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Araullo_A_2010

Erich Fromm's psycho-spiritual discourse

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„Erich Fromm's psycho-spiritual discourse.“ First published in: *Fromm Forum* (English Edition - ISBN 1437-1189) 14 / 2010, Tuebingen (Selbstverlag) 2010, pp. 52-56.

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Introduction

In the middle of 20th Century, Fromm believed that there was a need to spiritualise Psychoanalysis. The reason behind this was that Fromm was confronted by the great importance of a person's cultural and spiritual condition, and this was evident in his new philosophical approach to psychoanalysis, which he calls "Humanistic." It is essentially based on "religious humanistic principles," which is a dialectic of Judeo-Christian, Zen, and Freudian psychoanalytic humanism. This spiritualisation attempt is called the "Psycho-Spiritual Discourse." In order to appreciate this discourse, I will proceed with the sources of Fromm's psychology and spirituality. This will be followed by the origin and the meaning of "self-realisation" or "self-actualisation;" also known as "x experience." It is an experience which is grounded on the "need to relate" to one's fellow human being situated in the "being mode of existence." Then the aim of his psycho-spirituality will be presented. The critiques will also be explored to assess the validity of his spiritual dialectic. In conclusion, an attempt will be made to evaluate whether or not Fromm's spiritual dialectic is an appropriate method of personal transformation towards the humanisation of man.

The Psychoanalytic Source

Fromm's psychoanalytic studies began with his wife Frieda Reichmann, and were formally completed under the Karl Abraham Institute in Berlin (Funk, 1999: 173). Throughout his life, he remained faithful to the principles of Freudian psychoanalysis. These words confirm that loyalty: "I want to emphasize that this concept of psychoanalysis does not imply replacing Freud's theory..." (Fromm, 1964: 15). He adds: "Analysis is—to use a traditional formula—the understanding of the unconscious of the patient. That is the formula since Freud's day, and I would still say that is a correct, good formula" (Fromm, 2009: 21; Fromm's latest publication). The change, according to him, is nothing but "...a different philosophical frame of reference, that of "dialectic humanism"" (my emphasis) (1964:14). Dialectic humanism, in short, is the discourse of the realisation of humanity in a person because he or she is the embodiment of humanity. As Fromm (1966) has maintained: "...every man carries in himself all of humanity" (p. 81).

In his book "The Revision of Psychoanalysis" published in 1990, Fromm tried to further Freud's theories by revising a certain portion of it based on his own "sociobiological" orientation (Fromm, 1990f: 9). He argues that his revision emphasises self-actualisation (ie, socio-spiritual interaction) rather than the gratification of sexual (biological) drives. Conversely, a man who is not



self-actualised is an isolated man. He is separated from his self and his fellow men. Fromm calls it “alienation” (1976a: 94). In Horney’s (1950) spirituality, alienation is a force that “... prevents him from realizing his given potentials” (Horney, 1950: 141). One of these potentials is the spiritual self which is called the “real-self.” In the context of psycho-spirituality, alienation is “aleness,” says Fromm (1941/1942: 15). Aloneness is a state of mind where a person fails to relate with his fellow men spiritually—his inability to commune with God within his fellow man (ibid). His soul is sick because it is isolated or separated from God. Thus, this sick soul needs to be cured, transformed, or he dies spiritually. This is, according to Fromm, the primary aim of psychoanalysis: the “cure of the soul” (my emphasis) (1950: 65). “Making the unconscious conscious transforms the mere idea of the universality of man into the living experience of this universality; it is the experiential realisation of humanism” (Fromm, 1960a: 107). This interpretation of psychoanalysis indicates his commitment to “religious-humanistic principles” (Fromm, 1955: 205). To put this idea in one word: spirituality.

The Spiritual Sources

Fromm’s spirituality is much inspired by the following: the prophets or prophetic Judaism, Christian mysticism, and Zen. As Maccoby has put it: Fromm’s concept of human development or human transformation is drawn from the “Jewish bible, Zen Buddhism, Christian mysticism” (1994: 1). The prophetic side of spirituality is his ability to see the significance of his psycho-spiritual discourse in this millennium. The present economic situation, ie. the Credit Crunch, forces us to reflect on spiritual aspects of our lives. The Christian mystical element is heavily drawn on Jesus’ teachings because of their unequivocal humanistic principle (Fromm, 1950: 37). Finally, the Zen aspect is very much influenced by the Zen of his teacher, the late Prof Suzuki. It is also the significant element to his spirituality.

