Reclaiming the Sane Society

Essays on Erich Fromm's Thought

Seyed Javad Miri, Robert Lake and
Tricia M. Kress (Eds.)

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Reclaiming the Sane Society

IMAGINATION AND PRAXIS: CRITICALITY AND CREATIVITY IN EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

VOLUME 2

SCOPE

Current educational reform rhetoric around the globe repeatedly invokes the language of 21st century learning and innovative thinking while contrarily re-enforcing, through government policy, high stakes testing and international competition, standardization of education that is exceedingly reminiscent of 19th century Taylorism and scientific management. Yet, as the steam engines of educational "progress" continue down an increasingly narrow, linear, and unified track, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the students in our classrooms are inheriting real world problems of economic instability, ecological damage, social inequality, and human suffering. If young people are to address these social problems, they will need to activate complex, interconnected, empathetic and multiple ways of thinking about the ways in which peoples of the world are interconnected as a global community in the living ecosystem of the world. Seeing the world as simultaneously local, global, political, economic, ecological, cultural and interconnected is far removed from the Enlightenment's objectivist and mechanistic legacy that presently saturates the status quo of contemporary schooling. If we are to derail this positivist educational train and teach our students to see and be in the world differently, the educational community needs a serious dose of imagination. The goal of this book series is to assist students, practitioners, leaders, and researchers in looking beyond what they take for granted, questioning the normal, and amplifying our multiplicities of knowing, seeing, being and feeling to, ultimately, envision and create possibilities for positive social and educational change. The books featured in this series will explore ways of seeing, knowing, being, and learning that are frequently excluded in this global climate of standardized practices in the field of education. In particular, they will illuminate the ways in which imagination permeates every aspect of life and helps develop personal and political awareness. Featured works will be written in forms that range from academic to artistic, including original research in traditional scholarly format that addresses unconventional topics (e.g., play, gaming, ecopedagogy, aesthetics), as well as works that approach traditional and unconventional topics in unconventional formats (e.g., graphic novels, fiction, narrative forms, and multi-genre texts). Inspired by the work of Maxine Greene, this series will showcase works that "break through the limits of the conventional" and provoke readers to continue arousing themselves and their students to "begin again" (Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*, 1995, p. 109).

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PREFACE

Erich Fromm (1900-1980) was born in Frankfurt Germany and in his formative years, studied traditional Jewish ethics and the newly formed disciplines of sociology and psychoanalysis. After completing his Ph.D. in sociology in 1922 he studied further to become a psychoanalyst. In 1930 he was invited to become a faculty member at the Institute for Social Research at the Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany, also known as The Frankfurt School for Social Research, and the institution that is now widely held as the birthplace of critical theory. With the rise of Hitler, Fromm was forced to immigrate to America in 1934. The institute itself sought refuge in New York and was housed at Columbia University in 1935. By 1937, Fromm's humanistic readings of Marx and his rejection of Freud's biologically deterministic drive theories alienated him from the core of scholars at the institute. More specifically, Fromm emphasized the role of social processes in personality formation and eschewed a hardline, depersonalized view of class struggle that cut across prevailing Marxist dogma. These views would eventually result in public disenfranchisement and denunciation from former colleagues such as Theodore Adorno and Herbert Marcuse who went on to become immensely popular with the New Left in Western thought. Yet Fromm's books went on to sell by the millions. One book alone, *The Art of Loving* (1956), has sold over 25,000,000 copies. Because he wrote about human relationships in a popular style that was more accessible to a wide range of readers, his work has been mistakenly stereotyped as "self-help" or "pop-psychology," but as the essays in this book attest, this is simply not the case. In fact, Fromm's work is particularly relevant in light of present, increasingly complex and often insane prevailing global conditions caused by greed, religious and political dogma, dehumanization and standardization.

In many ways Fromm's work is at least fifty years ahead of his time and brings to mind a metaphor that comes from the largest and oldest trees on the planet, the sequoia. These trees produce seeds in a cone that do not proliferate at the moment of maturity but are retained until the most advantageous environment for germination arises. This occurs after a fire when all the competing growth on the forest floor has been consumed in the heat. At that moment, the heat opens and releases the seeds of the sequoia. Present global geo-political conditions are indeed "heating up" considerably, but this heat can also create the environment for the dissemination of Fromm's work. For example if you read Fromm's (1968) work the *Revolution of Hope*, he clearly warned us of the peril of the misuse of technology when he wrote that if it "is permitted to follow its own logic, it will become a cancer-like growth, eventually threatening the structured system of individual and social life" (p. 15). Fromm offered the first expanded definition of

biophilia (beyond a medical glossary) in his (1964) work, *The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil*, which included a passionate desire to preserve and nurture all living things. His use of the word has been appropriated by leading voices in ecology such as E.O. Wilson and David Orr. Conversely his use of necrophilia to describe man's perverse desire to possess and destroy is an apt description of the many-headed monster of neo-liberalism, nihilism, extreme fundamentalist beliefs and increasing standardization. Issues such these are now written about continually by the leading scholars of critical theory and public intellectuals such as Henry Giroux, Naomi Klein and bell hooks just to name a few.

Though several Frankfurt School theorists' works appear to influence critical conversations about education, references to the works of Fromm are conspicuously absent, despite the fact that his work strongly influenced Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* the volume which few would argue is foundational to what has come to be known as "critical pedagogy." Like Freire, Fromm saw love, hope and respect for life as fundamental to the growth of a healthy society and healthy individuals. The relevance of Fromm's work to education can be understood through the key concepts his thought expresses in the contemporary moment. The terms mentioned above along with his crucial distinction of "having" and "being" (Fromm, 1976) are vitally important when applied to education. Indeed, it is hard to separate his notion of the vast difference between consuming and possessing information, "*having*," and personal experience with the text, "*being*," from Freire's concept of the banking model of education. These two men spent time together on several occasions, and like all healthy dialogical relationships, it is clear that they both influenced each other on education and in their focus on an actively engaged praxis of hope. Additionally, Fromm's (1960) vision of learner centered, curiosity borne, inwardly free, democratic education is a concise yet potent description of the kind of schools we could only hope for in the current nightmare of painting by numbers curriculum. While Fromm's work makes a relatively small appearance in the education literature, his ideas were nonetheless influential and offer an additional lens through which to reimagine education as critical praxis that is hopeful and actively engaged toward recreating education and humanity to be more humane.

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FOREWORD

Erich Fromm's social psychological approach and its relevance for today

Erich Fromm's relevance for today means above all to refer to him as a social scientist who developed his own social psychoanalytic approach to man and society. But there is another important aspect of Fromm's relevance for today. It often was neglected or interpreted as "another voice" in Fromm—a "spiritual voice" that has to be strictly separated from his "scientific voice." According to Fromm's concept of a "science of man" this aspect has not at all to be separated; rather, it refers to the subjective preconditions of any scientific work in the field of social sciences: For Fromm it is a decisive question, whether a scientist is able to practice personally reason and love—that is to say whether he or she personally is practicing the social psychological insights into what is conducive to a person's ability to be related to oneself and to others. Both of Fromm's contributions—his social psychoanalytic theory and how he as a scientist practiced reason and love—will be discussed.

FROMM'S THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Like Sigmund Freud, Erich Fromm was driven by the question of what drives the person *internally*. Only with this answer could a satisfactory answer be found as to why people think, feel and act irrationally, why they control their cognitive and affective strengths insufficiently, even counterproductively, and why they show dysfunctional behavior or become psychically ill. Unlike Freud, who as a physician treated the individual patient and drew on natural scientific patterns to explain psychic phenomena, Fromm the sociologist pursued psychic phenomena with primarily social psychological interest: he wanted to find out why *many* people behave irrationally in similar ways. This modified central interest entailed that Fromm also had to find an answer to the question of what the inner drives of the subjects had to do with their collective way of life, that is, with their economic relationships and societal demands. With this, the question took hold from the very beginning of what role the requirements for social success play in the development of internal drives. With just a few lines it shall be indicated how Fromm answered this question in the 1930s and how he thus came to a distinct psychoanalytic approach, with which he already developed a great deal conceptually that was interpreted 50 years later in relational and intersubjective psychoanalysis as a great paradigm shift.

The New View on Man and Society

That Fromm could come to a new theory that combines the question of sociology and psychology into a social psychological theory and method has doubtless to do with the fact that from 1935 on, Fromm was in an intense exchange with Harry Stack Sullivan, who put the question of the adaptation of man to the environment at the core of his interpersonal psychoanalysis. The psychiatrist Sullivan saw the person's main problem not in drives, but in his or her relatedness to reality. This different view about what drives a person internally, that is, the need for relatedness, fell on fertile ground with Fromm.

For Fromm, socialized as an orthodox Jew, the question of relatedness was a deeply existential one. Fromm grew up in a religious tradition that defined its identity from its demarcation from liberal Christianity as well as from a Judaism that was willing to assimilate to bourgeois society. To be a Jew meant for Fromm that as a child and teenager he had to cut himself off and be isolated. In his 1922 dissertation, he examined three groupings within diaspora Judaism and pursued the question of what enabled these diaspora Jews to survive without adapting their behavior to the society in which they lived. That the question of social relatedness became a question of his own survival became clear no later than when Hitler seized power. Unlike a large part of his extended family, Fromm escaped extermination at the hands of the National Socialists by emigrating in 1934.

Sullivan's focus in psychoanalysis on the question of interpersonal relatedness encouraged Fromm to understand a person's need for relatedness as the core psychological problem and to revise Freud's psychoanalytic theory accordingly. For Fromm, abandoning Freudian libido theory was unavoidable in this. This departure was already alluded to at the end of 1936 in a letter to Karl August Wittfogel, a colleague at the Institute for Social Research, to which Fromm belonged at the time:

> I worked over my fundamental reexamination of Freud. The core of the argument is when I try to demonstrate that those urges which motivate social activities are not, as Freud supposes, sublimations of sexual instincts, rather products of social processes or, to be more precise, reactions to certain circumstances in which human beings need to satisfy their instincts. These urges…differ in principle from the natural factors, namely the drives to satisfy hunger, thirst and sexual desire. While all human beings and animals have these in common, the others are specifically human productions. (Letter to Wittfogel, dated Dec. 18, 1936 – Erich Fromm Archive)

Fromm elaborated these thoughts in an essay completed in the Summer of 1937, which was received unfavorably by his colleagues at the Institute for Social Research and therefore remained unpublished. (I found this essay, thought lost, in 1990 in the part of Fromm's estate deposited at the New York Public Library. It is now accessible in English with the title "Man's impulse structure and its relation to culture." Cf. Fromm, 1992a.) By means of this essay, it is possible to see point for point which insights brought Fromm to a reformulation of psychoanalytic theory.

For most psychologically relevant phenomena, being driven by the need for relatedness is more plausible than being driven by instinctual needs, which a person shares with animals.

In Fromm's eyes, Freudian drive theory took too little regard of a person's specific situation. According to Fromm "the psychic structure of man is regarded as the product of his activity and his manner of life and not as the reflex thrown up by his physical organization" (p. 71). Being driven by a need for relatedness (cf. Fromm, 1955, pp. 30-36) resulted from the circumstance that the person lacked the instinctual ability to adapt to his environment to a large extent, so that he perceived this relatedness as a psychic necessity, which he would have to satisfy all his life with his human potential and because of social requirements.

What drives the person, especially internally, are conscious and unconscious psychic impulses, with which the person satisfies his or her need to be related to reality, to other people and to him or herself, in which the implementation of these impulses are largely the result of his or her adapting to the demands of societal cohabitation.

