



Fromm's Reception Among Psychologists and Psychiatrists

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In the following pages, I evaluate the published responses of psychologists and psychiatrists who attempted a synoptic overview and critique of Fromm's work. Certain stylistic peculiarities of this chapter are dictated by the nature of the material itself. For example, I have not tracked down every fugitive reference to Fromm in the work of his better known contemporaries, unless they were part of an overall appraisal of his work. If the sample we examine here is representative, the further back we go, the more thoughtful and substantive Fromm's appraisers tend to be, and the more likely it is that they knew Fromm personally. Judging from the flurry of responses to Fromm's work in the 1940's and 50's, the personal equation is key to assessing Fromm's reception in psychology and the mental health professions. Consequently, if someone had a personal association with Fromm, or if the same person(s) made more than one installment over the course of time, I have noted these facts in the interests of illuminating whatever intellectual relationship or exchange may have obtained between them. Otherwise, the various responses to Fromm's work follow in more or less chronological sequence.

1. Otto Fenichel

Otto Fenichel knew Fromm from his years at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute. Fromm, like Reich, was a frequent participant in Fenichel's *Kinderseminar*, an informal gathering of left

leaning analytic trainees and staff (Jacoby, 1983, p. 67). Thus Fenichel's published responses to Fromm's work follow on several years of informal exchanges and private correspondence (ibid., pp. 107-110). For example, two years after Reich's vituperative „critique“ of Fromm in 1934 (Reich, 1934) - to which Fromm did not respond publicly - Fenichel reproached Fromm for distancing himself from Reich, and minimizing his pioneering contributions. Fromm explained his reluctance to cite Reich „on personal as well as factual grounds“. He found Reich's „pathological self-love and arrogance“ insufferable, and believed that Reich did not really understand Marx (Jacoby, 1983, p. 109). Evidently, Fenichel sympathized with Fromm at that time.

However, Fenichel did *not* sympathize with the direction Fromm's work took after 1935. In a review of *Escape From Freedom* in *The Psychoanalytic Review* (1944, vol. XXXI), Fenichel objected that „instead of studying the interrelations of erogenous zones and object relationships, they (Fromm and Kardiner) think statically, and are of the opinion that the insight into the role of object relationships contradicts the importance of erogenous zones (Fenichel, 1944, p. 150, cited in Jacoby, 1975, p. 96).“

Judging from this comment, Fenichel was familiar with Fromm's early papers. He perceived *Escape From Freedom* (Fromm, 1941a) as an extension of Fromm's earlier work, and criticized it accordingly. And rightly so. Since 1934, Fromm had questioned whether the severity of clinical psychopathology can be gauged by situ-



ating a symptom, conflict or character trait at some hypothetical point along an ostensibly pre-programmed ontogenetic sequence - an assumption that is axiomatic to orthodox theorizing. Nowadays, of course, the reservations that gave rise to Fromm's misgivings, and Fenichel's harsh rejoinders, have become quite respectable, and are openly endorsed in the analytic mainstream (e.g. Kernberg, 1980, pp. 3-4). Still, Fenichel's charge that Fromm's discussion of drives such as a drive to work or to „enjoy nature's beauty“ are „very abstract, and in comparison with Freud's...analysis of the instinctual attitude, very vague“ (Fenichel, in Jacoby, 1975, p. 96), was perfectly just. In 1944, when the review appeared, Fromm had not yet articulated his philosophical anthropology, or his concept of existential needs. Even if he had, however, Fenichel would not have been satisfied. As Fenichel himself said, in response to Karen Horney's work: „My conviction...is that the value of psychoanalysis as a natural scientific psychology is rooted in its being an instinctivistic and genetic psychology“ (cited in Jacoby, 1975 p. 97). Fenichel obviously had a great deal invested in the idea of psychoanalysis as a „natural scientific psychology“. But he failed to acknowledge how tenuous the Lamarckian underpinnings of Freud's psychobiology actually was, and was oblivious to its ideological sub-text. Fromm, for all his faults, was not.

2. Patrick Mullahy

Mullahy's book, *Oedipus: Myth & Complex*, published in 1948, was the first attempt to present a synoptic overview of the various schools within psychoanalysis in terms of their own inner logic and objective merits without indulging in sectarian rancour or name-calling. Like Fromm, Mullahy taught at the William Alanson White Institute, and it is therefore no accident that Fromm wrote the introduction to this historic volume. As Mullahy relates in the preface, Fromm and he initially intended to collaborate on the book. When that proved impossible, Fromm gave Mullahy access to an unpublished manuscript on Bachofen and the Oedipus myth to aid its composition. Consequently, no doubt,

Mullahy's summary of Fromm's views was crisp, incisive and sympathetic, and notable for an illuminating discussion of Bachofen - the best in the literature, bar none.¹

Mullahy's training in psychology and philosophy enabled him to discern dimensions in Jung, Rank and Fromm that had hitherto been buried or dismissed by sectarian canards from orthodox quarters. While this open-mindedness operated to the benefit of the dissident fringe - and to the benefit of Mullahy's readership - the chief beneficiary of Mullahy's broad scholarship was probably Fromm himself. In his concluding remarks, Mullahy noted: „Fromm brings to his work a wide knowledge of sociology, anthropology and history. For this reason, if not for others, his writings have a profundity which those of most psychoanalysts lack. Fromm does not suffer the illusion that all psychological knowledge began with Freud - or with Fromm. An Aristotle, a Spinoza, a Meister Eckhardt, a Kafka may not have known much about the so called libido, but they knew a great deal more about other matters - perhaps ultimately much more important matters - concerning what has traditionally been called man's spirit.“ (Mullahy, 1948, p. 331.)

Judging from these remarks, there was something about Fromm's spirituality and ethical orientation that Mullahy found deeply appealing. This registers in the mildness of his criticism. Nevertheless, according to Mullahy, Fromm made insufficient allowance for the role of science and technology in the development of modern capitalism, treating it, apparently, as part and parcel of the economic sphere, rather than a causal force in its own right (ibid., p. 332). Moreover, in Mullahy's estimation, Fromm was not sufficiently an „interactionist“ in his description of social and psychological processes. Finally, Mullahy voiced what would nowadays be termed a „cognitive“ or a „cognitive-behaviorist“ objection to Fromm's theory of character; one anticipated in Sullivanian theory. Like most analysts, said Mullahy, Fromm took

¹ To the best of my knowledge, the manuscript Mullahy referred to (Mullahy, 1948, p. xvi), never appeared in print. An abbreviated version may have appeared as chapter 7, section 1 of *The Forgotten Language* (Fromm, 1951a).



the patient's emotional attitude to be „primary“, and regarded ideas, judgements, and so on, as derivative manifestations of underlying emotional dispositions. (See, e.g. Fromm, 1961a, pp. 3-4). Mullahy, to the contrary, noted that ideas, in turn, affect one's emotional dispositions, and that „ideas and judgements, for example, instead of being a result of character, are as efficacious in the constitution of character as anything else“ (ibid., p. 333).

Mullahy's criticism reflects Sullivan's influence. But it is interesting to historians of psychology because it harkens back to a rationalistic theory of the relationship between thought and affect that dates back to Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, in which affects are construed as false or mistaken ideas, or as the passions engendered by them. J. F. Herbart inherited this rationalistic bias from Christian Wolff, Leibniz's pupil and expositor, and attempted to explain mental illness by the presence of unconscious ideas that distort our conscious apprehension of reality.

Freud was indebted to Herbart for his theory of repression, and his insistence that all psychic activity is determined by lawful interactions among hypothetical quantities of mental energy (Ricoeur, 1970). But following the Romantics, and most notably, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Freud reversed the terms of the equation by insisting on the primacy of affect, suggesting that ideas merely express unconscious volitions and phantasies that are adapted in varying degrees to existential actualities. Fromm's experience of human behavior during World War I had already inclined him toward the Romantic position, and so he kept faith with Freud in this respect, without trying to disentangle or resolve these theoretical antinomies, or put them in historical perspective.

Nowadays, the debate about the primacy of affect or cognition continues. Among cognitive theorists, in particular, classical rationalism still has several respected representatives, although many theorists now emphasize that affect and cognition operate simultaneously in complex reciprocal interactions, with neither taking precedence (e.g. Greenberg & Safran, 1984; Safran & Greenberg, 1987). Ernst Schachtel, who devoted a great deal of explicit reflec-

tion to this subject, came to more or less the same conclusion (Schachtel, 1959). The fact that Fromm neglected this issue, which is central to psychological theorizing, reflects an exclusive preoccupation with the ethical side of philosophy, and a relative disinterest in the relationship between affect and cognition, the mind-body problem, and the overarching problems and perplexities of Western metaphysics (Funk, 1982, pp. 46-47). Had Mullahy pressed his advantage, he would have concluded that Fromm's philosophical learning, though deep, put a selective emphasis on ethics, and was simply not up to transposing many problems in philosophy into psychoanalytic idiom.

3. Clara Thompson

Unlike Mullahy, Clara Thompson was not a psychologist or philosopher. Like Reich, Fenichel, and most psychoanalysts at the time, she was a psychiatrist. Her book *Psychoanalysis: Evolution & Development* was unusual in that it discussed the ideas Jung and Rank, and rehabilitated two members of Freud's „loyal opposition“ - Groddeck and Ferenczi (Thompson, 1950). While this was unusual, it is scarcely surprising, since Thompson studied with Ferenczi and Fromm, who were both admirers of Groddeck. Like Mullahy, Thompson was also close to Sullivan, and taught at the William Alanson White. Her exposition of Fromm was more schematic than Mullahy's with respect to personality theory, but more concrete on clinical topics like character defenses and anxiety, noting, for example, that in emphasizing respect for the patient, Fromm had much in common with Jung and Rank (ibid., p. 204). Still, as a cautionary note, she added:

„...Freud has emphasized that the analyst must be free from any tendency to condemn the patient, that he must not have any emotional stake in what kind of person the patient becomes. Fromm agrees with this but points out that the analyst's convictions about what is good for man must play some part in his goal of therapy. He would use value judgements in choosing



patients for treatment in the first place. A marked insincerity of attitude in a prospective patient, for instance, would point to the likelihood of unsuccessful therapy. There are certain dangers in this approach of Fromm's. A note of moral condemnation can easily slip in, and one may find oneself sitting in judgement on the patient, although I'm sure Fromm's attitude is far from this." (Thompson, 1950, pp. 210-211.)

