

ERICH FROMM: THE CONDUCT OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

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I would like to begin by relating a clinical vignette. Erich Fromm was treating a professional man who had ~~become depressed following a traumatic event at the university where he taught. This included a rather~~ powerful experience during an afternoon psychoanalytic session. The next morning, after hours of painful but productive reflection, he ~~returned to~~ <sup>told</sup> Fromm what he had learned. Instead of the encouraging smile he anticipated, Fromm asked him pointedly: "Well, what have you done about it?" ~~The man was taken aback. After struggling with issues most of the night, he hardly had the time to make changes~~

I was that patient and Fromm's ~~abrupt~~ <sup>Unexpected</sup> question, "Well, what have you done about it?", had a lasting impact. It meant

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that I was not to let time slip by, but to act and live through the medium of the new grasp of things. ~~It also conveyed directly to me Fromm's stance as an analyst; he did not need the patient's success or gratitude for his own self-worth.~~

This experience also showed how Fromm kept up a momentum, laced with the feelings of urgency and vitality. Another feature of Fromm's approach is illustrated here; he insisted that new knowledge alone does not produce change. It must be felt in the here and now and also serve as the springboard for action. This was of decisive importance for Fromm; new awareness must lead to altered action that must be practiced repeatedly.

Erich Fromm reflected continuously on the technique of psychoanalysis. Yet, although he published 22 books and nearly 100 articles, he wrote little specifically on technique. He long planned to do so

~~and had begun to write on this topic before his death in 1980. He~~  
*did not do so*  
~~waited,~~ I believe, because he felt that too strong a focus on meth-

odology would not do justice to the enlivening spirit of the therapeutic engagement. Nevertheless, and perhaps paradoxically, he strongly believed in a science of psychoanalysis and in a <sup>T</sup>rigorous

methodology, which he felt was required to deal with such complex ~~material~~

*psychodynamic material.*  
~~material~~  
~~material.~~

He taught psychoanalytic technique for some fifty years in seminars and supervision. It was my privilege to have studied with Erich Fromm in the early sixties and, later on, to know him in a more personal way; this paper is based on my ~~own~~ understanding of the principles of psychoanalytic practice that Erich Fromm developed but

did not publish.

Psychoanalysis is unlike any other relationship. It is an interpersonal process with the specific intention of discovering unconscious reality and conflict, so as to extend the range and intensity of conscious awareness. This experience ~~mobilizes energy~~ and it allows the perception of new possibilities for action to facilitate personality change and growth. ~~At times the shared experience is moving and stimulating, along the way, however, extraordinary difficulties and painful tensions inevitably arise. These occur~~ in a unique context that the two participants create through their work together. Within this frame of reference their concern is to understand and learn from the difficult and often <sup>painful</sup> ~~threatening~~ struggles. ~~On the analyst's part this requires much self-examination, discipline of a high order and a thorough knowledge of psychoanalytic technique.~~

Although the analytic relationship by itself is not curative, since a psychoanalytic cure is based on overcoming repression and the distortions that arise from it, the establishment of a "productive relatedness" is primary in Fromm's approach.

The description of Fromm's work that <sup>so well</sup> ~~best~~ describes the nature of this relationship and also captures <sup>its</sup> ~~his~~ galvanizing spirit, is that of Edward S. Tauber ("The Sense of Immediacy in Fromm's Conceptions", American Handbook of Psychiatry, Vol II, 1959; New York Basic Books) who wrote that for Fromm, the essence of psychoanalysis was that it "... shall penetrate as deeply and as speedily as possible to the very core of the patient's life, to locate his tenaciously held, unreal, unconscious

solution to his separateness, to waste no time on the consequences of his problem and on his adjustments, but to force him to face his resistances and give no quarter... ~~This process is carried out in setting where the analyst is his full self with the patient. The analyst is not waiting, figuring things out, carefully weighing what the patient can tolerate because, Fromm repeatedly asserts, most delay is in the service of the therapist's anxiety anyway.~~ The therapist should reveal, by his own genuine interest, dedication, openness, and true participation, that there is an urgency to grasp life, to live, to search, and to dare uncertainty. Fromm rejects the notion that the analyst must be the passive one. ~~This does not discard the previous ability to listen with all one's powers, but passivity can be exploitive when it merely serves to disguise the analyst's own malice.~~