The physiological drives" such as hunger, thirst and sexual desire, do not have a particular significance for the formation of the psychic structure for Fromm. "The most important elements of the psychic structure are," as he formulates in his 1937 essay, "the '*attitude*' of the individual to others or to himself, or, as we should like to say, the *basic human relation*, and the fears and impulses which, in part directly, in part indirectly, arise out of this behavior" (p. 44). Fromm calls relatedness here "basic human relation," to express that the person does not exist other than as a relational being, where the concrete manner of his relatedness and his impulses rise from a social process. Later, he speaks of character orientations rather than basic human relations and thereby distinguishes between those that develop because of social adaptation and those that are based on individual life circumstances and relational experiences. He already calls the character orientation resulting from social relatedness the "socially typical character" (p. 58) in the 1937 essay, and distinguishes it from individual character formations.

The Relevance for Social Sciences

This distinction between individual and social character also results for Fromm from another understanding of the relationship between individual and society. Just as the Freudian individual is always faced by a society that must be accepted by the individual for better or for worse for the sake of social cohabitation, and which demands of him to abandon his impulses, so Fromm's relational theoretical approach sees society always at work in the individual, and the individual exists only as a socialized being. "Society and the individual," says Fromm in his 1937 paper, "are not 'opposite' to each other. *Society is nothing but living, concrete individuals, and the individual can live only as a social human being*" (p. 58). With this, Fromm really introduced a new and different understanding of individual and society to psychology as well to sociology. What is special in Fromm's psychoanalytic approach is that he understands the person as having always been

related to others, and that he understands this primary sociality not only in the sense of interactive sociality, as antecedent relatedness to other individuals, but as a social relatedness that precedes all concrete perceptions of relatedness, which has its psychic representation in the social character.

Actually, this point is most relevant for today in social science. Fromm always tries to see the person, even in his intersubjectivity and relatedness, as a social being. He thus overcomes a social amnesia of which social scientists in particular accuse psychoanalytic theory and practice, and which is not really transcended by relational psychoanalysis or the intersubjective paradigm. From the Frommian perspective, the intersubjective approach is still far too limited to do justice to the social imprint of the person. Sociability of the person is defined in the intersubjective paradigm only from the interactive social, not from that, which the person has to develop in terms of irrational pathogenic drives to do justice to the demands of a certain society. The intersubjective paradigm lacks the potential for social critique that capacitated Freud to recognize the meaning of repressed sexual urges in the development of psychic illnesses and brought Fromm to unmask authoritarianism as pathogenic, given both its inherent quest for power and subordination. At issue is a social-psychological approach with which it is recognizable that that which society needs to function is manifested in the person as a powerful striving, but by all means can also make him or her sick.

Fromm's social psychoanalytic approach is able to do exactly this. It can let us recognize, for example, that the socially required and promoted striving for security, predictability, and quantifiability stifles a person's ability to trust and to love. It especially allows for a critical distance from the consumerism omnipresent today, in which what goes into a person and what he can acquire and become is the only thing that counts, not what he can bring out of himself from his own abilities. Such consumerism occurs today especially with respect to the experience of feelings and passions. The production and offer of events, emotions, affects and passions are in full force and bring the individual to relinquish his innermost perception of feelings and affective powers in order to experience the proffered emotions. The pathogenic effects of this are readable in insurance companies' statistics of depression and "burn outs" and also in the inner emptiness and lifelessness that overcome people more and more if they do not let themselves be animated, entertained, stimulated, enlivened or get inspired. Fromm has a clear idea of what is conducive for a "sane" society and which ways of being related have productive effects on mental health, on human growth and on the successful outcome of human beings: by actively being related to reality, to others and to oneself with reason and love.

"DIRECT MEETING": FROMM'S WAY TO BE A SOCIAL SCIENTIST

A Personal Report

As I rang the bell at the entrance to the apartment building "Casa La Monda" in Muralto near Locarno, Switzerland on September 1, 1972 and took the tiny

elevator to the fifth floor, I had no idea that this first personal encounter with Erich Fromm would be the beginning of a unique relationship for me. Everything that I had been taught up to that point and everything that I had learned, tried out, and experienced myself in the previous twenty-nine years had been centered on education and thought. I was absolutely convinced that this was the way to supremely master life, even my personal, social, moral and religious life. To comprehend and to intellectually safeguard the human was my educational goal. I was equally certain that, after an experience like Auschwitz, we could only place our hopes in humanity if it were protected against failure by something which ensured and transcended man. Fromm's humanistic justification of ethics was dubious—too trusting and naive. In my initial letter to him, of August 1, 1972, I had already intimated that his humanism would clearly be "the starting point for a constructive debate."

The elevator finally arrived on the fifth floor. When the doors opened I looked straight at Erich Fromm. He was standing in the doorway to his apartment, and looked at me in a friendly and expectant way. I took two steps toward him and stiffly greeted the seventy-two-year-old with the formal address "Professor." He shook hands with me and facing me, replied: "*Guten Tag, Herr Funk.*"

Fromm invited me to join him in his study. My first impression was the breathtaking view of Lake Maggiore from the window. Fromm had positioned his desk—strewn with books and manuscripts—in front of the picture window extending across the room so that his gaze always fell on the water and its dramatic interplay with light. On the opposite shore the peak of Mt. Gambarogno was visible in the sunny haze of the late summer afternoon.

Not until later did I become aware to what a degree a person's relationship to nature instinctively creates a sense of trust in me. Here I had apparently encountered another human being who shared my affinity. Fromm offered me a chair next to this desk, facing the room. The bookshelves were overflowing, and manuscripts and handwritten drafts and notes were piled on every conceivable surface. This rather chaotic environment became obscured, however, as he seated himself and focused on me with an expression in his eyes that is difficult to describe.

Face-to-Face Encounter

Fromm looked at me in such a straightforward way that my attempts at polite conversation abruptly ceased and any role-specific behavior became unnecessary. Although we had only met face-to-face a few minutes before, a dimension for the relationship had already emerged, allowing closeness and trust, but no longer allowing the evasion of a question or topic that had been broached with clever remarks. Somehow Fromm's eyes, encircled by wrinkles, and scrutinizing me intently, managed to initiate a conversation that appeased my anxieties and made it possible for me to concentrate intently.

The initial focus of our meeting was by no means my questions about his works and thoughts. Fromm inquired about my professional situation and why I was

interested in his body of thought, particularly his ethics. Above all, he asked which aspects of psychoanalysis, religion and theology interested me. He even wanted to know my stance on Germany's *Ostpolitik*, my opinion of the Bavarian-born politician Franz Josef Strauß, and my assessment of Konrad Lorenz's theory of aggression. However, it wasn't his intention to discern my political or ideological orientation as quickly as possible. The questions—as it became clear to me through our conversations over the following eight years—were intended to reveal my deepest concerns and preoccupations. Fromm wanted to understand my innermost being: if and what I loved and hated, valued and sought, critically assessed and rejected, what appealed to me, encouraged, stimulated and angered me, delighted or thrilled me, what made me feel anxious or guilty or what frightened me. He was curious about my feelings, my needs, my interests and passions.

This was something entirely new to me. It was not my "head," my thoughts or my intellectual and argumentative abilities, that interested him, but—to continue on the same metaphorical level—my "heart." What motivated me, fascinated me, passionately moved me, what was behind my values and compelled me—this is what he wanted to learn. Thinking, the art of argumentation, brainwork, knowledge—all of these were at most means for arriving at what really drove people.

Fromm's undivided interest was directed toward coming into contact with inner strivings and feelings and understanding them not as obstacles but as bearers of energy. Even if the emotional powers were less than flattering and prevented thought and action in line with reality, it was crucial to make contact with them and meet them with understanding. Only in this way could the hidden meaning of intense feelings of jealousy or a paralyzing sense of inferiority, for example, be recognized, and the energy bound there be released for a rational or loving approach. The result was a school of thought, in which 'head' and 'heart' were linked and which strove for cognitive insights *carried by feelings*. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that particular emphasis was placed on the fundamental role of feelings.

Through his interest and questions Fromm wanted to get in touch with my inner world, my rational and irrational, overt and covert strivings. To do so, he utilized eye contact. Since infancy we have all learned to express our inner state—our affects, feelings, wishes, needs as well as our inner reactions—through eye contact. Naturally, at the time, I was incapable of comprehending this fully. What I did sense, however, was that he had a special way of approaching me: it had a great deal to do with his gaze, which one could hardly evade. The pupils of his blue, myopic eyes behind the rimless eyeglasses appeared to be diminished in size, causing his look to seem almost penetrating. His gaze corresponded to his way of being interested in my inner life, my soul. But there was something else about the way Fromm looked at me, spoke to me and focused the conversation. Despite the directness and bluntness with which he approached uncovering my soul, I did not at all feel interrogated, cornered, judged, unmasked or exposed. I quickly sensed that he was dealing with me in a pleasant way, with understanding and warm-heartedness, and that I had no inclination to justify or to conceal myself. He

reached out to me and, through his sincere interest in what concerned me, let me sense that there was no reason to fear oneself or one's inner world. Every look and every word conveyed a sense of solidarity and kindness.

This type of human encounter was an entirely new experience for me: this way of conversing, of being with the other, of venturing into that world of feelings and passions which is at work behind our thinking, together with the assurance of a well-meaning glance from the other person, making small talk or pretences at concealment superfluous. Initiated by Fromm, it signaled the beginning of a new intellectual approach for me.

Letting Someone Sense: "This Is You"

The Frommian philosophy has its roots in experiences which Fromm himself had in therapeutic relationships. Approximately twenty years later, as his literary executor, I was preparing a number of Fromm's unpublished manuscripts for publication, when I came across the transcript of a lecture he had held at the William Alanson White Institute in New York City in 1959. There precisely this experience of solidarity was described:

> The feeling of human solidarity is one of the most important therapeutic experiences which we can give to the patient, because at that moment the patient does not feel isolated any more. In all his neuroses or whatever his troubles are, the feeling of isolation, whether he is aware of it or not, is the very crux of his suffering. There are many other cruxes, but this is the main one. At the moment when he senses that I share this with him, so that I can say, 'This is you,' and I can say it not kindly and not unkindly, this is a tremendous relief from isolation. Another person who says, 'This is you,' and stays with me, and shares this with me.
>
> I have had the experience increasingly through the years that once you speak from your own experience and in this kind of relatedness to the patient, you can say anything and the patient will not feel hurt. On the contrary, he will feel greatly relieved that there is one man who sees him, because he knows the story all the time. We are often so naive, to think the patient must not know this, and the patient must not know that, because he would be so shocked. The fact is the patient knows it all the time, except he does not permit himself to have this knowledge consciously. When we say it, he is relieved because he can say: 'For heaven's sake, I knew this always.' (1992b [1959], pp. 178-179)

What Fromm says here about the therapeutic relationship also held true for him in general. In every type of relationship there should be a "direct" meeting with the other person, a face-to-face encounter; the face reveals the inner world of the other. A face-to-face encounter goes beneath the surface, making a "central relatedness" possible:

I can explain the other person as another Ego, as another thing, and then look at him as I look at my car, my house, my neurosis, whatever it may be. Or I can relate to this other person in the sense of being him, in the sense of experiencing, feeling this other person. Then I do not think about myself, then my Ego does not stand in my way. But something entirely different happens. There is what I call a *central relatedness* between me and him. He is not a thing over there which I look at, but he confronts me fully and I confront him fully, and there in fact is no way of escape. (p. 174)

Such a direct encounter means to be interested:

We are interested in another person, we listen attentively, we listen with interest, we think about the person, and yet the other person remains outside…We should try to be aware of the difference between lack of interest, interest and what I call the direct meeting with the other person, not only with regard to our patients, but with regard to everybody. (p. 178)

What distinguishes this "direct" meeting with another person from interest in another person? The "direct" meeting facilitates coming into contact with the feelings and passions of the other in order to be able to experience him or her as a whole person. For Fromm, there was one definitive characteristic of this kind of direct encounter with the other: "If you really see a person…you will stop judging provided you see that person fully." (p. 178 No matter how often we are forced to pass judgment on what we want and what we resist in the course of living and in safeguarding our existence, in a "direct" meeting, in a direct encounter with the other, we must refrain from judgment, if we truly want to see him or her. "If you see yourself, whatever you are, you will stop feeling guilty, because you feel: 'This is me'" (p. 178). Significant in the "direct" meeting is the direct encounter:

At the moment when you see yourself or another person fully, you do not judge because you are overwhelmed with the feeling, with the experience: 'So this is you,' and also with the experience: 'And who am I to judge'? In fact, you do not even ask that question. Because in experiencing him, you experience yourself. You say: 'So that is you' and you feel in some way very plainly: 'And that is me too'… If I see the other person—what happens is not only that I stop judging but also that I have a sense of union, of sharing, of oneness, which is something much stronger than being kind or being nice. There is a feeling of human solidarity when two people—or even one person—can say to the other: 'So that is you, and I share this with you.' This is a tremendously important experience. I would say, short of complete love, it is the most gratifying, the most wonderful, the most exhilarating experience, which occurs between two people. (p. 178)

An Exhilarating Experience

I vaguely perceived Fromm's capability for the face-to-face encounter when I met him personally for the first time on this first of September in Locarno. Exactly

thirty-three years earlier the Second World War had begun with the invasion of Poland. Fromm, a Jew by birth, was able to avoid persecution and genocide by emigrating to the U.S.A. in 1934. Sadly, although he had done everything in his power from New York City to try to arrange for the emigration of relatives, whom he cared for deeply, he was only able to save a few from deportation to concentration camps and subsequent murder there.

