



Erich Fromm's Contribution to Relational Perspectives in Psychoanalysis.

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Erich Fromm is one of the earliest and perhaps most ignored contributors to the shift in psychoanalysis from a metapsychology based on nineteenth century instinctivism and physicalism to a self psychology based on the primacy of human relatedness.

The neglect of Fromm's contribution, particularly in English speaking countries has always bothered and puzzled me. As Burston (1991) has recently noted, in large part it is the result of Fromm's work being caught up in the ideological battles of psychoanalysis. Fromm's trenchant but loyal critique of Freud was misunderstood and distorted by the psychoanalytic establishment who saw any deviation from Freud as an act of disloyalty to the master. Burston's intellectual biography on Fromm has done much to reappraise his work and debunk the widespread misconceptions surrounding his contribution. However the neglect of Fromm's work can not be fully explained on this basis. Fromm rarely wrote for his colleagues. His books, many of which were national best sellers, like Escape From Freedom, The Art of Loving and The Sane Society, were addressed to an educated lay public. Fromm's combination of psychoanalysis, a Marxist inspired social psychology, religion and moral philosophy was original and at times brilliant. His radical critique of modern society was often articulated in a prophetic voice that oscillated between insight and moralism. Fromm's intolerance

industrial

toward modern society was the combination of his commitment to a humanistic socialism blended with a tradition of iconoclastic Judaism. Neither of these traditions were consistent with what Weber would call "the spirit of capitalism". Fromm himself admitted, he never felt at home with the merchantile attitudes of the 20th century.

Nevertheless, I believe much of his critique continues to be relevant, particularly his portrayal of the modern character--which Fromm called the "marketing character"--as flexible, cooperative but detached and lacking real convictions. We have only to witness our current disenchantment and anger with the political and corporate leadership in this country and in Western Europe to recognize how much on target Fromm was. Fromm's distaste for modern society led him to idealize a model of character development rooted in a medieval tradition--the masters of being--and ignore some of the more positive attributes of modern social character types that can emerge with good leadership, a point that Maccoby (1983) has astutely observed. At any rate, Fromm's marxist critique of modern society did not sit well with the American psychoanalytic establishment that was trying to incorporate Freudianism into the mainstream during the post Second World War era characterized by an unbridled ethnocentric optimism in the American way of life and intolerance and hatred toward foreign ideologies.

If one adds all these factors, Fromm's substantive critique of orthodox psychoanalysis, his radical critique of American



society and his decision to ignore the orthodox psychoanalytic establishment that had expelled him from its ranks in the early 1940's, it becomes clearer why Fromm's contribution has been ignored. Whatever the complex set of circumstances that has led to this state, it is important to rectify this historical injustice and take Fromm's contribution seriously. Fromm opened new vistas in psychoanalysis and the application of psychoanalysis to the economy and the workplace. A critical appraisal of his work is long overdue. Even in areas where Fromm's work was misleading, his "mistakes" are instructive and worth considering in light of contemporary developments in psychoanalysis and developmental psychology.

With a few exceptions, Fromm's interesting and provocative contributions to psychoanalysis per se are scattered over a vast production of over 20 books and dozens of articles. Most of what we know of Fromm the clinician has been maintained as an oral tradition among his students and colleagues at the William Allanson White Institute--which he co-founded with Harry Stack Sullivan--and the Psychoanalytic Institute in Mexico where he taught and trained analysts for a period of 20 years. ¹

In the remainder of this article I would like to assess some of Fromm's contribution to psychoanalysis with particular emphasis on clinical concepts that are less well known. I will

¹ Fromm always promised his students a book on psychoanalytic strategy and technique. Unfortunately this volume never came to pass. I understand that toward the end of his life Fromm began working on this project.



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develop a few key points by comparing Fromm's work with some of the representatives of the object relations and interpersonal schools of psychoanalysis and will discuss and critique Fromm's elegant but flawed theory of the human condition and motivation based on core "existential needs". I will argue that despite some limitations, Fromm's down to earth existentialism is helpful in understanding certain aspects of human destructiveness and creativity based on the need to transcend "existential needs"

FROMM'S PLACE WITHIN THE OBJECT-RELATIONAL AND INTERPERSONAL SCHOOLS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS.