The establishment of this kind of committed relationship between patient and analyst is the first, ~~and the most important~~ step in Fromm's approach to psychoanalysis. He warned, however, that the abandonment of the mirror-like, <sup>relatively</sup> impersonal relationship that is the Freudian model requires care. The analytic relationship, Fromm insisted (Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis, <sup>126 (Finishes 141) Overrepression & enlightenment</sup> 1960: New York, Harper and Row) "...must be free from all sentimentality, unrealistic distortions, and, especially, from any -- even the most subtle and indirect -- interference of the analyst in the life of the patient, not even that of the demand that the patient gets well. If the patient wants to get well and change, that is fine, and the analyst is willing to help him. If

his resistance to change is too great, this is not the analyst's responsibility. All his responsibility lies in lending the best of his knowledge and effort, of giving himself to the patient in search of the aim the patient seeks him out for."

~~I would now like to discuss Fromm's position with respect to some of the practical issues that arise in the day-to-day conduct of psychoanalysis. In teaching seminars,~~ Fromm emphasized the importance of establishing a psychoanalytically-appropriate atmosphere in the consulting room. The analyst sets the tone by his presence, he is to be concentrated, steady, unconcerned with obtaining status through his patient's compliance. It is essential to establish the analyst's competence from the outset. This is facilitated when the analyst is straight to the point, and not persistently silent or "analytical" in a reductionistic fashion.

(notes)  
Fromm noted that "The patient is always impressed by indications that the analyst has listened with concentration and interest. He knows when the analyst is listening. There are no false words, no sheer politeness. There is courtesy, yes, but the atmosphere must be one of honesty and concentration. When the patient is evasive the analyst takes up the challenge. The analyst should not be the friendly detective who says, 'Hmmm' and tries to trap the patient in an inconsistency. "This is alienating." Competence is also demonstrated when <sup>The analyst</sup> ~~he~~ shows that he has listened in a way novel to the patient, makes connections that the patient hadn't thought of, asks questions that stir interest, and raises provocative observations.

*In doing this,*  
 Fromm did not favor the use of the couch. He found it uninteresting not to see directly the patient's expressions and he believed it was a disservice to the patient who was deprived of the analyst's authentic reactions. He said: "I don't try to hide anything in my face. This affords the patient another very important communication with reality."

In Beyond The Chains of Illusion (1962; New York, Trident Press), Fromm described his early experiences that led him to abandon the couch: "I had been trained in accordance with a strictly Freudian procedure of analyzing a patient while sitting behind him and listening to his associations. This technique of psychoanalysis was modeled along the lines of the laboratory experiment; the patient was the 'object', the analyst observed his free associations, dreams, etc., and analyzed the material produced by the patient. ... The longer I worked in this manner, the less did I feel satisfied... ~~Fromm said~~, I often became tired and even sleepy during the analytic work; I often felt relieved when the analytic hour was over. But worse than that, I had less and less the feeling that I really understood the patient...I was talking about the patient rather than to him -- and I felt that much of what I ought to understand was escaping me."

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 157 Pocket Book  
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~~In addition~~ Fromm <sup>also</sup> observed that there are some candid statements that should only be said face-to-face"... because the words are more real that way". For example, he quoted a statement <sup>he made</sup> to a highly deferential patient: "You feel that you have to treat me gently and nicely because that's how you'll get what you need; actually you'd like <sup>to</sup>

devour me, but you're afraid that if I knew that I'd be angry." He felt one could say <sup>something like</sup> this most effectively when facing the patient, avoiding moral indignation on the one hand and easy reassurance on the other. Fromm believed that it was a disservice to spare the patient the shock of learning the truth about himself.

While the couch encourages transference and regression, Fromm argued that "The kind of infantile material this will produce is of limited value and does not foster significant insight." He believed, in any event, that transference developed without the couch. What is important is that there be a counterpoint between infantile or irrational experiences and adult experiences, the latter being essential to grasp the significance of the inner conflict, and mobilize to deal with it.

