

international war. He states that "Greed and peace preclude each other". He is also in no doubt that the development of an economic system as an autonomous entity, independent of human needs and human will, is a recent development. The question, therefore, is no longer "What is good for Man?", but "What is good for the system?" - and the assumption is that the latter is good for the former.

And this assumption is bolstered by the further assumption:

*"That the very qualities that the system required of human nature - egotism, selfishness and greed - were innate in human nature; hence, not only the system but human nature itself fostered them."*

Societies in which egotism, selfishness and greed did not exist, were supposed to be "primitive" and their inhabitants "childlike". People refused to recognise that their traits were not natural drives that caused industrial society to exist, but that they were the products of social circumstances.

Fromm reinforces his assertion with the little-known, but surprising, fact that the majority of the world's languages have no word for "to have". Such languages express possession in the form "it is to me", whilst others have only developed the construction "I have" at a much later date. "This fact", argues Fromm, "suggests that the word for 'to have' develops in connection with the development of private property, while it is absent in societies with predominantly functional property; that is, possession for use". And "While private property is supposed to be natural and a universal category, it is in fact an exception rather than the rule if we consider the whole of human history."

Thus, for Fromm, the difference between "being" and "having" is between a society centred around persons and one centred around things such as property, profit and power. The distinction is between "I have knowledge" and "I know" - where "knowing" means to "see reality in all its nakedness".

Fromm therefore concludes that the character traits engendered by our socio-economic system are pathogenic, and produce sick people and a sick society. Given that fact, we are headed for an economic catastrophe unless we change our social system. The physical survival of the human race depends on it. •

**RICHARD LAYTON**

## And Fromm Where . . .

**B**orn in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1900, Erich Fromm was one of the first to attempt a synthesis of Marx and Freud (Reuben Osborn had previously made such an attempt, in his *Freud and Marx*, in 1937, from a Stalinist viewpoint), and to develop a Marxian social psychology. Fromm was trained in psychoanalysis, and worked with the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt from 1930 to 1933, when he fled from Nazi Germany. He then went to America.

In his early essays, Fromm combined the dialectical and materialist elements in both Marx and Freud; and applied Marxian social psychology to interpret such phenomena as religion and the sado-masochistic roots of the authoritarian personality.

In 1941 Fromm wrote probably his best-known work, *Escape From Freedom*, published in Britain in 1942 under the title *The Fear of Freedom*. In it he asks if freedom is a psychological problem; and discusses in detail authoritarianism, destructiveness and conformity. He also deals with the psychology of Nazism. His conclusion is that "changing social conditions result in changes of the social character; that is, in new needs and anxieties . . . social conditions influence ideological phenomena through the medium of character; character, on the other hand, is not the result of passive adaptation to social conditions, but of a dynamic adaptation on the basis of elements that either are biologically inherent in human nature or have become inherent as a result of historic evolution".

Fromm's old friend, Herbert Marcuse, engaged in polemics with him during the 1950s, beginning with his *Eros and Civilization*. Marcuse accused Fromm of being a "Neo-Freudian revisionist", and Fromm retaliated by calling Marcuse a "nihilist". Fromm, however, argued that people must free themselves, whilst Marcuse, particularly in his *One-Dimensional Man*, looks largely to the "substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colours, the unemployed and the unemployable", when "they get together and go out into the streets, without arms" to lead the fight against "domination".

In 1955 Fromm wrote *The Sane Society* in which he deals with the concept of alienation in some depth, as well as so-called education in capitalist society and what he calls the "roads to Sanity", a sane socialist society. In 1949 he had already written *Man For Himself: An Enquiry into the Psychology of Ethics*, and in 1957 he wrote *The Art of Loving* - not a sex instruction manual, I might add. In 1965, Fromm published a collection of essays based on a symposium of various academics such as the Polish writer, Adam Schaff, Maximilien Rubel, T.B. Bottomore and others, titled *Socialist Humanism*.

Erich Fromm actively opposed the Vietnam war, and all other wars in which the United States became involved. He died in 1980. Of all his works, I have found his *Fear of Freedom* and *The Sane Society* the most useful, although all are worth reading. •

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