The Self-realisation or The Self-actualisation

All of these spiritual teachings were put together because Fromm saw how crucial a person’s cultural and spiritual condition was. As he points out: “Finally, the cultural and the spiritual condition of a person is of great importance” (Fromm, 1993: 69). In this remark, one has to consider that the one of the three elements of the definition of culture is spirituality. According to Giambattista Vico, ‘culture’ is “...a pattern in which spiritual, economic and social factors are interwoven...” (cited by Berlin, 1969b: 63).

Fromm’s psycho-spiritual approach is indeed strongly grounded on these interwoven factors. It was further reinforced in his twelve-year relationship with Horney. She reinforced his desexualised psychoanalytic discourses (that is, giving emphasis to “desexualised Eros,” in Freud’s terms) and his awareness of Zen spirituality.

Zen had such a profound impact on both Fromm and Horney that they became disciples of Professor Suzuki (Funk, 1999: 62, 93, 132; Paris, 1994: 174). Fromm’s Zen training under Professor Suzuki had a significant influence on his spiritual side which led to his own personal transformation— his own self-realisation, self-actualisation or “x experience.”

This “x experience” is based on Fromm’s basic framework about the need for man to realise himself as a human being endowed with his specific human potentialities. When a person is able to actualise these potentialities spontaneously, Fromm calls it “self-actualisation” or “self-



realisation.” These two terms are interchangeable (Fromm, 1970: 79).

Originally, however, the concept of “self-realisation,” was already known to Hindu culture. In the Western context, the term was already known in the early 18th Century in Hegel’s notion of the “Actualisation of Self-consciousness” (Hegel, 1807: 211). It was also used by Kierkegaard in 1939 (Clarkson & Makewn, 1993: 65). On the other hand, the term “self-actualisation,” was introduced by Kurt Goldstein (1875-1965) in the 1930s, who inspired Abraham Maslow’s (1908-1970) “self-actualisation” in his humanistic psychology. Goldstein coined the term and Maslow modified it. Goldstein asserts that self actualisation is our ultimate or primary natural drive, and all our values arise from this natural striving. For a sick organism the ultimate self-actualisation is to exist or to preserve its life; but for the healthy one, its self-actualisation is to fulfil actively its potential to the fullest (Goldstein, 1995: 162).

Fromm and Horney, however, extend Goldstein’s self-actualisation to the realm of spirituality. For example, Horney asserts that there is in every human being a central inner force or a spiritual force which she calls the “real self” (Horney, 1950: 12). Apparently, Horney’s spirituality is also influenced by Professor Suzuki.

In 1941, Fromm’s book, “Escape from Freedom,” was published. A year later, the title was changed to “The Fear of Freedom.” It is a book about freedom, “...freedom as the active and spontaneous realisation of the individual self” (Fromm, 1941/1942: 238). This discourse was further expounded in his book “Man for Himself” published in 1947. In this book, the term “self-realisation” is directed towards the spontaneous (natural) actualisation of potentialities. As he asserts: “All organisms have an inherent tendency to actualise their specific potentialities. The aim of man’s life, therefore, is to be understood as the unfolding of his powers according to the laws of his nature” (Fromm, 1947: 20). This idea, in its spiritual context, comes from Zen’s original nature. This is because it is also the main aim of Zen. As Thomas Cleary points out: “Zen is purely devoted to liberating the *hidden potential* of the human mind” (my emphasis) (1995: vii).

This too is the central idea in Abraham Maslow’s Humanistic Psychology. Contrary to the popular belief, Maslow’s works actually promote psychoanalytic psychology – specifically, the Humanistic Psychoanalysis of Erich Fromm and not Humanistic Psychology itself. He, himself, acknowledges that his humanistic psychology is significantly influenced by Fromm’s humanistic psychoanalysis. This is evident in his book “Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences,” published in 1970. He says, ‘...some others, still a small proportion, are finding in newly available, naturalistic faith,..., a “humanistic faith” as Erich Fromm calls it, humanistic psychology as many others are now calling it’ (Maslow, 1970: 39). In addition, it is not only Fromm and Maslow who advocate self-actualisation, but also Tillich and Linssen. As Paul Tillich (1954) writes: “Life is the dynamic actualization of being” (p. 41). Linssen (1958), a Zen writer, reinforces it: “The highest mission of man is to manifest the fullness of his being” (p. 110).