Fromm would begin the initial session by requesting a comprehensive account of the presenting symptoms, followed by an overview of the patient's history and family background, including the grandparents, to provide <sup>the analyst with</sup> a social-cultural frame of reference. Then he would say something like the following to the patient: "Tell me about yourself, but with the intention of getting behind the level of ordinary conversation. There's a lot of fiction in life. We want to get to the underlying reality. Express what you feel, and I may interrupt you at times when I see something."

This contrasts with the classical concept of free association in which word links are held to connect conscious--preconscious--unconscious ideation. Fromm valued the creative flow of ideas and emotions, but he also found that free association was often trivialized and used in the

service of resistance. He once said dryly, "The analyst should not simply say 'Tell me what comes to mind' because then he can't legitimately say 'Cut out the nonsense' when the patient is not serious. The main thing is for the patient not to omit things, to be utterly frank."

Students sometimes complained that they were bored in some of their sessions with patients, <sup>to which responded that he</sup> Fromm felt that boredom in the session was a strong indication that something was wrong with one or both of the participants. The classical <sup>Freudian</sup> position states that boredom in the patient means that he is blocking awareness of instinctual drives and fantasies. This is possible but, from Fromm's perspective, the analyst may well be at fault. He, too, has a responsibility to enliven the session by his own efforts. The risk of boredom lessens when the analyst is always ready to challenge the patient's defenses and activate his curiosity.

With this in mind, Fromm's advice to the analyst is that "... he should not be tentative. Be firm but flexible and sensitive to new data. Stick to the main issue. Don't clutter up interpretations and don't add points that the patient can't make use of. At times the analyst has to put himself into the battle to liberate a patient from a fortress where he has been imprisoned for many years and fears escaping."

To maintain an alive atmosphere, Fromm <sup>emphasized</sup> ~~advised~~ the use of imaginative metaphor to <sup>dramatize</sup> ~~make explicit~~ the rationalizations which have filled the patient's mind; although this often leads to much anxiety, it brings into relief new alternatives to the old patterns. As a result the patient will come to experience psychoanalysis as such

an important event that boredom will be no issue.

Vivid language also better enables the patient to make the shift from thinking into experiencing. Fromm was critical of too wordy an exchange. He felt that long explanations hindered change. "When we hear the word, the reality is already lost," he said. "In psychoanalysis it is important to differentiate between being aware and thinking. Don't act cerebrally, or it will be like two brains talking <sup>and not two human beings,</sup> No one changes by thinking alone." Of himself, he said: "I try not to add constructions; my impressions must come from the data."

I recall a seminar in which a therapist reported having told a highly symbiotic patient that she was angry at her mother. Fromm declared: "I would have to be strong and dramatic in presenting to this patient the point you are making. To tell her that she is angry at her mother is like telling Hamlet that he doesn't care for his step-father. Be vivid, get rid of everyday language that's not adequate to tell anything to this young woman. She is dominated by her mother and feels that any movement away from mother is treason. Even though her mother is destructive she clings to her because her strength gives certainty to life. In talking of this do not minimize or prettify things for the patient. If the analyst hedges, the patient's resistances are only increased, whereas the full truth has an unusual effect. There is life in this patient and she can get better."

To show more specifically Fromm's way of thinking about, and engaging the patient, I would like to relate a consultation I had with him. It was in reference to an unhappily married 39-year-old woman who claimed that she endured a boring marriage only because her husband's dependency prevented her from divorce. In the course of

a detailed history -- a work-driven, rigid, but affectionate father; a detached, status-seeking, domineering mother; prominent schools; an active social life; an impotent and detached stockbroker husband who was highly-esteemed by her parents; a routine suburban life with two children in private schools -- Fromm focussed on one detail: the patient had recently applied to a university to obtain a doctorate in literature, her main interest, <sup>(This was)</sup> over the objection of her parents and husband. They were united in urging her to work, instead, for a master's degree in business administration. The patient resisted and, proud of her rebellion, she sent in her application to the university and department of her choice. She commented, however, that unfortunately the application form had been written hurriedly in pencil to meet a deadline, and <sup>that it</sup> bore smudges and erasures. Some questions had not been answered in sufficient detail. ~~She felt~~ <sup>and she felt badly.</sup> ~~lolly-olly~~ her application was not accepted. Clearly the way she handled her application was an act of self-sabotage. How would one account for it?

