



## Individualization and Alienation of Adolescents - Loss of experiences in a fun society

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Today 'Childhood and Youth' is produced under the premises of a globalized capitalism, which in a socially critical manner the School of Frankfurt, of which I regard Erich Fromm<sup>1</sup> as being a member, has reflected on since the Institute for Social Research was founded at the beginning of the thirties.

### Structural Change

Through the development of scientific technical progress, the social change in industrial society is leading to far reaching political, economical, cultural and social changes. However, these do not just modify structures and institutions, but also the individual himself through change in the social environment. The opportunity arises, and also the compulsion, to lead one's own life, with the ambivalence, that the *normal* biography can become a *chosen* biography, a *crafted* biography, a *risk* bio-graphy, or a *broken* or *collapsed* biography. In this case one's own life is also one's own *failure*. Individuals struggle to lead their own lives in a world, which is becoming less and less accessible, which is inescapably globally interlinked, and which is becoming clear

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Wehr 1990, p. 16ff, 2001, p. 16-27; With regard to Fromm's work I cannot recognize the 'exhaustion' mentioned in the 'Spiegel' (weekly magazine 1/2003), on the contrary, Funk; Johach; Meyer 2000 and Funk; Ferst; Bierhoff 2002 make Fromm's critical humanistic current relevance clear.

due to internet, economic market connections between multinational businesses, telecommunications etc. Market innovations cause very rapid changes, alterations and rationalization in production. At the same time, with this dependency on the globalized market, one's own life becomes detraditionalized at the same time. The social structure of a person's life is formed with continual differentiation and individualization. „Every man for himself“ (cf. Beck 1997, p.9 f; Rolff, Zimmermann 1997, p. 151ff.).

In a society, that regards itself as a „fun society“ (Schulze), the lacking intensive psychological contacts or relations in Fromm's sense force the emotional investment in relationships to become trivial. Involvement with an object or a person vanishes in consumeristic or virtual smoke. This tendency is increased by the (new) „flight from freedom“ (Fritzsche), an impulse to fear and flee, to avoid the risks of a risk society (Beck 1986): unemployment, ecological and globalization dangers, the threat of war (Iraq) by means of suppression.

Here the phenomenon of individualization (Beck/Beck-Gernsheim 1986; 1990) can be seen as the trend of modern socialization in a risk society. *Individualization* means that people's biography is removed from its fixed points and is laid open in the hands of each individual that is given the task of acting depending on decisions (Beck 1986, p. 216). Modern socialization tends to dissolve restrictions within the family and to release children, adolescents, men and women



from their traditional Procrustean bed. Due to isolation, domestication and change in social contacts, the changed conditions of socialization in mass culture influenced by the new media produce 'throwaway relationships', 'chosen family relations', one-child-relationships, wealth and the dominance of leisure time contacts, and destandardized biographies of children and adolescents (Rolff, Zimmermann 1997, p. 153). Winkel (1988, p. 142f) polemically uses the term 'non children'. He thus recalls Postmann's theory of the disappearance of childhood in secondary correlations of experiences influenced by the media.

### Reception of the Media

Within horizons of perception and experiences influenced by the media, the passive, consuming reception of reality conveyed by the media dominates. The actual reality of communicative and social relations disappears behind the medium, which thus becomes a non-recognized (pseudo) primary experience. The 'replacement' of childlike activity and movement impulses by (real) secondary experiences makes primary perceptive qualities waste away, since an intensive consumer becomes a 'matrix of prefabricated experience' (Rolff, Zimmermann 1997, p. 124). This means that reality is iconically listed second-hand by a mediated acquisition of the symbolic culture of adults (Rolff, Zimmermann 1997, p. 121). Thus the medium presents an 'edited version' of reality, where the raw material fantasy is converted into a domesticated form (Rolff, Zimmermann 1997, p. 123). The daily flood of pictures from the media (*Spiegel special* 9/95, p. 116ff) leads to a change in the reception modi and thus modifies the synaptic connections in the brain. The visual right half of the brain is reinfluenced to optimize the processing of information from pictorial information in episodes. On the other hand, the potency of the abstract left half of the brain is reduced due to a lack of use. Fantasy, the 'material of which the future is made', wastes away, since expressions, which are related to grasping, always lose their original meaning and are visualized. *Associations* of a logical, temporal or spatial type are made

