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SOCIAL-ANALYTICAL [FROMM]

He who knows nothing, loves nothing. He who can do nothing understands nothing. He who understands nothing is worthless. But he who understands also loves, notices, sees. . . . The more knowledge is inherent in a thing, the greater the love. . . . Anyone who imagines that all fruits ripen at the same time as strawberries, knows nothing about grapes.

Paracelsus

SOME BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Erich Fromm was born in Frankfurt, Germany, on March 23, 1900. The University of Heidelberg awarded him the Ph.D. in 1922. He married Frieda Reichmann on June 16, 1926. After being divorced from her he was married to Henny Gurland on July 24, 1944. Following her death, he married Annis Freeman on December 18, 1953. After receiving his degree from the University of Heidelberg he studied at the University of Munich and later at the Psychoanalytic Institute in Berlin. He served as lecturer at the Psychoanalytic Institute of Frankfurt, the Institute for Social Research, and the University of Frankfurt during the period from 1929 to 1932. In 1934 he went to the International Institute for Social Research in New York City and stayed until 1939. Fromm was guest lecturer at Columbia during the years 1940–1941, was a member of the faculty at Bennington College, 1941–1950, and delivered the Terry Lectures at Yale in 1949. He was a Fellow on the faculty at the William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry in New York.

Fromm has been Professor National at the University of Mexico since 1951 and he is the Director of the Mexican Psychoanalytic Institute in Mexico City. He has also been on the staff at Michigan State University since 1957. He is a Fellow of the New York Academy of Science and a member of the Washington Psychoanalytical Society and of the Mexican National Academy of Medicine.



INTRODUCTION

Erich Fromm is a “socio-psychoanalyst.” He is well trained as an analyst. Fromm has had an optimistic approach to the human personality, feeling that all men are ultimately idealists and hope for a life beyond pure physical satisfaction. However, Fromm is not a dreamer. In *May Man Prevail?* (1961) he reveals a tremendous sense of urgency about the atomic-nuclear threat. Although he is not directly against current psychological research, he does wonder whether it will do any good in saving mankind. While the comparative psychologists and the factor analysts crank out their new data, he feels the world may blow apart around them.

Individual behavior is shaped by society. But counter to the Freudians, Fromm feels that there is hope because man has the capacity to solve his own problems. Since man has created most of his problems beyond those of weather and natural phenomena, he can solve these problems. In short, man can unwind what he has wound up, but it will take just as long to unwind his problems as it took to wind them up. Consequently, Erich Fromm does not look for quick solutions.

Since his arrival in the United States Fromm has been an exceedingly popular symposium speaker. He has at different times spoken on creativity, appeared at many APA meetings, and discussed Zen Buddhism, and psychoanalysis. He is in demand as a platform speaker.

Fromm considers man to be an animal, but with certain differences. “Man is the only animal who finds his own existence a problem which he has to solve and from which he cannot escape. In the same sense man is the only animal who knows he must die” (*The Sane Society*, pp. 23–24).

THE SYSTEM, THEORY, OR ESSENTIAL FEATURES

General Considerations

Erich Fromm thinks in broad historical terms, as did Jung. He uses human history as a laboratory in his own study of human personality. He feels that man is a history-made animal, primarily the product of social influences. In contrast to Freud, who believed that personalities make society, Fromm feels that society in general makes the personality. He thus reverses the causal order of Freud. Fromm sees the differences in man's personality as being due to social processes. All men must eat, drink, breathe, defecate, sleep, rest, and exercise, but society molds basic behavior into different forms. The most beautiful and ugly of man's actions do not spring from his biological system but from environmental forces. As a consequence, man has transformed



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himself into a thing. He now worships the products of his own hand. Erich Fromm feels that this is the idolatry of materialism. Man even worships the mechanisms of war that he has created, such as the atomic bomb. Quoting Emerson, who felt that "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind," Fromm thinks we can still put man back in the saddle and let him decide his own destiny.

In regard to democratic order, Erich Fromm feels we have mistaken democracy and equality as "sameness" rather than "one-ness" (*The Art of Loving*, p. 15). He does not believe that because man has a democratic way of living we must homogenize humanity, but rather that each variant human being can be directed toward the same goal but not always along the same path.