Evidently, Auschwitz did not, however, deter Fromm from seeking the face-to-face encounter with the other. Nor did he need transcendental authorization or a justification beyond man in order to have "the most exhilarating experience" "which occurs between two people" (p. 178). The practice or utilization of the capacity for the direct encounter necessitates neither a rational proof nor a special justification. In the course of its realization it proves itself to be morally right and good. The only question is what prevents one from actually doing this—the capability to encounter oneself and others directly can be limited, neutralized or even thwarted by fears, prejudices, biases, illusions, inhibitions, irrational bonds, etc. For Fromm, to put it concisely, it wasn't the head that made decisions but the heart, through emotional and psychic drives. These drives determine to a great degree whether our thinking is rational and reality-oriented and whether our feeling is loving and solidaristic—or not. This is why Fromm generally spoke of the capacity for reason and love instead of that for the "direct" meeting. The practice of reason and love is what ultimately makes "exhilarating" experiences possible.

During our first personal encounter I merely had the impression that the arguments with which I had intended to dispute Fromm's humanism had become obtuse and unessential. The way he approached me was totally "disarming." With my intellectual "weapons," that is logical, argumentative thought, I wanted to challenge, not concede something. I wanted to be right, not rational. I was seeking a confrontation, and Fromm was offering me a face-to-face-encounter.

I accepted his offer and noticed how both encounters during my initial visit invigorated me. I left Locarno highly motivated and energized. The following weeks, I formulated the sections on Fromm's social psychology and his theory of character orientation for my dissertation, and visited him in Locarno again in the summer of 1973. The following summer Fromm—who had only spent the summer months in Switzerland until then and otherwise lived in Cuernavaca, Mexico— decided not to return to Mexico, but to reside in Locarno year-round. This is how he came to ask me to be his research assistant, while he was writing the book *To Have or to Be?* (1976). I lived in Locarno for some time; later I worked for him while based in Tübingen, visiting him regularly in Locarno as well as in Hinterzarten and Baden-Baden, two spas in the Black Forest, where he and Annis spent the hot summer days together.

Above all, the almost daily contact with Fromm in 1974 and 1975 gave me the opportunity to develop a comprehension of his philosophy by observing and reflecting on its effects, although we rarely discussed this specifically. Our conversations revolved in part around topics which I had researched for the book *To Have or to Be?*, for example, the conception of "activity" in Aristotle, or oral traditional studies on the Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament, or the

concept of the Godhead in Meister Eckhart. The other part of the conversations—usually continuing for three or four hours—focused on specific passages and chapters of the book in progress, *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), which Fromm had given me to read as soon as Joan Hughes, his British secretary, had typed the handwritten version from the yellow legal pads. What distinctly characterized these conversations were Fromm's elucidations from his vast reservoir of historical and political events as well as his personal experiences and encounters with important figures in politics, society and psychoanalysis. Equally unforgettable: his boundless trove of jokes from the Jewish and psychoanalytic scene. It was extraordinarily difficult for Fromm to refrain from telling a joke that suddenly came to his mind.

But it wasn't actually the topics under discussion which caused me to notice the effects of his philosophy, as interesting and entertaining as these were. It was the face-to-face encounter which—regardless of the subject matter—he made possible with clearly perceptible effects on me. Particularly conspicuous were my heightened attentiveness and ability to concentrate; our interpersonal communication did not consume strength but released energy instead. During our countless discussions, I never experienced a feeling of exhaustion nor a decline in attentiveness. I was wide-awake and on some evenings worked on my dissertation far into the night after our meeting, the time spent together with Fromm having been energizing and stimulating. Equally striking was that I often lost all sense of time. Frequently it seemed as if I had arrived half an hour earlier, although three or four hours had actually elapsed.

Only in retrospect did the impact of the encounter with Fromm become clear to me; his contact with my emotional realm and my driving forces apparently had initiated a process of personal growth, although in all those years I never experienced Fromm in a therapeutic setting. (Since according to Fromm, the most significant therapeutic factor is the capacity of the therapist for a *direct meeting*—a face-to-face encounter with the patient—and not a setting defined as 'therapy,' it is not surprising that I observed typical therapeutic effects outside the therapeutic setting.) Nor did we ever discuss the following observations.

As a result of my contact with Fromm, I began to sense and seek a relationship to nature again. During childhood I had always known whether the moon was full, or waxing or waning, or new at a particular moment. Now I had rediscovered the lunar phases and was captivated when the full moon was reflected in the lake and illuminating the snow-covered peaks. On January 4, 1975, the first red bud of the camellia in front of my window in the Via Mondacce burst into bloom, and before long there was no mountain peak on the horizon that I hadn't scaled.

My decision to stop smoking in the spring of 1975 made life exceedingly difficult for me. Over an extended period of time, cigarettes had supported and stabilized something within me. I was oriented on "having" the cigarettes and on the nicotine-related effects of smoking. But who was I without the cigarettes? As a nonsmoker? The intense daily work on the manuscripts for *To Have or to Be?* was not without consequences. Freeing myself from this "having" mode of existence became a moment of truth: whether I chose only to intelligently discuss the

alternative "having" vs. "being" or whether I dared to put the theory to practice, i.e. dared to try to *be* without a crutch of *having*. The withdrawal symptoms were intense, and it took me several months to consciously and fully realize that the alternative to the "having" mode of existence is not the "not-having" mode of existence but the "being" mode of existence. The "being" mode of existence, as I learned, had much to do with becoming aware of other things in oneself and in one's social context as well as with allowing and pursuing new interests.

This was *terra incognita* for me, which I trod on with a wish for professional reorientation. I wanted to discover—in a more exacting and professional way— what really motivates and drives me and others; I wanted to familiarize myself with approaches to the human unconscious, both my own and that of others. At the same time I became aware that what interested me and what sparked my interest in scholarly work was changing considerably. To determine the morally right, the morally demanded and the morally favorable, that is, the morally good, and its justifications is undeniably an important and challenging question. However, it became increasingly clear to me that another question preoccupied me much more, namely, why people who recognize something as being morally right and good do not act in accordance with these insights in their concrete actions and decision-making. What hinders their utilization of the faculty of reason? Which irrational forces lead to their failure to act rationally?—I wanted to undergo training in psychoanalysis and leave the fields of theology and ethics, which I consequently did in 1977, after completing a doctoral dissertation on Fromm's ethics (see R. Funk, 1982) and having been accepted in a psychoanalytic training program in Stuttgart.

Encountering the Foreign

How crucial the direct encounter with the self is and what consequences it can have were phenomena which I also observed with Fromm himself. Hardly a day went by when he did not actively seek this direct encounter with himself. Fromm usually allotted an hour in the late morning for "his exercises." What he meant were physical and contemplative exercises which he had described in *The Art of Being* (1989 [1974-75]) as exercises promoting attentiveness and self-perception, sensory awareness exercises, Tai Chi as well as self-analysis. He concentrated on his body movements, on his breathing, attempted to become totally empty and to meditate. He also tried to become aware of what resounded in him emotionally or preoccupied him mentally: for example, a feeling of uneasiness that persisted after an interview, or the impulse to write a letter to the editor for *The New York Times*. Whenever he could remember a dream from the night before, he tried to decipher its message, in order to be able to confront his own unconscious strivings, fantasies, emotional powers, and conflicts.

The effects of these exercises seeking the direct encounter with the self were clearly apparent, not only to Fromm himself but to those around him as well. The most impressive example for me was the opening address Fromm gave at a symposium in Locarno-Muralto in May 1975. Together with the Gottlieb

Duttweiler Institute in Switzerland, I had organized this symposium in honor of his seventy-fifth birthday. During the preceding weeks Fromm had been considerably incapacitated by a broken arm, and for a long time it had been uncertain whether he would be able to hold the opening address. He ultimately spoke extemporaneously for two hours on "The Meaning of Psychoanalysis for the Future" (1992c [1975]). Afterward I asked him where he had found the concentration and energy for the lecture, and he replied, without any pretentiousness whatsoever: "Well, this morning I spent twice as long doing my exercises."

Someone who practices the direct encounter with himself or herself can draw on powers also serving the direct encounter with other people, facilitating his or her total absorption in a topic and in the other person. The opposite is also true: Someone who practices the direct encounter with others draws on experiences facilitating the encounter with the foreign and the other within himself or herself. That Fromm was versed in both and consequently able to be with himself and with the other could readily be seen in his facial expression. After his death, I found a series of photographs of Fromm, taken with the assistance of a photographic innovation (a battery-powered rewinding mechanism) allowing an entire series of photographs to be shot within a few seconds. On the strip of developed negatives there was one photograph that showed Fromm with his eyes shut next to another photograph in which he was looking directly at the photographer. In the course of these sequential images Fromm must have closed his eyes for a split second and been photographed in the process. On closer scrutiny this photograph depicts a face concentrated on the inner self, a face totally immersed in itself. The adjacent photograph of Fromm with his eyes wide open gives the impression that his eyes are totally focused on the observer. In the first, he is totally with himself, in the second, he is totally with the other.

These portraits reveal how intensely Fromm must have practiced the direct encounter to learn to be with himself and with the other. At the same time, they also illustrate the significance of the practice of the direct encounter for the successful realization of humanity and of social existence. Regardless of the type of relationship in which the direct or face-to-face encounter is carried out, in the relationship to others, in scholarly or scientific work, in artistic or therapeutic endeavors, in dealing with nature or in dealing with one's own inner powers, the direct encounter always releases energy for direct encounters in other areas of life.

The experience drawn from the practice of the face-to-face encounter inspired Fromm's development of the concepts of the "productive character orientation," "biophilia," and the "being mode of existence." "The person who fully lives life is attracted by the process of life and growth in all spheres," writes Fromm in *The Heart of Man* (1964, p. 47). In *To Have Or to Be?* (1976a, p. 103) he summarizes the exponential effect of the direct encounter as follows: "Genuine love increases the capacity to love and to give to others. The true lover loves the whole world, in his or her love for a specific person." While for the "having" mode of existence it holds that every instance of sharing and every use of what is had leads to its consumption and its consequent loss, sharing and using—by a person in the

"being" mode of existence—lead to the experience of an abundance in sharing and to the growth of the individual's own powers in using them.