more holistically, whereby *creativity* and *innovation* become destructured. It becomes more difficult to apply independent thoughts, which is required, for example, for *active reading* or *looking* and co-fabulating, which would be necessary for a creative text and picture interpretation. Indeed, the ability to absorb and process a variety of information at the same time increases in the 'storm of signals' of information society, however, magnetic resonance imaging illustrates that the 'tracks' in the brain are formed by pictures. It is thus difficult to make temporal, spatial and abstract associations. The quantity and intensity of the flood of information demand a specific selectivity from a child's brain. However, this is not guided by categories or formed by norms, it is guided by thrill/action, with the constant compulsion to increase the thrill, in order to cross the threshold of perception. In this way a good portion of the quality of the senses is lost: desensorization of perception and a certain impoverishment of the activity of fantasizing, of reading - to recall the Pisa study - of comprehension and the possibility of one-sided coordination of the brain halves: *visuality contra digitality, picture contra language*.

### Perception of Time

This process is intensified by an individual experiencing of time. The cyclic perception of time of children is 'chopped up' by the course of the day determined by adults (Rolff, Zimmermann 1997, p. 130f). Since time seems to be short (time is money), the differentiation and economy of time results in pressure of time. Accelerated and stressful modernization produces a 'synchronization disturbance' in children and adolescents (Reheis 1996, p. 620), which disturbs the time balance between chronological, individual and social time (cf. Molicki 1998) and thus brings about enormous intrapsychological stress. Children are confronted with preset time rasters and economic dealing with time, whilst 'natural (time) rhythms ... are experienced to a lesser extent by children' (Faust - Siehl 1995, p. 17).

This development can be regarded as a result of the wider range on offer to consumers



today. Children live in an economic and materialistic climate with protective cover, (for the most part) they are spared any vicissitudes and 'highly dangerous' risks. This upbringing with all comforts often deviates from children's life rhythms. In addition to the loss of immediacy, the modern way of dealing with time holds the danger of replacing spontaneous actions by planned activities. However, this organisation of time corresponds less to the natural way, in which children deal with time, but more with the technomorphic structures. The ability regarding the sociostructured perception of time, however, is only learned in elementary, biophilic associations in life. Child's play is not subject to any planning, moreover it is characterized by boundlessness and creativity. Molicki (1998 p. 1) describes a child's experience of time as follows: 'I control myself as a living organism. I live in time and have the time I need! I select the right time! Time works for me!'. In addition to the suppression of children's spontaneity, over time the changed manner of dealing with time also produces a loss in the holistic experience of the phenomenon. Time is divided into segments, spatial experiences take place in insular areas; due to their specialized offers the islands themselves only appeal to a part of a child, even if they encourage a 'panoramic spatial experience' (Rolff, Zimmermann 1997, p. 136), which can be described as hastiness, the impossibility of recognizing details, and pausing and gaining an overall impression.

The areas and surroundings for children's experiences are no longer connected by (traditional) consistent chains of association and experience (Rolff, Zimmermann 1997<sup>5</sup>, p. 117-154). The vision aimed for with the individualized handling of time is the 'flexible high speed person' (cf. Geißler 2000, p. 12; Glotz 2000, p. 17), who can keep up with the global elite of mobile singles independent of time and place and with the (unsatisfactory) hectic of daily rationality in a non-stop society (cf. Reheis 1999, p. 35). However, here also the destructive necrophilic effect of an accelerated production logic (cf. Reheis 1999, p. 33) can be seen, which with the lack of time suppresses the reproductive and lasting aspects of human existence.