This is how Fromm formulated the situation: "The main issue is that she has remained a completely dependent child, unable to take a step toward what she really wants because of her need to keep the affection of her parents. Her father is an alienated man working to death for success. He has shown some love for his daughter, which forms the central point in her <sup>psychic</sup> structure. The mother is shown to be unrelated, superficial and exploitative. Her father has been under the thumb of the mother so he has never really supported his daughter. He's just warm enough to sway her, to persuade her to submit. She

has been stunted because she could not resist their pressures, having been bribed and threatened from the earliest time on. Because she hasn't seriously attempted to break loose, she has grown up frightened, confused by the world, and feeling powerless.

"There seems to be no valid reason to stay in a marriage with a man who has shown no interest in her, and vice versa. Her only rationalization is that her husband can't live without her; but he can, obviously. Now she is not so beaten down as not to be able to attempt something, to apply to graduate school. But her problem is that she has never built her existence on her own will. She has always tried to please her parents. Her effort to go to graduate school was a fork in the road where she could have followed her own interests as opposed to her parents'.

"Allegedly she did the right thing in filling out an application form but unconsciously -- because she was frightened -- she did it badly. This is a very common occurrence: the rebellion is done in such a way that it will be defeated. Often a child rebels so irrationally that it gives the parent a weapon to go on dominating. Thus the child must be defeated. This kind of action satisfies both the conscious desire to be free and the unconscious fear of being free.

"People often deceive themselves and others by making a pretense at a trial. The effort turns out to be a lie because it was done ineffectively. It gives the appearance of freedom but this is to keep up an illusion for someone who doesn't dare to do anything decisively. Sometimes one is overcome by external factors but more often an effort fails because the heart wasn't in it. You either stay in the cage or get out; you cannot compromise.

*Fromm continues saying:*

"With regard to this patient, she is very frightened about losing her parents' approval and so she focusses her problems on her marriage. But the real issue is achieving freedom from her parents. In the authoritarian structure of her family life there is only one main sin: rebellion, and one main virtue: obedience, which officially provides love. In this setting the problem of freedom is very difficult. For as long as one is dependent and afraid every rebellion is felt as a sin.

*"as her therapist I must tell you that*

*When this is presented to the patient it will be frightening for her to see it; the resistance will be enormous. I would tell her of her resistance, hitting very hard to drive it home, not whispering it. Now she may leave the analysis after a few hours but then she's written her own diagnosis, that her resistance is too high. Perhaps she'll have to endure more suffering. Or she may get furious which would be fine. I would say: 'That's the way you express your resistance.'"*

Fromm facilitated this patient's treatment which, I am glad to say, led to a very satisfactory result.

In Fromm's view, effective analytic technique demands that the analyst develop an over-all strategic plan ~~as early as possible~~ in the analysis, ~~and that he stick to this plan.~~ Otherwise, Fromm warned, everything may become scattered and the analyst derailed by side issues.

To <sup>formulate</sup> ~~develop~~ such a master plan requires a good deal of thought and can only be <sup>developed</sup> ~~acquired~~, Fromm said, after the analyst knew the patient well enough so that he could visualize the patient's life as a drama played out on a stage.

Strategy involves making a distinction between primary issues and secondary ones, followed by a strong concentration on the former. I once commented to Fromm that I had read a similar principle in Karl von Clausewitz's book On War, and he said, "Yes, that's so. You have to concentrate your moves." He was quite familiar with Clausewitz's treatise on the strategy and tactics of combat. Clausewitz had written that if one had to deal with opposing forces on various fronts, then "One front must always be looked upon as the main issue to which our forces and activity are to be chiefly devoted". Without such concentration, he warned, there can be no clear center of gravity, the focus will be obscured and the objectives will be harder to reach.