Whenever I wanted to more fully comprehend what Fromm actually meant by "productivity," "reason and love as [one's] own powers," "biophilia," or the "being mode of existence," I found it helpful to recall the effects of the face-to-face encounters with him. Fromm's capacity for the face-to-face encounter finally explains why his writings have a special appeal for many people, particularly those who have difficulties reading and comprehending highly conceptual, abstract theories. In an interview conducted by Hans Jürgen Schultz (1974, p. 105), Fromm confessed: "I have no gift for abstract thought. I can think only those thoughts that relate to something I can concretely experience." This is why Fromm also sought a direct encounter with the issue or problem under consideration in his written work. Before beginning to write, however, he had to find a mental but not totally unemotional approach to what others had written on the same question. When reading a primary text it was vital that he could directly relate to what he was reading. With certain authors this was regularly the case—above all Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx, Baruch Spinoza and Meister Eckhart. With a number of other authors this was rarely the case—for example, Georg Wilhelm Hegel, Martin Heidegger, Theodor W. Adorno and most of the sociologists.

Fromm spent much more time reading than writing (perhaps twenty or thirty times as much). When he finally did start to write, he generally put his ideas on that specific topic on paper in one sitting—by hand, preferably with a fountain pen or ball point pen. The following day he read what he had written the day before and sometimes started over from the beginning, if he had been unable to express what concerned and interested him and what he wanted to say. He then made another attempt until he felt that he had become one with the topic. While writing, Fromm also sought the direct encounter, namely, with a topic, with concepts, arguments and ideas; not until this encounter in his opinion had been correctly conveyed in the written text did he give the handwritten text to his secretary, so that she could prepare a typewritten manuscript, which he could then give others to read.

Because Erich Fromm's writings arose out of a direct and inwardly perceived encounter with the works of other writers and with a topic, and were not the outgrowth of abstract thought and conceptual-logical thought processes, many readers feel addressed by them and are able to enter into an inner dialogue with what they read. Fromm lived and felt what he said and wrote. Teachings and life were closely interconnected in Fromm's person and works because both involved the practice of direct encounters.

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PART I: THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF ERICH FROMM

RODOLFO LEYVA

1. ON THE PSYCHOLOGY AND LIBERTARIAN SOCIALISM OF ERICH FROMM

Towards an Empirically Based Psychological Retrofit

The basic entity of the social process is the individual, his desires and fears, his passions and reason, his propensities for good and for evil. To understand the dynamics of the social process we must understand the dynamics of the psychological processes operating within the individual, just as to understand the individual we must see him in the context of the culture which moulds him. (Fromm, 2001, p. ix)

INTRODUCTION

Disheartened by the rise of fascism in Western Europe and mass consumerism in the US, the 1930s group of exiled German intellectuals collectively known as the Frankfurt School, sought to investigate why significant numbers of individuals from advanced industrial societies seemed to so willingly succumb to hierarchical political-economic structures that breed rampant inequality and social alienation. Drawing primarily on Marx's historical materialism and Freudian psychology, they developed critical theory, which describes the hegemony of these structures as the result of interrelated and mutually reinforcing psychosexual, institutional, and ideological discursive factors. While generally in agreement with the principal tenets of critical theory, key member Erich Fromm laid out a more humanist conception of the human psyche that diverged from that of his other notable colleagues; Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse, who mostly kept with Freud's libidinal and instinct-driven formulation.

This fundamental disagreement over the interpretation and accuracy of Freudian theory largely contributed to Fromm's less than amicable divorce from the Frankfurt School. However, it also led him to develop a unique version of critical theory that arguably surpasses the inherent pessimism and hopelessness of its predecessor by offering a convincing framework of the possibilities for genuine human freedom, mental wellbeing, and egalitarian societal organization. This critical theory 2.0 if you will, reflects Fromm's polymath abilities, and incorporates, amongst others, comprehensive theories on religion, matriarchal relations, and the psychology of fascism and the authoritarian personality (Brennen, 1997). Obviously covering all of these individual elements is beyond the scope of one paper. Therefore, in this piece, I will review some of the major

elements of Fromm's work that specifically pertain to his appraisals and criticisms of Freudian theory, humanist ontology, and libertarian-socialism. I then, and in keeping with Fromm's commitment to empiricism and transdisciplinarity, review some of the recent relevant findings from the neuroscience, organizational, and political schools of psychology, and make the case that they compliment and can be synthesized with Fromm's mostly theoretical account of human nature, psychology, and normative political-economic organization, i.e., they can offer a contemporary and empirical basis for them. I end this piece by drawing out some of the implications that this theoretical synthesis poses for neoliberal ontology and political economy.

BEYOND HOME-ECONOMICUS AND HOME-SEXUALIS

Central to Fromm's thought was a critical evaluation of the assumptions, premises, and methods of Freud's psychoanalysis. In the first instance, Fromm was largely indebted to Freudian theory and drew on several of its major insights. Amongst others, these included the observation that childhood is a crucial time for psychological development; the experiences from which can have life-long consequences on adult cognition and behavior. The existential premises that the psyche holds intrinsic drives and needs that unconsciously propel human motivation and behavior, and that the disjunction between these and the expectations and constraints of culture can lead to individual neurosis and pathological behaviors. And, last but not least, he also borrowed from Freud what can be considered a critical realist approach and commitment to the scientific method and its application to the exploration of universal social and psychological characteristics (Fromm, 1980/2013). To be certain, Fromm held a deep and lasting respect for Freud, and considered him to be a great and historically important intellect on par with Hegel, Marx, and Newton.

Nonetheless, Fromm departed from Freud in many areas, and perhaps most significantly, he disagreed with him on constitution of the underlying drives of the unconscious. For Freud, these primarily consisted of repressed sexual urges and desires and instinctual destructive and self-destructive tendencies. Fromm however, believed that other drives and innate pre-dispositional needs played a more powerful role in unconsciously influencing human motivation and behavior. Namely, these entail the need to be productive, to reason, to be self-directed, and to be social, or what humanist psychologists today broadly refer to as the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. While Fromm acknowledged the existence and importance of libidinal and physiological needs, he viewed them as pre-social evolutionary inheritances that could be tempered if not overcome via our higher order pro-social needs and motivations. Therefore the ongoing struggle to satisfy these pro-social needs in the face of political-economic and socio-cultural constraints was, according to Fromm, what more accurately constitutes the human condition.

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There lies also the key to humanistic psychoanalysis. Freud, searching for the basic force which motivates human passions and desires believed he had found it in the libido. But powerful as the sexual drive and all its derivations are, they are by no means the most powerful forces within man and their frustration is not the cause of mental disturbance. The most powerful forces motivating man's behavior stem from the condition of his existence, the "human situation." […] The necessity to unite with other living beings, to be related to them, is an imperative need on the fulfillment of which man's sanity depends. (Fromm, 1991, pp. 27-29)

Correspondingly, Freud's *homo-sexualis* view of human nature was, according to Fromm (1970), the psychological derivative of the *homo-economicus* ontology touted by neoclassical economists*,* as in both conceptions the individual is an "isolated, self-sufficient man who has to enter into relations with others in order that they may mutually fulfill their needs" (p. 43). In holding to this narrow ontology of human nature, Freud took capitalism for granted and saw the role of psychoanalysis as helping the mentally ill or psychologically distressed to adjust to the demands of bourgeoisie culture. Fromm's humanist ontology, however, led him to conclude that capitalism was itself the root of many of the major mental illnesses rampant throughout the developed world, given the meaningless and alienating work, overly competitive social relations, and vapid consumption that liberal-capitalist modes foster and depend on. In other words, in viewing humans as essentially self-interested sexually charged walking calculators, Freud committed a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy whereby he failed to see how dominant social and psychological characteristics that individuals commonly express in any given society are not universal or intrinsic, but are rather specific products and functions that follow from specific political-economic systems. Thus, Fromm argued that rather than marking a fixed or inevitable stage of societal development, liberal-capitalism and the exchange relations, consumer norms and values, and psychopathologies that it generates, is one of many possible societal manifestations. Hence, for example, the selling of human beings under systems of chattel slavery or the selling of human kidneys via ebay under our current neoliberal system, are not inevitable and universal human quirks. They are specific behaviors that are generated and enabled by their respective and overarching political-economic systems. While these practices are underpinned by individual agency, volition, and natural faculties, they are nonetheless second order manifestations that more likely reflect a perverse permutation of our core properties, but which cannot be said to be intrinsic given the vast differences in social norms and values and political-economic systems that can be observed in different societies and historical eras. As Fromm (2001) argued:

Why do certain definite changes of man's character take place from one historical epoch to another? Why is the spirit of the Renaissance different from that of the Middle Ages? Why is the character structure of man in monopolistic capitalism different from that in the nineteenth century? Social

psychology has to explain why new abilities and new passions, bad or good, come into existence. (p. 9)

However, it must be noted that this claim that the human character changes from one system to the next does not mark a relativist or post-structuralist streak in Fromm's thinking. Rather, he argued that despite their variety, different political-economic systems and their corresponding superstructures take root at different historical intervals specifically because they address some universal aspect of human nature. For example, at least in their initial formation, feudalist societies arguably addressed the human need for security, while liberal-capitalist societies address, however partially, the human need for freedom (Fromm, 2001). The widespread psychological neurosis and distress that follows each of these systems, however, likely stems from their failure to address the totality of human nature by emphasizing some aspects of it while hindering others. For example, liberal-capitalist modes tend to emphasize anti-social qualities like self-interestedness and competition over pro-social qualities like altruism and cooperation). Thus Fromm proposed that another key task for psychologists and sociologists is to attempt to find the types of socio-organizational settings that can best meet and create a balance between all of our various core needs. Such settings should, in theory, lead to more sustained human happiness and social harmony. As social-psychologists Ryan and Deci's (2000) note:

Research on the conditions that foster versus undermine positive human potentials has both theoretical import and practical significance because it can contribute not only to formal knowledge of the causes of human behavior but also to the design of social environments that optimize people's development, performance, and well-being. (p. 68)

THE SANE SOCIETY

But as critical as he was of capitalism, Fromm was equally critical of Soviet-style authoritarian socialism. Drawing on the theories of Max Weber, Fromm saw the inherent dangers of the unchecked institutionalization of scientific rationalism and the consequent bureaucratization of society championed by both orthodox socialists and capitalists alike (e.g., Vladimir Lenin and Henry Ford both admired and implemented Taylorism a.k.a. the scientific management of labor). Bureaucracies, argued Weber (1922), whether serving public or private interests, are characterized by hierarchical command and control structures, compartmentalized labor specialization, role and task specification, and uniform rules and procedures. Moreover, not only are they the most efficient and rational model for structuring and coordinating collective human action, but bureaucracies are also the inevitable result of societal development and industrialization (Weber, 1922). Being well aware of the dismal conditions of both American and Soviet workers who day in and day out worked under such bureaucratic structures, Fromm also significantly departed from Marx, and agreed with Weber that no matter how efficient bureaucratic organization may be, it has an inherently

dehumanizing effect on workers. Therefore, its prescriptive transposition across all social institutions, even socialist ones, will lead to a lifeless and disenchanting world.

> The bureaucratic reformer, by laying all the stress upon the purely material side of life, has come to believe in a society made up of well-fed, well-housed, well-clothed machines, working for a greater machine, the state; the individualist has offered to men the alternative of starvation and slavery under the guise of liberty of action. (Fromm, 1991, p. 277)

Still, Fromm insisted that liberated from its authoritarian political and bureaucratic correlate, socialism could lead to the types of societal organization more fruitful to individual and societal well-being. Fromm (1991) referred to this more ideal version of socialism as 'communitarian socialism.' While sharing many affinities with the orthodox Marxist schools, this version of socialism takes the more anarcho-syndicalist or libertarian socialist inflection of figures like Robert Owen and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon who posited to the well-being of the individual worker and democratic organization as the primary political objectives for social transformation. This is in direct opposition to the orthodox Marxist branches of socialism. These are generally premised on the takeover of the political-economic base by an elite revolutionary vanguard who in due time will theoretically relinquish power and usher in a democratic and free communist society. Fromm's libertarian inspired socialism on the other hand, is premised on Kantian deontological ethics and direct democratic organization in both the workplace and the state whereby individual liberty and collective needs can both be satisfied via the implementation of democratic mechanisms that ensure that everyone has a direct say in the decision-making process. That is, the means have to reflect and not merely justify the ends.

