







Since the 1940's, Erich Fromm has become more and more prominent on the lists of those with major influence in psychoanalysis, perhaps because his basic theme and penetrating study correspond closely to the mid-twentieth century *Zeitgeist*: the alienated man. The theme is an existential one, and though Fromm himself would not approve being labeled as an existential psychoanalyst, his descriptions of man's dilemma and modes of relating to the world have been borrowed and used by many who do describe themselves in this fashion.

Although also frequently classified as one leading proponent of the neo-Freudian school—along with Horney, Sullivan, and Kardiner—Fromm objects to this label as well, for he sees his work as an attempt to broaden the base of Freud's discoveries, not to change them, and as an effort to interpret them in terms of contemporary philosophical and sociological concepts.

Fromm is better described as the outstanding advocate of a humanistic approach in psychoanalysis and currently is writing a systematic presentation of his views.

When asked to compare the views of Freud and Fromm, many people see only a contrast between biological and cultural determinism. Freud is labeled a biological determinist, one who sees the motivated behavior of man as springing from his innate biological equipment, while Fromm is referred to as a cultural determinist, one who views man's motivation as determined by cultural influences.

Such an easy differentiation does both men an injustice. It ignores those areas in which there is more implied agreement than disagreement. Freud did not deny the importance of cultural influence on behavior, especially as a shaping and controlling agent over the aggressive and sexual instinctual drives which he saw as the two primary sources of human motivation. Nor has Fromm, more especially in his later writings, neglected the importance of constitutional factors in motivation and in the strength and intensity of the characteristic ways by which one orients himself to the world.

However, Freud's observations on the unconscious motivating forces behind man's behavior lend themselves to a more pessimistic view of what it means to be human than Fromm's views do. (The orthodox Freudian psychoanalyst would sooner describe this as *realistic* than as *pessimistic*.) Freud saw man

as driven by an unconscious pleasure principle to seek the reduction of tensions that emanate from the two basic instinctual drives, sexuality and aggression, which he classified more broadly as life instincts and death instincts. In his view, society is constructed on the renunciation of direct and immediate instinctual gratification, which results in inner conflict and neurotic behavior. Thus, the more repression demanded by society, the greater the incidence of neuroses among the populace. The motivational strength of these irrational instinctual forces, the development of inner controls against their breakthrough into conscious awareness, and the understanding of their role in the development of personality and neurosis are constant themes in Freud's work.

The idea of such motives as self-actualization, a will to meaning, and tran-



scendence of the human condition—concepts that today find expression in the more humanistic and existential views of man—are not to be found in the writings of Freud. He was exceptionally impatient with such philosophical speculation. Freud saw all values, morality, love of any kind, art, justice, religion, indeed all that is part of the structure of civilization, as coming from the two basic drives. Yet in spite of his pessimism about the relative strength of man's rational and irrational qualities, Freud still held out the possibility that at some distant time, reason would play a more significant role in man's behavior.

Fromm does not disagree with Freud on the strength of unconscious irrational

passions that can drive man to the brink of catastrophe, but he emphasizes the presence of human needs that spring from the existential conditions of man. He insists that man carries within himself potentialities for growth and for productiveness. Given the proper conditions in a culture and society, Fromm is optimistic in his conviction that the human forces of reason and love will prevail. It is when Fromm views what the cultural influences have been and continue to be on man's human potentialities that a pessimistic tone appears.

He sees man as caught on the horns of a specifically human dilemma. On the one hand, man is an animal like all other animals in nature. On the other, he is a reasoning, self-aware, and imaginative creature. These latter characteristics preclude an automatic instinctive accommodation to nature that is available to other animals. The result is a feeling of disunity with nature, of loneliness and separateness. As Fromm sees it, man strives to escape these feelings by finding some other kind of unity with the world. He can do so in productive ways by developing his human capacities for reason and love to the fullest, or in regressive and nonproductive ways that lead to a constricted and neurotic relatedness both to the world and to himself.

In addition, Fromm sees in man the development of characteristic ways in which he acquires or assimilates what he needs from the world. Fromm has stressed in particular the influence of the economic and political structure of society on the development of these orientations, but he does not emphasize this aspect to the exclusion of constitutional and temperamental determinants.