Fromm is often categorized as a representative of the neo-Freudian, interpersonalist or cultural school of psychoanalysis. Fromm never accepted these labels, pointing out that despite some similarities with Sullivan and Horney, the two most prominent members of this group in regard to the emphasis on cultural and social factors leading to personality development and neurosis, their differences far outweighed their similarities. I have come to believe that Fromm was right in this assessment. The differences with Sullivan in regard to social determinants of character development are vast. Fromm's views are rooted in the dialectical tradition of Hegel and Marx; Sullivan was influenced by the Chicago school of Herbert Mead. More significantly, Fromm remained loyal to a Freudian id psychology, albeit an id that was conceived as driven by the need to relate to the world and to others. This is a point that most of Fromm's critics have



completely misunderstand. Sullivan's psychology was more adaptationalist in spirit and put emphasis on the distorting effects of anxiety on the self system. Fromm's project was to expand the understanding of the irrational by ridding Freudian psychology of its commitment to outdated instinctivism and a metapsychology of psychic energies. While Fromm, Horney and Sullivan all directed their attention to the patient's direct experience, they emphasized different aspects of this experience. Sullivan remained skeptical of irrational forces that couldn't be studied and operationalized in the interpersonal field. Fromm's approach led to a confrontation with the irrational based on the belief that only a full exposure of regressive tendencies was curative. It is ironic that Fromm is generally thought to be an analyst who dealt with surface phenomena. This is a caricature of his work. Despite enormous differences in many respects, Fromm in spirit was much closer to the object relational school of Melanie Klein in their insistence on accessing rapidly the irrational core of the analysand.

Fromm's relationship to the British object relational school is complex. This creative group of analysts range in diversity from Bowlby to Klein. A detailed comparison is beyond the scope of this article. I will limit myself to a few remarks in regard to Fairbairn and Bowlby who share a ^{unequivocal} commitment to an unequivocal relational psychology. Fromm's work developed independently from the object relations school even though many members of the "middle group" were moving in similar directions.



Fromm only became aware of some of the similarities late in his life thanks to Guntrip who in an essay entitled The Promise of Psychoanalysis honoring Fromm on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, wrote that it was partly as a result of Fromm's work and other analysts working in Britain such as Fairbairn, Balint and Winnicott that psychoanalysis had been transformed from a theory and therapy of instinctual frustration and control into a "theory and therapy that encourages the rebirth and growth of an authentic self within authentic relationships" (Fromm, 1973 p. 85).

With few exceptions--Guntrip (1971), Mitchell (1983) and Burston (1991)--there have been very few attempts to develop any dialogue between the interpersonalist and the object relational perspectives in psychoanalysis. One of the most interesting comparison is between Fromm and Fairbairn, who despite significant differences in interests, emphasis and temperament share striking similarities. Burston observes that as early as 1932 Fromm had already developed the basis for an object relational view similar to Fairbairn's although influenced by Bachofen theory of Mother Right and matriarchal societies:

"There is a basic difference between the typology based on pregenital character structures and the matricentric and patricentric typology. The former signifies a fixation to the oral and anal level, and is basically opposed to the mature "genital character". The later conceived in terms of dominant object relations does



not stand in opposition to the genital character. The matricentric type can be an oral character; in that case the person is more or less passive, dependent or in need of others' help. But the matricentric type can also be a genital character, i.e., psychically mature, active, not neurotic or arrested.

Here we cannot enter into a full discussion of psychoanalytic categories...I do believe, however, that a typology based on object relations, rather than on erogenous zones or clinical symptomatology offers fruitful possibilities for social research..." (My italics) (Burston, 1991 p.61)