Judging from the testimony of Dr. Michael MacCoby and Dr. Herbert Spiegel, what Thompson described as an incipient danger was in fact the chief shortcoming of Fromm's therapeutic posture. Perhaps Thompson's fondness for Fromm, and her respect for his skills as a clinician made her reluctant to acknowledge this in public. Then again, perhaps this characteristic weakness was not in evidence at the time she wrote. (More on this, below). Thompson's final remarks on Fromm and Sullivan (Thompson, 1964, chapter 11) are a transparent attempt to mediate and downplay what were by now strong personal and theoretical differences between Fromm, Sullivan and their respective followings by emphasizing their essential complementarity. This makes stimulating reading, substantively speaking. But in a deeper sense, it reflects Thompson's conciliatory temperament and gifts, and her strategic posture towards intramural divisions at the William Alanson White.²

4. Rollo May

Rollo May's book *The Meaning of Anxiety* appeared in 1950 - the same year as Thompson's *Psychoanalysis: Evolution & Development* - and was followed by *Man's Search For Himself*, in 1953. Though never a close friend of Fromm's, May was his analysand, and among the few psychologists to welcome Fromm's extensive scholarship and rigorous eclecticism without impugning his clinical credentials. This fact alone is quite remarkable. After all, Fromm's insistence that

² For a more recent - and in some respects, more penetrating - analysis of the relationship between Fromm and Sullivan theoretically, see Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983.

psychological phenomena be addressed in historical context - that problems and processes studied in economics, anthropology, sociology, theology and ethics are not merely relevant, but *integral* to a properly psychological understanding - would have struck a responsive chord in Wundt, Dilthey, or in Max or Alfred Weber. But this outlook is anathema to those committed to a rigid division of labor between psychology and other disciplines, and has contributed enormously to the widespread perception of Fromm as a dilettante or eccentric. By commending Fromm for the attributes that damned him in the eyes of his colleagues, May was indirectly passing judgement on many of Fromm's detractors; past, present and future.

However, the honey-moon was shortlived. John Kerr recalls Dr. Anna Gourevitch, Fromm's close friend, remarking on her dislike for May.³ According to Gourevitch, May cribbed the material for *Man's Search For Meaning*, his second book, directly from his analysis with Fromm, and while this in fact have been Gourevitch's private assessment, the likelihood is that she shared it with Fromm. Another factor in their estrangement was that as May's involvement with existential and humanistic psychology in America increased, he became more anti-Freudian. Fromm, who was a forthright critic of the psychoanalytic movement, had nevertheless not relinquished his Freud piety, so that his sharpest criticism alternated predictably with celebrations of Freud's genius. The price Fromm paid for his loyalty to Freud was that as humanistic and existential psychology burgeoned in America, their leading spokesmen - including May - increasingly ignored him.

From its inception, humanistic psychology in America declared psychoanalysis and behaviorism as its two chief enemies, calling itself „the Third Force“ in psychology (Fuller, 1986, chapter 7). Though Fromm (among others) was cited as a precursor to the movement in a manifesto drafted in 1961 by Anthony Sutich (*ibid.*, p. 151), he evidently refused the embrace. In 1963, in an inaugural address for the new building housing the psychoanalytic wing of the Autonomous University of Mexico City (reprinted as Fromm,

³ Personal communication with the author.



1975), Fromm also predicted the coming of a „third force“ in psychology, psychiatry and psychoanalysis. However, Fromm *failed to cite a single American psychologist*, or to address the widespread perception among psychologists at that time that psychoanalysis is inimical to humanism. Indeed, Fromm argued that, despite its „instinctivist“ limitations, Freudian theory is rooted in the same soil as Renaissance humanism, and must be renewed and transformed, not discarded. By adopting this position, Fromm refused to engage in dialogue with American humanistic psychology, though he had ample opportunity in the years that followed.⁴

In light of this circumstance, it is no wonder that May's references to Fromm dwindle after the late 1950's, becoming less flattering with the passage of time. In *Power & Innocence*, for example, May paused to snipe at Reich and Fromm for oversimplifying the relationship between „the rebel“ and society.

„Contemporary writers all the way from Reich to Fromm speak indignantly of society, venting their irritation with such words as 'bureaucratic', 'juggernaut', 'supertech-nocratic', implying all the while that it is society's fault that we are the way we are. On one hand, this arises from a utopianism - the expectation that when we develop a society which trains us rightly, we'll all be in fine shape. On the other hand, it is like a child wheedling his parents because they aren't taller or in some other way different from what they ought to be. All of which they cannot be expected to be... The rebel is a split personality in that he realizes his society nursed him, met his needs, gave him security to develop his potentialities; yet he smarts under its constraints and finds it stifling.“ (May, 1972, p. 227.)

It is interesting to note that these remarks, which affect a tone of earthy common-sense, describe Fromm as a „writer“, rather than a psychoanalyst or social theorist, and compare him to a spoiled, unreasonable child - which, in truth, he

⁴ For more on this point, see the section on Fuller and Stone below.

was, once upon a time. However, the phrase „all the way from Reich to Fromm“ hints at a breadth of perspective that is specious, since the two are closely allied. More to the point, there are no quotes from Fromm's own psychology of rebellion, which don't accord well with May's attributions. Judging from the *ad hominem* character of the critique, and in view of other circumstances, the charge that Fromm did not really understand „the rebel“ sounds suspiciously autobiographical.

In fairness to May, I suppose, whatever interpersonal dynamics obtained here were complicated by the ideological warfare between Freudians and „humanists“ in general. As the battle progressed, Fromm was stranded on the sidelines. He felt, no doubt, like a voice in the wilderness, with no allies or interlocutors in either camp. But he also thrived in his prophetic, outsider status. Perhaps he preferred being ignored to the indignity of debating people he perceived as bombastic, posturing illiterates who did not understand Freud or humanism deeply.⁵

5. G. S. Brett & R. S. Peters

The abridged, one volume edition of *Brett's History of Psychology*, edited by R. S. Peters, appeared in 1953. Brett's classic, three volume effort appeared in 1921, long before Fromm, but the new edition contained a concluding chapter written by Peters in collaboration with various colleagues. Consequently, it is hard to know precisely whose opinion is cited here. The reference to Fromm is perfunctory, but noteworthy, in that it welcomes the kind of Marx-Freud synthesis heralded by *Escape From Freedom* - entitled *Fear of Freedom* in Britain. I quote in full:

„A 'Neo-Freudian' who has suggested that

⁵ A recent contribution to existential and humanist psychology, entitled *Cognition and Affect: A Developmental Psychology of the Individual*, by Laurence Stone, Ph.D. (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1986) claims that Fromm was closer to humanism and existentialism than to psychoanalysis. Though Dr. Stone's references to Fromm reflect sympathy for Fromm's ideas, this is one facet of Fromm he has grasped somewhat imperfectly.



psycho-analysis should have a social rather than a biological orientation is Fromm. In his *Fear of Freedom* (1942), for instance, he attempted to show the interaction between the psychological and sociological factors and to supplement the psycho-analytic interpretation of certain political and religious attitudes by a sociological theory of the economic determinants of social change taken from writers like Marx and Tawney. This attempt to work out the interrelation of the insights of Marx and Freud is most suggestive and welcome after the oversimplified theories of both. It is also characteristic of the twentieth-century trend away from the tendency to interpret social phenomena in exclusively psychological terms.“ (Brett, 1953, p. 715.)

This brief characterization of *Escape From Freedom* is followed by a somewhat lengthier description of Kardiner's theory of „basic personality structure“, and by the following caveat:

„These examples are sufficient to show the way in which social science is making its influence felt on psychoanalysis. It is only fair to Freud, however, to say that he was well aware of the differences between cultures and that his great importance lay in demonstrating the modification of instinctive drives when they came up against normative pressures. No man was more conscious of the common saying that all psychology is social psychology... Freud started off with a predominantly biological orientation. But he came to see more and more the infinite plasticity of human beings and the determining influence of their social relationships.“ (Ibid., pp. 715-716.)

Clearly, the author of these passages did not read Fromm's German language publications - notably „The Dogma of Christ“ (Fromm, 1930a) and „The Method and Function of An Analytic Social Psychology“ (Fromm, 1932a). If he had, he would have known that Kardiner's idea of a „basic personality structure“ is pre-figured there. Kardiner's idea of the „basic personality“ did not appear till 1939, in *The Individual & His So-*

ciety, and the fact that Fromm's earlier work was not mentioned at this juncture suggests that Peters et. al. were simply ignorant of it. While regrettable, perhaps, this is scarcely surprising. *Escape From Freedom* (Fromm, 1941a) first brought Fromm to an English speaking public, and with very few exceptions, Fromm's English speaking evaluators often begin here.