Fromm shared other points of view with Clausewitz. One of these involved the concept of courage, and I would like to discuss this in some detail. Fromm believed that the analyst must be closely aware of his own anxiety in treating a precariously-situated patient and he must be able to muster the courage to control his fear. After the analyst has made a careful assessment of what is going on in the patient's life, he should be able to make a thought-out professional judgement and then take the risks of appropriate actions. In doing so, the analyst must not try to placate the patient, or admonish him, or burden him with the analyst's own anxiety. This requires courage and coolheadedness under fire, Fromm taught. Thus, he often said that the analyst's character was as decisive an element as the patient's in determining the outcome of psychoanalysis.

~~Clausewitz took a similar position in teaching the method of war~~  
~~to master "the province of logic, and then some courage alone~~

all things is the first quality of a warrior. To carry out a strategy in the face of the great uncertainties that war entails," Clausewitz wrote, "...two qualities are indispensable: in the first place an intellect which...is not without some traces of inner light which lead to the truth, and then the courage to follow this faint light."

Fromm stated that ~~not only was~~ <sup>was</sup> courage essential for the analyst *as well as* ~~but~~ for the patient ~~as well~~; if the analyst shows courage and does not compromise, then the patient's courage will increase. "The clearer, more complete, less compromising, blunter the truth -- the description of the patient's reality -- the more it will strengthen the patient," he said. "Trying to persuade the patient of something doesn't help. Putting the truth on the table is the only thing that will work." He went on to say that the analyst should question his own courage if he starts to feel that the patient can't take it.

With respect to the patient's growth, he said, the analyst should tell the patient: "You have to practice courage". He insisted that, "We must be concerned with more than love and hate in personality development. The concept of courage is also an extremely important factor." Fromm had no doubt but that the taking on of a courageous attitude

could be practiced and learned, and he felt that this was a vital matter that had been overlooked in <sup>traditional</sup> psychoanalysis.

I would now like to describe briefly another case that brings into focus the issue of courage and other key aspects of Fromm's thinking and technique. ~~THIS CASE WAS PRESENTED IN THE~~

~~PRESENTATION OF THE 21st ANNUAL MEETING OF THE~~

An analyst presented in seminar the case of a 30-year-old single woman, called Alice, who lived alone with her divorced mother. The father who had been sent packing ten years earlier was a remote, weak vaguely-unhappy accountant who lived a solitary life. The mother was dominating and intrusive; for example, she had ~~checked each day~~ <sup>examined</sup> Alice's <sup>daily</sup> bowel movements until Alice strongly protested when she was around 18. Alice told her analyst that she had gradually become very anxious, was bored with her life, and also disliked her job as a clerk-typist. She said that she liked her mother but sometimes resented her because she was too controlling. Otherwise, Alice had no idea as

to what was wrong with her, although she did wish she had a boy friend and she regretted quitting college after her first year.

Her initial dream in analysis was a brief episode in which she sat down to take an examination in some strange subject and became panicky since she couldn't figure out how to proceed. A week later, she dreamed that her mother told her to eat some poundcake the mother had baked, and a voice announced: "The poundcake is the lesson."

Fromm began: "The examination panic is due, not to any actual test but to an inner feeling that Alice is being examined as to who she is. She is full of rationalizations and excuses, so that when she has to give an account of herself in analysis, she's badly frightened. We have been told that this young woman has always managed by getting people to help her. But in an examination, as in the second part of a bullfight, she is on her own. At this moment she is completely exposed and this is what leads to panic. About the dream I would tell her simply: "You are deeply frightened of being examined as to who you are. This is what you expect in analysis and so you feel put on the spot and panic."

A therapist interrupted and asked if her anxiety really wasn't a means of obtaining mother's attention. Fromm replied: "Her panic is too great to be accounted for by secondary gains. Actually she doesn't want her mother's attention (because that's a rape) No, she has to try and hide her dependency from her mother."

Fromm went on to describe Alice as having had no practice in self-defense. "Her childhood was a prison and she always feared being engulfed. She is fighting a fierce battle with her mother and is not well-endowed with courage. Even her friends are weak and, as we have

seen, they were chosen by her mother. One of her needs in therapy is to be taught to practice courage; from what has been said, I believe that she is capable of this."