More specifically, Fromm (1991) argued that the road to communitarian socialism should first include the implementation of what economist Michael Albert (2000) would refer to as 'balanced job complex schemes.' These entail individual workers being trained in, and allowed to perform, all the facets of work related to their workplace; including both mundane and highly technical work. The balance of monotonous and more cognitively challenging work may ensure that at least most workers feel engaged in their work, while also ensuring that dirty and drudge tasks are also completed. Incidentally, as Graeber (2004) argues, having all workers embark in the monotonous work of their workplace may lead to more novel and creative solutions that can decrease the time and effort needed to accomplish it. For example, highly skilled scientists and engineers would also be required to clean up their own labs and bathrooms, and thus one can only imagine how long it would take them to engineer something that can more efficiently deal with these types of unpleasant tasks. Secondly, this road also involves giving workers knowledge of the economic and social consequences of their industry on their local and global communities. This would give workers a more conscious awareness as to what their actions are doing, and will in theory, allow them to correct for any negative externalities that they may be responsible for. Thirdly, and

perhaps most importantly, this road involves the enactment of systems of direct management whereby the conducting of the particular tasks of any given workplace are directly organized and managed by all of the workers that work in it. Direct management would entail a balance of power between management and the rank and file, as well as significant input from those consumers who are most served by them. As workers develop the sense of empowerment and autonomy that these systems engender, they will, in theory, be more inclined and prepared to transpose and maintain these direct democratic mechanisms at the state level. For Fromm, the self-governing of the workplace was a necessary precondition for political decentralization and individual liberty, and for the development of corresponding cultural norms and values needed to nurture and sustain them.

EMPIRICAL VINDICATION

Thus far I have discussed the following themes in Fromm's work. 1) The ontological position that human nature and psychology is composed of several innate motivational drives and needs, which in addition to biological ones, also incorporates higher order needs that can be parsimoniously classified as competence, autonomy, and relatedness. 2) Bureaucratic structures of whatever political or economic orientation generate dehumanizing work, powerlessness, and consequent mental distress. 3) Libertarian/democratic socialist organization consisting of direct management and meaningful work can potentially generate the socio-environmental settings needed to cultivate mentally and socially healthier human beings.

However, despite his insistence on empirical scrutiny, Fromm relied mostly on rhetoric, analytical induction, and folk psychology to support these positions. For example, in his magnum opus *The Sane Society* (1991), Fromm relegates his empirical foundation for his claim that advanced capitalist societies generate high rates of alienation, suicides, and addictions to sparse statistics, footnotes, and what can almost be classified as anecdotal evidence. Now this may be unfair to Fromm who lived in a time without the Internet, and most importantly, without 'Google Scholar.' Thus he could not access the seemingly infinite number of systematic case studies, which would have significantly strengthened his above listed positions. And more limiting than that, he was in fact dead before most of the literature that now lends empirical support for them was published. Indeed, had Fromm been around to asses the recent developments of cognitive and organizational psychology and social neuroscience, he may well have come to realize that his more holistic conception of human nature, which included what he thought of as the inherently 'non-biological' traits of imagination, reason, creativity, empathy, and cooperation, are in fact properties that are firmly rooted in biologically endowed neural physiology. To be certain, Fromm was a voracious reader who kept up and drew on latest social and psychological theories of his day, including the cognitive developmental theories of Jean Piaget (Fromm, 1970). Therefore, barring a few semantic revisions, and in keeping with Fromm's commitment to transdisciplinarity and empirical evidence, I will briefly review the

findings from a set of studies and meta-analyses from the sub-fields of neuroscience, social psychology, and political psychology that are respectively and specifically concerned with neuroanatomy and social behavior, socio-environmental organization and intrinsic needs and motivations, and workplace democratic practices. I will try to make the case that when looked at in tandem, these literatures give preliminary empirical support for the crux of Fromm's above listed (and mostly theoretical) positions.

SOCIAL NEUROSCIENCE, CREATIVITY, AND DEMOCRACY

In recent years the field of social neuroscience has shed some new light on the dynamics between the brain, mind, and culture. Bringing together the expertise of cognitive psychologists and traditional neuroscientists this field is concerned with the exploration of the computational properties of the human mind, their foundation in neurophysiologic structures, and how both of these are in turn influenced, affected, and triggered by stimuli from the social world. Amongst other key findings from this field, preliminary research suggests that human beings are hard wired for creativity, morality, and empathy. In other words, human beings have built in cognitive mechanisms that allow them to manifest these capacities with relative ease across a broad range of socio-cultural contexts (Dietrich, 2004; Jackson et al., 2006; Moll & de Olivera-Souza 2007). These capacities are hypothesized to be the products of evolutionary derived complex neural networks located along the prefrontal cortex and limbic system. Short of relatively rare pathological cases, they are believed to be universal, highly interrelated, and strongly subject to co-activation. For example, in a study by Moll et al., (2007), researchers loaded healthy Brazilian participants onto an MRI machine and gave them a series of event scripts designed to elicit emotional and emotionally-neutral responses. Once inside the scanner, participants had six seconds to read scripts like the following: "Your mom called you and said she didn't feel well. You ignored her, and the next day she died," and, "There was an empty shelf in a furniture store. The next day, it was full of new items which were put on display." The results showed that when presented with scripts designed to elicit pro-social emotions (e.g., embarrassment, compassion, guilt), the pre-frontal cortex and limbic system regions of the participants' brains consistently lit up. The researchers note that in line with other similar studies, their results suggest that our brains endow most of us with an intuitive sense of fairness, concern for others, and moral agency (ibid). Nevertheless, simply because we have the innate capacities to feel the suffering of others or make moral judgments does not mean that we have a corresponding set of primary motivational dispositions that unconsciously propel us to want to use these capacities as Fromm (1991) argued. While the above studies point to motivational mechanisms that facilitate the manifestation of these capacities in everyday social interaction, these mechanisms refer to products of socialization that are activated during relevant socio-cultural contexts. That is, for example, even though the faculty for empathy may be innate, people learn when to act empathetically, and will be motivated to do so according to appropriate socio-

cultural contexts that call for it. Therefore these studies do not address whether or not we have an innate need to utilize these capacities, or whether we simply utilize these innate capacities to meet the needs of our respective societies.

However, there is a parallel and extensive body of research that draws on the premises of 'self-determination theory,' which suggests that competence, autonomy, and relatedness are innate and universal psychological needs with corresponding motivational drives. When cultivated and satisfied under appropriate socio-environmental settings, these intrinsic needs and drives can lead to positive social development, personal job satisfaction, and psychological well-being (Gagne & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000). For example, in a cross-national study by Deci et al. (2001) that explored the degree to which American and Bulgarian workers satisfied their needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness in their workplace, the researchers found that in both nations there was a direct positive correlation between the extent of the satisfaction of these needs and feelings of personal job contentment and work engagement. Moreover, other studies have shown that in order to foster optimal work engagement and performance, work environments have to address all three of these intrinsic needs, which Ryan and Denci (2000) argue is necessary since, for instance, a feeling of competence without the autonomy to more freely express it may forestall or hinder an individual's intrinsic motivation for creative work. In fact, in order to promote creativity and innovation in the workplace, extensive meta-analyses by Hammond et al. (2011) and Bass et al. (2008) respectively note that, while several factors are important, organizational settings that promote positive work climates, autonomy, mutual trust and respect between managers and subordinates, and enjoyable, interesting, and cognitively challenging tasks are the ones most likely to be filled with creative, engaged, and self-motivated workers.

Conversely, workplace settings that are most conducive to the generating of alienated and unmotivated workers, are typically characterized by rigid bureaucratic organization. Given their hierarchical structures and standardized and rigid work routines, bureaucracies to varying extents stifle individual autonomy and creativity since most of the workers in these settings have to perform strict and regimented tasks. Additionally, they often have little or no freedom to decide on the pace of their work, the types of work, or in many cases even the types of clothes that they are allowed to wear to work (to say nothing of the lack of Constitutional rights that most workers are faced with in most workplaces). Moreover, the punitive and/or monetary incentive schemes used to motivate workers that bureaucracies generally employ, likely serves to foster suspicion and distrust between employees. As Pink (2010) argues, several studies have even shown that they actually lead to worse performance on work that requires higher level cognition (Pink, 2010). All of these factors, incidentally, likely explain why bureaucratic workplaces are often plagued with low employee morale and high employee turnover. Thus in contrast to mainstream economics theories, and when combined with the findings from the social neuroscience studies described above, the empirical literature on self-determination theory consistently demonstrates that humans far from being solely utility-maximizers, and are actually hardwired and

naturally self-motivated to, among other things, care for others, be productive, and master complicated skills and knowledge irrespective of self-regarding incentives.

Nonetheless, the extent to which the positive qualities of human nature manifest is largely determined by social institutional organization. For example, bosses and managers all over the world are tweaking their organizational structures in ways that give their workers more autonomy, work enjoyment, and decision-making power. While these tweaks vary in context and are certainly never referred to as forms of 'communitarian socialism,' they are characterized by more horizontal organization and democratic practices. These include allowing employees to, for instance, vote for their CEO or managers, determine their own work-projects and schedules, switch leadership roles and job tasks on a frequent basis, and view the company's financial health via policies of open book accounting. Workplace democratic businesses as they are referred, do not necessarily implement all of these and other democratic practices at once, and there is no study that has explored which practices or sets of practices may be the most effective. What is clear, however, is that workplace democratic practices can lead to the development of healthy, loyal, and conscientious employees and peaceful communities (see Spreitzer, 2007). Incidentally, they can also translate into to healthy and sustainable profit margins through lower employee turnover costs, better customer service, and overall better employee efficiency and productivity (Doellgast, 2012). As Fenton (2011) argues:

> Sound far-fetched? Well it's not. These innovative examples of organizational democracy are being practiced in companies all over the world of every size-from small to Fortune 500. It's a growing trend that reflects an inescapable fact: organizations that embrace a democratic style are building healthier workplaces and cultures and better bottom lines. In the process they are also becoming a force for social change in the world, proving that how a company operates is just as important as what it does. (p. 175)

Overall, when looked at together, all of these studies suggest that Fromm is three for three in his above listed positions. Still, a few odd co-opts here and there and some hippy CEOs who are having some success with democratic organization does not prove Fromm right, nor does it prove that workplace democracy can be effectively applied across a now global and irreversibly intertwined political-economy with over 7 billion people and growing. Moreover, both the psychological and democratic workplace studies briefly discussed above are not without criticisms and major limitations. For instance, the former largely consist of small sample sizes of mostly university students in mostly laboratory settings. While the latter are far too few in examples to make any claims that democratic organization will work in other socio-cultural and political-economic contexts, and more importantly, the workplaces highlighted in them are still capitalist not socialist. This means that they are subject to the capricious demands of market forces that at any given moment can undermine democratic organization if it gets in the way of profits.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY NEOLIBERAL MODES

Furthermore, it may even be the case that our current global neoliberal political-economic system is the system that, as neoliberals argue, can best optimize human happiness and individual freedom (Braedley & Luxton, 2010; Harvey, 2005). Of course in order to agree with this position one has to ignore the brazen fact that neoliberal market principles and prescriptions led to, or at the very least largely contributed to the 2008 global financial crisis, which is itself only the latest of a series of similar crises that have followed the last thirty years of the neoliberalization of the global economy, and which have at different intervals impacted most of the developed and developing world (Ellwood, 2010; Harvey, 2005; Mason, 2010). One has to also ignore the fact that while many multi-national corporations, institutional investors (e.g., hedge funds, insurance companies, and investment advisors), and elites have throughout the neoliberal era profited from the various windfalls, the vast majority of people have suffered and continue to suffer the consequences of a global economic system that is now, in effect, a global speculative casino (Baker, 2009; Chomsky, 1999), one which is significantly contributing to the proliferation, at a seemingly exponential rate, of massive inequalities and the growth of slums and shantytowns in metropolises all over the world (Davis, 2006; Patel, 2010). As Harvey (2005) argues:

> For those left or cast outside the market system a vast reservoir of apparently disposable people bereft of social protections and supportive social structures there is little to be expected from neoliberalization except poverty, hunger, disease, and despair. Their only hope is somehow to scramble aboard the market system either as petty commodity producers, as informal vendors (of things or labour power), as petty predators to beg, steal, or violently secure some crumbs from the rich man's table, or as participants in the vast illegal trade or trafficking in drugs, guns, women, or anything else illegal for which there is a demand. (p. 185)

Furthermore, one has to also ignore a growing body of evidence that suggests that as Fromm (1991) argued, the dominant socio-cultural values of market societies are strongly correlated with widespread psychological pathologies (e.g., Black, 2007; Hamilton & Dennis, 2005; James, 2007, 2008). For example, in a cross-cultural analysis of the values and goals of neoliberal societies, Kasser et al. (2007) argue that in promoting questionable assumptions about the primacy of self-interest and the relationship between wealth and happiness, these societies and the consumer and materialistic cultures that they promote undermine empathy, healthy relationships, and feelings of autonomy and relatedness, which psychologists have long thought to be crucial for individual and collective well-being. Indeed, it would appear that one has to ignore reality in order to come to the highly unlikely conclusion that neoliberalism is the political-economic system that most reflects or approximates our human nature and that neoliberal policies will at some point usher in a global consumerist utopia.