6. Ruth Monroe

Still, Brett - or rather, Peters et. al. - was hardly the only one to read Fromm this way. Echoing Fenichel and Peters before her, Ruth Monroe, psychologist, and author of *Schools of Psychoanalytic Thought* (1955) spoke for many people when she reflected on Fromm's tendency to circumvent this issue:

„I state the argument ad absurdum, but I am not very much impressed by casual acknowledgement of bodily needs as 'obvious but psychologically unimportant'. What does the infant know beyond the bodily needs? On what other basis does he learn than by elaboration and correction of what he already 'knows'? Can we say, with Fromm, that the infant has biological needs, and so does the adult, but that human needs start where the biological needs leave off? This is true enough, but specifically human needs originate in infancy when the child *who wants to move his bowels* is already in human relationship with his parents, so that his handling of his anal impulses is 'humanized' from the beginning...“ (Monroe, 1955, p. 418.)

„One may criticize the libido theory of Freud as neglecting half or more than half the story; one may feel that the actual stages of development in these systems have not been perfectly delineated... Nevertheless...it seems to me quite simply wrong to make a positive point of ignoring the sexual systems as factors in the development of the human psyche. Any sensitive, unbiased study of the young child prior to gross cultural intervention shows



spontaneous concern with 'sexual' areas - oral, anal and genital." (Ibid., p. 419.)

Still, despite sagacious criticism along Freudian lines, Munroe's response to Fromm was positive. She acknowledged that the inescapable certainty of one's own death poses an existential problem. And like Fromm, she distinguished the class of „existential problems“ from the manifold social and historical dichotomies which, in Fromm's estimation, are capable of transcendence within human history (e.g. poverty, war), and without dismissing him as hopelessly utopian (ibid., pp. 352-353).

Furthermore, Munroe grasped the role which the concepts of individuation and the need for relatedness to others play in Fromm's system, and showed a keen appreciation for his analysis of Nazi psychology (ibid., 390). She gave qualified endorsement to Fromm's notion of the „marketing“ orientation, which she recognized as Fromm's distinctive contribution, with no analogue in Freud's ontogenetic schema, and by implication, no specific anchor in our somatic organization (ibid., pp. 393-394). However, like David Riesman, Munroe argued that while the marketing orientation is endemic to contemporary American life, Fromm overlooked positive changes in social interaction that accrued with the demise of old-fashioned patriarchal authority (Munroe, pp. 475-476).

Oddly enough, however, the distinctive nature of Fromm's clinical contribution is not apparent in Munroe's synopsis, and Fromm contributed to this failing. Munroe devoted an entire chapter of her book to the concepts of pathology and treatment among Adler, Horney, Sullivan and Fromm. She showed insight and sensitivity to the differences of her various subjects on personality dynamics and other topics. But when it came to Fromm's views of the treatment situation, she had little to say. In response to this curious circumstance, Munroe noted that „in a personal communication, Fromm remarks that his position on these matters is much closer to Freud's than to Horney's. Since he has not written much about treatment procedures as such, I shall not try to elaborate“ (ibid., p. 518).

Furthermore, according to Munroe,

„Fromm himself does not intend that his philosophical analysis be used directly in psychoanalysis. I dwell on this because enthusiastic lay readers of his books and critical psychoanalytic colleagues often assume a much more immediate connection between theory and practice than is at all justified. Fromm's special contribution does not lie in the area of refined analysis of the individual. Here, like any good practicing psychoanalyst, he uses the contributions of other people and would himself consider direct application of his philosophical orientation to treatment of the individual as a travesty upon psychoanalysis.“ (Ibid., 474.)

The problem with the preceding is that it is not clear from the context whether what Munroe says about Fromm's attitude towards his ideas in the clinical context is based on his written or spoken communications, or whether the suggestion that philosophical formulations have little relevance in his clinical orientation is a gratuitous assertion designed to 1) defend Fromm from harping critics or 2) to defend an *image of Fromm existing in the author's mind* that she felt constrained to defend for unknown reasons. If Munroe's attributions stem from a personal avowal of Fromm's, then Fromm contributed *directly* to the widespread perception of himself as having nothing distinctive to say about treatment. On the other hand, if these were gratuitous assertions on Munroe's part - however well intended - they illustrate how Fromm's reticence about treatment issues in the public domain prompted people to imagine either that 1) he *did* use these ideas in treatment, or 2) that he *did not*, and further, that 3) either scenario is equally conceivable in the absence of explicit statements to the contrary.

Dr. Benjamin Wolstein, a psychologist training with Fromm at the time, relates that Fromm endorsed a return to „classical technique“ (circa 1915-1917) to his trainees at the White in 1955, which suggests that Fromm's response to Munroe reflects how Fromm saw *his own* conduct as a clinician (Wolstein, 1981, p. 484). But clinicians who worked with Fromm *after* 1955 thought otherwise. Dr. Michael Maccoby, Dr. Marianne Eckardt, Dr. Herbert Spiegel and Dr. Maurice Green all remember Fromm's penchant for moralizing intruding on the clinical situation on



various occasions.

Wolstein observed that Fromm's long promised book on technique, or fragments thereof, might clarify matters somewhat. But sadly, it never materialized. Even if it did, we would merely have Fromm's *views* on treatment; not a clear reading on what his practical conduct of an analysis was like. In the absence of a clear cut answer, it seems plausible to suppose that Fromm himself was unclear on this issue, but that before 1955, saw himself practicing in a (more or less) orthodox mold, notwithstanding his critique of „neutrality“ (Fromm, 1935a).

7. Hall & Lindzey

Hall and Lindzey's first appraisal of Fromm appeared in an article entitled „Psychoanalytic Theory and the Social Sciences“ in 1954. At this particular juncture, Hall and Lindzey described Fromm as being „more influenced than influencing“ on the American scene, and were ignorant of Fromm's early methodological papers - an omission which, to all appearances, they never made good. Hall and Lindzey claimed to base their evaluation on an extensive survey on textbooks in social psychology that were current at the time. My own research prompted me to review four textbooks, namely, *Theory and Problems of Social Psychology* (Krech & Crutchfield, 1948), *An Outline of Social Psychology* (Sherif, 1948) and *Social Psychology* (Asch, 1952). Here Fromm, if cited at all, is given only the most perfunctory references. In *An Outline of Social Psychology* (Sherif, 1948), for example, Fromm's discussion of changes in social character from feudalism through the modern period in *Escape From Freedom* were briefly paraphrased in connection with the effects of technology on collective behavior. But even the revised edition (Sherif & Sherif, 1956, pp. 712-713) did not contain any reference to *contemporary* or post-War society and the „marketing character“, though Fromm's views on the subject had been in print by now for several years. This apparent willingness to truncate Fromm's evolving reflections on the effects of technology on character suggests strongly that after *Escape From Freedom*,

Fromm was ignored by social psychologists. Apparently, Hall and Lindzey's cautionary note about the derivative character of Fromm's social psychology reflected the emerging consensus within the field.

Theories of Personality, by Calvin Hall and Gardner Lindzey, published in 1957, was advertised as „the first objective and comprehensive review of the major theories of personality“, and was addressed to students of personality theory, rather than social psychology. Having gone through several editions, it is still used extensively as an introductory text in most universities, which lends it particular relevance here. For while social, clinical and humanistic psychology were „tuning out“ where Fromm was concerned, Hall and Lindzey insured that most personality theorists in North America became vaguely conversant with Fromm's ideas, though none attempted to apply them empirically.

Given the air of studied neutrality that attaches to treatments of this sort, it is impossible to determine precisely what sort of attitude Hall and Lindzey had toward Fromm. On the whole, it seemed quite positive. Within a mere four pages, they conveyed a tolerably accurate and sympathetic account of Fromm's concepts of individuation vs. symbiosis, of existential needs, and of the impact of social and historical conditions and contingencies on the unfolding or alienation of the person.

There are several areas where Hall and Lindzey misguided their readers in the first edition, however. The least of their sins is that they classified Fromm along with Miller, Murphy, Dollard, Lewin and Sullivan as a „field theorist“, because of his emphasis on the environmental determinants of personality. The problem with this label is that it implies some sort of underlying uniformity or consensus between these various theorists on the nature of the „field“. While Dollard and Miller's views on human aggression touch on the environmental determinants of behavior in ways which resembled Fromm's (Fromm, 1973, pp. 90-93), this categorization conceals more than it reveals. To Fromm's way of thinking, the chief „field“ determinants that affect personality are class origins and affiliations, prevailing methods of production, the psychology of work, etc. If class structure, the



family milieu and the working environment constitute „fields“, then Fromm was a „field theorist“. But calling him a field theorist without further qualification is apt to be misleading.

A more serious shortcoming is that Hall and Lindzey classed Fromm among „environmentalists“ like Horney, Sullivan, Lewin and Rogers, who minimize the impact of heredity on personality (Hall & Lindzey, 1957, p. 542). This is simply a misreading. Fromm always emphasized the importance of innate disposition. Personality, for Fromm, consists of a combination of the innate and the acquired - or in his own terminology, of „temperament“ and „character“ (Fromm, 1947a, pp. 59-62). When acquired traits („character“) conflict with one's innate dispositions („temperament“), one becomes chronically neurotic and insecure, with a false or tenuous sense of identity. A primary task of therapy, according to Fromm, is to disentangle the real self from characterological trends that have been super-imposed by socialization, and affirm those features that promote health and happiness, even if they conflict with prevailing norms of conduct and belief (Thompson, 1950, p. 210; Fromm, 1980, pp. 65-66).⁶

Another serious misconception Hall and Lindzey fostered was that Fromm was an „intuitive“ theorist, who never engaged in any empirical research (Hall & Lindzey, 1957). Plainly, they were not aware of the extensive social-psychological research among the working class in Weimar Germany that Fromm undertook in 1929/1930, or the massive study of a Mexican village that commenced that same year.