## Normative Change

Modernization phases also intensify the changing of values, since 'visual children' rather identify themselves with children from the advertising world (advertising kids/advertising heroes) than with 'weaker' identification objects, as offered in fairy tales or other forms of text, which encourage fantasy. In this way there is a tendency for 'early' socialization to develop, in which children's mobility and play impulses degenerate. They are rejected by children as being childish and waste away as a result. Thus they rather think in 'categories' of *strong* and *weak* (quasi authoritarian expressions) or successful and unsuccessful than in patterns which differentiate between good and bad (ethical expressions). What is more, since children are often virtually packed in cotton wool as 'only children' in a protected area without the opportunity to prove themselves and without creative play areas to try out, and at the same time they are confronted with a flood of overtaxing visual information, in reality there is nothing left for them but to reduce the emotional occupation with other objects to usage and consumption. Thus Köhnlein's theory (1995, p. 4): 'Children hardly allow themselves to be touched personally by something' is understandable. This is connected to the difficulty of producing the sensory association between individual areas of life and the resulting management of living conditions (Rolff, Zimmermann 1997, p. 134-138). The authentic requirements, interests and desires of experience of children and adolescents are meddled with by adults due to 'practical constraints'.

## Individualization of 'Youth'

Children and adolescents are not only passively socialized, they also individualize themselves actively in the socialization process. This becomes clear in the expression 'biographization' of youth. This expression means becoming active, achieving, planning and organizing one's own life. This does not just concern self-realization but also finding and creating a 'patchwork identity': A person's own life becomes a daily prob-



lem of acting, managing and presenting oneself. Individual freedom is fought for, defended and safeguarded against adults, who still do not know 'which way they are going'. Thus the chances of individualization according to Beck definitely offer more room for freedom, more flexibility in behaviour, the democratization of educational and occupational opportunities and the emphasis on self-realization values as opposed to values of duty and safety. This means, however, that in addition to the possible fun, whether they are 'happy children' or 'problem children of freedom' (Beck 1997), adolescents have an enormous increase in stress and (subjective) symptoms of being overtaxed (Fritzsche 1998, p. 127f, 139 f).

The adolescent phase is also characterized by the search for autonomy and becoming independent, which is accompanied by a strong emphasis on corporeality and sensory experiences. This search encounters a social situation in society, which is characterised by a certain confusion in the *pluralisation* and *polarization of concepts of life*. In particular, a change in orientation regarding leisure, consumption and the use of the media can be seen. Here the conditions of mediarization of information and communication processes apply, and thus the desensitization and digitalization of perception.

### Superficial and Intense Experiences in the Modern Age

This refers to the importance of the value of experience, i.e. the aesthetics and management of things, which are more important than their use or utility value. Schulze puts this down to the fact that the survival of most people is assured in modern societies, whereby 'Beyond the question of survival, stimulated by the constant daily aesthetic compulsion of choice, ... individuals have the basic existential problem of having to live their life (Schulze 1993, p. 140).

The orientation of experience<sup>2</sup> as the most

<sup>2</sup> In contrast to 'everyday life', 'experiences' are direct and the individual is 'totally' (i.e. as a psychophysical entirety) appealing, they represent a (spatially and temporally) structured unit with a multi-sided structure of excitement, they include a subject-object rela-

direct form of the search for happiness, fervor, change and entertainment thus determines the decisions to act of the adolescents looking for experiences who still feel their lives due to their juvenile needs and who experience their bodies and want to find their own limitations. This would be the function of the moratorium. The phenomenon, that '*Everyone is responsible for his own experiences*', (Schulze 1993, p. 14) makes it increasingly difficult for children and adolescents to make the right decisions on the market of (experience) opportunities, as paradox as it may sound, since due to the tendency to generalize experiences, i.e. by declaring everything and everyone as an experience, the experiences which are 'right' and relevant for the 'project good life' are often placed in the background. By commercializing experiences in the media, culture and leisure industries, it is all too often forgotten that 'experiences' are subjective processes which require a certain amount of initiative of one's own, and which cannot simply be purchased and consumed as one is often led to believe by the lovely, brightly coloured experiences in a department store world.

The purchasing and consumption 'experience' seldom satisfies the search for experiences and orientation of adolescents, indeed it often bores them, which is why they partly search for these in the thrill of extreme situations (e.g. urban railway surfing, car racing, bungee jumping, etc.) as well as in rhythm and in extremely loud music (Schulze - teachers' information pamphlet 12/92). Unfortunately, this is not the right place to follow the search for adolescent joy of experimenting and looking for adventure with the aim of finding their limits and identity, however, the adolescent subcultures of the Wandervogel youth movement, scouts, beatniks, rockers, hippies, punks etc. and their worlds of experience should be kept in mind here.

