

Kevin Anderson and Richard Quinney (Eds.). *Erich Fromm and Critical Criminology: Beyond the Punitive Society*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000. 206 pp. \$34.95 (cloth), \$15.95 (paper). ISBN 0-252-06830-0 (cloth), ISBN 0-252-0514-8 (paper).

Erich Fromm has long been a forgotten intellectual, despite a recent renewal of interest in his psychoanalytic theory, sociological analysis, and social criticism. Fromm was a major figure in the early Frankfurt School for Social Research, the originator of the authoritarian personality research tradition, mentor to sociologist David Riesman, an innovative Freudian revisionist and one of the most prominent public intellectuals in the middle of the twentieth century. Fromm became unfashionable by the early 1970s and has since received little scholarly attention. The last several years, however, has seen the publication of a series of works on Fromm's legacy. Kevin Anderson and Richard Quinney's *Erich Fromm and Critical Criminology: Beyond the Punitive Society* (2000) is an important part of this revival of interest in Fromm's work. This edited collection brings Fromm's previously untranslated writings on

crime and society to our attention, and its original scholarly essays raise once again important questions about Fromm's place in contemporary intellectual history.

Efforts to revisit Fromm's work fall into three different categories. As a matter of intellectual history, scholars have been looking anew at Fromm's contribution to the early development of critical theory, the revision of Freudian thought and twentieth century American social criticism and sociology. In addition, some scholars argue that Fromm has relevance to contemporary social theory, sociological research and Freudian clinical work. Finally, Fromm has been appropriated as an inspiration or an intellectual hero for a radical humanist political agenda in the context of a cynical neo-liberal and post-modern climate. Historical record, living legacy and inspiration are in tension in the Anderson and Quinney collection. The failure to distinguish these three distinct scholarly tasks leaves the volume a valuable but limited addition to scholarship on both Fromm and criminology.

Central to the volume is an excellent essay by Kevin Anderson entitled "Erich Fromm and the Frankfurt School Critique of Criminal." Anderson insightfully discusses Fromm's early 1930s essays on the criminal justice system, forgotten scholarship that is translated into English here for the first time. Anderson reminds us that Fromm was an important part of the early German development of what we now call "critical theory." Anderson's essay highlights Fromm's pioneering concern with developing a Freudian-Marxist account of the legitimating role played by the modern criminal justice system. Placing Fromm's essays in the context of other German critical theorists (Rusche and Kirchheimer), liberal criminologists (Liszt and Aschaffenburg), Freudian-Marxists (Siegfried Bernfield and Wilhelm Reich), and psychoanalysts (Alexander and Staub) of the time, Anderson makes an important contribution to historical scholarship on early twentieth century German intellectual life and criminology. Anderson also makes a compelling case that Fromm's psychoanalytically informed approach is more useful for thinking about crime today than either orthodox Freudian criminology or Foucault's poststructuralist anti-humanism. If Anderson's essay can help encourage young radical graduate students to look beyond the dead-end that Foucault offers them, this volume will have been a success. What Anderson's essay does not accomplish, however, (and this is a problem with the volume more generally) is to show specifically how Fromm's writings on criminology directly challenge contemporary mainstream research in the field. Fromm is presented as an inspiration for radical criminology, but less plausibly as a living criminological theorist or an expert on crime.

Lynn Chancer's "Fromm, Sadomasochism, and Contemporary American Culture" goes further in laying an agenda for a radical criminology influenced by Fromm's theories. Building on her important book *Sadomasochism and Everyday Life* (1992), Chancer suggests how Fromm's ideas about social character, irrationality and emotions can help illuminate the roots of crime, public opinion, the "mass psychology of crime" and the inadequacies of contemporary American criminology and public policy. Along with Nancy Chodorow and Jessica Benjamin, Chancer has done as much as anyone in developing a feminist and sociological adaptation of Freud's insights into the relationship between psyche and society. For the most part, however, Chancer's theoretical agenda, as well as the other essays in the book, have only begun to re-open the discussion of the relevance of a psychoanalytically informed social theory for thinking about crime. There is much more work to be done, hopefully by scholars such as Chancer who do have an active empirical research agenda on crime in contemporary society.

As in any edited volume, the quality of the chapters is inevitably uneven. Some chapters largely mistake Frommian inspiration for the history of ideas and contemporary relevance. Some of the radical criminology represented in the volume has too much of an insular feeling

to it, a shame just at the time when we need voices closer to the mainstream of North American sociology and social criticism willing to challenge contemporary crime policy with rigorous research and credible alternatives.

The volume contains important intellectual history, suggestive theoretical ideas, and might indeed inspire young scholars to return to critical theory as they engage contemporary debates within sociology and criminology. Anderson's essay on the young Erich Fromm's writings on crime is worth the price of admission. In addition, Rainer Funk, Fromm's literary executor, provides an extremely useful biographical context in his preface to the book as well as making available English translations of some of Fromm's early work. This volume will thus be indispensable for scholars interested in Fromm's social theory. Ultimately, however, Fromm's writings on crime are worth only a small footnote in the history of critical theory and criminology. Fromm wrote too little on the topic and his essays are crude by contemporary standards. Fromm's major contribution to social theory and modern social science is likely to be found elsewhere, particularly with his revision of psychoanalytic theory and development of a Freudian inspired sociological and historical social psychology. But that would be a different book. This one works reasonably well for what it has tried to accomplish.

REFERENCE

Chancer, L. (1992). *Sadomasochism and everyday life*. Livingston NJ: Rutgers University Press.

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