Furthermore, Maslow is really unsatisfied with Freudian psychoanalysis because according to him, it does not cover spiritual life. As he states: ‘It [Freudian psychoanalysis] does not supply us with a psychology of the higher life or the ‘spiritual life, of what human being should grow toward, of what he can become (although I believe psychoanalytic method and theory is necessary substructure for any such “higher” or growth psychology)’ (Maslow, 1970: 7). As a result, Maslow sought to explore this spiritual life, which he called “Peak-Experience.” It is an idea that he borrowed from E. I. F. Williams, the editor of Kappa Delta Pi Publications (ibid: vi). Surprisingly, Fromm (1966) seems to have a similar approach – the “x experience” (pp 56-57).

The “X Experience”



By and large, the “x experience” is nothing but Fromm’s terminology for “religious experience.” Like that of Buddhism, Taoism, and Zen, it is an experience which does not suggest a theistic encounter (ibid). It is rather an experience which actualises the need to relate with a fellow human being because of that humanity in him. That humanity is the spirituality. This, according to Fromm, is because the term “humanity” implies non-egoism, compassion, and love. They are actually the characteristics of Buddhist, Taoist, and Zen spirituality transported to the Western Culture.

In Zen, this “self-realisation” is called the realisation of the “self-essence” or “buddha-nature.” As the third Zen’s patriarch, Seng Ts’an, puts it: “The timeless Self-essence is reached” (Clarke, trans., 1973). Hui-neng, the sixth patriarch, naturally calls it: “The essential buddha-nature...,” is the nature of which is apparently non-judgemental (Price and Wong, trans., 1990: 14). He continues: “The essential buddha-nature is neither good nor not good; this called nonduality” [...] “The nondual nature is the buddha-nature” (ibid: 14, 15). He also claims that the realisation of this buddha-nature is the realisation of the non-judgemental human qualities in us: “...do away with truth as well as falsehood, then we may consider ourselves as having realized the buddha-nature, or in other words, as having attained buddhahood” (ibid: 103). This realisation of non-judgemental nature is what the term “enlightenment” is all about, according to Zen spirituality. Suzuki (1957) adds: “The Buddhist enlightenment is nothing more than the experience of is-ness or suchness (tathata)...” (p. 5). “There is neither good nor bad,.. there is only is-ness” (ibid. 124). This isness of Zen Satori (enlightenment) experience is also called “totalistic” experience or the actualisation of the “transcendental realm,” the egoless realm (Goldberg, 2008). Non-judgment is also called love. As Nietzsche puts it: “That which is done out of love always takes place beyond good and evil” (1886: 85). In Vimalakirti’s words: it is “... the love that is nondual...,” (Thurman, trans., 1976: 57). This non-judgmental principle is evident in Fromm’s works and is found in his book “The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness” published in 1973, and also in his article, “The Nature of Well-Being” (1983). As Fromm says, “that attainment of a non-judgemental understanding can lower aggressiveness or do away with it altogether; it depends on the degree to which a person overcome his own insecurity, greed, and narcissism, and not on the amount of information he has about others” (1973: 57).

Essentially, the Zen spirituality in Fromm’s psycho-spiritual dialectic is the non-judgemental understanding or reasoning that is directed towards love. It is about the altruistic love of others and oneself. It is the courage to love others because he experienced love by loving himself. It is similar to the way Fraser Watts describes “the Church, at its best, as a community of people who together finding the courage to love one another as they have been loved” (2007: 74). For love is the actualisation of the need to relate.

The Need to Relate

Fromm insists that our basic passions originate from our need to relate (Fromm, 1955a: v). It is an echo of Alfred Adler’s (1931) words: “The oldest of human strivings is to be one with our fellow human beings” (209). It is also popularly known as Adlerian “Holism.” The phrase “a new relatedness to man and nature” implies another way of relating guided by man’s developed qualities: reason and love. “Man must develop his power of reason in order to understand himself, his relationships to his fellow men, his position in the universe” (Fromm, 1950: 37). For even the Lord, Himself, call us to reason together. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord:...” (Isaiah 1:18).

However, reason alone is not sufficient to guide man in his relationship to his fellow men.