Furthermore, the social change in the globalized modern world is however also characterized by *crises* in the gainful employment sector,

relationship, have a universality and individuality with historical character and a relation to the future, which wants to objectify itself and is inherent in creative strength, which accounts for the correlation life-expression-understanding (cf. Fischer, Ziegenspeck 2000, p.235/236)



due to unemployment, rationalization and the reduction or transfer of employment, ecological (El Niño, ozone hole, etc) and military conflicts (Middle East, Afghanistan, Iraq, terror). In the meantime, these phenomena are no longer 'just' burdens of adult life, which do not affect adolescents in the 'protected area' granted to them. Moreover, they have now reached the centre of the adolescent phase, by questioning the meaning of youth, their 'moratorium' itself granted to them by society. When peace and the working society become a problem in themselves, then the adolescent phase as a phase of biographical preparation for this society also has to become a problem. Thus 'youth' itself changes and it becomes a phase with its own ('alternative') qualities of experience and life. Increasingly it contains opportunities to lead a life on one's own responsibility and to create one's own biography. The tendency to dissolve the collective status passage and the time of the adolescent phase represent a structural change: as *de-structurization* and *individualization*, whereby *de-structurization* means that the transition to an adult age disintegrates due to the tendency towards an incoherent succession of partial transitions, which are each determined by their own appearances and time structures. However, this structural problem can only be compensated by adolescent subcultures to a certain extent<sup>3</sup>.

However, the fact that nowadays it can be assumed that there is an increase in risk constellations in the life phase of youth is shown by a wealth of research results: psychosomatic disturbances and psychosocial disturbances, behavioural disturbances, such as aggressive and delinquent behaviour, health endangering behaviour, such as the consumption of drugs or medicines, are symptoms of a 'bio-psycho-social stress condition'<sup>4</sup>. These are regarded as being an indication that the requirements in developing, which confront adolescents today in modern industrial societies, which have become increasingly com-

plex and difficult, demand a great deal of flexibility and ability to act, which surpass the individually available resources to manage these, and thus seem to increase problematic behavioural characteristics (cf. Beck/Beck-Gernsheim 1994).

Heitmeyer's (1993, 1994) disorientation theory draws attention to the ambivalence and ambiguity of the growing areas of freedom. Of course, the 'children of freedom' can use the improved creative opportunities due to better social, personal and material resources, but the 'problem children of freedom', who also have social, economic, personal and educational problems, and even perhaps migration and language problems, become disorientated all too easily and look for *one* definite pattern to solve problems<sup>5</sup> (violence, drugs, fundamentalism etc.). This can be explained on the basis of Fromm's model of 'fear of and flight from freedom' (1941a; GA I, p. 217-392), which Fritzsche updated with the expression '*new* fear of and flight from freedom' (1998, p. 45f). They draw attention to the risk of freedom and that freedom *from* does not mean freedom *to* at the same time. The discontinuance of repressions does not determine a positive horizon of aims.

### Children of Freedom

As a result of modern socialization and individualization dynamics, it is well possible to determine a socialization type, which can be established as a society character not only as a 'child of freedom' (Beck 2000), but also, as Fritzsche (1999) emphasizes, as one with drawbacks, that

<sup>3</sup>Ziehe emphasises the 'reconciliation or mediation work', which has to be carried out by a 'charming *authority*' (Journal für Politische Bildung - Journal for Political Education - 1/02, p. 16ff)

<sup>4</sup>cf. Survey of adolescent health by the University of Bielefeld 9/03 BT (newspaper) of 18.9.03/ kinder-jugend-gesundheit 21.de