Unlike Fairbairn and other object relational theorists, Fromm did not create a developmental schema of internalized object relations. He did, however, expand this object relational view to describe modes of relatedness or socialization ranging from the most loving (biophilic orientations), to the most destructive (necrophilic orientations). For Fromm love, sado-masochism, incestuous or symbiotic relatedness are developmental trajectories that relatedness can take. Although the concept of developmental line was never used by Fromm, the concept is implicit in his writing. Like Fairbairn and Bowlby, Fromm rejected the libido theory--the oral anal genital sequence--on theoretical and clinical grounds (1932, 1941, 1964, 1973). Theoretically Fromm discarded Freud's metapsychology of energies



as being a product of mechanistic 19th century commitment to materialism. 3 Unlike Freud who saw relatedness as driven by the pleasure principle, Fromm believed that the main dynamism in human nature is rooted "in the need of man to express his faculties toward the world rather than in his need to use the world as a means toward the satisfaction of his physiological necessities" (1986 p. 69). Compare this with Fairbairn's revision, that in effect, turns the libido theory on it's head: "it is not the libidinal attitude which determines the object-relationship but the object-relationship that determines libidinal attitude" (1941 p. 77)

Clinically Fromm argued that the libidinal sequence of development did not predict psychopathology. Anal characters in general are more pathological than oral characters. Furthermore, he observed that pathology seemed to depend on the amount of regression existent within each orientation, i.e. the oral character can be relatively healthy or sick. (Fromm, 1963, pp. 142-145). Fromm believed Freud's libidinal character traits

3 Fromm accepted the concept of psychic energy only in the general sense as a symbol for psychic forces (personal communication). In fact he developed a very interesting critique of Freudian metapsychology and its shift from libido to the Eros-death instinct(s) theory. He believed the later theory was much more promising. His own theory of biophilia and necrophilia was inspired by it. (See for instance The Anatomy Of Human Destructiveness, 1973. New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, particularly the appendix on Freud's theory of aggression and destructiveness). This critique was contemporaneous with and in some instances preceded the metapsychology critiques of G. Klein, Holt and Schafer. Yet nowhere is Fromm ever acknowledged as contributing to this revision even though his work rivals in breadth and scholarship the efforts of the aforementioned authors.



could be better understood as modes of assimilation to social and economic conditions rather than as the product of libidinal fixations. For instance the anal character traits of parsimony, orderliness and obstinacy according to Fromm are characterological adaptations to the demands of 19th century capitalism to accumulate and save capital, accompanied by the bourgeois need to gain social respectability, a good example of what Fromm called social character (Fromm, 1947). 4

Again compare Fromm's reworking of Freud's libidinal types with Fairbairn who came to see libidinal attitudes as representing internalizing and externalizing "techniques" adopted by the infant and child to master deficiencies in the quality of the dependence with his mother, rather than being fixations in stages of libidinal development. Fromm's and Fairbairn's critiques complement each other emphasizing object relational and

4 Unfortunately Fromm retained this Freudian libidinal typology by assimilating it to his own characterological types. Oral = a receptive character, anal = a hoarding character and genital = a productive character. As a result Fromm maintained two descriptions of character, one based on modes of socialization or relatedness--symbiotic or incestuous, sadomasochistic, loving etc. and one based on modes of assimilation to the world--receptive, hoarding, marketing etc. This lead to a great deal of confusion between character types that are primarily clinical in nature, "modes of relatedness or socialization," and character types that are primarily socio-psychological categories, "modes of assimilation" or as Fromm later called them, social character types. I believe this confusion of tongues bedeviled Fromm's work and many of his students.

The irony is that Fromm's social character types, which basically describe normal modes of adaptation to broad socio-economic conditions originate from Freud's clinical typology and Fromm's clinical descriptions of modes of relatedness remained undeveloped.

socio-cultural determinants to character formation.

Fromm's and Fairbairn's revision of Oedipal theory also have much in common, ^{re}interpreting the Oedipus complex along relational lines. Fairbairn (1942) noted that the child grows up with an ambivalent attitude toward the mother, internalized as an accepting (good) or rejecting or exciting (bad) object. During the Oedipal period the child projects these images into the triangular relationship with his parents along gender lines. The boy sees his mother as the good exciting object and the father as the bad rejecting object. The converse is true for the girl. Pathology is determined by the quality of the tie with the mother and by the inversion of normal gender based identifications. Fromm (1951), influenced by Bachofen, had reached the conclusion that the child's tie to the mother was primarily rooted in the non-sexual desire for protection and safety. He noted that given Freud's premises, his theory of infantile sexuality and his patriarchal biases, he was bound to see the child's attachment as primarily sexual in nature. Fromm notes that sexuality, if anything, is very fickle, particularly in men, and hardly the base for establishing committed and enduring attachments. Fromm also notes that the rivalry between father and son, the other key element of Oedipal theory, is far from universal, and is only prevalent in authoritarian patriarchal societies.