One must also develop one's powers of love. As Fromm puts it: "He must develop his *powers of love* (my emphasis) for others as well as for himself and experience the solidarity of all living beings" (1950: 37).

Fromm (1976: 61) quotes the Gospels to support his view on spiritual love. According to Matthew 44-48 and Luke 6: 27, Jesus contrastingly says: "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies,...." The Gospels also state that Jesus does not command us to love our enemies but also not to judge anyone. Matthew 7: 1-5 and Luke 6: 37: "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." Fromm also cites Jesus summing up the ten commandments into two – "Thou shalt love thy Lord thy God... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," according to Matthew 22: 37-39. Fromm interprets these non-judgemental and compassionate words of Jesus as "a further extension of the principle of *forgetting one's ego* (my emphasis) and being totally devoted to the understanding and well-being of the other" (1976: 61). It is really about altruism.

It would appear that Fromm has not noticed that these two commandments could be further summed up into one word: this word is Love. Without the word "love" these two commandments would not be possible. Notice that both begin with the phrase: "Thou shalt *love*..." (my emphasis). The New Testament also says that God is love. As Jesus confirms: "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is *love* (my emphasis), and he that dwelleth in *love* dwelleth in God, and God in him (my emphasis)" (I John 4:16). In the Gospel of John 13:24, Jesus presents his new commandment: "A new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

This is why, according to Soothill (1987), the Gospel of St. John is one of "the three most influential books in the world" (p. v); the other two being the Lotus Sutra of Buddhism and Bhagavadgita of Hinduism. All of them convey the same message– Love. This kind of love is known in the New Testament as Agape and Philia. Agape means charitable, selfless, altruistic. Agape means "love (especially love that is spiritual and selfless in nature)" (<http://www.wordreference.com/definition/agape>). Philia is "brotherly love" (ibid). In other words, it is the spiritual humanistic love.

Actually, the Freudian humanism is also influenced by Jesus's humanistic words. According to Freud, when the object is replaced by the ego-ideal (the idea of perfection), the sexual love for the object is desexualised or "a kind of sublimation" (1921c: 368-9). Hence, the phrase "to love one's neighbour as oneself" (my emphasis) [Matthew: 22:39] is really appropriate (1921c:368-9;). This desexualised love for the object is also extended to the love for the group or community, the "urge towards union with others in the community" (my emphasis) (ibid: 369; 1930a: 334). Freud calls it the "desexualisation of Eros." Moreover, Freud also points out: "I may now add that civilization is a process in the service of Eros, whose purpose is to combine single human individuals, and after that families, then races, peoples and nations, into one great unity, the unity of mankind" (1930a: 313). This is Freud's version of humanistic psychoanalysis which Fromm has emphasised and expanded. This is also the basis of being a civilised person or a cultured spirit, a person who is in harmony (ie holism) with society and Nature.

The "need to relate," according to Fromm, is crucial to a man's survival and the actualisation of his individuality or self. This is because a man cannot live on his own. His existence is meaningless if he cannot actualise his potentialities. The actualisation of these potentialities depend on his fellow men. As he strongly asserts: "All men are in need of help and *depend* on one another" (my emphasis) (Fromm, 1947: 101). On the one hand, a man must harmonise with his fellow men to unfold the potentialities which are the embodiment of his individuality. In short: he needs to love. On the other, "active and intelligent cooperation" (my emphasis) is required to realise his individuality or the actualisation of his potentialities (Fromm, 1941/1942: 235). In other words, he must be actively reasonable. As he further stresses: "Human solidarity is the necessary



condition for the unfolding of any one individual” (Fromm, 1947: 101).

Thus, Fromm’s notion of the “self-actualisation” is inextricably bound with the need to relate to both society and nature. On the one hand, man’s social drive propels him to relate to fellow human beings. On the other hand, being part of Nature himself drives him to respect Her.

In this respect, when a person actualises reason and love, he is socially integrated, active, and is normal and healthy– in a word: alive. This is because, for him, to be normal, he has to satisfy the two conditions of “human” existence: firstly, he has to be able to fulfil his social role (ie: love for fellow human beings or compassion), and secondly, he has to be fully able to grow and be happy (Fromm, 1941/1942: 118-9). This growth is the growth of reason or the understanding of the self and his potential to be happy, active and alive. Actually, this social integration as the way to human happiness is an echo of Freud’s humanism: “Integration in, or adaptation to, a human community appears as a scarily avoidable condition which must be fulfilled before this aim of happiness can be achieved” (1930a: 334).