Finally, Hall and Lindzey utterly failed to appreciate the tragic dimension in Fromm, characterizing him as naively utopian. They noted that in Fromm's idea of a truly human social order, everyone would have an equal opportunity to develop his or her specifically human capacities. But they also made the further (unfounded) assertion that Fromm was a Pollyanna. According to them, in Fromm's „sane society“: „There would be no loneliness, no feelings of isolation, no despair“. Fromm never said any such thing. On more than one occasion, Fromm stated ex-

pressly that a sense of the tragic side of human existence is a prerequisite for productive living and emotional literacy; that even without the misery, insecurity and privation engendered by general want and social injustice, human existence is a sad undertaking (Fromm, 1941a, pp. 270-271; Fromm, 1955a, pp. 174-175). Fromm was much soberer, on balance, than Hall and Lindzey implied.

To their credit, however, Hall and Lindzey improved by the third edition of *Theories of Personality*, which deserves to be their portrait of record. Though they still characterized Fromm as a field theorist (Hall and Lindzey, 1978, p. 690), Fromm's Marxist bearings were clearly acknowledged, and ample recognition was given to his empirical research in Mexico, which occupied a paragraph of ten lines out of a total of five and a half pages (*ibid.*, pp. 174).⁷ The discussion of Fromm's characterology, informed by recent reading, was more concrete. The role of innate dispositions in Fromm's theory was emphasized (*ibid.*, p. 173), and the attribution of radical environmentalism withdrawn (*ibid.*, 198).

But despite the vast improvement between the first and third editions of *Theories of Personality*, a small but noteworthy distortion crept into their new characterization. According to Hall and Lindzey „...in *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962), Fromm compares the ideas of Freud and Marx, noting their contradictions and attempting a synthesis. Fromm regards Marx as a more profound thinker than Freud and uses psychoanalysis mainly to fill in the gaps in Marx. Fromm (1959) wrote a highly critical, even polemical, analysis of Freud's personality and influence, and, by way of contrast, an unconditional eulogy to Marx (1961).“ [*ibid.*, p. 170.]

Hall and Lindzey may be forgiven for characterizing *Marx's Concept of Man* (Fromm, 1961b) as „an unconditional eulogy“. What they overlooked, however, is that *The Sane Society* (Fromm, 1955a) contained pointed criticisms of Marx's scientific errors, and of his personal and political conduct. Here Fromm reproached Marx for his increasingly economic bias and

⁶ This was equally true of Horney, but that is another story.

⁷ In this same edition, four pages were devoted to Horney, and twenty one to H.S. Sullivan.



his dogmatic, authoritarian behavior. Fromm even allowed that Leninism, which has an economic, doctrinaire interpretation of reality, departs from elements in Marx's own personality and teachings, and ignores the more humanistic elements in Marx represented by socialists like Gustav Landauer and Rosa Luxemburg (Fromm, 1955a, pp. 230-236).

Unfortunately, this frank, penetrating portrait of Marx was followed by *Marx's Concept of Man*, in which Fromm now ascribed the advent of Leninism and Stalinism to „distortions“ of Marx's original message, rather than the somewhat belated triumph of trends latent in Marx's own personality that were inimical to his broad humanistic background and aspirations (Fromm, 1961b). In fairness to Fromm, however, the average reader often makes an immediate and unthinking equation between Marxism and Marxism-Leninism, and the whole point of *Marx's Concept of Man* was to demonstrate the misconceptions inherent in this assumption. By not noting this fact, Hall and Lindzey played into the political naivete of their readers, who would accord Fromm less credibility for this reason.

Nevertheless, this distortion was a small price to pay for the vast improvement in their analysis. I suspect this deepened understanding was prompted by their reading of *Social Character in A Mexican Village* (Fromm & Maccoby, 1970), which would have stimulated them to re-think many earlier misconceptions. All that remained of their earlier errors was the unfounded notion that in Fromm's sane society, loneliness and despair would cease to intervene in human affairs. The image of Fromm as a benignly optimistic utopian environmentalist was modified, but not abandoned entirely.

8. Harold Searles

Harold F. Searles is a psychiatrist known principally for his work with schizophrenics. Though he was never associated closely with Fromm, he acknowledged a deep personal debt to Fromm's first wife, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, whose treatment philosophy he studied at Chestnut Lodge (Searles, 1965, p. 9). Searles had no syn-

optic overview of Fromm's contributions, but references to Fromm are strewn throughout his collected papers from 1959 onwards, the most notable of which, perhaps, is „The Place of Neutral Therapist Responses in Psychotherapy with The Schizophrenic Patient“ (Searles, 1963). Commenting on the schizophrenic's (conscious and unconscious) fear and avoidance of developing an individual, autonomous identity, he observed that „...the invaluable work of Erikson concerning identity crises and other aspects of the struggle for identity has tended to highlight, by its very beauty and perceptiveness, the sense of ego-identity as something to be cherished so that we tend to underestimate how ambivalent are one's feelings - particularly, the psychotic individual's feelings - about this matter of identity... Fromm's comments in his *Escape From Freedom*, pointing out some of the psychological costs entailed in the development and maintenance of a sense of individuality, emphasize a fact of this subject of ego-identity not to be forgotten in our appreciation of Erikson's work...“ (Ibid., p. 648.)

Searles also drew on Fromm extensively in his book *The Non-Human Environment* (Searles, 1960), to illustrate his thesis that „...in our culture, a conscious ignoring of the psychological importance of the non-human environment exists simultaneously with a (largely unconscious) *overdependence upon* that environment. I believe that the actual importance of the environment to the individual is so great that he *dare* not recognize it... That is... I hypothesize the existence...of an intrapsychic situation which is analogous to that situation which is well known to exist in neurotic and psychotic patients as regards interpersonal matters: the patient steadfastly denies the importance to him of certain other persons on whom he is unconsciously extremely dependent and who constitute, via his unconscious identification with those persons, important parts of his own personality.“ (Searles, 1960, p. 395.)

Moreover, he insisted, in what now seems like a remarkably prescient declaration, that „...man's impaired relatedness to his nonhuman environment may contribute significantly to this threat with which mankind is grappling“ (Ibid., p. 394).



The threat in question is our simultaneous tendency to de-humanize people (witness the holocaust), and to treat nature increasingly as part of the impersonal „It-world“ to which we have no meaningful connection. According to Searles, Fromm’s description of the universal human conflict between the desire for symbiotic fusion with nature and the contrary need for mature relatedness is not only useful for understanding schizophrenia, but is characteristic of our culture as a whole, which disguises its dependence on nature by reifying and degrading it prior to use. Searles’ was one of the few clinicians who attempted to apply Fromm’s more philosophical concepts in the clinical situation, and subsequently to his own cultural critique, in which schizophrenic psychopathology represents merely a more overt and dramatic form of conflicts faced by everyone.

9. Benjamin Wolman

Contemporary Theories and Systems in Psychology, by Benjamin Wolman, was published in 1960. On minor points, it gave a more accurate presentation of Fromm than we find elsewhere. For example, unlike Hall and Lindzey in the first edition of *Theories of Personality*, Wolman was careful to point out that Fromm took cognizance of inherited constitutional factors in personality dynamics (Wolman, 1960, p. 362). Unlike Ruth Munroe in *Schools of Psychoanalytic Thought*, Wolman noted the role of value and ethical judgements in Fromm’s theory and therapy (ibid. p. 366). And while discussions of Fromm’s social and historical views were not new in the secondary literature, Wolman was the first one to attempt an analysis of the relationship between clinical theory and the philosophy of history, and to give explicit recognition to the conceptual interdependence and reciprocal interaction between these two discourses in psychoanalytic inquiry.

While all this is to Wolman’s credit, the overall execution of his project was a disaster, blighted by muddled thinking and misinformation. For example, there are flatly contradictory assertions with regard to Fromm’s use of the „biogenetic principle“ which Freud borrowed

from Haeckel and applied to history and human development. According to Wolman, „Fromm follows in Freud’s footsteps and applies the biogenetic principle. Childhood development presents a pattern similar to that of the history of mankind.“ (Wolman, 1960, p. 361.)

Yet earlier he informs us that „Fromm shifted away from Freudian philosophy on several points. He discarded the biogenetic principle and attached more weight to the cultural heritage. In fact, he regards human behavior at any historical moment as a product of cultural influences at a given time.“ (Wolman, 1960, p. 355.)

Even less forgivable are the following assertions, which suggest an elementary incomprehension of his subject matter. According to Wolman, „Freud’s philosophy of history was an addition to his psychological theory; Fromm’s philosophy of history was the cornerstone of his psychological theory. The reason is apparent. Freud regarded history as man-made, while Fromm regarded man as history made.“ (Wolman, 1960, p. 356.)

Granted, in all textbook treatments, minor distortions invariably creep into a schematic and condensed treatment of this nature. But this formulation is unacceptable, because untrue. Wolman asserted that Freud’s philosophy of history is an addition to, rather than an *expression of* his psychological outlook - something Freud himself would have vigorously denied. Moreover, he implied that Freud first engaged in a careful and deliberate examination of the clinical data, then framed the appropriate empirical generalizations, and then - and only then - drew inferences about society and history. But Freud did not work in this manner. To anyone familiar with Freud’s cultural environment, and its impact on his thinking, this image of Freud as some sort of positivist is so absurd it scarcely warrants refutation. And while Fromm regarded man as a product of history, as Wolman alleged, he also saw history as the product of human agency; of the unfolding of our „productive powers“ and the inevitable alienation that dogs each new step toward freedom (Fromm, 1955a; Fromm, 1961b). Like Marx, Fromm emphasized that „history“ as such does nothing. Men make their own history, albeit seldom under conditions of



their own choosing (Fromm, 1941a, p. 28).