Fromm pointed out that Alice felt ~~like~~ she had no rights of her own and so she started every new endeavor with the expectation that everything was lost from the beginning. "She really acts like a slave who feels that everything she gets is a favor and that she should feel grateful if she's not beaten and starved. Now her main fear is that of the mother. Her fear of father is relatively mild. The <sup>deep</sup> fear of the mother is panic and the task of analysis is to unmask the mother while being protective of the patient. Remember that her fright of being destroyed by her mother is so real that it must be taken very seriously. Right now, telling her to confront her mother would be like shoving her into a lion's cage. This <sup>kind of</sup> fear actually exists in the patient's unconscious. Also note that in cases of tremendous fright of the mother, you will usually find both destructiveness and seductiveness on the mother's part, and both qualities imprison the child in a symbiotic bind". Fromm added that Alice was afraid to do anything on her own because ~~it~~ <sup>that</sup> could imply a criticism of her mother and this would instantly activate terror. Having said this, he led into an analysis of the second dream:

"Taking the dream in a general way," Fromm said, "the statement that 'poundcake is the lesson' means that food and learning are connected. The maturational task of learning is connected with the developmentally more immature concern with food. Note the incongruity of the dream. It means that to learn, for Alice, is like being force-

fed by mother. The primitive sphere of being fed by mother has not yet been separated from <sup>the</sup> taking-in <sup>of</sup> new learning. This is another aspect of her examination fear." ~~For~~ <sup>(repeat:)</sup> taking a test is not only frightening in itself but it represents a move toward being more independent which strikes terror in Alice."

With respect to strategy, Fromm would stay close to this central theme of Alice's intense fear of her mother. While offering maximum support, he would work to open Alice's eyes <sup>show her</sup> to how her mother has shown intolerance for all of Alice's personality and to show Alice how she has, so far, <sup>reacted</sup> -- not with fight or courage, but with panic, flight and looking for help. Fromm would not be deflected in following through on this theme. When one analyst objected that the mother was not 100 per cent bad and had, for example, treated Alice well when she was ill, Fromm responded that such a statement would harm Alice.

"Look", Fromm said, "to tell Alice that her mother is five per cent good will not help her because she already feels overly grateful for what her mother does and this would only reinforce it. The main focus must be to help Alice to see how her mother imprisons her."

Another analyst argued that, in any case, Alice should see that the mother was actually mentally sick. Again, Fromm disagreed: "The analyst should not excuse the mother. If Alice is told at this stage of the analysis that the mother is sick, it would only make her feel sorry for her mother. The main point is that the mother is very harmful and the analyst may have to be very strong to wake up the patient. Naturally the analyst is neither sentimental nor should he get angry at the mother. His manner is to be utterly realistic and precise,

conveying to the patient that she can rely on him. In a case like this I would go out of my way to say to her: if you need to, call me up any time of day or night."

~~Fromm had encountered many cases like this earlier in his life and his findings led him, by the mid-nineteen-forties, to a strong appreciation of the phenomenon of the child's deep fear of the mother. He had seen many patients who, like Alice, had been so closely bound to their mothers that any move not connected with mother's wishes -- especially starting psychoanalysis -- was felt by the patient as treason.~~

~~The fear of the father, Fromm held, can usually be alleviated through obedience. If the father punishes and the child obeys, the fear will be lessened. But the fear of the mother has a different quality, Fromm insisted: "Mother's love is an act of grace; it is not acquired by anything the infant has to do. Good works matter less with the mother. She is life-giving. You can notice the euphoria and bliss an infant experiences when being nursed. But precisely because the mother can give life like this, the opposite also holds. The mother's scolding and withholding are felt like a banishment. And where the mother is both seductive and hostile, you will see the child developing severe fright. This kind of fear of the mother is panic. The child caught up in such panic feels like a prisoner and is so concentrated on the mother or jailor that other people are not as real to her."~~

~~Fromm felt that Freud was not sufficiently aware of this phenomenon because of his rigid commitment to the Oedipus complex. Additionally, Freud's markedly patriarchal attitude prevented him from seeing that~~

the woman could be the main cause of a child's fear, Fromm believed. In the case of the boy, incestuous longings for his mother and dread of his father's revenge through castration, intensified by hatred of the father as a rival, were said by Freud to make the boy badly frightened of his father. But Fromm had come to believe through many clinical observations that the most pathogenic fears were related to the mother, fears of the father being comparatively minor.