He describes a number of nonproductive orientations (or character types), all of which he attempts to relate historically to the economic social structure prevalent at the time these character types first appeared.

The influence of our contemporary Western economic system is seen in what Fromm describes as the *marketing character*. This person experiences himself as a product to be marketed and shaped to bring about the greatest rewards. He views himself as an object to be manipulated, a commodity to be transformed to the demands of the marketplace. In the construction of this kind of non-relatedness to the world, he loses any sense of his true self and is left with feelings of futility and emptiness.

Then there is the *receptive character*, who is basically passive and dependent



upon being given things from the world outside. There is the *exploitative character*, who also sees everything that is good and nurturant as existing outside himself, but who uses force, manipulation, and guile instead of dependence to gain his ends. The *hoarding character* has little trust in the outside world and thus entrenches himself in what he considers a safe position by hoarding and saving—not only material items but such intangibles as love.

In his more recent writings, Fromm has introduced another nonproductive orientation, which he calls “necrophilous” (which he contrasts to “biophilia,” the love of life). The *necrophilous* orientation is the most pathological of those he has described, for here there is a love of death, decay, and destruction. It is in the description of this orientation that Fromm seems to emphasize the presence of a significant constitutional component. Fromm points to the relationship between this conception and Freud’s view of a death instinct.

Except for the marketing orientation, Fromm’s descriptions of character are very similar to portions of those presented by Freud many years earlier. The receptive character is very much like Freud’s description of the oral-passive type; the exploitative character is similar to Freud’s oral-aggressive type; the hoarding character like Freud’s anal-retentive type; and the necrophilous character is very similar to Freud’s anal-sadistic type.

The difference between Freud and Fromm in their view of character types is, therefore, not so much on the basis of the clinical descriptions, but in how each views the causes for the development of a specific type. Freud sees character as coming primarily from fixations that result from traumatic experiences—deprivation or even over-gratification—at various stages in the development of the sexual instinct. Thus, if such occurrences are experienced at the first oral stage of psychosexual development, then a fixation could result in an oral-passive character. At the later anal stage, then, an anal character would be the outcome. Fromm, on the other hand, emphasizes sociocultural factors in the determination of character.

Neither Freud nor Fromm neglects a description of the ideal adult character. Fromm labels this the productive character, and Freud’s term is the genital character. Although referring primarily to the same traits, Fromm describes more richly a productively active, reasoning

individual who relates truly to himself and to others and who is capable of realizing his human potentialities. Freud’s emphasis is on heterosexual adjustment in the adult.

Both Freud and Fromm have pointed to the long dependency of the child on his mother and the role such dependency plays in his development, but they differ as to the important aspects of such dependency. Freud singled out the Oedipus complex as a momentous event in the life of the child, especially the male. The child desires to possess his mother sexually, but he fears his father’s revenge (castration) for harboring such wishes. As a result of this complex, the child’s sexual development is interrupted and remains latent from about the sixth to the twelfth year. Then, assuming the normal psychosexual development, hormonal changes accompanying puberty



reawaken his sexuality and lead to an adult heterosexual orientation. The importance of the mother as the original love object of the child is stressed.

Fromm’s emphasis goes beyond the sexual one. He stresses the importance of the burgeoning opportunities for growth and independence that the child encounters. If the threat of leaving behind the all-protective love of the mother is great and the child’s experiences are constricting, then his development is stunted in that he regresses to a symbiotic-like dependency on the mother. Unless there is a push to greater independence, such a regressive orientation can result in an emotionally crippled adult who is not free and who

remains dependent on any mother-like figure for nurturance. This dependence can be on authorities or on symbols of authority, such as “God” or “country.” Fromm sees the child’s sexual desire to possess the mother as a positive rather than a regressive sign, for in the wish is a sign of separateness from the mother and an attempt to assert one’s independence and self-sufficiency.

Freud and Fromm differ in their conceptions of love. For Freud, all love stems from the sexual drive. He sees the love for friend, for parents, and for ideals as an inhibited expression of the basically sexual aim of love. Furthermore, he sees a basic incompatibility between love of others and love of oneself. He described a situation in which the individual possesses a limited fund of energy for love. The more narcissistic and self-loving the person, the less love remains for objects outside oneself.