If the forgoing remarks were indicative of positivist bias, the latter is even more so. In his concluding remarks, Wolman declared that „though the discussion of Fromm’s philosophy and ethics transcends the borders of a scientific study of true and false statements, it is good to point to this revolt of a psychologist against objective truth in favor of moral judgements. Thus Fromm’s writings confront scientific truth seekers with the problem of right and wrong.“ (Wolman, 1960, p. 368.)

Implicit in these statements is the view that science or „objective truth“ stands in some sort of adversarial relationship to „moral judgement“ - that ethics are a matter of subjective preference or of cultural convention. This view is increasingly questioned by cognitive-developmental theorists studying moral development (e.g. Kohlberg et. al). Were it not that Wolman claimed to find Fromm’s challenge „refreshing“, one would assume that this was really a summary dismissal. (And in a certain sense, it was). After all, Fromm had criticized the tendency to relativize ethical issues in Freudian theory and therapy (Fromm, 1935a; Fromm, 1947a, introduction). He argued that the choice for or against a given ethical choice can be judged objectively as good or bad, as rational or irrational, to the extent that it is conducive to the full development of the human person, and irrespective of the degree of consensual validation that attaches to it one way or another.

Of course, cogent and persuasive arguments can be adduced against Fromm, and in favor of ethical relativism (e.g. Birnbach, 1961, pp. 76-77 & 83-89). But whether we agree with him or not, an essentially Kantian perspective on ethical conduct was integral to Fromm’s „normative humanism“, and to his views on social psychopathology. Given the centrality of this issue in Fromm’s work, it was incumbent on Wolman - among others - to give this point explicit consideration, rather than treat it as a mere afterthought, declaring Fromm’s views as tangential to „objective truth“ by mere fiat. This he failed to do. Perhaps it is just as well. Judging from the glib treatment accorded Fromm’s philosophy of history, and his tendency to lionize and distort Freud, Wolman was probably not up to the task

of exploring and the implications of the Kantian position with much insight or sympathy.

10. Duane Schultz

A History of Modern Psychology, by Duane P. Schultz, was published in 1969. It contains a perfunctory description of Fromm that echoes the previous efforts of Hall and Lindzey (1957) and Wolman (1960). According to Schultz, Fromm „believes that the prime motivating force in human existence is not the satisfaction of instinctual drives, but the desire to revert to a condition of dependence“ (Schultz, 1969, p. 304).

Schultz concludes his summary with the observation that „Fromm’s descriptive analyses are not defined to the degree of precision required of scientific evidence“ (ibid., p. 306).

In the following section, entitled „Social Psychological Theories in Psychoanalysis“ - a critique of Jung, Adler, Horney and Fromm - Schultz chided Fromm et. al. for their picture of human beings as essentially rational, conscious, socialized creatures, who are victims of debilitating social systems, citing Hall and Lindzey in this connection (1957). Schultz then demonstrated his own sagacity by suggesting that, if this were true „we are left with the paradox of man, an eminently rational, perfectible, socialized being, who has nevertheless developed an abundance of social systems inadequate to his needs.“

Let us take these assertions one at a time. Fromm did not, in fact, suggest that the primary motivating factor in human behavior is the desire to revert to a condition of dependence. At the very most he suggested, in *Escape From Freedom* (Fromm, 1941a) and *The Heart of Man* (Fromm, 1964a) that the desire to revert to a condition of dependence is an integral element of all *clinical psychopathology*. This reasonably modest and balanced assertion, which Schultz inflates without justification, is balanced by the explicit recognition that given proper conditions, this regressive longing is outweighed by the healthy individual’s growing need and capacity to relate him (or her) self *productively* to others.

In light of Shultz’s cavalier misattribution, his complaint that Fromm’s descriptive analyses



lacking the precision required of scientific „evidence“ is somewhat comical. Moreover - like Wolman - Schultz takes the meaning or nature of science entirely for granted, as if it were something self-evident, rather than something requiring definition and discursive elaboration. The cumulative effect is that he appears awfully smug. His global characterizations of Jung, Adler, Horney and Fromm are equally trite and misleading. It is true that, in comparison with Freud, Fromm et. al. stressed man's *potential* sociability and his *relative* capacity for reason. But the entire *raison d'être* of psychoanalytic psychotherapy is predicated on the assumption that the dark and irrational forces in us are outside our conscious control - for Adler, Jung and Horney, no less than for Fromm.

Still, the question why we develop social systems that do not meet our existential needs is a valid one. In all likelihood, Fromm's considered answer to this would have been that until relatively recently, there was a scarcity of material means to provide everyone with the basis for a decent and dignified life. This required the division of society into classes, and the use of force and deception to maintain class rule. The explosive development of productive forces in the 19th and 20 centuries, which makes adequate provision for material needs possible - enabling us, potentially, to dispense with force and deception - has been carried out under capitalist auspices. Unfortunately, capitalism also fosters the widespread proliferation of alienation, mechanization, consumerism and so on, which render it difficult to experience, much less address, our specifically human needs, and so implement social change that would make adequate provision for all. Indeed, now that we have the material means to do so, our ability to implement them is obstructed by the legacy of centuries of fear, greed and oppression that are engrained in our „social character“ from preceding epochs (Fromm, 1937a; Fromm, 1955a; Fromm, 1960a; Fromm, 1968a).

In short then, Schultz's rendering of Fromm is rather typical of responses in the mainstream of academic psychology after 1960. That is why I cite it, despite its brevity. One gets the impression that Schultz read Hall and Lindzey (1957) and Wolman (1960), without actually reading

Fromm, or that he read Fromm indifferently, with a view to confirming preconceived ideas, gleaned second hand from „authoritative“ sources. On balance, one suspects that Schultz's chief goal in including Fromm was to demonstrate his grasp of the field as a whole, i.e. an assertion of competence or virtuosity, rather than the desire to „get it right“, and do justice to his subject matter.

Fromm is scarcely the only figure to receive this sort of treatment in textbooks on the history of psychology, and in fairness to Schultz, and others like him, one can't expect people doing synoptic treatments of such complicated and far ranging subject matter to do them complete justice. But this isn't the issue here. Judging from our sample thus far, psychologists writing after Ruth Munroe (1955) simply can't be trusted to grasp the fundamental import of what they read - or allege they have read - never mind being familiar with earlier, German language sources, or grasping the finer points of Fromm's theory. (Hall and Lindzey's 1978 edition of *Theories of Personality* is partially exempt from this assessment, though the first edition emphatically is not). And this problem is compounded as the secondary literature, feeding off itself parasitically, grows apace.

11. R. Lundin

Another example of this general trend is R. Lundin's book, *Theories and Systems of Psychology*, published in 1972. His treatment of Fromm is as flawed as Schultz's, though perhaps more sympathetic. To his credit, he recognized the role of inherited constitutional predispositions in Fromm's theory of personality (temperament), but like Hall and Lindzey in the first edition, categorized Fromm inappropriately. Lundin cites Fromm's theory of character as an example of „social learning“ (Lundin, 1972, p. 284). And in a sense it is, given the mediation of family, school (and so on) in the shaping of characterological traits. The problem here is that describing Fromm's theory of character as an instance of „social learning“ is just as illuminating - and just as misleading - as describing him as a „field theorist“, as did Hall and Lindzey. It is



more likely to confuse than enlighten, since it does not offer a word of explanation about the enormous differences separating Fromm and the other theorists included in this designation. Moreover, and more importantly, *Fromm explicitly repudiated the idea that behavior is chiefly a product of learning or imitation* (Fromm & Maccoby, 1970, p. 10 & 19).

In fairness to Lundin, he took more care to grapple with fundamentals. Instead of suggesting that the primary motivation underlying all human behavior is the desire to revert to a dependent state, he notes correctly that for Fromm, the primary problem confronting all human beings is that of overcoming aloneness (Lundin, 1972, p. 284). (This is not a mere nicety of definition, but a fundamentally different assertion, since the desire to overcome one's aloneness, characteristic of both health and illness, need not promote a reversion to dependence). This trenchant observation is followed by a brief enumeration of the various „escape mechanisms“ cited in *Escape From Freedom* (Fromm, 1941a), of the various character types in *Man for Himself* (Fromm, 1947a), and the existential needs cited in *The Sane Society* (Fromm, 1955a). While correct, on the whole, the treatment is sketchy, and one gets the impression that mere enumeration (e.g. *three* escape mechanisms, five characterological orientations, etc., etc.) is really an aid to rote memory for undergraduates, rather than an indication of genuine understanding. Like Wolman, Schultz and others, Lundin states that Fromm's attitude to the human species is „loving“, but idealistic and lacking in realism. Echoing Wolman (Wolman, 1960, p. 367), Lundin argues that Fromm's attempts at describing the historical evolution of the modern psyche are in fact unhistorical, lacking empirical specificity (Lundin, 1972, p. 286). He suggests that „perhaps we should not call him a psychologist at all, but rather a historical and ethical philosopher“ (ibid., p. 286).

But what manner of historical philosopher would Fromm be, if Fromm's historical theorizing is fundamentally unsubstantiated, as Lundin, in his wisdom, claims? The overall impression Lundin conveys is that Fromm is a nice fellow, but hardly worth the attention of a serious psychologist.