This clinical experience led Fromm to re-examine Freud's theoretical formulation of the case of Little Hans, in collaboration with colleagues at the Mexican Institute of Psychoanalysis, including Dr. Jorge Silva who is with us today. In this analysis -- "The Oedipus Complex: Comments on 'The Case of Little Hans'", published in Contemporary Psychoanalysis, Spring, 1968 -- Fromm meticulously studied the data so clearly recorded by Freud. He found a number of references showing Hans to be extremely fond of his father and he pointed out rather dramatic illustrations of the mother's destructive attitude. Fromm wrote that Hans' mother menaced him very explicitly with castration. For example, she told him: "If you do that (touch your penis with your hand), I shall send for Dr. A. to cut off your widdler..." She also threatened to abandon him. For example, Hans said: "Mummy's told me she won't come back." Fromm noted that Hans fear of his mother was manifested by another symptom. Hans told his father: "In the bath I'm afraid of falling in." His father replied: "But Mummy bathes you in it. Are you afraid of Mummy dropping you in the water?" Hans answered: "I'm afraid of her letting go and my head going in."

Fromm concluded: If Hans' central fear is directed towards his mother rather than his father, if his sexual desires are not pathogenic, and do not produce hostility and fear of the father, how do we explain Hans' phobia (of being bitten by a horse)? We suggest that the elements

that enter into the phobia are as follows: As Hans is already attached to the mother, his terror of her increases with the threats of castration and abandonment. His fear is intensified by his first confrontation with death; before the emergence of his phobia, little Hans witnesses a funeral in Gmunden. Later, he saw a fallen horse and believed it to be dead. The first encounter with death is a very serious event in a child's life, and it can produce additional anguish in an already sensitive child, owing to the fear of castration.

"It may therefore be concluded that the fear of the horse has two origins: (1) the fear of the mother, due to her castration threats and (2) the fear of death. To avoid both fears, Hans develops the phobia, which protects him from seeing horses and from experiencing both types of anxiety."

I have gone into this analysis at some length in order to show how Fromm's close attention to clinical detail -- in this case, the dread of the mother -- led him to question existing theory and to modify when it no longer was able to account for his clinical observations.

I would now like to discuss briefly the role of responsibility in Fromm's technique and then conclude with some reflections as to the future of Fromm's approach to psychoanalysis.

With regard to responsibility, always a major issue in psychoanalysis, Fromm took a strong position. He felt that responsibility (respondere - to reply) is the most important human quality. In Fromm's approach, the patient is expected to take on a considerable degree of responsibility for his life and progress; <sup>and most significantly</sup> This focus on responsibility, and daring, is true for the analyst as well. ~~Who~~ cannot hope to produce a significant effect by following measures prescribed in a theoretical scaffolding; for the

patient and analyst are attempting something unique in delving beyond the apparent. The truth may be stunningly different from surface appearances. This means, Fromm held, that the person who would take command of his life is perforce responsible for his unconscious as well as his conscious mentation and activity.

But how can a person be fully responsible for all aspects of his life? It would seem that Fromm's position is an existential one: the locus of responsibility must be viewed as within the individual, even if he is incapable of assuming it, in order to emphasize that each person, ultimately, is responsible for his own life. In practical terms, Fromm's position on responsibility is intended to summon forth the very best in the patient *and the analyst.*

Fromm held out for a transformation of character and he felt that this could only occur if the patient felt his responsibility. He insisted that little improvements will have no real impact and once said to a highly obsessional patient: "If you make a few repairs here and there in a slum, it's still a slum". ~~He stated that the opposition between the love of life and the love of death, which exists in various blends in every person, was the fundamental human problem. To deal with this choice analytically,~~ Fromm extended his position on responsibility even further. He believed that the patient must assume responsibility retroactively and to calculate why he had not acted other than he had. This was an empirical matter: ~~as~~ he believed that the only way to get something corrected in life was to go back to the point where something went wrong, <sup>reconstrue</sup> <sup>the past</sup> possible alternatives, and <sup>consequently</sup> understand why one had not acted otherwise. Only by doing so will the patient be able to

move away from the blaming of others and take charge of his life in the present. Without going back in time, admitting the lost years and and energy expenditures, most people will keep going in the wrong direction, Fromm held, passively hoping that something will change for the better.