<sup>5</sup>The problem of prejudice, which thus clearly becomes stronger, shows the fundamental socialization problems. The construction or destruction of reality through prejudice has two complementary sides regarding the distortion of perception: Negative prejudice against minorities is complemented by 'positive' prejudice regarding one's own group. As a result of experiencing one's own weaknesses and fears of inferiority, the illusion of collective and personal superiority and strength arises. This (archaic) tendency in the foundation of society to produce a projective aggressive rebuff gives Beck cause to talk of a 'scapegoat society' (cf. Beck 1986, p. 100f, 161 ff.)



is to say at least partly a 'problem child', i.e. with narcissistic characteristics in Fromm's sense. This could be connected to the fact that children's needs, e.g. for closeness, creativity, security, structure, are desensitized - undermined by consumerism and also that the uncertainty of adults bringing up children appears disoriented (Heitmeyer; cf. also e & w (magazine) 2/03; Stern (magazine) 36ff/03).

The following is characteristic of 'children of freedom': no limitations (Hopf, Lehrerzeitung B&W (teacher's magazine) 24-24/1992, p. 552f): Children are no longer in a position to recognize and perceive outer and inner limitations. They have the tendency to search for experiences of limitations again and again and they are not able to set themselves limits. They mainly act as a result of their own experiences and have problems in imagining the feelings of others. Their ability to postpone needs is not very developed. They have a low frustration tolerance. If their needs are not satisfied, they easily become aggressive or have autoaggressive outbursts. They are unable to concentrate, since stimulation has to be continually greater, in order to conceal a chronic feeling of boredom. They look less for causes of their problems in their own personality but in that of others, i.e. they project their problems to outside causes. Whoever has no experience of limitations as a child, tends to exceed limitations as an adolescent (cf. Hopf 1992, p. 552f).

It is not clear yet, whether the tendency to individualization will fulfil Beck's hopes (1997, p. 18f) of an 'altruistic individualism' in a middle-class society, and whether it will tend towards productive reality processing, or whether marketing orientation will arise, in which exchange becomes an end in itself (1955a, GA IV, p. 105; Funk 2002, p. 143-158).

The 14th Shell study (shell-jugendstudie.de) illustrates both possibilities: modern (self-realization, happiness, etc.) and old values (order, security and diligence) are mixed individually into a value cocktail. Performance and security should form the pragmatic basis for an interesting and purposeful life full of experiences. '*Self-confident doers*' and pragmatic '*idealists*' appear to be the winners of modernisation. *Self-confident doers* originate from the wide social

middle classes, and they are equally represented by both sexes. Due to a supportive style of upbringing at home they are the achieving elite, since they face demands and follow their aims with ambition: to take on a position with responsibility, they want to gain promotion instead of opting out.

The *pragmatic idealists* originate from the educated classes, they tend to be females, their personal commitment is aimed at combining social thinking and the perception of achievement, the ideal side of life stands in the foreground, and the material side in the background. They take an active part in society in the areas: xenophobia, war, pollution and poverty.

The *robust materialists* and the (hesitant) *inconspicuous* seem to be more the problem children and losers of individualisation. The hesitant inconspicuous regard their personal future with scepticism, they come to terms less with the requirements at school and at work, they react more with resignation and apathy, since they have not learned to assert their (legitimate) interests. The robust materialists have similar problems to the hesitant inconspicuous, however they react with elbow power, i.e. they show outward (male) strength, they violate social rules more often and look down upon fringe groups.

### Fromm's Criticism of Experiences in the Modern Age

Fromm's social psychological criticism of the modern age and the socialization conditions refers to the fact that activating stimuli, which lead people to be productively active, i.e. to be inwardly and outwardly active, are nowadays replaced more and more by simple, i.e. passive stimuli: 'Life today in industrial society works almost exclusively with such 'simple stimuli'. Urges, like sexual desire, greed, sadism, destructiveness and narcissism are stimulated here. These stimuli are conveyed by films, television, radio, newspapers, magazines and the market for consumer goods. For the most part the advertising is based on the stimulation of desires, which are created by society. The mechanism is always the same: simple stimulation - direct and



passive reaction. Herein lies the reason why stimuli must constantly change, so as not to lose their effect (Fromm 1973a, GA II, p. 217).