12. Dieter Wyss

A notable exception to the prevailing trend after 1955 is Dieter Wyss, whose book *Psychoanalytic Schools*, was published in America in 1973. Wyss is a psychiatrist practicing in Frankfurt, Fromm's city of origin. Unlike Reich and Fenichel, who were Freud-Marxists, Wyss's primary commitments are in the philosophical arena. Consequently, perhaps, he commended Fromm for attempting to clarify the rather modest role of „instincts“ in human behavior, and to substitute existential and humanistic concepts of human motivation in their place. When it comes to Fromm's views on love, his analysis of Fromm's philosophical anthropology rivals or exceeds Mullahy and Thompson in breadth and acuity (Wyss, 1973, pp. 271-280). Unlike most psychologists and psychiatrists, Wyss appears to endorse Fromm's outspoken ethical views, and argued for their relevance to the later phases of psychotherapy (ibid., p. 280); an interesting suggestion, which to the best of my knowledge, has never been followed up. His concluding remarks were confusing, however. He likened Fromm to Rank in ways Fromm himself would have rejected, adding that Fromm „evaluates clinical symptoms as being of secondary importance only and accords them their proper place within the total phenomenon of „man“. Like the other Neo-Freudians Fromm failed to recognize the problem posed by the instances and the difficulties which prevented Neo-Freudianism from establishing its independence from Freud in this respect. But then the clinical investigation and description of neurosis was not his primary concern.“ (Ibid., 524.)

Coming from the vast majority of psychiatrists, the suggestion that the description, study and cure of neurosis was not Fromm's primary concern would constitute criticism, if not grounds for complete condemnation. But with Wyss, if anything, the opposite appears to the case. Indeed, he implies that neo-Freudianism - Fromm included - did not distance itself from Freudianism *enough* in this respect, but without saying why. Even if we grant that symptom remission or alleviation isn't „the cure of souls“, as Wyss and Fromm insisted, this attitude vitiates the value of Wyss' evaluation considerably.



13. William Sahakian

William Sahakian's response to Fromm comes in two installments, *Systematic Social Psychology* (Sahakian, 1974) and *History and Systems of Social Psychology* (Sahakian, 1984). Unlike Hall and Lindzey's efforts, however, Sahakian's did not undergo any noticeable improvement. Though mercifully free of the stylistic redundancies of other earlier treatments, which enumerate the various needs, character types, and so forth, to assist undergraduates at exam time, it lacks both the depth and precision one would expect in a serious treatment. According to Sahakian, on coming to America, Fromm „...found himself under the sway of the sociologists John Dollard and Harold Dwight Laswell, the psychoanalytic anthropologist Abram Kardiner, as well as anthropologists J. Hallowell and E. Sapir. In this respect, Fromm and Horney are at odds with Freud, whose contention was that man is the product of his biological nature, consisting of instinctual urges, instead of being generated by social learning, as Fromm and Horney held.“ (Sahakian, p. 173.)

To someone reasonably familiar with Fromm's early work, Sahakian's suggestion that Fromm's theorizing took shape under the convergent influences of Dollard, Laswell, Hallowell, Kardiner and Sapir is actually somewhat offensive. It implies that the period between 1927 and 1933, when Fromm's distinctive outlook was taking shape in Germany, was somehow less decisive for his future development, which is utterly untrue. This misattribution, which echoes Hall and Lindzey's earlier mistakes, seems to derive its justification from an isolated instance in *Escape From Freedom* (Fromm, 1941a), where Fromm cited the above mentioned people as providing convergent testimony regarding his critique of Freudian social psychology (ibid., p. 28, footnote 6). When Fromm met these individuals through Sullivan's „Zodiac club“ in the late 1930's, he was already a formidable intellect in his own right, and most accounts suggest that whatever „influence“ there was flowed in precisely in the opposite direction.

On a more superficial level of distortion, we find the lingering attribution of „social learn-

ing“ which, while partly excusable, is not a term that appears *anywhere* in Fromm or Horney's vocabulary. Moreover, Fromm never suggested that „man“, or human nature, is „generated“ by „social learning“. According to Fromm, human nature is a transhistorical constant, which is shaped or distorted in manifold ways according to prevailing social conditions (Fromm, 1961b; Fromm and Xirau, 1968b).

Notwithstanding the vague and confusing import of the preceding passage, Sahakian went on to assert that „Fromm is an environmentalist, aware of the potent effect of culture on individual personality; but also like them (Horney and Sullivan), he is not an extremist, believing that social factors alone account for the personality of the individual. Man does have a human nature, innately imbedded within and crying out for self-realization and fulfillment. The development of this nature is a co-operative endeavor between the individual and society.“ (Ibid., p. 176.)

This passage is an improvement on the preceding one, in that it gives recognition to the fact that, for Fromm, man „does have a human nature“. However, the use of the term „innate“ with reference to our „human nature“ suggests that Sahakian may be confusing innate constitutional predispositions (temperament), which are subject to individual variation, with human nature properly so called, which is a universal and transhistorical constant, common to all individuals, irrespective of genetic endowment or social circumstances. Both „cry out for realization“. According to Fromm, constitutional predispositions may pattern the individual's development in his own unique way, barring obstructions from the pressures of socialization. To suggest, in practically the same breath, that Fromm is nevertheless an „environmentalist“ is somehow a little peculiar.

14. Robert Fuller

Robert Fuller's book *Americans and the Unconscious* (Fuller, 1986) is a history of humanistic psychology's response to Freud, and an attempt to situate Fromm in a perspective on the unconscious mind that is ostensibly indigenous to



America. As Fuller points out in the concluding chapter „the purpose of this book has been to draw attention to the fact that psychological concepts, while originating in the world of scientific discourse, perform many of the cultural functions traditionally associated with philosophy and theology. Psychological theories offer fully articulated interpretations of human nature, identify the nature of human suffering, and point the way to human betterment or progress. To the extent that psychological systems attempt to nourish our sense of identity and purpose, they conform to the pattern of the humanities, or sciences of the spirit. Indeed, psychology now constitutes the dominant cultural form through which Americans seek to understand the non-empirical „realities“ that sustain and give meaning to human existence.“ (Fuller, 1986, p. 198.)

Without wishing to dispute the role of psychology as a surrogate for religion in America - which, though sometimes exaggerated, can scarcely be denied - there are problems with Fuller's handling of Fromm. In an illuminating chapter entitled „Rediscovering the Unconscious: Humanistic Psychology“, Fuller sketches what the American attitude to the unconscious is supposed to be. For humanistic psychologists like Maslow, Murphy, May, Weisskopf, Proffoff and Rogers, the unconscious is more a repository of positive, growth oriented and „higher“ mental functions that of primitive or anti-social impulses. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Carl Rogers, who characterized the „human organism as a pyramid of organic functioning, partly suffused by an unconscious knowing, with only the tip of the pyramid being fleetingly illuminated by the flickering light of fully conscious awareness...some of my colleagues have said that organismic choice - the nonverbal, subconscious choice of being - is guided by the evolutionary flow. I would agree and go one step further. I would point out that in psychotherapy we have learned something about the conditions which are most conducive to self-awareness.“ (Rogers, in Fuller, 1986, p. 169.)

And elsewhere, but in the same vein, Rogers argued that „...when we provide a psychological climate that permits persons to be...we are tapping into a tendency which permeates all of organic life to become all the complexity of which

the organism is capable. And on an even larger scale, I believe we are tuning into a potent creative tendency which has created the universe.“ (Rogers, in Fuller, 1986, p. 171.)

In the interests of situating Fromm historically, let us contrast Rogers' unconscious with the Freudian variety, and then again, with Fromm's own. Except for portions of the ego, what is unconscious for Freud is chiefly the timeless, archaic, „id“, which, by virtue of its conservative and perseverative character, *resists* adaptation to reality. Freud's emphasis on what he termed „the conservative character of the instincts“ (Freud, 1921) was rooted in the mechanistic materialism of Helmholtz and Brücke. Though biology may lend a hand, in the final analysis, the reality principle and the ego, which mediate the processes of adaptation to the environment, evolve chiefly through cultural constraints, not biological processes, and then only at the price of inevitable neurosis - a pessimistic view antithetical to Rogers' own.

And Fromm? According to Fuller „of all the neo-Freudians, Erich Fromm has unquestionably been the most influential. Virtually every theme that distinguishes the „American psyche“ from its Freudian predecessor appears in Fromm's writings: the importance of the present (or existential) situation of the individual rather than his or her past; consciousness and willed freedom rather than intrapsychic determinisms; the continuing openness of the personality and its responsiveness to new experiences... Importantly, Fromm's psychoanalytic orientation prevented him from following his social and environmental ideas to their logical conclusions. The unconscious became for him a psychological bastion defending the individual from total domination by outer forces... Describing this deeper mental life, he repeatedly draws upon such patently mystical language as the Zen account of satori, Meister Eckhart's depiction of union with the Godhead, and Paul Tillich's description of the psyche's participation in 'the ground of being'.“ (Fuller, 1986, p. 126.)

Unfortunately, this characterization suffers from several serious defects. Being nestled in a chapter entitled „Assimilation & Accommodation: American Interpretations of Psychoanalysis“, Fuller's opening remarks on how influential



Fromm was seen to imply that Fromm's unconscious is „pre-packaged“ to suit an American audience. But the real problem resides chiefly in how Fuller constructs the „American unconscious“. With reference to Rogers, for example, he cites Emerson as an important influence, which by Rogers' own account, is perfectly true (Fuller, 1986, p. 169n.). Elsewhere in his book, Fuller also cites F.W. Myers - an English Romantic and parapsychologist - as a background inspiration for Americans, which is also to his credit. However, Fuller *neglects* to mention that the cosmic unconscious described by Rogers - while compatible, no doubt, with Emerson, Myers, etc. - emerges full blown in the philosophy of Schelling and Carus, and subsequently in other varieties of vitalism (e.g. Johannes Muller, Henri Bergson, Samuel Butler, Teilhard du Chardin). A belated representative of vitalism among Freud's followers, Georg Groddeck, was Fromm's friend and preceptor during his late 20's and early 30's.