~~Having presented these observations of Fromm's approach to psychoanalysis~~ I would <sup>now</sup> like to ask what in <sup>Fromm's</sup> ~~his~~ work will prevail and what future influence his work may have on psychoanalytic theory and practice. Certain phenomena have inevitably softened Fromm's impact. First has been the popularization of many original aspects of his work to the point where they have been absorbed into the mainstream of psychoanalysis and contemporary critical thought. The result has been that one of the most radical of the great psychoanalysts is often represented by what is now expressed as conventional wisdom.

For example, Fromm was the first to describe in detail the "pathology of normalcy", a concept which refers to the labeling as normal that conforming behavior which is merely a superficial adaptation to a social system, however stifling that system may be.

Fromm was also the first to use as a psychological metaphor the biological concept of symbiotic relationship. He showed incisively how one form of symbiosis unfolded into sadistic or masochistic character development. Long before symbiosis became <sup>the</sup> a popular construct <sup>it is now,</sup> it was at the core of Fromm's theory. ~~From~~ <sup>E.F.</sup> ~~he~~ viewed psychoanalysis not only as a means of symptom relief but in terms of freedom from symbiosis, fixation and anxiety and freedom toward independence, truth and the possibilities of love. This position, too, is now becoming

generally accepted. <sup>Additionally,</sup> ~~As~~ long before it caught on, <sup>Fromm</sup> ~~he~~ focused on experience, authenticity and immediacy in psychoanalysis. These ideas, once radical, have long been accepted, although usually in a way that has sapped their original vitality and dwindled down to the narcissism of the "me generation". This happened because his vision of freedom was taken in, but without awareness of significant social concerns and without the discipline and human values implicit in Fromm's constructs.

Erich Fromm described more attentively than any other psychoanalyst how social patterns <sup>(and political structures)</sup> may bend man's character and values against his <sup>genuine,</sup> real interests. Where does this aspect of Fromm's work lead? It suggests that the psychoanalyst should not separate the patient from a recognition of those social, political and economic forces which constrict his choices and stunt his growth. Without such recognition, the analyst cannot materially help the patient to discover his embeddedness in constrictive socially-defined patterns. But with his eyes opened, the patient may find himself with the ~~intent~~ and courage to ~~tolerate anxiety and~~ challenge entrenched security operations so as <sup>(as well as work for social change.)</sup> to find opportunities where he can express his unique capabilities.

Where the analyst operates without ~~these~~ perspectives he will have difficulty in translating Fromm's teachings into effective action. <sup>thus,</sup> some analysts have left Fromm's seminars inspired to work in a more energized way and they greatly animated their sessions for a time; but they were unable to maintain this thrust. The basic difficulty in such cases was two-fold. First, the analyst moved in before achieving the discipline of an over-all strategic plan, <sup>with its implicit self-discipline,</sup> Second, the analyst had too narrow an outlook. Fromm's work was informed by his carefully considered views as to how an individual was to examine and challenge

his society and himself so as to develop new possibilities for his <sup>and his relationships.</sup> life. Without this ever-widening outlook it is always difficult to keep the analytic work alive and well at the center of the patient's world.

Above all, Fromm was concerned that contemporary society was leading to the "robotism" of man and to <sup>the</sup>nuclear war, and he hoped that psychoanalytic insights would help to avoid those evils. Since psychoanalysis had always dealt with critical awareness and the uncovering of rationalizations, Fromm held that there had been a revolutionary potential in Freud's discoveries, and that these might have led in the direction of what Fromm called "the sane society". But the wide acceptance of Freud's thought led to better adjustment to society instead of <sup>to</sup> major changes in social organization. Accordingly, Fromm sought to restore the early radical spirit of psychoanalysis. Looking to the future he wrote: "...the creative renewal of psychoanalysis is possible only if it ... becomes again a critical and challenging theory in the spirit of radical humanism. This revised psychoanalysis will continue to descend evermore into the underworld of the unconscious; it will also be concerned with the processes that could lead to the adaptation of society to the needs of man, rather than man's adaptation to society." (The Crisis of Psychoanalysis. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.)

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