Fromm went on to re-conceptualize the Oedipal striving as the wish, in men and women alike, to re-establish the unity with



mother, and recover the "paradisiacal bliss". This striving, perhaps the most powerful in human beings according to Fromm, is not only infantile in nature, but is part of our existential condition. As adults we remain helpless in the face of adversity and catastrophe. What would be more natural asks Fromm then to continue to crave for "certainty, protection and love?" (Fromm, 1964 P. 121). Fromm's reinterpretation of Freud's Oedipus complex as based on the pre-Oedipal wish to reestablish the primary ties with the mother anticipated the main thrust of psychoanalytic inquiry of the last few decades. In this he also shares the tendency among psychoanalytic theorists to slant normal development toward the pathological. I will return to this point when I discuss Bowlby's work.

Another example of Fromm's contribution to relational perspectives was his early description of sado-masochism in Escape From Freedom. Fromm had reached the conclusion that the essence of sado-masochism was based on the need for control. Sexual bondage was only one of many manifestations of this personality development. He noted that the sadist as well as the masochist attempt to escape from unbearable feelings of aloneness and powerlessness. The sadist attempts to master these feelings by humiliating and lording over others. Cruelty serves the same need. The masochist is not primarily motivated to suffer; the dismissal of his own needs and the surrender of self are but a desperate gambit in an effort to seek love, security and protection. Fromm noted that under special conditions these roles



could be reversed, thus demonstrating the close affinity between these character orientations. Clinical experience amply confirms Fromm's insight. Recent developmental research has begun to probe the possible origins of this phenomena. Troy and Sroufe (1987) studied patterns of victimization between 4 and 5 year olds in a summer camp situation, who previously had been examined using Ainsworth strange situation technique at 12 months to classify attachment patterns. Children with histories of secure attachment neither victimized nor allowed themselves to be victimized by other children. Children with avoidant patterns of attachment victimized other children, and children with resistant attachment patterns were often victims. The researchers noted that these roles were dynamic. Often children who were victims would seek out victimization ("Johnny why aren't you teasing me today"). Children with avoidant histories, who are usually the victimizers, would revert to a victim role if confronted by a more powerful child (also with an avoidant history). These observations seem commonplace to us today. It is easy to forget how radical they were when Fromm first made them 50 years ago. *to 1/8/10*

I would now like to turn our attention to Fromm's concept of man, a bold contribution that is unique among relational perspectives in psychoanalysis,

FROMM'S MODEL OF HUMAN NATURE.

Fromm's concept of man is an elegant formulation of the human condition. He makes the case for a motivational structure derived from an interpretation of the human condition that is



practically devoid of instinctual strivings. Fromm's comprehensive formulation stands as an interesting alternative to Freud's tragic and compelling vision of human nature. While I believe Fromm's view of human nature is ultimately flawed, his concept of man captures an existential dimension that is lacking in most current perspectives on human development and in psychoanalysis and is well worth pondering. Fromm allows us to consider manifestations of the human spirit (at it's best and at it's worst) from a humanistic perspective without debunking them a la Freud (i.e., religion as an illusion), mystifying them a la Jung (i.e., collective archetypes) or simply reducing them to what Erickson once called "the fallacy of originology" (Erickson, 1975 p. 160), that is to say, to their infantile roots.

Fromm speculates that two converging evolutionary tendencies define the human condition. The "ever decreasing determination of behavior by instincts" (Fromm, 1973 p. 223) and the development of the neocortex that greatly extends the human capacity for self reflective action, and by extension, self-awareness.