Fromm does not make this distinction between self and object in considering the capacity to love. He sees love as an expression of care and respect which cannot be divided between outside objects and oneself. In other words, we are incapable of loving others without also loving ourselves. Fromm’s view of love is tied less narrowly to a sexual aim. He proposes a number of different kinds of love, only one of which has an erotic base. The capacity to love, he says, is as important in man as the capacity to reason, and only in the realization of these capacities does man become truly human.

It is now commonplace to refer to the current era as the “age of anxiety,” and it is only a short step from a discussion of love to one on anxiety. Freud’s theory of anxiety went through two stages. Initially, he saw anxiety as a transformation of sexual energy that is blocked in its aim of direct discharge. He later changed this view and explained anxiety as a warning signal of a potentially threatening situation. Such threat could come from the external environment—in which case it corresponds to what we call fear—or it could emanate from unconscious internal sources, such as the potential breakthrough of repressed material into consciousness.

Fromm’s approach to anxiety is related to his view of man’s separateness and aloneness. Each step away from the security of a regressive and dependent relationship is accompanied by anxiety.

How does a person learn to think and what is the nature of consciousness? The concept of the unconscious was known (Continued on page 64)



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by philosophers and writers long before Freud, but it was he who gave us a systematic rendering of its contents and workings. In his distinction between conscious and unconscious, he described two types of thought processes: primary process thought, found in the unconscious; and secondary process thought, a function of consciousness. He has described primary process thought as unconscious, illogical, symbolic, and as present from infancy. The only reality for this primary thought process is the inner, unconscious one. Psychotic thought, dream thought, and the symbolic thought of the artist are all examples of primary process thought. On the other hand, secondary process thought is logical and coherent and attuned to outer reality. It develops from the necessity of dealing with the outside world in order to attain need satisfaction.

Fromm has not yet detailed his conceptions of various thought processes, but he has emphasized cultural influences in his view of a social filter that both acts upon the development of the capacity to think and distorts the content of thought to fit the values of the culture. In his view, the productive person is a critical thinker who can transcend the limiting effects of socially determined thought. Fromm also is reluctant to equate an artistic thought process with a psychotic one.

Some of the more orthodox Freudian theorists also have been reluctant here, and one, Ernst Kris, proposed the view that although artistic thought is of a regressive, primary process type, it nevertheless can be viewed as serving the individual in a creative and reality-oriented manner.

Freud's emphasis on understanding the dream relates to its latent content—the true meaning of the dream, not to its manifest content—the dream as related by the dreamer. The latent dream content is distorted by various primary process mechanisms in its transmission from the unconscious to the dreamer's awareness. Freud saw the interpretation of dreams as the most direct access to the contents of the unconscious. When the latent dream content finally emerges via the analytic process, it is seen to be an attempted fulfillment of some repressed wish relating to the formative stages of personality development.

Fromm also emphasizes the importance of understanding the unconscious through the dream, but his attention is directed more narrowly to the manifest content. For him, this content

communicates an unconscious message in symbolic language, and the understanding of this language makes the message clear. In addition, he does not view all dreams as based on repressed childhood wishes.

Both men agree on the presence of universal symbols of dreams, but while Fromm might interpret such a symbol directly to the patient, Freud would have been hesitant to do so. Freud pointed to the necessity for the dreamer to associate to each portion of his manifest dream—no matter how inconsequential—in order to arrive at its latent content. Fromm does not neglect the importance of such associations, especially for those parts of the dream containing accidental symbols—in which meaning is found only in relationship to the dreamer's personal life experiences.

Psychoanalysis refers to a psychology of personality, to a research tool for the investigation of human behavior, and, finally, to a psychotherapeutic method. The term is most usually used in this latter sense. (One oftentimes finds surprise among people who are being analyzed when they are faced with the fact that there exist other approaches to psychotherapy besides the analytic one.) The preceding sections have been concerned with some of the psychological, rather than psychotherapeutic, views of Freud and Fromm. In going on to describe their respective approaches in therapy, we are limited by the fact that as yet Fromm has said little publicly on this topic.