Thus Fromm's affinity for the „American unconscious“, while neither trivial nor accidental, is less an *adaptation* to the new world than a *reversion to an older, pre-Freudian view of unconscious mental processes that has deep roots in his own cultural milieu*. By „reversion“, of course, I do not wish to imply that Fromm's position was retrograde. Schelling and Bergson's view of the unconscious as a creative, forward looking evolutionary principle, which Rogers and Maslow eagerly embraced, represents a polar antithesis to the archaic, conservative character of the instincts as understood by Freud. But both are true in some measure. Fromm, to his credit, made allowance for healthy, pro-social strivings that are repressed or distorted in the process of socialization, but laid equal emphasis on the difficulties of altering the fixed and perseverative character of distorted patterns of human functioning. By focusing exclusively on the vitalist component in Fromm's concept of the unconscious, Fuller distorted Fromm's position to fit his preconceptions, enabling him to reproach Fromm for not following through with his „social and environmentalist“ ideas; a complete „straw man“. And by treating this facet of his work as uniquely American, he engaged in a double distortion that is very difficult to refute,

because of its surface plausibility.

Finally, Fuller's construal of Fromm begs the question of why Fromm avoided any dialogue or involvement with the burgeoning movement of humanistic psychology in the 60's and 70's. Fromm's policy of ignoring humanistic psychology, which seems smug or self-lacerating on the surface, becomes somewhat intelligible if we consider the divergent meanings „humanism“ has in the European and American contexts. Historically speaking, for a European, the term „humanism“ has diverse significations. To the cultured conservative like Goethe or Thomas Mann, „humanism“ signifies an ivory-tower retreat from political life, while for liberals and left-wingers, historically speaking, the term is a clarion call for struggle against prevailing conditions that render a life of dignity and self-realization impossible for the broad mass of humanity. (Sartre and Camus used „humanism“ in this sense). But regardless of political coloration, the *sine qua non* of European humanism is sustained reflection on philosophical and historical texts dating to the Renaissance (or before), in which one's intellectual ancestry is scrupulously authenticated through direct citation, paraphrase or allusion to previous thinkers.

As a cultured, bookish European, Fromm inherited a culture of scholarship and the ancestral piety that goes along with it. By comparison with Fromm - if Fuller is any indication - humanistic psychologists in America tend to be cavalier in their choice of ancestors, and seldom look to Marx, Freud, Spinoza or Meister Eckhart for inspiration, as Fromm did throughout adult life. Fuller reminds us, of course, that humanistic psychology inherits an American insistence on „self-reliance“ found in Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman. And at its best, this „self-reliance“ imparts an openness to new ideas, and a willingness to question authority. But at the same time, this „homegrown“ attitude often appears to the European as a rationalization for avoiding the rigours of genuine scholarship; a kind of „do your own thing“ or „seat-of-the-pants“ eclecticism that lacks substance, discipline, and real social and political commitments.

Apart from the absence of rigour and ancestral piety, Fromm was openly suspicious of the „touchy-feely“, self-indulgent quality of the hu-



man potential movement, which was aligned to humanistic psychology. Fromm was not opposed to sociability, sensuousness or „spontaneity“. But to a cultured European, authentic self-expression is unthinkable in the absence of tact and reserve in appropriate circumstances. For an American, by contrast, „spontaneity“ is almost synonymous with the deliberate rejection or flaunting of constraints - often in a perversely conformist way. As a consequence, what strikes the European as a „spontaneous“ form of emotional expression often strikes the American as „uptight“, premeditated, or downright deceptive. Conversely, the American’s „spontaneity“ strikes the European as exhibitionistic, shallow, self-indulgent or forced. The kind of openness and spontaneity espoused by Fromm was of a decidedly European cast, which may be one reason some American students found him aloof in interpersonal encounters.

15. Summary and Conclusion

While the preceding sample doesn’t lend itself readily to quantitative or statistical analysis, certain trends emerge with vivid clarity. Of the psychiatrists that evaluated Fromm, some, like himself, were transplanted Europeans, and therefore familiar with Fromm’s earlier writings. For that very reason, they carried the sectarian squabbles of Marxism and psychoanalysis to America with them (e.g. Reich, Fenichel and their followers here). The exception is Dieter Wyss. He clearly understood features of Fromm’s thought that others failed to grasp. American psychiatrists like Thompson and Searles, who had known Fromm through Sullivan and Fromm-Reichmann, were unfamiliar with his early work, but explored his English language contributions sympathetically, and used his philosophical anthropology to the extent that they were able to. After Fenichel’s withering comments (Fenichel, 1944), however, American orthodox Freudians simply ignored Fromm. The paucity of references, or of a single substantive analysis in the orthodox literature bears this out.

In psychology as a whole, Fromm fared little better. With some notable exceptions, most secondary literature on Fromm after 1955 is

mediocre or misleading. Even nominally sympathetic reviewers and critics could not refrain from labelling Fromm inappropriately, misrepresenting him on fundamental issues, and smugly repeating the nostrums of earlier „authorities“, without first checking their sources. Social and personality psychologists, and would be historians of psychology - excepting Peters et. al. - alternately designated Fromm as „intuitive“, a „field theorist“, a „social learning theorist“ or an „environmentalist“, ignoring important features of Fromm’s work which exempts him from these designations. They could not relinquish their image of Fromm as a fuzzy headed utopian, who lacks an appreciation for the irrational and tragic dimensions of human life, even when they were disillusioned on other scores (e.g. Hall & Lindzey, 1957 versus Hall & Lindzey, 1978). In all likelihood, this persistent misattribution served a rhetorical function, suggesting, by example, the kind of theorizing the author thought best to avoid.

Given the extent and the frequency with which these errors crop up, it seems almost pointless to blame individual authors. Something of a more global character is obviously at work here. Indeed, the grotesque distortions of Fromm’s American critics and would-be expositors attest to the usefulness of Fromm’s theory of „social filters“, in which experience and information is „screened“ according to cultural preconceptions. Thus, for someone who bothers to read Fromm carefully, there is a comic irony, and in a sense, vindication, in this sad and deplorable state of affairs.

In clinical psychology, Fromm did poorly as well. Wolman’s formulation of Fromm’s clinical theory and philosophy of history foundered in weak, misguided formulations, contrasting a caricature of Freud with an equally misleading account of Fromm’s premises, methods and conclusions (Wolman, 1960). Mullahy’s treatment, an obvious exception, was informed by a strong background in philosophy, religion and comparative mythology and literature that made him receptive to the style and content of Fromm’s work (Mullahy, 1948). But Fromm himself had a hand in *Oedipus: Myth and Complex*, so that this exception does not count for much. Ruth Munroe was the only analytically



oriented psychologist who did not know Fromm personally, but managed to combine clear-sighted, forthright criticism with a sympathetic and accurate understanding of what Fromm was driving at most of the time (Munroe, 1955). Granted, she was confused about the extent to which ethical and philosophical ideas entered into Fromm's clinical conduct, and assumed that his ideas on these lines were immaterial to his practical conduct in therapy. But so was Thompson, who was supervised by Fromm (Thompson, 1950). Evidently, Fromm himself was more confused on this point than he cared to acknowledge, because he was sorting out conflicting intellectual loyalties and component parts of his own personal identity. This did not clarify matters much.

If there is any place one expected Fromm to flourish, it would be in the fields of humanistic and existential psychology. But with the exception of some laudatory passages in Rollo May's first few books, and fleeting references here and there (e.g. Stone, 1986), Fromm's distinctive combination of Freud and Marx, of humanism and existentialism, failed to gain a foothold. The sole exception here is Ernest Becker, whose book *The Denial of Death* was widely read and appreciated by existential and humanistic psychologists. Though he never attempted an overall assessment of Fromm's work, Becker showed a good understanding of Fromm, and a keen enthusiasm for his ideas (e.g. Becker, 1973, p. 134). But here, be it noted, the exception proves the rule. For Becker was not a psychologist, but a cultural anthropologist with broad interests in philosophy, the social sciences and literature, and his popularity among psychologists and psychiatrists did little to strengthen their understanding of Fromm, as far as I can judge.

The question then arises; why did Fromm receive such a sloppy and indifferent reception among psychologists? The answer is quite complex, involving a variety of factors.

Being a sociologist by training, Fromm felt no apparent need to justify the existence of psychology within the psychoanalytic fold, or even as a discipline in its own right. And while psychologists trained in the shadow of psychiatry continued to justify their precarious status in terms of a special competence for quantitative

and statistical analysis, Fromm emphasized the *qualitative* features of individual and social psychology. Fromm's penchant for exploring the economic and cultural determinants of widespread phenomena like anxiety, conformism, and the origins, history and psychological ramifications of collective belief systems, and his refusal to succumb to the more commonplace varieties of reductionism commonplace in both the Marxist or Freudian camps (Brett, 1953), made him difficult to categorize. Moreover, his attempts to decipher the ideological sub-texts to Freudian theory (e.g. Fromm, 1935a; Fromm, 1959a) rendered it practically disadvantageous for analytically oriented theorists doing clinical or social research to cite or apply his ideas, despite his protestations of fidelity to Freud. So long as Fromm was anathema, the practical constraints attaching to the use of his ideas were - and still are - quite formidable, involving the availability of funding, the esteem of one's colleagues, prospects for advancement, etc. Thus, despite widespread public enthusiasm, reflected in numerous bestsellers, he had no tangible impact on analytically oriented psychologists beyond his personal sphere of influence at the William Alanson White Institute, and the Mexican Psychoanalytic Institute, where policy dictated that the majority of his trainees were psychiatrists in any case.