As a consequence, Fromm sees human beings as radically uprooted from their biological heritage ("a freak of nature"). Endowed with reason, imagination and self-awareness, humans are both cursed and blessed with the need to search for an identity that will give meaning and purpose to their existence:

"Man's life can not be lived by repeating the pattern of his species; he must live. Man is the only animal



who does not feel at home in nature, who can be evicted from paradise, the only animal for whom his existence is a problem that he has to solve and from which he can not escape. He cannot go back to the prehuman state of harmony with nature and he does not know where he will arrive if he goes forward. Man's existential contradiction results in a state of constant disequilibrium. This disequilibrium distinguishes him from the animal, which as it were, is in harmony with nature..... Man's existential, and hence unavoidable disequilibrium can be relatively stable when he has found, with the support of his culture, a more or less adequate way of coping with his existential problems. But this relative stability does not imply that the dichotomy has disappeared; it is merely dormant and becomes manifest as soon as the conditions for this relative stability change.

(Fromm, 1973 p 223)

According to Fromm this biological dichotomy between missing instincts and self-awareness give rise to specifically human needs which he called "existential needs". Fromm defines these needs as, the need for a frame of reference and devotion (a cognitive and spiritual map that gives meaning and purpose to our life), the need for roots and for a sense of unity (relatedness), the need to be effective (competence, mastery) and the need for active stimulation.



Each of these needs are constrained or enhanced by a complex mixture of individual, social, cultural, and historical factors that give rise to different expressions of human nature. Each of these manifestations can be considered a "solution" to the riddle posed by the human condition. But for Fromm it is the "questions", not the historically conditioned "solutions", that are the essence of human life. It is here that Fromm is at his best, providing us with the dialectical tools to grapple with an age old philosophical conundrum.

The problem with Fromm's interpretation of human nature is that we have no reason to believe that as a species we are any less endowed with instinctual motivation than our closest relatives. Clearly, there are vast differences with even our closest evolutionary cousins, but we do not have to assume that these differences are the result of an atrophy of our instinctual equipment. Current infant research indicates the extent to which the human infant is endowed with extensive biological competencies. (Stern, 1985). These competencies are matched by intuitive, and also biologically mediated, responses of primary caregivers (Papousek, 1992). These innate capacities are similar to the motivational systems observed in other primates, particularly in regard to attachment (Hinde, 1972). If anything, the importance of attachment relationships in humans is probably more significant, given the long period of intensive parenting that is required in our species before we reach maturation.

Steven Jay Gould (1977) has offered a neotenic



interpretation of the origin of our species that offers an alternative to Fromm's minimal-instinct/self-awareness dichotomy. According to Gould nature can select for flexibility itself by delaying the rate at which a species reaches adult and sexual maturation. By transmitting juvenile forms of ancestors onto its progeny, a given species retains the plasticity and flexibility associated with early development. This Neotenic phenomena is a relatively common strategy observed in nature.

Retarding development (neoteny) in the primate line of evolutionary development has had a series of cascading effects that are the hallmark of hominidization. These include late sexual development, extended life cycles, prolongation of embryonic growth beyond birth, (leading to larger brains). Late maturation and small litters (see below) lead to intense parental care. In turn, these effects greatly increase opportunities for learning and play. All these developments have been associated with "K" reproductive strategies. Essentially, "K" strategies favor small litters in environments that are stable over r strategies, that select for large litters in unpredictable environments. In other words, K strategies select for quality; r strategies select for quantity.

"By now, this associated complex of characters-- neoteny, large brains, K selection, slow development, small litters, intense parental care, large body size-- must have suggested a look at the mirror. A neotenic



hypothesis of human origins have been available for some time but it has been widely ridiculed and ignored. Nonetheless, I believe it is fundamentally correct and the framework I have established may help vindicate it." (Gould, 1977, (p. 351))

Assuming these hypotheses hold, and remaining consistent with Fromm's dialectical approach, I would suggest a key element to a reinterpretation of the human condition is the "contradiction" between a radical increase in flexibility and adaptive competencies that can only flourish under extensive periods of intense and loving parental care sustained by favorable social economic and cultural conditions. I believe our vulnerability as a species is not the consequence of lack in instinctual endowment, but the result of the neotenic juvenilization of our species that makes humans much more dependent on the integrity of relatively healthy ("good enough") patterns of attachment in order to survive and of social and cultural conditions that sustain these attachments. What has been gained in adaptive ability and cognitive capacity can easily be lost if we do not build nurturing and sustaining environments in which to develop.