Boredom and chronic depression are a consequence of lack of active stimuli and rampant frustration despite all zealous consumption, for Fromm important characteristics of the 'pathology of normality' (Fromm 1955a, GA IV, p. 13ff; 1973a, GA VII, p. 220ff), which thus releases a characterological, destructive aggressiveness, which is not compulsorily mechanical: 'A particularly dangerous consequence of boredom, which is insufficiently compensated for, is violence and destructiveness. This solution is mostly expressed in a passive form, ...[the fact] is mostly overlooked that boredom is the prerequisite for such presentations [of violence] to have an effect.' (1973a, GA VII, p. 224).

Induced boredom, due to the lack of primary intense experiences, is only inadequately concealed by offers of consumption and superficial experiences and thus is not expressed directly, which hinders disillusionment and elucidation. What remains is often a vague, uneasy type of feeling (Fromm 1955a, GA IV: p. 13ff; 1991b, p. 15ff), a light form of schizophrenia, as Fromm formulates it provocatively. Consumer habits, which take on an addictive form, whether it be alcohol, coffee, nicotine, addiction to work and relationships, extreme leisure and sport behaviour, show that there is a non-satisfaction of fundamental needs in society: a feeling of belonging, transcendence, experiencing identity, a lack of an orientation framework and the experience of the extent of effects.

To summarize, modern experiences of socialization, culture, nature and media tend to promote visual receptiveness with a passive consumer style, rather than subject related experiences of competence in children and adolescents.

### **Alienated Experiences**

This change in the pattern of perception becomes problematic to children and adolescents due to the fact that the anthropological core of subjects is thus touched on. Since Fromm describes (cognitive) perception as 'the primary

human experience' (GA VII, p. 204-207), it is closely connected to the feeling of belonging to the world, since an individual can only 'experience' things, if they are related to his or her (social) environment. 'If I am isolated and without any relationship to others, then I am filled with such fear, that it is completely impossible for me to develop a feeling for my identity and myself as a person.' (GA IX, 1959c, p. 404). Although this presupposes the existence of *interest* and *curiosity*, which leads to *active perception*, in order to experience the (social) world within its connections and to adopt it. Here learning processes are important: socialization and assimilation in Fromm's sense; accommodation and assimilation in Piaget's sense.

A subject is characterized by different, very personal and concrete experiences. However, in any case, an experience is something which happens in space and time, which as a rule is reflected upon and processed. It is internalized so to speak, since it has an important significance for the development of experience. Learning processes are based on superficial experiences and thus on intense experiences, which are connected to a particular recognition of something. With regard to the expression superficial experience Fromm refers to the expression a feeling of belonging. According to Fromm, to feel related to something means to be involved, active and interested. People, who feel related to their fellow people and nature, are not just observers. They are involved in the world and are interrelated with it. A feeling of belonging takes place in a participatory way and refers to everything surrounding people (fellow people, ideas, nature) (GA XII, p. 347f). 'People who only know their own problems, cannot be healthy and become a real humane being. It is not possible to live in an open manner with joy and independence, if one is only interested in oneself and one's own problems. One has to stand firmly on two feet on the basis of reality' (GA XII, p. 347). According to Fromm, this active, productive feeling of belonging is integrated into thinking (head), feeling (heart) and acting (hand). Only then one can find 'oneself', since only in this way can one have one's own experiences. 'Intense' and 'superficial' experiences thus depend on whether someone is active or passive, pro-



ductive or destructive.

The consequence of the deformation of cognitive perception is, that what we encounter is socially perceived unrealistically, i.e. it is distorted by the projection of personal feelings and thus the image of the other is distorted. This type of self-awareness remains rudimentary, since it does not transcend the limits of the individual (cf. 1959c, GA IX, p. 405). Feelings of alienation arise, which can undermine the emotional basis for comprehension. By taking the following comparison, Fromm makes the disillusioning, self-confident, sensory perception of the environment clear: The extent of the strength of a person in this world depends on how adequate his or her estimate of reality is. The less adequate it is, the more confused and thus also unsure he is, so that he needs idols to lean on and to find a feeling of security. However, the more adequate his or her estimation of the world is, the more he stands on his own two feet and finds his or her centre in his or herself. A person is like Antaios, who loaded himself with energy by touching mother earth, and who could only be killed, when an enemy held him in the air for long enough. (1989a, GA XII, p. 420f).

