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Bill Schlotter

NAZI INFLUENCE ON MODERN WORLD TOLD IN UC SANTA BARBARA PROFESSOR'S THREE-VOLUME HISTORY OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

Though many would prefer to distance the 21st-century world from the legacy of Nazi rule in Germany, Laurence Rickels, a professor of German at the University of California, Santa Barbara, says there is little about modern life that wasn't affected by Adolph Hitler's fascist regime.

In his new three-volume work, "Nazi Psychoanalysis" (University of Minnesota Press, 2002), Rickels tells the history of the odd conjuncture of Nazism and psychoanalysis with frequent digressions to discuss Nazi influence in other spheres.

"What I liked about this project is that it is all about the uncanny continuity that keeps us closer to Nazi Germany than we might like to be," Rickels said.

In volume one, "Only Psychoanalysis Won the War," Rickels describes the development of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud and his followers and discusses its value in treating shellshock during World War I.

Because of its successful use in World War I, psychoanalysis was later embraced by the Nazi military, despite its origin with Freud and other Jewish psychologists. The

Nazi leadership, believing its country had lost World War I solely for psychological reasons, used Freud's work to treat shellshock and other war-induced neuroses.

"There is a myth most of us like to believe that there was no Freud in Nazi Germany," Rickels said. "Even though (Carl) Jung's pronouncements were more ideologically compatible with the stuff the Nazis liked to talk about, when it came to actual practice, they gave the advantage to the psychoanalysts. They kept Freud's science because it worked."

Jung, famous for his own psychological theories with regard to introvert and extrovert personalities and the collective unconscious of human experience, was a close collaborator with Freud early in their careers. The men eventually split over Freud's insistence on the sexual basis of neuroses.

The Nazis also used Freud's work to develop means of warfare aimed solely at the minds of opposing armies.

"The Germans were the ones who coined the phrase 'psychological warfare,'" Rickels said.

In his second volume, "Crypto-Fetishism," Rickels lays out advances in psychoanalysis made during World War II.

In the wake of German air strikes on British cities, the effects of war on civilian women and children were examined for the first time, leading to the development of family systems therapy, still a dominant treatment among psychiatrists today.

He also discusses the numerous similarities between psychoanalysis and the Nazi version of morality, particularly with regard to homosexuality.

That leads to volume three, "Psy Fi," in which Rickels discusses Nazi fascination with science and technology. He gives the example of German psychoanalysts studying the psychological adaptations of airplane pilots to the rigors of flight.

"One can really say that the pilot in this type of theorization was the first cyborg," Rickels said. "He was seen as someone who was merging with the machine."

Rickels said he began the work in 1991 with a single volume in mind.

"It's really an exhaustive history of the technical and theoretical innovations that were introduced at that time," Rickels said. "It is something I really wanted to write, but I am glad it's finally out of the house."

Note to editors: Laurence Rickels can be reached at (805) 893-2131 or at rickels@gss.ucsb.edu.

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