Does this difference in interpretation modify dramatically Fromm's views of the human condition ? I believe the existential questions that Fromm poses remain the same. I believe the revision I am proposing has different implications

for the understanding of the roots of human relatedness. According to Fromm at the moment of birth the human infant is symbiotically attached to his mother and remains so longer than most animals. The more complete the separation, the greater the need to replace the symbiotic tie with new ties. Fromm assumes that there remains a deep craving not to sever the original ties or to find a substitute that can provide absolute protection and security, "to return to paradise". But since this route is blocked by man's biological constitution--due to the lack of instincts--according to Fromm he has only one alternative:

"either to persist in his craving to regress, and to pay for it by symbolic dependence on mother (and on symbolic substitutes, such as soil, nature, god, nation, a bureaucracy), or to progress and to find new roots in the world by his own efforts, by experiencing the brotherhood of man, and by freeing himself from the power of the past" Fromm, 1973 pp 232-323)

Fromm has set up here a false dichotomy based on his own premises. Fromm assumes that the route toward independence in humans implies giving up the primary ties with caretakers and replacing them with new ties that are not based on a symbiotic relatedness. Fromm never explains how this developmental transformation takes place. As a result we are left with a critical gap in our ability to understand normal development. As I suggested earlier, this gap opens the door to view any



manifestation of the need for attachment as potentially regressive. Fromm is not alone in falling into this trap. Most clinical theory derived from psychoanalysis also has the tendency to pathologize normal development. Perhaps this has been inevitable, as psychoanalysts began to build developmental theory from the basis of its practice with clinical populations. This is true even with pioneers who used observation of children as an aid to theory building. Witness how Mahler used her experience with autistic and symbiotic children as a framework to conceptualize her brilliant observations of phases of normal development, or the use of Klein's experience with regressed children and adults to conceptualize early phases in development as schizoid-paranoid and depressive positions, or the use of the concept of projective identification to describe normal communication between infants and mothers. While studying pathological deviations is of great value in understanding normal development, normative development needs to be understood in its own right in order to make use of these insightful windows into human psyches. It is here that I believe that Bowlby's work has provided a much needed corrective.

Bowlby developed a conceptually powerful framework from which to understand and explore the origin and development of attachment throughout the life cycle. Bowlby can be seen historically as having provided a synthesis between Freud's ~~and~~ outmoded drive theory based on frustration and control of instinctual urges and the relational perspectives exemplified by Fairbairn and Fromm



that in revising Freud failed to develop an adequate biological basis for understanding human motivation. Bowlby redefines instinct in modern evolutionary terms using ethological cybernetic models, thus bridging the gap between both positions. He shares with Fairbairn and Fromm the belief that attachment is a primary motivation that does not depend on the satisfaction of physiological or libidinal needs to be activated. He parts company with the relational perspectives in defining the need for others as instinctual in nature. Seen from the "outside", Bowlby defines attachment in behavioral terms as the infant's need to maintain proximity to mother. Seen from the "inside", this need is "monitored" subjectively by feelings of pleasure, anxiety, anger, shame, joy and the whole gamut of emotions we associate with love. Bowlby's evolutionary perspective allows him to view attachment as serving a vital survival function that is not regressive or symbiotic in nature. For Bowlby regressive and symbiotic phenomena are the result of the breakdown of a healthy attachment relationship and not their cause. It is the quality of the relationship, or to use Fairbairn's terminology, the quality of the dependence, that is one of the key factor in determining healthy or pathological outcomes. Bowlby (1972), Ainsworth(1985), Sroufe (1983), among others have convincingly demonstrated that the route to autonomy and independence is not achieved as Fromm, Rank, Jung and others believed, by the relinquishing of primary ties but by the transformation of these ties via secure attachments to primary caretakers. As Ainsworth

*some ... is a descriptive term
as a clinical term, primarily used*

** the process of ... to relinquish the
transformation*



observed, the infant uses a secure attachment as the basis for exploration and play, the secure base phenomena. Autonomy is predicated on secure attachments.