Although Freud mentions the integrative aspect of us, he still insists that biological drives (ie. sexual ones) determine our behaviour and are in conflict with culture, specifically the spiritual aspect of culture. Fromm (1990f), however, has a dialectic approach by integrating the two. In this respect, he calls this kind of psychoanalytic framework “humanistic,” grounded on sociobiological perspective (Fromm 1990f: 9).

It is humanistic, because it considers the “humanity” in us as the ultimate goal–the end itself. Even his concept of the unconscious is based on this humanistic principle which he calls it “the universal man” or “the whole man” (1960a: 107). It is in this principle that the notion of his spirituality is founded. It declares that “God is the image of man’s highest self,...” (Fromm, 1950: 49). This idea comes from Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in his own image....” This is also reinforced by Jesus in Luke 17:21: “Neither shall they say, Lo here or, lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is within you” (my emphasis) (Fromm, 1950: 48). In this respect, every man should be respected and valued. He must not exploit another man. As Fromm declares: “Man is the *end*, must never be used as a means...” (my emphasis) (1955a: 205).

Compare these words with Jesus’s humanistic sayings as stated in Mark 25: 40: “Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my *brethren*, ye have done it unto *me*” (my emphasis).

Moreover, human beings are not just instinctively social animals because they have the natural capacity to reason and love. Kierkegaard maintains that “man is not merely animal, for if he were at any moment of his life merely animal, he would never become man” (1980: 43). This humanistic principle was already introduced by Aristotle (384-322 BC) almost 2,500 years before. Aristotle contends: “...for man by nature is a social being” (Thomson, trans., 1976: 74). Hence, it is appropriate to say that human beings are social or cultural beings or cultural spirits or just “spirit.” As Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) vehemently situates it: “Homo est animus,” man is spirit (Ficino, 1495: 78); and not only spirit but also a “cultured spirit.” They are not animals. As Fromm (1968) says: “...he is not an animal...” (p. 63). Man as a mind or spirit is also a being if this mind takes itself as it is, according to Sengtsan. In Plato’s view in the dialogue of Timaeus: being is real, permanent and within the realm of intelligence (the soul or spirit); on the other hand, becoming is unreal, impermanent and within the limits of the senses (Lee, trans., 1965: 40; Jowett, trans., 1965: 1161-2). Being is a spiritual characterisation, whereas becoming is a material one.

The Being-Mode of Existence



Fromm (1974), in his last chapter on “Who is man?,” expresses the definition of “man,” not only as an animal but also not as a thing or materially defined thing. However, man, because of his drive to survive at all cost, submitted himself to a thing or to his material needs. In psycho-spiritual context, man idolises things or materialism. This submission to things or the possession of things is known as the “having mode” or the “having mode of existence.” The consequence of having things, alienates him from his society and nature. This submission to things is manifested through the automatization of human beings by technology and the crisis of meaningless life (Fromm, 1955a: 31). He also commodifies everything for the sake of profit. He becomes obsessed with money and wealth. He only relates to his or her fellow human beings in the context of the wealth and power that he or she might gain. He or she exploits them for the sake of “cash” (Fromm, 1922b: 32).

As a consequence, humans have fallen out of nature. This fall also means he turns into an egoistic person (ibid). It also means suffering. People suffer, says Fromm, because of “sin” (my emphasis) – that is, disharmony with nature or “...unresolved estrangement...” (1976a: 125). It is similar to Horney’s ideal self, the superficiality of the pseudo-self: the egoistic, disharmonised, alienated person. This is because this person is unreasonable and un-loving – in other words: an alienated human being.