Man is not instinctual even though he may have a general or uniform mode of behavior. Also, man does not satisfy his physiological needs in an animal-like way. He cooks his meat; he does not eat it raw. The higher the species, the better developed is the brain and the less instinctual, therefore, is the behavior. Thus, it is possible that more learning, reasoning, and adaptable behavior can be and have been achieved by the human animal. The development of each human personality, as the human being goes through childhood, Fromm believes, somewhat recapitulates what the human race has gone through. Out of experience with his fellow men, through the prime psychological agent of the family, the child emerges into adulthood and has a social character. Fromm believes the family is an overpowering and extremely strong force in the formation of any personality.

Specific Considerations

DICHOTOMIES OF EXISTENCE

Erich Fromm feels that man is surrounded by contradictions which are of a polar nature. These contradictions are man-made and hence can be man-solved. Thus, with one exception, our problems in life are not insoluble. The problem of *existential dichotomies* he feels has no solution. Fromm is referring primarily to religion. Some of the dichotomies of existence are these: man lives but he must die; man is part of nature but he also transcends it; man loves peace but wages war; in some societies man has abundance, but through inequality of wealth many people face starvation; man has a future, but he cannot achieve his future personally (he must do it through a social order); man wants freedom but he also wants security; and man likes to believe that he behaves rationally but he is also unreasonable and immoral and has a strong urge to behave emotionally. Other dichotomies of existence are that man wishes both to submit and to dominate. He wants to be alone but has an inexpressible urge to be with others. He denies his identity with



nature as a natural animal but is part of nature, and always will be. He wants governmental protection but chafes under governmental restrictions. He wants to be fully individualized and be himself, but he also wants strongly to be socialized and to be like everyone else. Therefore, there is a strong dichotomy in man's existence and a split between the intellect and the emotions. Erich Fromm has taken considerable trouble to spell out his ideas in his well-known book *Escape from Freedom*. Man now has a portion of negative freedom. He is "free from" certain things, but he is definitely not "free to" do as he wishes. In the progress of human society mankind has developed a "marketing orientation" or "what he is worth," but he also wants a "productive orientation." Man should create out of his own individual capacities a productive way of life. Unfortunately he strives for "what he is worth" rather than "what he can do." The pleasure of satiation is not differentiated from the pleasure of production. Man finds himself gluttonous rather than creative.

Fromm feels that humanity's problems may be resolved by restoring the unity of man and nature. Man needs an orientation, a devotion, and ideals which are beyond his own selfish purposes. Without an aim, an objective, an ideal, man will continue to be lost in the dichotomies of existence. Looking back at the history of man, Fromm believes that nature is a continuing process, and it has always involved a creative activity. Thus man may still continue to emerge and resolve his dichotomies because he has continued throughout thousands of years to move beyond a pure animal state.

The name Fromm gives to the total social order which may achieve the resolution of the dichotomies is Humanistic Communitarian Socialism. He is not referring to any political party by this label, nor even any national structure. He means rather a total world order which uses the humanistic approach, shares in a communal way, produces in a socialistic order, and will thus achieve the best possible state of existence for the human race.

MECHANISMS OF ESCAPE

There are four mechanisms of escape from the dichotomies of existence. The first is sadism toward others who are dependent upon one. He may destroy them or try to swallow up all of his problems. The second mechanism is masochism, in which the single personality gives up or submits to a stronger personality or a stronger group and in so doing tries to escape loneliness. The lonely masochistic personality may even ignore the bestiality of the group in order to belong to it, have it engulf him, and identify with its strength, even though it hurts him in the process. The third mechanism is wanton destructiveness. The human personality may try to escape the feeling of powerlessness by crushing any outside force. The adolescent delinquent who senselessly destroys property is using this form of escape mechanism. The fourth mechanism, which many people follow, is automaton conformity. The



automaton personality simply has a blind acceptance of all of the dichotomies of life. If he can't beat them, he must join them. He totally lacks any spontaneity and has no true experience of what is really his own life. In a social group he is full of meaningless chatter, which carries over to much of his thinking and takes the place of true communication with his fellow men.