### Awareness and Attentiveness

In consequence, this implies stimulation through primary experiences and direct pro-social communication instead of concealed, induced boredom through offers of consumer goods and superficial experiences. Here spontaneous creativity and the thus related individual subjectivity is directly expressed. Disillusionment and elucidation are promoted. It is thus possible to strive against addictive types of consumer habits. The fundamental individual needs can be realized: feeling of belonging, extent of effects, amongst others. This authentic socio-emotional stimulation promotes the markedness of productive character orientation and the up-dating of loving solidarity, elucidating good sense and creative work. Since a biophilic upbringing includes 'direct sensory perception' and conveys 'direct human confrontation' (Scarbath 1999, p. 47).

Fromm is interested in spontaneous and

complete comprehension of the world, i.e. penetrating into the object itself and seeing it from the inside so to speak (1960a, GA VI, p. 347). He is concerned with 'attentiveness' and 'awareness' meaning that 'at every moment I am aware of my own body, including my posture, and of what is happening in my body, and I am wholly aware of my thoughts, that is to say, what I am thinking. I am always concentrated, at just the moment when I am able to have this awareness (1991d, GA XII, p. 355/356; cf. also 1989a, GA XII, p. 481-483). This awareness reminds one of 'flow' or 'aha experiences,' when Fromm tells of the experience of seeing a ball roll, of a pea or the aesthetic movement of a dancer as an example (1958d, GA IX, p. 329; 1960a, GA VI, p. 331).

This differentiated form of experience is integrated into a *productive orientation* (1960a, GA VI, p. 336). Fromm describes people's ability to use their powers, to feel themselves as a subject of these powers and to use them in relation to their needs, to realize any potential which he possesses. „I experience *myself* as the *subject* of my activity. Non-alienated activity is a process of giving birth to something, of producing something and remaining related to what I produce. This also implies that my activity is a manifestation of my powers, that I and my activity and the result of my activity are one. I call this non-alienated activity *productive activity*. (...) In alienated activity I do not experience myself as the acting subject of my activity; rather, I experience the *outcome* of my activity--and that as something „over there,“ separated from me and standing above and against me. In alienated activity I do not really act; I am *acted upon* by external or internal forces.“ (E. Fromm, *To Have Or to Be?*, New York 1976, p. 90f).

Here creative, intellectual thinking is connected to intuitive and direct comprehension and perception (cf. 1959c, GA IX, p. 400). Above all with regard to children, Fromm observes this direct, immediate comprehension 'before the might of upbringing changes this form of feeling' (1969a, GA VI, p. 346), in a quite traditional manner according to educational reforms here (Montessori, Buber, Bernfeld, Reichwein, etc.).

„They create a whole world out of scraps





of paper, wood, stones, chairs, practically anything they find available. But when after the age of six they become docile, unspontaneous, and passive, they want to be stimulated in such a way that they can remain passive and only „re-act.“ They want elaborate toys and get bored with them after a short while; in brief, they already behave as their elders do with cars, clothes, places to travel, and lovers.“ (E. Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, New York 1973, p. 271.)

For Fromm, adolescents are also an option for social transformation in the direction of *biophilia*, however only, if a humanistic upbringing productively ‘stirs up’ a social passive socialization. Fromm understands education as being ‘identical to the help, which is given to a child, so that it can realize its potential’ (Claßen 1987, p. 164f).