To be certain, the hegemony of neoliberalism continues to reign supreme and will likely continue to do so well into the foreseeable future. However, the *homo-economicus* ontology that it reflects is a highly questionable depiction of human nature that only really exists in game theory mathematical formulations, corporate boardrooms, and extremely rare pathological cases. It is a narrow and sordid conception that is not borne out by the overwhelming amount of sociological and psychological evidence as Fromm intuitionally and correctly argued. Nonetheless, just because neoliberal modes are arguably antithetical to core human properties does not mean that they will be replaced by more appropriate political-economic systems. Although, understanding the fact that we are more reflective of a humanist ontology, at the very least, affords us the somewhat cruel realization that for all our foibles and limitations, we are capable of creating something better even if we have yet to do so. As Fromm (1991) argued:

> The problem in the twentieth century is to discuss ways and means to implement political democracy and to transform it into a truly human society. The objections which are made are largely based on pessimism and on a profound lack of faith. It is claimed that the advance of managerial society and the implied manipulation of man cannot be checked unless we regress to the spinning wheel, because modern industry needs managers and automatons. […] Yet it is quite beyond doubt that the problems of social transformation are not as difficult to solve—theoretically and practically—as the technical problems our chemists and physicists have solved. And it can also not be doubted that we are more in need of a human renaissance than we are in need of airplanes and television. (pp. 27-29)

Of course there is no telling whether a communitarian-socialist society along the lines envisioned by Fromm will be any better at generating and maintaining genuine human freedom, mental well-being, and socioeconomic equality than current and past political-economic systems. The point, however, is that our evolutionary descent has endowed us with a number of unique cognitive faculties. How we choose to transpose these to the enactment of socio-organizational forms is a volitional choice enabled but not determined by any one of these faculties.

CONCLUSION

Whether or not most of us have an innate need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, and how strongly these influence our everyday behavior is still highly debatable, but this is missing the forests for the trees. Even if these more pro-social needs and corresponding capacities for empathy, creativity, and moral agency are not underpinned by innate motivational drives, the overwhelming amount of empirical psychological studies concerned with exploring this area, and as briefly discussed in this paper, at the very least, make it clear that most people have the innate capacities to enact pro-social behaviors. Furthermore, when they do so under social organizational settings that more aptly facilitate autonomy, creativity, and relatedness, the preponderance of empirical studies thus far suggest that these

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types of settings, which are to some significant extent democratic in orientation, can lead to the cultivation of workers that are happier, more creative, civically responsible, and feel more empowered and psychologically adjusted. In other words, Fromm was right, and if in the final analysis his theories seem overly utopian and romantic, so be it. After all, when complemented with the major findings of the empirical schools of psychology, they offer an empirically grounded conception of human nature that allows for the possibility of alternative and more humane and democratic forms of political-economic organization. Additionally, they offer a powerful counter-argument to those self-styled pragmatists whose endorsement and promulgation of existing neoliberal modes serves only to justify and perpetuate the mass cruelties that they engender.

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2. FROMM'S DIALECTIC OF FREEDOM
AND THE PRAXIS OF BEING

Positive freedom, according to Fromm's definition, is the capacity for "spontaneous relationship to man and nature, a relationship that connects the individual with the world without eliminating his individuality" (1941, p. 29). Negative freedom according to Fromm exists in dialectical relationship to this as "freedom from" (1941, p. 34) external restraints that limit the exercise of free will. To illustrate the nature of this dialectic, Fromm uses the example of freedom of speech as an example of negative freedom as the "growth of freedom outside ourselves" (p. 105) without external restraints of authoritarian force. The other dimension to this dialectic is positive freedom, viewed here by Fromm as the ability to "think originally (p. 105) and creatively express newly formed ideas.

Fromm's description of negative and positive freedom together as one holistic entity, is positively Hegelian, in that it negates Cartesian dualist separations of mind and body, objective and subjective forms of reality. Like the act of riding a bicycle, the way to maintain balance is to sustain forward motion through pedaling, steering, leaning and counter leaning. Similarly, Fromm's use of Hegel's notion of dialectical thought is best understood in the motion of practice. It is not a 'method' or a set of principles" (Spencer & Krauze, 1999, p.78) but as in the bike analogy, there are specific acts of "being" that make use of and keep balanced both aspects of freedom. In this chapter, we view the dialectic of freedom in the unity of negative freedom as "freedom from" outward, individual, limitations of unjust, inhumane and destructive conditions and positive freedom, which is the ability to create, to imagine and "be" free within yourself as well as with others and nature in ways that transcend alienation.

FROMM ON CAPITALISM AND ALIENATION

Freedom has a twofold meaning for modern man: that he has been freed from traditional authorities and has become an 'individual,' but that at the same time he has become isolated, powerless and an instrument of purposes outside of himself, alienated from himself and others; furthermore, that this state undermines his self, weakens and frightens him, and makes him ready for submission to new kinds of bondage. Positive freedom on the other hand is identical with the full realization of the individual's potentialities, together with his ability to live actively and spontaneously. (Fromm, 1941/1994, p. 268)

According to Fromm, our goal as humans is to be free and to live authentically. Historically, becoming free has meant being left alone to choose for ourselves; to have the right to think and act according to our own desires. Yet, what has happened is that even as modern man has achieved this negative freedom (freedom "from") he has failed to become fully free. This is because he has failed to appropriate both positive and negative freedom because, psychologically, he fears freedom.

This fear of freedom leads him to attempt to escape from freedom by responding in one of three ways: a) by looking for security outside of himself again, in terms of looking for an authoritative person, belief system, or other external power source, to relieve them of the responsibility of being free (masochism), or (b) seeking to become the authority over others so that they do not feel so alone (sadism), or (c) falling into mindless (automoton) conformity. Fromm states, "In our effort to escape from aloneness and powerlessness, we are ready to get rid of our individual self either by submission to new forms of authority or by a compulsive conforming to accepted patterns" (1941, p. 134).

The crucial need in Fromm's day as well as today is to move towards a productive orientation towards life that will fulfill the feelings of aloneness, isolation, alienation, and separation. This requires providing a positive solution for the psychic need for relatedness. This human need must be addressed in order for people to fully appropriate positive freedom in loving relationships and productive work. To be truly *free* we must be both sociologically free from external oppression and psychologically free from the fear of freedom that leads us back into oppressive relationships. Given that we have achieved to a large degree the former, we must begin to acknowledge and fully claim the latter. If we want to reclaim a sane society, we must not only create the external conditions for sanity, but we must help develop the internal conditions which will reinforce the sane society.

Fromm goes into great detail in the beginning chapters of *Escape from Freedom* (1941) to demonstrate that "The breakdown of the medieval system of feudal society had one main significance for all classes of society: the individual was left alone and isolated" (p. 99). Yes, he was free, in the sense of being free from traditional bonds, however, this freedom had a twofold result.

> Man was deprived of the security he had enjoyed, of the unquestionable feeling of belonging, and he was torn loose from the world which had satisfied his quest for security both economically and spiritually. He felt alone and anxious. But he was also free to act and to think independently, to become his own master and do with his life as he could—not as he was told to do. (p. 99)

Hence, the new religious doctrines of Luther and Calvin gave expression to the feelings of isolation which resulted from the loss of the sense of belonging and security which had been in place in feudal times. "Protestantism was the answer to the human needs of the frightened, uprooted, and isolated individual who had to orient and relate himself to a new world" (p. 99).

Fromm explains that humans feel lonely and isolated because of their separation from nature and from other human beings. He contends that as humans have gained more and more freedom from traditional bonds, they have become more and more isolated, scared, and alone (because they have become isolated from nature and other human beings). This fear of isolation, in turn, has led them to attempt to escape from the freedom they have gained. The acceptance of the doctrines of Protestantism demonstrates how this process has worked concretely in history. It demonstrates that freedom from the traditional bonds of medieval society, though giving the individual a new feeling of independence, at the same time made him feel alone and isolated, filled him with doubt and anxiety, and drove him to find an escape from freedom (1941, p. 103).

In a modern sense, capitalism must be understood as a social system that affects the personality too. According to Fromm, development of capitalistic societies has affected the person "in the same direction it had started to take in the period of the Reformation" (1941, p. 103). Capitalism as a system, "its practices, and the spirit out of which it grew, reached every aspect of life, molded the whole personality of man and accentuated the contradictions" (p. 104) between freedom and desire for an escape from freedom. "It developed the individual—and made him more helpless; it increased freedom—and created dependencies of a new kind" (1941, p. 104). Accordingly, it accentuated the "dialectic character of the process of growing freedom" (ibid.), that as modern man became more independent, self-reliant, and critical he also became more isolated, alone, and afraid.

Again, it is clear that the freedom that man wanted so badly was slipping further and further out of reach because of the economic system of capitalism and its inherently negative characteristics of competition, individualism, materialism, consumption, etc. As the old enemies of freedom were eliminated, new enemies of a different nature had arisen; "enemies which are not essentially external restraints, but internal factors blocking the full realization of the freedom of personality" (1941, p. 165). According to Fromm, because we have been fascinated by the growth of freedom from powers outside of ourselves we have been blinded to the fact that there are inner restraints, compulsions, and fears, which undermine the victories freedom has won against traditional enemies (1941, p. 105). Fromm further reasons that we are:

> prone to think that the problem of freedom is exclusively that of gaining still more freedom of the kind we have gained in the course of modern history, and to believe that the defense of freedom against such powers that deny such freedom is all that is necessary. We forget that, although each of the liberties which have been won must be defended with utmost vigor, the problem of freedom is not only a quantitative one, but a qualitative one; that we not only have to preserve and increase the traditional freedom, but that we have to gain a new kind of freedom, one which enables us to realize our own individual self, to have faith in this self and in life. (1941, pp. 105-106)

The effect of the industrial system on this kind of inner freedom, Fromm suggests, has affected the development of the entire human personality. Fromm contends

that capitalism has outwardly freed man spiritually, mentally, socially, politically, and economically. For instance, under the feudal system the limits of one's life were determined even before he was born; whereas under the capitalist system, "the individual, particularly the member of the middle class, had a chance – in spite of many limitations – to succeed on the basis of his own merits and actions" (1941, p. 107). Man, under the capitalist system learned to "rely on himself, to make responsible decisions, to give up both soothing and terrifying superstitions … [he] became free from mystifying elements; [he] began to see himself objectively and with fewer and fewer illusions" (i.e., to become critically conscious), and hence he became increasingly free from traditional bonds, he became free to become more. As this freedom "from" grew, positive freedom (the growth of an active, critical, responsible self) also advanced. However, capitalism also had other effects on the process of growing freedom as well. "It made the individual more alone and isolated and imbued him with a feeling of insignificance and powerlessness" (1941, p. 108). It also increased doubt and skepticism, and all of these factors made man more anxious about freedom.