Freud indicated several goals for the person under psychoanalysis, and each of these is based on different ways of viewing the personality system, but he was not optimistic about their attainment. Most broadly stated, the primary goal in psychoanalysis is to help the patient resolve the unconscious conflicts relating to his early childhood experiences which, as Freud viewed it, are the most significant causes for the adult neurosis. To accomplish this, it is necessary to bring into consciousness as much unconscious material as possible. Freud also saw psychoanalysis as a method whereby the energy in the various structural systems of the personality is balanced so that the reasoning, reality-oriented faculties are enhanced. He was quite aware of the dangers of an interminable analysis and warned about this.

Fromm's primary goal for his patient can be put into his more general humanistic perspective: to help the person realize to the fullest degree possible his human and individual potentialities for

productive relatedness to the world, for self-awareness, for reason, and for love. For Fromm, as it was for Freud, the curative effect is based on bringing into awareness the unconscious forces that have molded and continue to direct the patient's behavior. (It is for this reason that Fromm considers himself a follower of Freud, and not the founder of a different "school" of psychoanalysis.)

The major difference between Freud and Fromm here lies only in what is considered to be the main area of repression. In the earlier phase of Freud's theory, repression was found to operate primarily in the area of sexual instincts; in the later phase, he emphasized the importance of repressed aggression. Fromm does not give a central role to the repression of sexual desires and believes the repression of various types of aggressiveness to be more important. But, going far beyond that, he believes that anxiety, aloneness, alienation, and narcissism are among the most significant areas of repression.

It should be added that for Fromm the main problem is the person's total response to the question of human existence which each one has to answer by the very fact of having been born. The answer is not essentially one of ideas but one of character: everyone wants to make some sense out of his life, in fact, to "make the best of it." But there are better and worse forms of responding to the problems of existence. The better ones increase energy and vitality and make for a person's sense of unity. The worse ones create anxiety, insecurity, submission, and sadism, and cause suffering. Symptoms are signs of the contradiction between optimal or ideal character structures and the particular form of character that a person has adopted, under the influence of constitution, early upbringing, social structure, and accidental experiences. Fromm holds that awareness of one's inner reality is a crucial factor in change, together with the effort to practice a different kind of life.

What are the characteristics of the patient most likely to benefit from psychoanalysis? Freud believes that there must be good capacity for reality-contact in the prospective patient, especially in those areas in which his neurosis should not limit his perceptions. Thus he does not see psychoanalysis as the treatment of choice for a psychotic disorder. Both Freud and Fromm see traumatic experiences in the patient's past life as a good sign. Without such indications there is greater likelihood that constitutional fac-



tors are operating in the development of the neurosis, and such factors are not greatly amenable to change through psychoanalytic treatment.

Fromm also has pointed to the need for what he terms a "vitality" in the prospective patient. He sees this as indicating an energy oriented toward growth and life, love of life as opposed to a hate of or indifference to life. He means more than simply a high-energy level, for he points out that destructive people also can be viewed as possessing a great amount of energy. Finally, Fromm and Freud—as well as analysts of all persuasions—are interested in gauging the underlying seriousness and intensity of the patient's motivation for analysis. Without such strong motivation, there is little hope that the patient will stay on to work through anxieties as they emerge in his analysis.

Both Freud and Fromm have emphasized the importance of understanding the patient's childhood history, but Fromm does not appear to dwell as long on this stage of the patient's life in the analysis as do those who follow the more orthodox Freudian approach. The past is used to help in the understanding of the patient's present behavior and as an aid in uncovering the unconscious resistances to the analysis. Freudians might object that this is their emphasis as well. But in practice, too often their approach leads to a minute and overly intellectualized investigation of childhood experiences, particularly those relating to psychosexual development.

Freud emphasizes a continual focus on the patient's conscious and unconscious resistances to the aims of the analysis. The analysis must become an integral, ongoing part of the patient's life, and the orthodox Freudian analyst generally sees his patient in no less than one hourly session each day, five days a week. To attempt an analysis on a less-frequent basis is seen as only complicating the problems of dealing with the patient's resistance. Depending upon the defenses and regressions of a particular patient, an orthodox analysis can continue for five or six years or even longer.

