

## ERICH FROMM, AS SEEN BY ANALYSTS OF THE 1990S

A Review of *A Prophetic Analyst: Erich Fromm's Contributions to Psychoanalysis*, edited by Mauricio Cortina, M.D., and Michael Maccoby, Ph.D. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1996. 461 pp.

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ERICH FROMM WAS A "RESPECTED WRITER" whose ideas influenced intellectual debate in the 1940s and 1950s. He was in those decades the most popular author to bring sociological analysis into integration with depth psychology. He lost some influence by crossing academic disciplines, he was no respecter of the rigidity of departmental boundaries. Herbert Marcuse also hurt Fromm's reputation among the political left. He characterized Fromm as a neo-Freudian with a superficial culturalist outlook who distorted Freud by describing him as a radical philosopher.

For people at the White Institute, which Fromm cofounded, it is interesting to note that Fromm emigrated to Mexico in 1950 because of his wife's illness; while there he began the Mexican Psychoanalytic Institute. He had been chairman of the faculty and of the Training Committee at White from 1946 to 1950. After his move, he visited New York for three months each year, at which time he was available for consultation by Institute members. He also continued to give seminars annually.

During those years he would expound on how he viewed Freud's instinctual approach to be metaphoric rather than literal. He noted his close affinity with Freud's intellectual legacy. However, he reformulated Freud's belief that the infant's primary drive was to minimize tension and seek pleasure, insisting instead that the infant's (and the adult's) primary need is to establish affectional ties that provide a sense of security and belonging.

Early on, Fromm discovered he could bypass the mainstream psychoanalytic community and did not need its approval. His free-ranging contributions intersperse a radical critique of society with a commitment to and analysis of humanistic values and ideals.

His contributions remain relevant, as evidenced by the papers gathered together in *A Prophetic Analyst*. Almost all of the papers were presented at the Erich Fromm International Symposium, May 1994.

Fromm never wrote a clinical psychoanalytic study. The hypothesis of

this book (which I share) is that we could never be clear about when he was being analytic and when he was being prophetic. The analytic voice describes what is and how it came to be. It is an analysis of thoughts, emotions, and behavior patterns that may be conscious or unconscious. While the analytic voice helps us understand what can be, the prophetic voice states what should be.

Fromm brought to his clinical work the humanistic beliefs he communicated in his theoretical formulations. He maintained that the analyst can go only as far with patients as is allowed by the analyst's ability to discover within himself what patients are experiencing. He believed we all have the capacity to be murderers, to experience madness, or to be saintly. Being human means accepting that "There but for the grace of God go I."

At best, his interpretations encouraged the analyst's life-affirming tendencies; at worst, his prophecies could be overwhelming and intimidating, causing an idolatrous transference of the type he despised. His position may be viewed variously. Consistent with contemporary emphasis on countertransference, his emotional responsiveness was a vehicle for understanding and change—an empathic mode. Or he can be seen as being in a more traditional interpretative mode with emphasis on insight. Or he can be seen as bullying and arrogant. He is another set-breaking psychoanalyst who does not use a couch or see patients more than once weekly. So he is something like Gill or Weiss, with the difference that he brings transference into the treatment less than they do.

Fromm's work transcends some of the dichotomies in today's psychoanalysis. His comments on the dichotomy between the drive and the relational model, one- versus two-person psychology, intrapsychic and interpersonal forces, innate tendencies and social character, all these integrate society and the individual from a psychoanalytic point of view. His description is of social expectations and norms becoming internalized as character syndromes.

*A Prophetic Analyst* is a continuing contemporary discussion of Fromm. Michael Maccoby discusses Fromm's two voices—the analytic and prophetic—as they become expressed in Fromm's role as a social scientist, psychoanalyst, and religious thinker. He points out how the two roles are congruent, and at other times are incongruent and contradictory.

Mauricio Cortina criticizes Fromm's view of human nature as "Biblical," as "being evicted from paradise." Cortina substitutes, instead, at-

tachment theory to explain how security is constructed at each stage in the ongoing process of development.

Paul Lippmann illustrates how Fromm reawakened interest in the experimental approach to dream interpretation and, further, engaged Jung's understanding of how dreams can give expression to the best in us. Lippmann demonstrates how Fromm's dream interpretations were the expression of his own beliefs.

Marianne Eckardt points out three reactions to nominative principles. The classical analyst (Hartmann) advises the analyst to stay clear of any moral position and hope for the best. The Horney approach is to provide the right conditions for human growth, in line with the self-righting tendencies assumed by many contemporary theories. Fromm, like Stephen Jay Gould, says that nature does not provide us with answers to the problem of living. It is humanists of every stripe who provide us with moral guidelines by which we can live.

A central paradox of human development is that while development is lawful, it is not predictable on an individual basis. Carl Goldberg illustrates with a case study Fromm's discussion of the development of malevolent personality.

Douglas LaBerre explores the relational paradigm in Fromm's work. He illustrates it with the Stone Center's variant of the relational paradigm. He does not mention, however, that the Stone Center does not mention Fromm's work.

Marco Bacciagaluppi takes up a reported case in order to try to formulate whether insight or new experience is considered more helpful by Fromm in effecting therapeutic change. He elaborates on the classical distinction between participation *with* and participation *in*. Fromm puts theoretical stress on insight, and practical stress on new experience, so containing the diverse methods. Bacciagaluppi found out the case he took up was not actually treated by Fromm, the therapy was supervised by Fromm. This does not invalidate the description of Fromm being warm to the patient and his downplaying of the role of the father.