Bowlby has been criticized as not paying attention to intrapsychic forces. Not so, Bowlby's concept of working models is the basis for understanding how relationship patterns are carried forward by the process of internalization. (Sroufe, 1986a, 1986b). What Bowlby does emphasize is that these representational models are direct transformations of lived experience and not the product of fantasy divorced from this experience. The nature of these representations become distorted as the result of defensive processes that result from anxious forms of attachment. There is now an exploding field in developmental research that has used Bowlby's seminal contribution as a developmental paradigm for testing hypothesis and studying relational patterns. Attachment researchers have become very sophisticated and are interested in studying intrapsychic representations and their relational correlates (Main, 1985). a subject matter that has always been a central concern for psychoanalysis. As Bowlby (1988) put it, developmental psychology has come of age and is now joining the psychoanalytic inquiry in exciting and unexpected ways.

I would like to conclude by returning to Fromm and giving one more example of Fromm's contribution to the relational perspectives. Fromm contributes to a life span developmental model by calling attention to human inexorable

and the pillars of human organism



encounter with the contingency and fragility of life.

(see also)

FROMM'S CONTRIBUTION TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF DESTRUCTIVENESS

Fromm believes that the most hideous as well as the most sublime manifestations of our nature are not determined by destructive or erotic drives built into our biology, but are the result of our attempts to transcend our creatureliness:

"Creation and destruction, love and hate, are not two instincts that exist independently. They are both answers to the same need for transcendence, and the will to destroy must arise when the will to create cannot be satisfied. However the satisfaction of the need to create leads to happiness; destructiveness to suffering, most of all for the destroyer himself." (quoted from Burston, 1991 (p.69))

The strength of this formulation of destructiveness as negative transcendence is that it provides some insights into a diverse array of human behaviors that is puzzling and terrifying. What motivates serial murders? What motivates a Himmler or a Stalin? Fromm argues that whatever the developmental path(s) that may lead to these monsters, it is ultimately the intoxicating passion to have control over life and death, to overcome one's insignificance in an orgy of sadism and cruelty, that animates these perversions. Attempts to explain these behaviors by postulating a destructive instinct fall short. Destructiveness, Fromm would say, is not a regression to



bestiality, it is all too human. Fromm's hypothesis on the nature of necrophilia and sadism find ample support in psychological profiles of serial killers.

If the biblical parable of creation, with man's expulsion from paradise, represents the basic paradigm in Fromm's view of the human condition, the parable of creation, quoted by Gould and told by the lowly badger in T.H. White's novel The Once and Future King might be the best candidate for the corrective I have been developing. At first, God created a set of embryos looking perfectly alike and offered them the specialization they wished (beaks, hides, wings). One by one they chose those characteristics that they thought would keep them in good stead. Finally the human embryo approached the throne:

"'Please God', said the embryo, 'I think that you have made me in the shape which I now have for reasons best known to Yourselves and it would be rude to change. If I am to have a choice, I will stay as I am. I will not alter any of the parts you have given me... I will stay a defenseless embryo all my life, doing my best to make myself a few feeble implements out of the wood, iron, and the other materials which You have seen fit to put before me...'" "Well done" exclaimed the creator in a delightful tone. Hear all of you embryos, come here and see with your beaks, and whatnots to look upon the first Man. He is the only



one who has guessed our riddle....As for you, Man...
You will look like an embryo till they bury you, but
all others will be embryos before your might.
Eternally undeveloped, you will always remain potential
in Our image, able to see some of Our sorrows and feel
some of Our joys. We are partly sorry for you, Man,
but partly hopeful. Run along then, and do your best!"
(1977, p. 402)

I believe that if Fromm were here today he might have
accepted the revision I have proposed. At any rate he would
have honored the critical tradition that he so well exemplified
and would have engaged an honest dialogue, always with the intent
of pursuing the truth as best we are able to understand it and
wherever it may take us. The power of his vision and its
limitations remain a rich legacy, one that has earned its
rightful place within the psychoanalytic tradition.