The principle of individualist activity characteristic of a capitalistic economy put the individual on his own feet. Whereas under the feudal system of the Middle Ages, everyone had a fixed place in an ordered and transparent social system, under capitalism, if one was unable to stand on his own two feet, he failed, and it was entirely his own affair.

> That this principle furthered the process of individualization is obvious and is always mentioned as an important item on the credit side of modern culture. But in furthering 'freedom from,' this principle helped to sever all ties between one individual and the other and thereby isolated and separated the individual from his fellow men. (1941, p. 93)

The results of capitalism (the increasing freedom "from" and the strength of the individual character which it built) has led people to assume that modern man is "the center and purpose of all activity, that what he does he does for himself, that the principle of self-interest and egotism are the all-powerful motivations of human activity" (Fromm, 1941, p. 109) He goes onto sat that "much of what seemed to him to be his purpose was not his" (p. 109). Rather, the capital that he earned and created no longer served him—he served it. "Man became a cog in the vast economic machine … to serve a purpose outside of himself" (p. 110). Man became a servant to the very machines he built, which gave him a feeling of personal insignificance and powerlessness. Those who did not have capital (like the middle class) and had to sell their labor to earn a living suffered similar psychological effects, according to Fromm, because they too, were merely cogs in the great economic machine, and hence instruments of "suprapersonal economic factors."

Modern man believed that he was freeing himself, but was really submitting to aims which were not his own. As such, he became untrue to himself. He did not work for himself, his happiness, or his freedom, rather, his work was done either to serve more powerful others or to acquire capital. This further isolated and alienated him from himself and his fellow man. As modern man became more conscious of

and worked towards freedom from oppressive bonds, he also became more alienated and isolated, and he began to feel insignificant. Fromm attributes this to the fact that negative freedom (freedom from oppressive forces) never fully developed into positive freedom. While it did create positive freedom in some ways, i.e., by providing humans "with economic and political freedom, the opportunity for individual initiative, and growing rational enlightenment" (1941. p. 121), it did not provide people with a means to realize positive freedom. Let us return to the quote we gave at the beginning of this chapter. Positive freedom, according to Fromm's definition, is the capacity for "spontaneous relationship to man and nature, a relationship that connects the individual with the world without eliminating his individuality" (p. 29). The foremost expression of which, according to Fromm, is "love and productive work because they are rooted in the integration and strength of the total personality" (p. 29). So positive freedom equals wholeness of the personality, which is integration.

Moreover Fromm asserts that the need for a sense of identity "is so vital and imperative that man could not remain sane if he did not find some way of satisfying it" (1955, p. 61), and "The need to feel a sense of identity stems from the very condition of human existence, and it is the source of the most intense strivings" (p. 63). It is humans' need for identity and belonging that underlies their intense passion for status and conformity. These needs, according to Fromm, can be even stronger than the need for physical survival. Fromm asks:

> What could be more obvious than the fact that people are willing to risk their lives, to give up their love, to surrender their freedom, to sacrifice their own thoughts, for the sake of being one of the herd, of conforming, and thus of acquiring a sense of identity, even though it is an illusory one? (p. 63)

A capitalistic economic system has caused man to be estranged from the products that he makes with his own hands. "He is not really the master any more of the world he has built; on the contrary, this man-made world has become his master, before whom he bows down (Fromm, 1941, p. 117). Productive work does not have this character. Similarly, relations between people have also become alienating in the modern capitalistic world. As Fromm states, human relationships assume the character of relations between things rather than between beings (1941, p. 119). Fromm writes:

> But perhaps the most important and the most devastating instance of this spirit of instrumentality and alienation is the individual's relationship to his own self. Man does not only sell commodities, he sells himself and feels himself to be a commodity [and] if there is no use for the qualities a person offers, he has none; just as an unsalable commodity is valueless though it might have its use value. Thus the self-confidence, the "feeling of self," is merely an indication of what others think of the person … If he is sought after, he is somebody; if he is not popular, he is simply nobody. (p. 119)

This is devastating, because what people dread most is isolation; we cannot live without some sort of co-operation with others. In fact, Fromm believes that "the

need to be related to the world outside oneself, the need to avoid aloneness" is as imperative to man as is the physiologically conditioned needs (like hunger, the need for sleep, etc.). Fromm wrote that "to feel completely alone and isolated leads to mental disintegration just as physical starvation leads to death" (1941, p. 17). The mode of capitalistic production, because it has made man an instrument for suprapersonal economic purposes and increased his sense of individual insignificance, has also increased his feeling of isolation and powerlessness. Likewise, human relationships have suffered because they have assumed a spirit of manipulation and instrumentality and have lost their sense of connectedness and relatedness. There is no sense of solidarity in modern society. Human relationships under capitalism have ceased to be relationships between people who have an interest in one another as fellow human beings, and have become relationships based on mutual usefulness. The instrumentality of relationships is clearly seen in relationships at all levels, from employer/ employee, to business person/customer, to one's relationship with one's own self. As such humans have become "bewildered and insecure" (p. 120) rather than strong and secure beings who are capable of loving and liberating both themselves and others. Productive and authentic love does not have this character.

PRODUCTIVE LOVE

In discussing how to move into positive freedom, Fromm (1947) talks about the importance of love and productiveness. He suggests that genuine love is rooted in productiveness and he refers to this as productive love. Productive love includes care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge. He states:

> To love a person productively implies care and to feel responsible for his life, not only for his physical existence but for the growth and development of all his human powers. To love productively is incompatible with being passive, with being an onlooker at the loved person's life; it implies labor and care and the responsibility for his growth. (pp. 106-107)

Moreover, he contends that love for oneself is inseparably connected to love of any other self, and that to love or work productively, one must be able to be quiet and alone with oneself. He says that "if an individual is able to love productively, he loves himself too; if he can love only others, he cannot love at all (1947, p. 135).

Later in *The Art of Loving* (1956), Fromm further confirms that love for self and others are not mutually exclusive concepts.

> If it is a virtue to love my neighbor as a human being, it must be a virtue—and not a vice—to love myself, since I am a human being too. There is no concept of man in which I myself am not included. A doctrine which proclaims such exclusion proves itself to be intrinsically contradictory." Furthermore, "respect of one's own integrity and uniqueness, love and understanding of oneself, cannot be separated from respect, love, and understanding for another individual. (p. 53)

In a powerful book called *Education and The Significance of Life* (1953), Jiddu Krishnamurti beautifully sums up Fromm's point about the relationship between love of oneself, love of others, and freedom. He states, "Self-knowledge is the beginning of freedom, and it is only when we know ourselves that we can bring about order and peace" (p. 52). He further adds that "if we want to change existing conditions, we must first transform ourselves, which means that we must become aware of our own actions, thoughts and feelings in everyday life" (p. 68). Hence, Krishnamurti concludes:

> If we are to bring about a true revolution in human relationship, which is the basis of all society, there must be a fundamental change in our own values and outlook; but we avoid the necessary and fundamental transformation of ourselves, and try to bring about political revolutions in the world, which always leads to bloodshed and disaster. (pp. 53-54)

Like Fromm, Krishnamurti (1953) stresses inner transformation as one important part of the man's relationship with others because "It is the inward strife which, projected outwardly [which] becomes the world conflict" (p. 77). He, like Fromm, fears that "most of us are afraid to tear down the present society and build a completely new structure, for this would require a radical transformation of ourselves" (p. 80). He states:

> If we are to change radically our present human relationship, which has brought untold misery to the world, our only and immediate task is to transform ourselves through self-knowledge. So we come back to the central point, which is oneself; but we dodge that point and shift the responsibility onto government, religions, and ideologies. The government is what we are, religions and ideologies are but a projection of ourselves; and until we change fundamentally there can be neither right education nor a peaceful world. (p. 80-81)

Love of self and of others is vital for the flourishing of a productive life of true positive freedom. While it is important to develop critical consciousness in the Freirean sense (a consciousness of oppression and its causes), these notions are not sufficient to create a truly liberated person. Political revolution on the sociological side alone will not cure the ills of society without an internal awareness that merges self-love and love for others in a productive way.

In *The Sane Society* (1955) Fromm integrates the psychological and the sociological dimensions of these conditions. According to Fromm, Americans have lost sight of intrinsic values as a consequence of the Capitalist mode of production and a focus on individual freedom. He says that a " healthy society furthers man's capacity to love his fellow men, to work creatively, to develop his reason and objectivity, to have a sense of self which is based on the experience of his own productive powers" (p. 72). However, the capitalistic principle that each individual seeks his own profit and thus contributes to the happiness of all, (which became the guiding principle of human behavior in the 19th century, and which became corrupted further into individual competitiveness over the course of the 20th

century onto the present time), has decreased the role of human solidarity through the inordinate obsession of having. Thus the quest for positive freedom that is spontaneously created through loving relatedness to self and others is destroyed by a focus on possessing and acquisition as a means to overcome alienation, when in actuality it leads to more alienation from self and others.

BEING AND POSITIVE FREEDOM

The having mode is the source of the lust for power and leads to isolation and fear and that the being mode is the source of productive love and activity and leads to solidarity and joy. In the being mode of existence, one responds spontaneously and productively and has the courage to take risks in order to give birth to new ideas. Our real goal, Fromm (1976) believes that the distinction between having and being "represents the most crucial problem of existence" today (p. 4). These two "fundamental modes of existence" are two different kinds of character structure the respective predominance of which determines the totality of a person's thinking, feeling, and acting" (p. 12). Fromm further explains that in the having mode of existence our " relationship to the world is one of possessing and owning, one in which I want to make everybody and everything, including myself, my property" (p. 12). The self is defined by what one has. The being mode of existence, on the other hand, refers to the mode of existence in which "one neither has anything nor craves to have something, but is joyous, employs one's faculties productively, and is oned to the world" (p. 6). Like a fish in the water, being "oned" to the world (yes he transforms a noun into a verb) is the environment in which positive freedom spontaneously thrives in creative presence.

In Fromm's writing, he consistently refers to Meister Eckhart, whom he calls "one of the great masters of living" (1976, p. 74). Fromm describes Eckhart's explanation for the relation between possession and freedom. Eckhart wrote that "freedom is restricted to the extent to which we are bound to possession, works, and lastly, to our own egos … By being bound to our egos, we stand in our own way and are blocked from bearing fruit, from realizing ourselves fully" (Eckhart cited in Fromm, 1976, pp. 51-52). Eckhart's concept of not having is that "we should be free from our own things and our own actions. This does not mean that we should neither possess anything nor do anything; it means that we should not be bound, tied, chained to what we own and what we have, not even God" (as cited in Fromm, 1976, p. 51). "Being to Eckhart, means to be active in the classic sense of the productive expression of one's human powers, not in the modern sense of being busy" (1976, p. 53). Fromm believes that "Breaking through the mode of having is the condition for all genuine activity" (1976, p. 54).

Consequently, we crave to fill the emptiness of not loving the self by domination or submission to others, and by seeking to possess things which we believe will make us more valuable as persons. A being based orientation then is based in love of self/others, productive creativity which is in essence the very nature of positive freedom. But can one learn to "to be?" Are there choices that we can make and actions to be taken that like the bicycle analogy might create and

sustain the momentum of the dialectic of freedom through being? After briefly exploring Fromm's praxis of being, we will conclude by returning to this question.

