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Martin Dehli. *Leben als Konflikt: Zur Biographie Alexander Mitscherlichs.* Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2007. 320 pp. EUR 29.90, cloth, ISBN 978-3-8353-0063-7.

Tobias Freimüller. *Alexander Mitscherlich: Gesellschaftsdiagnosen und Psychoanalyse nach Hitler.* Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2007. 480 pp. EUR 39.90, cloth, ISBN 978-3-8353-0187-0.

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Although he was not as widely known as his contemporaries Theodor Adorno, Max Horckheimer, or Jürgen Habermas, Alexander Mitscherlich played an integral role in the German Federal Republic's scientific and cultural development. Recently, two biographies of Alexander Mitscherlich have attempted to place his development in the cultural and political context of the dramatic transformations that took place during Mitscherlich's life. Martin Dehli and Tobias Freimüller successfully interweave Alexander Mitscherlich's life and scientific development within his social and political milieu during the Weimar, National Socialist, and postwar periods. Dehli and Freimüller both carefully try to distance themselves from the bulk of work that has focused primarily on Mitscherlich's role as a psychoanalyst who revitalized medical programs at the universities of Heidelberg and Frankfurt. Instead, they bring a fresh approach to Mitscherlich's life by examining his earlier development within the politically polarized years leading up to 1933, and the impact of Nazi oppression on his later scientific and political worldview.

Both Dehli and Freimüller agree on the general details about Mitscherlich's life: imprisoned after opposing the Nazis while still a medical student in 1937, Mitscherlich emerged after the war

as an instrumental figure in psychiatric medicine. With his anti-Nazi credentials, Mitscherlich stood in an exceptional position as an internationally recognized, morally unburdened figure able to rehabilitate German medicine from its Nazi past. In the 1950s, he revived the field of psychoanalysis in Germany, where it had been denounced by the Nazis, by bringing world-renowned figures to share perspectives on individual and collective responsibility for coming to terms with the past. In addition to his scientific achievements, Mitscherlich was a major figure in the new democracy's cultural and political scene. Called the "bearer of the national conscience" by one prize committee, his diagnoses of Germany's "inability to mourn" and the "fatherless society" in popular works during the 1960s became touchstones for analyzing Germany's failure to remember, or accept responsibility for, its traumatic past. Dedicated to fostering a liberal-progressive society and a democracy based on humanistic values, Mitscherlich was also admired by the '68ers and played a key role in defending the student movement.

Dehli emphasizes that, in order to understand Mitscherlich, his life before 1945 must be reexamined to correct the distortions in his biography that stem from previous scholarship and even Mitscherlich's own self-portrayals. By examining the years in Mitscherlich's life before he rose to international fame, historians can weigh the continuities and changes in his development and ideology more accurately. Dehli dismisses Mitscherlich's own claims of having been one of the so-called anti-fascists of the first hour and of having always been devoted to psychoanalysis. In fact, Dehli claims, Mitscherlich's political views and scientific development in the early 1930s and during the war stood in clear contrast to the positions that he later claimed. His political ideas did not evolve in a straight line to the liberal-progressive views he held in the last years of his life. Instead, Mitscherlich, like many other Germans of his generation, struggled to establish a coherent identity in a period of political upheaval. In this vein, Dehli attempts to trace Mitscherlich's crisis as an individual within Germany's larger political crises, comparing the doctor's own dilemma in legitimizing the medical profession with the nation's struggles with continuity and change following the trauma of National Socialism.

Dehli focuses his first two chapters on Mitscherlich's pre-1945 experiences, tracing his identity formation and political development in the context of his fragmented nation. Stifled in the educated, middle-class family environment in which he was raised, Mitscherlich discovered a sense of liberation in 1928 when he entered the university at Munich. He first became interested in history and the humanist tradition under the guidance of inspiring professors, but the greatest influence on his life just before the Nazis came to power was that of the writer Ernst Jünger. Dehli argues that Jünger's ideas became the cornerstone of the conservative revolution that held sway over Mitscherlich's first phase of intellectual development. The famous veteran's lectures and writings on the positive psychological aspects of the trench experience appealed to the young student. According to Dehli, myths about trench heroism espoused by the front generation appealed strongly to Mitscherlich. Jünger even introduced Mitscherlich to a circle of writers and publishers who rejected the political ideals of the Weimar Republic and envisioned replacing the social order with a different kind of nationalist unity that transcended social class. Ultimately, he developed a cynical, distant perspective on the demise of Germany's first democracy, seeing politics as a kind of circus that fed on the masses.

Dehli identifies an interesting paradox in Mitscherlich's development: although he was a product of the Weimar Republic's culture and literature of modernity, he was also ambivalent about the republic and mass politics, a topic that fascinated him throughout his career. At the same time, the political violence of the Nazis repulsed Mitscherlich and propelled him towards the polit-

ical Left. While employed as a bookseller, he joined a resistance circle organized by Ernst Niekisch that espoused an iconoclastic mixture of communist revolution and nationalist sentiment. Dehli emphasizes that Mitscherlich's political development came through personal attachments with Jünger and Niekisch who, despite their divergent ideologies, laid the foundation for Mitscherlich's lifelong struggle with questions about whether democracy could survive the pressures of modernity and whether humans were psychologically suited to political structures based on reason.