Fromm's view on the frequency of visits corresponds with those who generally are considered to be neo-Freudian: a successful analysis is possible in as few as three sessions—for some patients, even two sessions—each week. What matters for Fromm is not the number of hours but the aliveness or intensity of each session and the kind and degree of the patient's resistance. However, like Freud, Fromm has expressed doubts as to how

many people really can be analyzed "successfully." Since the patient is seen less frequently, Fromm's approach emphasizes—as does that of Harry Stack Sullivan—the active participation of the analyst in the therapeutic process.

Free association is the tool on which Freud bases his approach to treatment. The patient is instructed to say everything that comes into his mind without withholding, judging, or distorting the content. A second tool in the orthodox Freudian approach is the use of the transference relationship to gain an understanding of the patient's unconscious processes. Freud describes transference as a process in which the patient projects onto the analyst a complex of conscious and unconscious feelings that existed for significant figures—usually his parents—in his past life. Freud found that the best condition for the development of transference and for free association was to have the patient lie on a couch while the analyst sat in a chair behind him. In this arrangement, the analyst's presence interferes less with the free associations of the patient and enhances the development of the transference.

The approach suggested by Fromm—and by most neo-Freudians—is to have the patient sit in a chair while the analyst sits across from him. This face-to-face confrontation is maintained throughout the analysis and enables the analyst to attend directly to nonverbal cues such as body movements, which are seen as important aids in understanding the patient's unconscious. Fromm does not believe that this arrangement interferes with the development of a transference relationship. He points out that important elements of transference emerge even before the patient sees the analyst, for, in his fantasies about what kind of person the analyst will be, the patient already has begun to project transference elements.

Besides transference, Fromm also emphasizes another aspect of the relationship between therapist and patient: the reality factor of two separate individuals reacting to each other. He stresses that the analyst should not disregard this aspect of the relationship. In other words, he does not agree that every feeling of the patient for his analyst necessarily is based on transference. Fromm, too, wants the patient to express his uncensored thoughts and feelings. But he is concerned that free association should not deteriorate into "free chatter," and he interrupts the patient when this happens. He also actively suggests the patient associate to problems Fromm con-

siders relevant, based on the analysis. Fromm believes it is important to tell the patient what unconscious trends he detects; then the focus is turned to an analysis of the patient's response. Fromm is much more active than the Freudian analyst, not in the sense of offering the patient advice about the "right" way of acting, but in his insistence on the production of unconscious material and on the analysis of resistance.

The Freudian approach, especially early in the analysis, is to remain silent, allowing the patient uninterrupted reign with free association. The analyst neither comments nor interprets. He does not respond to complaints that he is doing nothing, saying nothing, being of little help. It is only at a later stage that the analyst becomes more active in making interpretations based on his observations of the patient's transference, associations, and dreams.

In Fromm's view, the patient-therapist interaction is the primary tool that furthers the work of analysis. He emphasizes the urgency that the patient must feel about his manner of relatedness to the world if there is any possibility for productive change. He sees the analyst as a sensitive and trained instrument who uses his full self—both reasoning and affective—in the analytic interaction. As Fromm sees it, for the analyst to sit back making un verbalized theoretical constructions to himself about the nature of the patient's problems without a continual active participation in the analysis leads only to an intellectualized and non-productive experience that can drag on for years. Freudians criticize this active involvement from the very beginning of the analysis as an almost naïve approach to an understanding of the nature and forms of unconscious resistance. Indeed, some liken this approach to an exhortation that can have no real effect on unconscious material.

Finally, we can say that Freud's theories were presented in a highly systematized and rigorous manner, whereas Fromm's writings exhibit a less exacting and less exhaustive presentation. Some account for this by saying that Freud was primarily the psychologist, while Fromm is more the social philosopher. But because of his broad social views, Fromm's concepts are of interest not only to psychoanalysts, but to people of many persuasions in the social sciences and in the humanities. Whether Fromm's views can equal the rigorous nature of those found in Freud awaits his more formal systematized presentation of humanistic psychoanalysis. ■