STEPS TOWARD BEING

In *The Art of Being* (1992) Fromm offers "steps towards being" which are intended to be "a guide to productive self-awareness" (p. vii) rather than a prescriptive method that can be nailed down and possessed. It is more apt to liken the following actions as taking steps in a flowing river which possesses you rather than the other way around. While Fromm recognizes that the orientation towards having is rooted in the "structural realities of today's industrial culture," he contends that the way to overcome these realities is through "rediscovering man's own psychic, intellectual, and physical powers and in his possibilities of self-determination" (Funk, 1992, p. vii); hence, his focus is on productive self-awareness. Included in an orientation towards being is the ability to reason and to love, which as we have seen thus far, are in short supply in modern American culture. The narcissism and ego-centeredness of modern man, which are the result of orienting one's life towards having, need to be overcome in order for reason and love to become manifest.

The individual with a having orientation has lost the power of her psychic forces, i.e., the power of her own capacity for love, reason, and productive activity and therefore these capacities must be established (or re-established), strengthened, and honed if one is to become more fully human.

Moreover, for Fromm (1992), "the full humanization of man requires the breakthrough from the possession-centered to the activity-centered orientation, from selfishness and egotism to solidarity and altruism" (p. 1). Fromm states that in order to move towards such a productive, being orientation, it is first vital to know what the norms are that are conducive to man's optimal growth and functioning. He contends that overcoming greed, illusions, and hate, and attaining love and compassion, are the conditions for attaining optimal being (1992). Consequently the art of living and the art of being, come from the ability to grow optimally, according to the conditions of human nature.

Fromm outlines several "steps towards being" which he believes will lead towards the type of liberation he is espousing. We provide a brief overview here. For a fuller elaboration of each step refer to the entire book, *The Art of Being* (1992). He begins with the concept of singular focus, the "first condition for more than mediocre achievement in any field, including that of the art of living, is 'to will one thing'" (p. 31). By this Fromm means that one must make a decision, and commit oneself to the particular goal one is striving for. This suggests that one is "geared and devoted to the one thing he has decided on, [and] that all his energy flows in the direction of this chosen goal" (p. 31); otherwise, the will of the person to accomplish the goal is compromised. It is to aim for the desired goal wholeheartedly.

The second step towards being for Fromm (1992) is to be fully awake. In a state of total awakeness "one is not only aware of that which one needs to be aware of in order to survive or to satisfy passionate goals, one is aware of oneself and of the

world (people and nature) around one. One sees, not opaquely but clearly, the surface together with its roots" (p. 36). To be awake means to see with "an extraordinary clarity, distinctness, reality" (p. 37). It is to see ourselves and others in our "suchness," meaning seeing people with a "direct, unimpeded awareness" (p. 37) i.e., in a state of alertness and consciousness of the being. Such a state of awareness precludes thinking, passing judgment or placing value on the person; it is a state which transcends thinking (this is a skill which requires much devoted practice and skill).

The third step towards being according to Fromm (1992) is to be aware, i.e., attentive and mindful. It signifies more than simple consciousness or knowledge; "… it has the meaning of discovering something that was not quite obvious, or was even not expected. In other words, awareness is knowing or consciousness in a state of close attention" (p. 37). Again, the process of becoming aware transcends thought. Awareness is not only becoming aware of what is not hidden, it is also becoming aware of what is hidden, or becoming conscious of what is not conscious, or making conscious what is repressed. It is a process of revealing or uncovering awareness. For people attempting to achieve a state of being, or liberation, there must be awareness or an uncovering in both inner conflicts and conflicts in social life. Becoming aware has a liberating effect; it allows one to have a clearer more precise understanding of "truth" and "reality" which in turn makes one more independent and more centered in one's self. Awareness frees us from dependencies on irrational passions, desires, and authority. Often just recognizing a problem and its significance can be freeing, and if one becomes intensely focused on that problem he or she will seek a resolution to it from his or her center.

Another dynamic action in the cultivation of being-based positive freedom is the capacity to concentrate, which is "a rarity in the life of cybernetic man" (Fromm, 1992, p. 44). To concentrate requires "inner activity, not busy-ness, and this activity is rare today when busy-ness is the key to success" (p. 45) which is measured in having more and more things. In order to learn to concentrate, one must first practice how to be still. It may surprise many to discover how active, how creative and spontaneous and *free* your thoughts can become when we cease from striving and being overly concerned about things, opinions, fears, doubts and attitudes that cut us off from connectedness to ourselves and others, which is the very essence of positive freedom. "Concretely speaking, this means to sit still for, say, ten minutes, to do nothing, and as far as possible to think of nothing, but to be aware of what is going on in oneself" (p. 46). This practice is to begin slowly and deliberately by beginning to just sit, and then by stretching that sitting time from 10 to 15 or 20 minutes or so. This can be done regularly, every day, morning and night. After learning to be still one must practice the art of concentration. One can choose to concentrate on an object, or on her or his breathing, for example. This practice should be followed by the practice of concentration on thoughts and on feelings and on concentration on others. One must not focus on the superficial, such as the clothes the other is wearing, or what her position in society is, or how he behaves, i.e., on the persona of the other person, but rather, "one must penetrate

through this surface to lift the mask and see who the person is behind it." This we can only know if we concentrate on him. Other helpful forms of concentration include concentrating on a particular sport, a chess game, painting or sculpting, anything which requires that we give our full attention to what we are doing. Practicing concentration in these ways helps us to achieve a mindful way of being in which we are fully concentrated on everything we are doing at any given moment, whether it is reading, sewing, cleaning, or eating. This allows us to live in the moment rather than to be fretting over the past or the future. Such deliberate thoughtful, mindfulness is a particularly vital component of a life lived with a being orientation.

Finally, the last component of Fromm's steps towards being is to meditate, which is a direct outgrowth of concentration, awareness, and alertness. While there are various forms of meditation (Fromm 1992) the main goal is maximum awareness or mindfulness of reality, especially, however, of body and mind. Such mindfulness should "be applied to every moment of daily living. It means not to do anything in a distracted manner, but in full concentration of what is at hand … so that living becomes fully transparent by full awakeness" (Fromm, 1992, p. 51). If every experience is done with mindfulness, it is "clear, distinct, real, and hence not automatic, mechanical, diffuse" (p. 51). This allows for "optimal awareness of the processes inside and outside oneself" (p. 53). In the Buddhist tradition of meditation, it is believed that greed, hate, and resultant suffering can be overcome because there is a clarity and intensity of consciousness which presents a picture of actuality that is increasingly purged of any falsifications Through meditation and mindfulness, "the subconsciousness will become more 'articulate' and more amenable to control, i.e., capable of being co-ordinated with, and helpful to, the governing tendencies of the conscious mind" (Fromm, 1992, p. 53) which allows for more independence and freedom. The psychoanalytic method can also be used as a tool to help individuals come to a greater awareness of the unconscious aspects of the mind.

While most people think of psychoanalysis in a limited way, as a cure for neurosis, the truth is that "the essence of psychoanalysis [once freed from the shackles of Freud's libido theory] can be defined as the discovery of the significance of conflicting tendencies in man, of the power of the 'resistance' to fight against the awareness of these conflicts, of the rationalizations that make it appear that there is no conflict, and of the liberating effect of becoming aware of the conflict, and of the pathogenic role of unsolved conflict" (Fromm, 1992, p. 56). The significance of recognizing internal conflict is that rationalizations for behavior are questioned and challenged. For example, if a newly un-oppressed person engages in oppressive ways, she or he can come to 1) an awareness of the bad behavior, and 2) an understanding of the unconscious thought processes that might be leading to her oppressive behavior. So, the function of psychoanalysis and meditation (and also the nine other "steps towards being" which Fromm presents) can be used for achieving inner liberation by awareness of repressed conflict, but also of achieving love, respect, responsibility, and compassion—which create solidarity—for others, which in turn leads to non-oppressive

liberation of self and others. In other words, these steps towards being help create the conditions necessary for love of oneself and one's neighbor. They create the conditions out of which productivity can emerge allowing humanity to reach its highest potential.

Along with the development of the aforementioned steps towards being, Fromm recognized that analyzing the unconscious aspects of the society was integral to a critical understanding of and transformation of both that particular society and the individual members of it. He declared: "Unless I am able to analyze the unconscious aspects of the society in which I live, I cannot know who I am, because I don't know which part of me is not me" (Fromm, 1992, p. 78). Thus it is clear that a critical understanding of society is crucial to the overcoming of oppression and to a positive form of being or becoming, but it is also clear that the inner, and often unconscious, conflicts of the individual must be equally understood and dealt with.

THE PRAXIS OF BEING AND POSITIVE FREEDOM

> Love, reason, and productive activity are one's own psychic forces that arise and grow only to the extent that they are practiced; They cannot be consumed, bought or possessed like the objects of having, but can only be practiced, ventured upon, performed. (Funk cited in Fromm, 1992, pp. 8-9)

We began this chapter with Fromm's definition of positive freedom and an example of the dialectic of 'freedom from' and 'freedom unto' applied to freedom of speech. In paraphrase, one can be free of unjust laws that prohibit freedom of speech but still have nothing worth saying (negative freedom). Yet the social political conditions derived from this freedom create external conditions to further inward freedom. Hopefully both aspects will result in the spontaneous formation of new thoughts, words and actions that can create inward freedom and connectedness to others (positive freedom). The summary of actions in the above section, singularity of focus, awakeness, awareness and the practice of inward quietness that leads to a lifestyle of mediation are all aspects of the kind transformative praxis that can provide the environment for the growth of positive freedom.

When all these "steps" are considered as one holistic practice, it helps us envision how we might apply them to Fromm's example of negative/positive freedom of speech. First of all the ability to focus on one thing, is not so much a matter of mind over matter exertion. It is a matter of yielding to curiosity, or ideas that grow on the more you give yourself to them. This leads to singularity of intent and a quest to discover more. In the process, awakeness, awareness, rejection of the given will hopefully lead to the quietness of incubation. Remember, it is a matter of yielding, of bringing to birth. It is in the inner quiet of incubation that connections between past experience and new created thoughts are formed.

In order for these networks to be established, time for reflection is essential and can occur in many forms. Sometimes incubation occurs in a half dream state of

sleep or while driving, walking or gardening. The mathematicians Changeux and Connes (1995) give an excellent summary of the incubation process that is worth noting here. The process begins with focused conscious intention followed by a period of setting this direct concentration aside. There must be a time allowance for germination or incubation. Often an unexpected solution will make itself known. This is followed up with a time of critical assessment (pp. 75-79). The process they describe parallels well with Fromm's praxis of being.

It is worth returning at this point to the emphasis in Fromm's definition of positive freedom as the ability to spontaneously connect to others. Steps toward being have a relational/horizontal dimension as well as an individual/vertical dimension. One example of how both aspects might be experienced out of the above mentioned steps might be discovered through an enhanced ability to ask questions of others in ways that draw out personal narratives, that break through presumptions and prejudices that result in forming new bonds and relationships.

Yes there are actions that can be taken in "being" which can lead to a lifestyle of singularly focused awakened, awareness, where inner clamor gives way to new thoughts and original ideas, practical ways to be productive, to relate to others in the quality of love of self and others that Fromm sees as essential to positive freedom. As in the bike riding analogy, the dialectic of freedom in motion uses and overcomes the gravity of alienation and maintains the outward/inward balance of both aspects of freedom through productive love of self and others in the praxis of being.

Erich Fromm maintains that the achievement of the ideals of knowledge, brotherly love, reduction of suffering, independence, and responsibility, constitute the most fundamental conditions for happiness and freedom. Indeed, as Fromm (1950) contends, these are essentially the fundamental ideals which comprise the ethical core of all great philosophies on which Eastern and Western culture are based (1950). Because these norms are considered so fundamental to human development, they should increasingly become the focus of our shared culture in ways that inspire each of us in our journey toward the unfolding of our full potential as individuals in a positively free democracy.

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