Sonia Gojman points out how modern analytic innovations in technique conform to Fromm's explicit humanistic approach to psychoanalysis—Fromm's need to know the patient from within (center to center). That the analyst must use his own experiences as a vehicle for understanding the patient is similar to positions advocated by Casement, Gill, and Mitchell. Fromm emphasized the importance of an unconven-

tional attitude, aliveness, honesty, and a profound interest in patients and their well-being.

In analytic institutes prestige and status influence a lot of issues, Gojman notes, so communication between training analyst and analysand should be fully cognizant of the effect of these issues on matters analytic. Fromm (unlike Gill) did not analyze all the transference issues.

Fromm's identification with prophetic traditions and visionary figures led him to formulate his clinical role in the tradition of dissolving illusions and awakening the patient to his or her inner demons and spiritual aspirations. His work produced more of an epiphany than the gradual changes of laborious clinical analysis.

Romano Biancoli's discussion of Fromm's theoretical concepts of clinical work emphasizes a theory of freedom dubbed "alternativism." It alternates between "hard determinism" and "free will." It allows for real change stemming from society *or* psychoanalysis; it allows for a realistic assessment of external *and* internal constraints.

Ana Maria Barosa uses the above paper to show how transference interaction indicates no single Frommian approach to clinical work. The approach is more heuristic, based on the rediscovery and exploration of the patient's stories as they unfold.

Alan Grey points out the inclusiveness of Fromm's view of countertransference. The unconscious contains primitive and irrational elements, but also is the source of penetrating insights that transcend the strictures of society. Grey shows how Fromm's view of the intuitive mind is consistent with modern-day thinkers. Also, Fromm includes social and constructive motives. The theory of social character is useful in understanding what holds people together; is it relevant in clinical practice?

Daniel Burston and Sharna Olfman comment on the pathology of normalcy. Freud held that any cultural advancement would leave in its wake a legacy of common unhappiness. Fromm also thought that society had a repressive function, but he hypothesized a qualitative rather than a quantitative function. Social demands based on economic modes of production and unequal distribution of goods would conflict with human demands for freedom and happiness. The conflict between social demands and human aspirations had to be analyzed for each case and could not be generalized, as it was by Freud. This perspective led Fromm to analyze how social demands create "socially patterned defects." A "pathology of normalcy" can subjugate human aspirations to

social conformity. Questions then arise. Who is sick? Is the symptomatic individual who rebels against social pressure sick? Is the individual who conforms, but is not symptomatic, sick?

Burston and Olfman show how these questions can be traced as far back as the Greeks, and farther. They confront us with moral and therapeutic issues. We cannot be in any morally or socially complacent position when we are in a troubled society with troubled patients. Where we practice, with whom we practice, the population we work with, and the goals of our institutional affiliations are becoming more salient issues as we witness the corporate takeover of American medicine. The leisured and secure middle class as we have known it is going to disappear. With corporate globalization and the erosion of the middle class, there is ample reason to be anxious about the future of psychotherapy and its remuneration, particularly of those psychotherapies based on the intensive study of people's lives. Prophetic Fromm, according to Burston and Olfman, was "too provocative and disturbing to be readily assimilated into the analytic mainstream" (p. 321).

In his essay, Salvador Millan indicates that the social character—the way patients and therapists internalize the values, cultural beliefs, and class structure of their society—is always present in the therapy, and often becomes manifest as transference and countertransference. For Fromm, transference issues have their origin in parental influence, but also represent the whole experience of the patient's life.

For Rainer Funk, the analysis of social character traits is as important for understanding any given person as are his or her particular history and idiosyncracies. He makes analysis of the alienating social character that affects analyst and patient alike a central issue.

Michael Maccoby describes how the post-Second World War economic boom created large government and corporate bureaucracies populated by middle managers with marginally productive roles. To advance, these middle managers had to market their personalities rather than their talent, much like the semifeudal society of the Mexican peasant, where being liked or pleasing the authority are primary success factors. In postindustrial society, however, success depends primarily on achievement or competency, and being liked is only secondary. In an unfolding economy with the collapse of industrial bureaucratic organizations, people have to hone their skills and develop their competencies. This makes for self-development and negative self-marketing tendencies.

Richard Margulies illustrates from surveys how there are five social

character types in the current economic situation: the expert, the helper, the defender, the innovator, and the self-developer. He presents a case of a self-developer whose unconventional choices helped resolve his ambivalence to two women. Margulies argues that focusing only on the pathology, and not on the real-life choices, would have made the therapy fail.

Sandra Buechler feels a traditional analysis would have been more helpful. The patient could have spent more time on his sexual fantasies and his narcissism.

Daniel Burston highlights how important Fromm's Jewish roots were. His philosophic and spiritual birthright as well as his interest in Buddhism guided him through his life.

Paul Roazen emphasizes Fromm's adoption of "Sigmund Freud's Mission," and shows how Fromm's mother stimulated him to be a great leader. Roazen says, "whatever legitimate disagreements there ought to be about what Fromm's legacy adds up to, I think few can deny that his responsible outspokenness, which I have called courage, should be a special beacon to us all" (p. 452).

This volume is an attempt to record the analytic legacy of Erich Fromm. He was a hugely popular sociological analyst with widely read publications. He was a critic of the theoretical formulations of Sigmund Freud, and of the impact of capitalism and bureaucracy on personality. He was an opponent of nuclear force and of any technological developments that interfered with humanist goals. He has never been acknowledged for his analytic contributions by orthodox analysts, nor by mainstream analysts like Erik Erikson, Heinz Hartmann, and so many others. There is all the more need for this volume.

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