



ERICH FROMM, PSYCHOLOGYST OF MAN.

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A different view regarding human nature and man being perceived as an open system, gave new dimensions to Freud's findings dealing with the unconscious, the functions of the mind, and man's relationship to his surroundings.

Erich Fromm followed in Freud's footsteps: the path chosen was closely examined; crucial points were thoroughly researched and pondered upon, key aspects were expanded transcended, thus being given new values. Regarding Freudian theories, all matters considered obsolete were eliminated, be their obsolescence either due to their being steps along the way that in their time were considered final goals, or because they were temporary objectives which had been determined by social and cultural considerations only true to Freud's time.

As a declared follower of the father of psychoanalysis, even towards the end of his life, Fromm always reveals himself as a critic of orthodoxy and lashes out against those who are unable to see beyond or to investigate further on than their mentor's views. Thus in only accepting those original findings, they remained inadvertent to the passage of time which crystallizes

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beliefs and transforms them into dogma. According to Fromm, Freud created a living theory insofar as he went about unfolding man's intimacy. Yet, many of his followers have paralyzed it by not essentially enriching it and by not eliminating the superfluous.

To me, this marks the difference between and unchanging theory, self-repetitive almost to the point of being a "compulsive repetition", which thus turns inefficient, compared to thought processes constantly revised which scrutinize, investigate, observe, clinically verify -just like Freud did- new possibilities for knowledge on man always bearing in mind the basic concept of consciousness-unconsciousness. This is wide-awake, alive thinking, maybe Fromm's way of thinking.

Just like Freud, Fromm initiated his investigations of man from a biological standpoint -if there is no biology, there is no man- could be a truism. Fromm, again in agreement with Freud, states that Psychology is a physical science which is a part of natural science.

Setting aside the drive theory and with it the idea of a Freudian concept of man's essence i.e. displeasure-pleasure-displeasure, Fromm places man at a crossroads between being or not being. He must face, together with his biology, nature, to whom he belongs and from whose grip he will try to break free, and also from his social way of life. He must safeguard his individuality and avoid being "one more in the pack".



In this constante struggle, permanent struggle, among the dichotomies of his existence, an individual will always be faced with choices. Constant choices of life-styles wich can take him on the path to becoming ever more human.

Immersed in this fundamental setting, Fromm retakes some of Freud's basic discoveries and redefines them, e.g. the concepts of consciuos-unconscious; here he wonders, which is the more valuable: a conscience fooled by social patterns or an unconscious in possession of the highest forms of human values not only individually but philogenetically.

The same holds true for certain other concepts of which I will cite a few examples: the Oedipus complex and the incestuous impulses; narcisism and relatedness; transference and depandance, and the theory of destructiveness and boredom. Character replaces drive as the determining factor in human conduct.

In a transcendental mode, the relationship of the individual with society was given top priority in Fromm's thoughts.

New channels leading to knowledge on man began surging as he treaded along this route: the concepts of individual character and of social character; individual unconsciousness and social unconsciousness. These were fundamental and original discoveries of his under this new perspective for the study of man.

Finally, in the search for the answers to his existence, man, insofar as he is able, has the possibility of choosing that road which will give meaning to his life. He will be free to choose taking into account the alternatives and insofar as he is



allowed to, by those predetermined aspects of wherein he finds himself. In this frame of reference, freedom, as a subjective aspect, does not exist says Fromm. Freedom must be understood as a concrete, individual act which makes itself manifest at every opportunity that an individual grants himself to take a decision. If the selection is an adequate one, that person will grow and will make progress. If it is not, he will remain paralyzed and even fixated to his primary ties. The election in one direction or another, can either take an individual to an extremely negative situation oriented towards a syndrome of decay, or will make him a more life-oriented (bifilic) human being.

As a continuator of the purest tradition in humanistic philosophy, and as a follower of the leading representatives of ethical thought, Fromm believes that in each choice that is made, in each response to life that one gives, there is a response of courage from the individual. He states that the essential human values are the only ones which benefit the growth of life.

Society's values tend to procure man's alienation, to augment his orientation towards greed, towards wealth, towards power, towards authoritativeness and towards control. They direct an individual towards having.

It is Fromm's belief we must recapture man's essential values, those which have sprung since the dawn of mankind. There are models to follow: Buddha, The Vedas, The Prophets, Jesus, and Krishnamurti who fundamentally stand for integrity, honesty,



sincerity, respect to self and to others, love towards oneself and to others; Being more than Having.

Fromm himself was a concrete and effective example of a life lived in response to a biophilic orientation. Fromm is the Psychologist of man, but above all, as scholars involved in his works have put it, he is the Psychologist of Hope.

This brief summary of Fromm's thoughts, of his beliefs, so superficial and incomplete is proof to me, that richness of his legacy, those fields he fertilized can be augmented through investigation and research. But it also brings me to ask myself:

- Will we, just like Freud's followers, make dogmas out of his postulates?

- Or will we, will some have, that capacity he so much impelled, to penetrate further on in the knowledge of man?

- Will we crystallize his philosophy or will we be able to keep it alive?

The presence here today of our german colleagues, psychoanalysts and social researchers, is I am sure, part of the answer in the sense of keeping Fromm's philosophy alive and from whence further motivation will surely arise. They have come here to share and exchange experiences with those of the members of our Institute who have been participating in the Seminar on Sociopsychoanalytic research, coordinated by Sonia Gojman and Salvador Millán.

I certainly consider that the presence of our guests will reap bountiful fruits, not only regarding sociopsychoanalysis,



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but in friendship and in the furthering of scientific bonds with the groups here represented especially The Erich Fromm International Society.

Welcome to Mexico, Dr. Rainer Funk and colleagues accompanying you. Welcome to The Mexican Institute of Psychoanalysis.

Mexico City.

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