while it included reactions related to his later development, was not emotionally disturbed. Dr. Fromm seems to conclude that Hitler's later days in the fighting of the first World War, his ensuing failure as an artist and his resulting poverty, and his reactions to the humiliation of Germany, included factors which made him the supreme example of necrophilia.

It must be said that Dr. Fromm has much more honestly and less dramatically expressed phenomena which he considers necrophilic. Books, architecture, for example the Parthenon, and paintings, for example Mona Lisa, are not living, and may be called "dead," as are automobiles. Dr. Fromm does not notice what are conventionally called artistic objects, but he does notice the automobile. He thinks Americans may love their automobiles more than their wives. This to him is an expression of necrophilia, which must be excoriated, before we take our place, as he says we may (page 398; but compare page 217) as the most likely savors of civilization now in view. We would apparently be better off if we loved not automobiles, but horses as in Kentucky, or cows as in Wisconsin, New York, and Texas, or hogs as in Iowa.

There is in fact a quintet set of themes running through the book, and the reader is likely to be put off unless he realizes this at the start. It may be that Dr. Fromm is consciously or almost consciously playing with paradox. In any event the quintet or paradoxical features of the book should not obscure its other virtues: profound and wide ranging wisdom and scholarship, a store of practically useful insights, a most likely saviors of civilization now in view. We would apparently be better off if we loved not automobiles, but horses as in Kentucky, or cows as in Wisconsin, New York, and Texas, or hogs as in Iowa.

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