In the midst of this political transformation, Mitscherlich pursued his study of medicine in 1933-35. These studies, along with the search for relief from the pressures of living under Nazism, led him to Switzerland. There he first encountered a circle of psychoanalysts who introduced him to self-analysis. When Mitscherlich briefly returned to Germany in 1937, the Gestapo arrested him and he spent eight months in prison. Upon his release, he approached Viktor von Weizsäcker for help; the doctor and philosopher gave Mitscherlich the research space to work on medical anthropology and psychotherapy. Dehli argues that Mitscherlich's personal experience with Nazi violence, including his first-hand observations of medical crimes against the vulnerable, profoundly shaped his critique of Social Darwinism. Mitscherlich thus embraced humanistic ideals, placing him in a unique intellectual position in 1945.

With the collapse of the Nazi regime, Mitscherlich was poised to foster postwar society's transition to new scientific and political values. Dehli argues, however, that 1945 did not represent a "zero hour" for Mitscherlich. True, Mitscherlich was instrumental in organizing an identifiable new era in the postwar institutional and scientific community. Nonetheless, such a movement could not erase the personal and intellectual continuities of scientists between the 1930s and the postwar setting. His own position as a doctor with impeccable anti-Nazi credentials thus played a key role in his ability to facilitate cooperation between Heidelberg University's administration and the occupying powers, thus ensuring the university's reopening. This collaboration with U.S. powers made him a pariah in the eyes of many of his colleagues, but Mitscherlich successfully guided the university in the direction of a liberal-humanist tradition. Dehli argues that Mitscherlich's politics during this period, though leftist, were still influenced by his conservative cultural past. Mitscherlich feared that the progress promised by machines threatened individuals with a system that would ultimately dehumanize them. Instead, he embraced a system of "free socialism" that called for local political activism as a counter to soulless mass politics and the emerging "bureaucratic dictatorship" that he believed would crush individuals and democracy (Dehli, p. 141).

While at Heidelberg, Mitscherlich did investigative research for the Nuremberg trials, reporting on crimes committed by the German medical establishment. In addition to providing what remains the definitive work on atrocities committed by doctors, Mitscherlich also reflected on the medical establishment's moral duty to atone for this past. Dehli emphasizes the intersection of politics and medicine in Mitscherlich's postwar life, as Mitscherlich stressed the need for medical professionals to deal with their moral responsibilities in order to avoid becoming part of the dehumanizing system.

After his work on denazification, Mitscherlich entered another phase of his career, moving past Weizsäcker's focus on medical anthropology and psychosomatic medicine to explore *Daseinsanalyse*, a combination of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. As in his previous intellectual shifts, Mitscherlich's new development represented a conglomeration of science, politics, and culture. Mitscherlich became fascinated by questions of

identity formation and instincts as ways of studying not only the individual psyche, but also the nation's postwar coming to terms with the past. He brought internationally renowned psychoanalysts to Germany in the early 1950s and founded the Psychoanalytic Institute at Frankfurt. Alhough Mitscherlich is touted as a foundational figure in reestablishing psychoanalysis in Germany, Dehli traces as much continuity as change in the personnel who formed the backbone of the Federal Republic's psychotherapeutic profession. Nevertheless, Mitscherlich's charisma and political credibility enabled him to gain financial and political support for his publications.

Along with Adorno and Horkheimer, Mitscherlich began to apply the principles of Freudian analysis to postwar society, and his books on social psychology became a reference point for the West German self-understanding. The "fatherless society" and the "inability to mourn" became his most poetic metaphors for the postwar condition, but, according Dehli, they represented the experiences of Germany's long-term breakdown of authority and search for identity through crises from the 1930s through the 60s, after which the individual and German society had to reconstruct a sense of self. Dehli ends his study with Mitscherlich's role as an intellectual founder of the FRG and well-known cultural critic. Fulfilling his goal of concentrating on his earlier, lesser-known period of development, Dehli leaves Mitscherlich's role in the tumultuous 1960s to another biographer.

Whereas Dehli argues that we cannot reconstruct Mitscherlich from a backward lens, Freimüller makes the case that, in order to understand the man's ideology and political identity in the 1960s, one must analyze the professional and intellectual steps that led to his fame. Although he provides in-depth analysis of Mitscherlich's pre-1945 experiences and the early recovery of medicine in the FRG, Freimüller's primary focus falls on the period in the 1960s when Mitscherlich became a popular symbol, and analyst, of the German national conscience. Using Mitscherlich's own psychoanalytic methods, Freimüller places his subject in the phases of instability and discontinuity that shaped his generation, claiming that Mitscherlich's personal life was formed by a sense of insecurity and isolation that later influenced his intellectual habitus.