Of course, psychoanalysts comprise a very small portion of psychologists in general, but many of the features that rendered Fromm strange and unpalatable to analytically oriented psychologists estranged him from academic psychologists as well, even when their research interests were highly convergent (e.g. problems of conformity and consensus). Fromm's Marxist and analytic leanings, which were already a strike against him, were blended with an approach to psychological questions that was more akin to that of late 19th century proponents of the *Geisteswissenschaften* than to prevailing ideas of scientific method. The impact of positivism in experimental, social and clinical psychology, and the corollary tendency to approach problems of human behavior in a radically un-historical way, rendered it all but impossible for the majority in mainstream academic psychology to grasp what Fromm was



talking about, much less lend his assumptions and methods any credence. Here again, practical and intellectual constraints conspired to insure Fromm had peripheral impact at best. The fact that his name appears in numerous articles and text books on social and personality psychology doesn't alter this fact. In these contexts, Fromm's name usually appears as a testimony to the author's broad and inclusive scholarship, as a convenient straw man who vindicates the author's prejudices, or as a gesture of courtesy or cautious acknowledgement to other „experts“ who saw fit to include him in previous treatments of the fields.

Of course, Fromm himself contributed to the widespread neglect he suffered. To see him simply as a victim is unfair to critics and expositors who made a genuine effort to puzzle him out. But given the prevailing intellectual climate, a measure of distortion was inevitable, no matter how much - or how little - Fromm contributed to it. Psychology under positivist and behaviorist auspices in America involved a radical devaluation of the qualitative aspects of human experience, and a corresponding valorization of what Fromm termed tendencies toward „quantification and abstractification“ (Fromm, 1955a, pp. 103-111). Apart from his emphasis on the qualitative dimensions of psychology, and its emancipatory, disillusioning function (Fromm, 1959b), his belief in the possibility - indeed, in the logical necessity - for an objective ethics, grounded in laws of human nature, struck many psychologists as grossly unscientific. In psychology and psychiatry, the prevailing orientation was predicated - as it is today - on the belief in the reality of objective *knowledge*, but not on the possibility of an objective *ethics*. Due to Cohen's influence, perhaps, Fromm refused to concede that ethics are merely a matter of arbitrary preference or consensual validation. And predictably, the Kantian insistence that valid norms for all humanity can be arrived at through „reason“, irrespective of prevailing norms and practices, cost him dearly in terms of professional credibility, although it endeared him to sectors of the broader reading public.

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Zusammenfassung: Die Rezeption von Fromm bei Psychologen und Psychiatern

Der Beitrag „Die Rezeption von Fromm bei Psychologen und Psychiatern“ entspricht einem Kapitel der Dissertation, die der Autor unter dem Titel *Fromm's Legacy: A Critical Appreciation* 1989 an der York University in Toronto abschloss. Mehr als irgend ein anderes Kapitel der umfangreichen Studie ist das hier erstmals veröffentlichte der „kritischen Geschichtsschreibung der Psychologie“ von Kurt Danziger verpflichtet, der die Dissertation betreute. Am Beispiel von Erich Fromm werden die Probleme und Tücken einer lehrbuchmäßigen Geschichtsschreibung aufgezeigt. An ausgewählten, repräsentativen Beispielen wird gezeigt, wie Fromms Originalität in Unkenntnis seiner frühesten (deutschsprachigen) Schriften in der englisch-sprachigen Sekundärliteratur unterbewertet wird und wie sehr die Wirkungen der deutschen Kultur des späten 19. Jahrhunderts auf Fromms Denken und auf seine Ansichten verkannt werden.

Meistens beschränken sich deshalb die amerikanischen Referenten und Kritiker darauf, Fromm zu etikettieren: Er sei ein „Environmentalist“, ein „Umfeldtheoretiker“, ein „sozialer Lerntheoretiker“, oder auch ein „intuitiver“ oder „utopischer“ Theoretiker. Tragischerweise wird dabei die besondere Freudsche Dimension im Frommschen Werk übersehen. Werden jedoch nur Kategorien herangezogen, die im amerikanischen Kontext entstanden sind und die wenig oder überhaupt keine Bedeutung für jenen Kontext haben, der für europäisches Denken typisch ist, dann begünstigt man nur eine Trivialisierung der grundlegenden Ideen Fromms und ihr grundsätzliches Missverstehen. So muss man den meisten amerikanischen Kritikern auf Grund ihres „gesellschaftlichen Filters“ bzw. wegen ihrer Vorurteile, die in ihrer eingeschränkten Auffassung von dem, was Psychologie ist, liegt, eine kollektive Unfähigkeit attestieren, sich wirklich mit dem Frommschen Werk auseinander zu setzen. Die amerikanischen Etikettierungen erfuhren andererseits ihre Prägung durch die besonders in Amerika strenge Freudsche Orthodoxie bzw. durch die mehr und mehr positivistischen und behavioristischen Strömungen in der akademischen Psychologie gerade in jenen Jahren, in denen Fromm sich in der breiten Öffentlichkeit einer allgemeinen Beliebtheit erfreute. In anderen Abschnitten geht es um Fromms Verhältnis zur Humanistischen Psychologie in Amerika sowie um die weitverbreitete Verwirrung und Unkenntnis bezüglich seiner Vorstellungen zur Ethik und zur Psychotherapie, wobei Fromm zu dieser Verwirrung und Unkenntnis selbst unbeabsichtigt beigetragen hat.

Riassunto: La recezione di Fromm da parte degli psicologi e degli psichiatri

Questo articolo è un capitolo di una tesi dal titolo *L'eredità di Fromm: Una valutazione critica*, presentata alla York University di Toronto (1989), il relatore della quale è stato il Dott. Kurt Danziger. Più di qualunque altro capitolo dello studio di Burston, questo rappresenta un'applicazione della concezione di Danziger di una „storia critica della psicologia“, con particolare riferimento ai problemi e ai tranelli di una „storia manualistica“ nel caso di Fromm. Basandosi su un campione piccolo ma rappresentativo, l'autore sostiene che, a causa dell'ignoranza dei primi scritti di Fromm, la maggior parte della letteratura secondaria su Fromm in lingua inglese sottovaluta largamente l'originalità di Fromm e l'influenza della cultura tedesca della fine dell'Ottocento sull'indirizzo e sul lavoro teorico di Fromm. Il più delle volte, i critici e i commentatori americani di Fromm non riescono a trattenersi dal classificarlo variamente come un „ambientalista“, o un „teorico del campo“, un „teorico dell'apprendimento sociale“, o un teorico „intuitivo“ o „utopistico“, trascurando le dimensioni tragiche e specificamente freudiane dell'opera di Fromm. La tendenza ad applicare delle categorie generate nel contesto americano - che hanno scarso significato o scarsa rilevanza nel contesto europeo, e favoriscono una banalizzazione o una radicale incomprendimento delle idee fondamentali di Fromm - attestano un'incapacità collettiva da parte della maggioranza dei critici americani di affrontare seriamente l'opera di Fromm, a causa dell'azione di „filtri sociali“ o di preconcetti radicati nella loro definizione limitata della psicologia. A loro volta, tali classificazioni sono determinata dalle costrizioni dell'ortodossia freudiana americana, oppure dall'indirizzo sempre più positivistico e comportamentistico della psicologia accademica dominante negli anni in cui



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l'opera di Fromm trovava larga diffusione nel pubblico non specializzato. Altri argomenti comprendono il rapporto tra Fromm e la psicologia umanistica in America, e i contributi involontari di Fromm stesso alla diffusa confusione o ignoranza relativa alle sue idee sull'etica e sulla psicoterapia.

Sumario: La recepción de Erich Fromm entre psicólogos y psiquiatras

La Recepción de Erich Fromm entre Psicólogos y Psiquiatras es un capítulo de una disertación de Daniel Burston titulada „El Legado de Fromm: una Apreciación Crítica“, supervisada por el Dr. Kurt Danziger de la York University de Toronto (1989). Más que cualquier otro capítulo en el estudio de Burston, éste representa una aplicación de la concepción de la „historia crítica de la psicología“, con especial referencia a los problemas y dificultades de la historia tradicionalmente transmitida („textbook history“), en el caso de Erich Fromm. Basándose en una pequeña pero representativa muestra, el autor arguye que, a causa de la ignorancia acerca de los primeros trabajos de Fromm, el volumen de literatura secundaria sobre Fromm en lengua inglesa ha menoscabado fuertemente la originalidad de Fromm y el impacto de la cultura alemana de fines del siglo 19 sobre la perspectiva y teoría frommiana. Con no poca frecuencia los críticos y estudiosos norteamericanos de Fromm, simplemente no pueden dejar de categorizar a Fromm de diferentes formas como de „environmentalist“, „teórico de campo“, „social learning theorist“ o como un teórico „intuitivo“ o „utopista“, ignorando las dimensiones trágicas y específicamente freudianas dentro de la obra de Fromm. La tendencia a aplicar categorías generadas en el contexto norteamericano - que poco significado o relevancia tienen en el contexto europeo, y que fomentan una trivialización o un malentendido radical de las ideas fundamentales de Fromm - de muestra una incapacidad colectiva por parte de la mayoría de los críticos norteamericanos de profundizar en la obra de Fromm, debida a la acción de „filtros sociales“ o a prejuicios arraigados en sus propias definiciones parroquianas de la psicología. Esta categorizaciones, a su vez, están condicionadas por las limitaciones de la ortodoxia freudiana en Norteamérica, o bien por la corriente principal de la psicología académica, cada vez más positivista y conductista, existente en los años en que Fromm disfrutaba de una amplia popularidad entre la generalidad del público lector. Otros tópicos incluyen la relación de Fromm con la psicología humanista norteamericana, y su propia inadvertida contribución a la amplia confusión o ignorancia con respecto a sus ideas sobre ética y psicoterapia.