TEMPERAMENT AND CHARACTER

Fromm believes that all therapy and all of life, too, must stand on moral issues. Ultimately value judgments always determine action. There are problems of right and wrong in personality dynamics, in life itself, in religion, in any ethical consideration of behavior. Fromm does not believe there are good and bad people; there are people who do good and bad things. The human personality is made up of temperament and character. The temperament is the basic constitutional organic stuff with which one is born. Character, however, is formed through social pressures and influence. Character may have and usually does have two parts: the individual character and the social character. The individual character comes primarily out of man's innate biological makeup plus the valuable things his family may or may not do for him. The social character is molded by society, and man shares his social character with society. The considerations of temperament and character may be much like Adler's style of life. In man's orientation to the world he may follow the primary path of assimilation, or being oriented toward things. The second kind of orientation would be that of socialization, or being oriented toward people. This is another example of the dichotomy of existence.

LOVE

In the final analysis of man's troubled existence, Fromm fervently feels that the answer to the problem is the capacity of man to love. All of humanity is starved for love, but being loved is no more important than loving someone. The need to love and be loved is reciprocal. To Fromm love is a faculty or a function of behavior, not an object cathexis. We do not speak of true love, therefore, if we speak of a love object as if something were possessed. Love is an art and must be practiced and mastered like an art. In any art form the artist must do two things: master the theory of his art and master the practice of it. Of all the potentials and dynamics in man's behavior, love is probably the most active and will continue to be so.

Fromm mentions four basic elements to love: care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge. All must be interdependent. None is more important than any other.

In his powerfully written book *The Art of Loving* Fromm proposes five types of love. They are described below:

Brotherly love is the most fundamental, the strongest, and the most underlying kind of love. It is a love between equals.



Motherly love is the love and care for the helpless, the wanting to make them strong and independent; the greatest test of motherly love is the capacity to let go or to wean; it is a love between unequals.

Erotic love is usually allied with sexual experience, a “craving for complete fusion,” and is what most consider the only kind of love. It is exclusive and inclined toward jealousy. (Fromm doubts it has anything to do with true love, because love is basically a phenomenon not of sexual satisfaction or discharge but of intimacy.) It is a love between equals.

Self-love is the care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge of self (not sinful as often assumed because of Calvinistic rigidity). Self-love and love for others are not mutually exclusive; one must love self in order to be able to love others. Selfish people are not capable of self-love, but only of vanity.

Love of God has the highest value, is the most desirable good, and emphasizes care, respect, responsibility, and especially knowledge. It must be remembered that love is an act or a function, not an object cathexis. It is essential to human existence because man must have something perfect to aspire to. Fromm quotes Meister Eckhart: “By knowing God I take him to myself. By loving God, I penetrate him” (*Art of Loving*, p. 81).

FIVE HUMAN NEEDS

Erich Fromm says there are at least five human needs which must be met in order for man to fulfill completely a true personality. They are as follows:

Transcendence: to go above being just an animal, to improve and learn, to increase in material things.

Identity: knowing one's true self, being able to identify with others.

Rootedness: return to nature or a natural way of existence and not artificial symbols, gaining satisfaction from work and not just working for money.

Frame of orientation: a consistent, good way of life, to be creative and aware and respond, live a reasonable life in a reasoning world.

Relatedness: feeling a oneness with fellow men and with self.

■ SUMMARY

Erich Fromm is a trained psychoanalyst who uses history for his psychological data. He feels that personality begins out of organic nature which very soon merges with, and is organized and molded by, society. Because man so highly prizes security, he has given up some of his freedom, so that he now has freedom from pain and threat but has lost the greater freedom to do things as he wishes. Fromm places extreme importance on the capacity to love and be loved. He feels that without love a personality cannot exist satisfactorily. And in the final analysis, Fromm continues to be an optimist. He maintains that



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Interpreting Personality Theories

man has inherent in his own personality and in the social systems he organizes the capacity to solve the problems he himself has created.

DELIMITATIONS

There are no gross omissions from Fromm's work, except that Fromm's writing and thinking and speaking have been extremely abbreviated in the above treatment.

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