According to Freimüller, Mitscherlich experienced the collapse of the Weimar Republic as the suicide of the bourgeois elite. This era pushed him to analyze the collapse of authority and the dangers of mass politics. Indeed, Mitscherlich displayed a lifelong ambivalence towards bourgeois culture. On the one hand, he was a product of its educational structure, reason, and rationality. On the other hand, he was always suspicious of modernity. Like Dehli, Freimüller characterizes Mitscherlich's experience at the end of the Weimar Republic as an oscillation from right- to left-wing radical politics, and he documents the young man's aversion to fascism and the impact of his imprisonment in 1937. Freimüller argues that the dissidents in Heidelberg, including Weizsäcker, influenced Mitscherlich's liberal-democratic worldview decisively, and by 1945, the young doctor's belief in "free socialism" had been set. Freimüller portrays Mitscherlich as incorporating a curious combination of bourgeois elitism, with his sense of purpose in educating the masses to political maturity, and a fierce criticism of authority, with his call for skeptical individuals to constantly engage in critical thinking and introspection.

Freimüller identifies the formative experience for Mitscherlich as the period 1945-47, when he was disappointed over what he perceived to be Germans' failure to pursue a new, postwar sensibility based on self-questioning and critical analysis. Despite, or perhaps because of, his anxiety that Germans refused to confront their past, Mitscherlich set out on his own journey of renewal by carving out a new, credible medical estab-

lishment in Germany. Indeed, Freimüller identifies Mitscherlich's experience as an investigator for the Nuremberg trials as triggering his interest in psychoanalysis. After becoming deeply pessimistic about the human condition and the difficulty in overcoming the mass insanity that had led to Nazi crimes, Mitscherlich looked to psychoanalysis for a way to meet the challenges faced by individuals in modern society. Freimüller argues that Mitscherlich's work at Heidelberg and Frankfurt demonstrates that his intellectual strength lay not necessarily in providing the theoretical foundation of psychosomatic and psychoanalytic ideas, but rather in his capacity as a symbolic icon who could synthesize different fields and ideas and bring international recognition to Germany's revival of medicine and psychotherapy.

In the 1960s, Mitscherlich applied psychoanalytic thinking to the challenge of coming to terms with the past. He argued that Nazi crimes were not just the product of morally corrupt doctors who promoted the killing of the mentally and physically disabled. He claimed that they also reflected deeper problems in the social structure that needed to be identified and eliminated. In his book *Auf dem Weg zur vaterlosen Gesellschaft* (1963), Mitscherlich identified an overly bureaucratic, anonymous, and alienated modern world in which individuality is prized but in reality lost to social pressure to conform. In order to overcome this crisis, and to confront the responsibility for Nazi atrocities, claimed Mitscherlich, individuals must examine their own psychological tendencies towards mass conformity and the "sickness of prejudice" (Freimüller, p. 291). The willingness of Germans to place their *Ich-Ideal* (ego ideal) in the *Führer* represented a collective psychological breakdown. Unsurprisingly, Mitscherlich's interest in self-criticism and social renewal drew him to view the student movements of the 1960s as having the potential to break down the oppressive features of modernization. Mitscherlich publicly supported student radicals, praising their willingness to confront and provoke authority. The trust students awarded Mitscherlich gained him an even wider audience as the younger generation embraced his call for Germans to evaluate honestly their collective and individual responsibility for making Nazi crimes possible.

Both Dehli and Freimüller convincingly argue that Mitscherlich's role as a public figure went far beyond his success as a psychoanalyst. Mitscherlich was deeply shaped by the rupture with civilization created by National Socialism, driving him to apply his scientific ideas to the establishment and preservation of democratic structures. However, their perspectives on which phases of Mitscherlich's life narrative deserve emphasis diverge, and any critique of their biographies is bound to be caught up in a debate as to the turning points in Mitscherlich's life and the most significant people and events to influence him. Freimüller makes the dialogue between the two books explicit: In his introduction, he critiques Dehli for overlooking Mitscherlich's emergence from the scientific establishment to become a cultural figure in the 1960s. Dehli successfully supports his thesis that Mitscherlich's life was a complex result of interactions with influential role models and social conditions that transformed his ideas as he struggled to unite his divergent political and scientific ideas. Freimüller also succeeds at contextualizing Mitscherlich's intellectual and political development, placing greater focus on his subject's scientific quest for a method of diagnosing Germany's individual and collective trauma. In addition, both historians maintain critical perspectives on their sources, including Mitscherlich's own sometimes self-serving autobiography. Nor do they shy away from questioning long-held assumptions about Mitscherlich's life and ideas. Both Dehli and Freimüller provide biographies that treat their subject as a complex individual whose intellectual journey must be understood against the background of historical circumstances. These engaging analyses are an important contribution to reconsidering Mitscherlich,

his writings, and postwar West German intellectual society.

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in influencing him.

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