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## Erich Fromm's humanist manifesto

Reviewed by  
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"*To Have or To Be?*" by Erich Fromm (Harper & Row).

The noted author of "*The Art of Loving*" and "*The Sane Society*" presents alternative prospects of the future, hinging on eventual dominance by one of two orientations — selfishness or altruism — both rooted in human nature. He gives an eloquent warning against the fallacy of taking our capacity to produce "things" as a safe indicator of human omnipotence. What if this trend led to making us inhuman instead of superhuman?

There are, indeed, numerous symptoms that shake the faith of an earlier industrial era in the trinity of unlimited production, absolute freedom and unrestricted happiness. We witness the acceptance of consumerism as a goal in socialistic and communistic countries, to the neglect of humanistic values. At the same time we witness in Western cultures tendencies among some young people born into affluence to turn away from



Erich Fromm  
Lisa Goldring

the philosophy that you are what you have and what you consume, and from the exploitation of fellow men and nature.

After comparing the two modes of existence, *Having* and *Being*, Fromm proceeds to the third part of his book, "*The New Man and the New Society*," wherein he summarizes this humanist manifesto:

- Production must serve the real needs of the people, not the demands of the economic system.
- A relationship of cooperation

must be established between people and nature.

• Antagonism must be replaced by solidarity.

• Not maximum consumption, but sane consumption must be sought to further human well-being.

• The individual must be an active, not a passive, participant in social life.

This thought-provoking book does not outline utopias, but reveals Fromm's awareness of the problems humans face in changing their attitudes and modifying social structures — in that order. He sees promising signs in the liberation of women, a movement which in his opinion is more significant than any political revolution of our century.

This is one of a "World Perspectives" series of books planned and edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen. In the introductory pages she illuminates the focal issue: the uniqueness of man and the human responsibility for further evolution and the destiny of the earth.