„Education is identical with helping the child realize his potentialities. (The root of the word education is *e-ducere*, literally, to lead forth, or to bring out something which is potentially present.) The opposite of education is manipulation, which is based on the absence of faith in the growth of potentialities, and on the conviction that a child will be right only if the adults put into him what is desirable and suppress what seems to be undesirable. There is no need of faith in the robot, since there is no life in it either.“ (E. Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, New York 1956, p. 112.)<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>According to Fromm, upbringing is based on four pillars: unconditional, (maternal) love; ‘paternal responsibility’, i.e. the right to respect others and to fulfill duties with respect to the community according to age. Next to one another the maternal and paternal principles (sympathy and justice) equally form ‘structure’ and ‘justice’. ‘Productive stimulation’ (holistic, i.e. body, spirit and psyche equally attractive stimulation). Here the following develops: ‘Interest’ is a basic attitude and a form of feeling of belonging to the world, which extends through all things.’ (1968a, GA IV, p. 321). The principle of self-administration and non bureaucratic (democratic) leadership includes the principle of involving children and in particular adolescents to a large extent in making decisions regarding their own matters. These four principles make it

The young generation is quite different from the majority. Among these young people we find patterns of consumption that are not hidden forms of acquisition and having, but expressions of genuine joy in doing what one likes to do without expecting anything „lasting“ in return. These young people travel long distances, often with hardships, to hear music they like, to see a place they want to see, to meet people they want to meet. (...) These young people dare to *be*, and they are not interested in what they get in return or what they can keep. (...) They do not polish their egos all the time in order to be a desirable „object“ on the market. They do not protect their image by constantly lying, with or without knowing it; they do not expend their energy in repressing truth, as the majority does. (...) While they may not have found themselves, or a goal that gives guidance to the practice of life, they are searching to be themselves instead of having and consuming. This positive element in the picture needs to be qualified, however. Many of these same young people (...) had not progressed from freedom *from* to freedom *to*. (E. Fromm, *To Have Or to Be?*, New York 1976, pp. 74f.)

‘Childhood’ and ‘Youth’ thus appear to be opportunities, to experience the freedom to exist beyond the superficiality of having and the mere ‘freedom from’ figurations of existence, but only as opportunities (Thiersch 1991), which remain risky and endangered, otherwise children’s and adolescent’s lives (experiences) remain a foiled life, as freedom, in which a person can only experience him or herself partially as a person<sup>7</sup>.

Here implications for school education and education by experience should be mentioned,

possible to have a democratic and educational opportunity to have humane organisation in the sense of a humane school education (cf. 1970b, GA III, p. 458-463; 1960e, GA IX, p. 409-414; 1970i, GA IX, p. 415-423; Claßen 1987/1991). Within this education to find oneself, which is existentially orientated, the ‘art of life’ develops (1947a, GA II, p. 16ff; cf. Cohen 1990; Fromm Forum 7/2003, p. 26-27; introduction: Bernath/Campbell 1975; Claßen 1991.)

<sup>7</sup>Attention is drawn here again to the 14th Shell study of youth.



and, using these experiences, can be looked at critically, in order to be able to lead to a humanistically inspired education (Claßen 1987, 1991; Winkel 1988; Wallrabenstein 2001, etc.): Experiencing and discovering within an assimilation and socialization process. Outdoor education (outward-bound), school trips (over several days), excursions, walking tours, cycling tours; city-bound: town rallies; indoor education:

- circus, theatre projects (interactive learning games)
- self-experience: Tai-Chi, meditation, relaxation through self-hypnosis, fantasy journeys etc., breathing exercises (Schmidt), promotion of self-experience, personal primary emotions,
- social experience ('doing service' in the sense of Kurt Hahn), compassion (Freiburg), promotion of empathy,
- experience of learning at school: orientated towards acting, learning by discovering.

Open teaching: free style work, learning by discovering, teaching in the workshop, teaching quietness (Wehr 1996, 2002), dancing, music, handicraft work (1970b, GA III, p. 458-463).

A significant moment in open learning and learning by discovering (Wehr 1992; Reinert/Wehr 2003) consists of presenting examples and individuals as an introduction. A provocative introduction can confuse pupil in their habitual way of thinking and make them uncertain, and this can cause the object of learning to enter the problem horizon of pupil. Alienation (taking everyday things out of natural connections of meaning, making them distant), cognitive dissonance, contradictions (through contradictory partial pieces of information) and many other things make the object appear to be worth questioning. This can lead to the 'art of questioning' (Neber 1981, p. 25) and to the 'art of listening' (Fromm 1991d, GA XII, p. 366f). Thus a new attentive way to recognize and experience is made possible.

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