Despite this, man can overcome his judgment, egoism, and obsession with material things. He has fallen out of nature because he is still evolving or developing. As Fromm insists that man “...is a living being caught up in a continual process of development” (1974: 140). By his ability of thinking, he can transcend his physical needs and actualise his spiritual nature, the spiritual self or the higher self (Fromm 1950: 49). According to Fromm’s, religious-humanistic principle or “humanistic religion,” “God is the image of man’s higher self...” (ibid). It is “God in him,” according to the first epistle of John 4:16. Fromm (1976a) calls this realisation of God in him the “being mode of existence.” Since God is beyond description, so is the being mode of existence. As he puts it: “Being refers to experience, and human experience is in principle not describable” (ibid: 91). Nevertheless, being can be understood in the light of his reasonable, loving, and active involvement with his fellow men and Nature as the meaningful spiritual embodiment of God in him. He finds happiness while being in contact with his fellow men. He is alive or fully alive in this engagement. Fromm calls this happiness and aliveness “well being” (1993: 117). Fromm (1983) also defines well-being in terms of non-judgement, tathata or suchness or beness. As he explains, well-being “is the state of having arrived at the full development of reason: reason not in the sense of a merely *intellectual* judgment (my emphasis), but in that of grasping truth by “letting things be” (to use Heidegger’s term) as they are...” (Fromm, 1983: 63). The idea comes from his Zen teacher Prof Suzuki. According to Suzuki, “The intellect is dualistic, and divides things into opposites. Furthermore, Suzuki (1957) also points out: “The Buddhist enlightenment is nothing more than the experience of is-ness or suchness (tathata)...” (p. 5). The founder of Zen, Bodhidharma, adds “...Reason itself, free from conceptual discrimination...” (Suzuki, trans., 1983: 74).

By this approach, he can be liberated from his inner slavery, his alienation, his narcissism, his selfishness, and his egotism (Fromm, 1993: 1 & 55). By his own thinking, he can be aware of himself, his higher, altruistic, cultured, civilised, non-judgemental, or spiritual self. Interestingly, Fromm emphasises the word “thinking.” The reason behind this could be that in Sanskrit: “man” means “to think,” which is “mind.” Descartes also calls the mind the spirit or the soul, “mens sive animus” (1641: 80). Similarly, Berkeley (1710) writes: “This perceiving, active being (my emphasis) is what I call mind, spirit, soul, or myself” (Principles 2: 30). Anaxagoras and Democritus, as well, assert that, according to Aristotle, “[s]oul and mind are the same” (Lawson-Tancred, trans. 1986: 134-135). In fact, the Greek word for soul or mind is “ψυχή” “psyche,” the root word of psychology and psychoanalysis, symbolised by transformation or the metamorphosis of a butterfly. It refers to the transforming power of our mind. In this respect, it is appropriate to emphasise



the spiritual legacy of psychoanalysis as the tool to unleash the thinking or reasoning power of the mind. As Freud puts it: “The ideal condition of things would of course be a community of men who had subordinated their instinctual life to the dictatorship of reason” (1933b: 359).

Furthermore, David Bohm, a physicist known for his “Implicate Order” Theory, considers everything, including ourselves, as a generalised kind of meaning. As he puts it: “It would suggest that everything, including ourselves, is a generalized kind of meaning” (Bohm, 1985: 87). In Heidegger’s words: “Dasein, man’s Being [...] is essentially determined by the potentiality for discourse” (Section 25, 1927: 47). This “potentiality for discourse” is also the potentiality for meaning. In other words, man is not only a living being but also a discursive being. In addition, it can be deterritorialised to the extent that one could strongly assert that man is a soul, an idea, a meaning, a discourse, a text, a mind, a spirit, and a self. Amazingly, psychoanalysis is known because of its emphasis on transformation of the person through words, “free association.” It is for this reason that psychoanalysis is popularly known “the talking cure” (Thomson, 1968: 213).

The Aim

To summarise, the ultimate aim of this psycho-spirituality discourse is to transform a “man” to actualise his or her “humanity.” Another way of saying it is the actualisation of a “human being” or “being human.” It is the actuality of reason, love, activity-centred, and aliveness. It is the actuality of “Well-Being” or “the Being-mode of existence” (Fromm, 1976: 91). Being human also means a “cultured spirit” which is in harmony with his fellow human beings (ie society), with Nature (bio), and with his God (the unconscious spiritual self, the universal man, or the whole man)—a civilised and socially integrated man. In this respect, Fromm’s spirituality or “x experience” is an active human-centred one. It echoes what Jesus said in the Gospel of Mark 2:27: “And he [Jesus Christ] said unto them, ‘The sabbath was made for man, and not man for sabbath.’” Similarly, Hui-neng, the sixth patriarch of Zen, states: “...all dharma are made for men...” (Price and Wong, trans., 1990: 84). Erich Fromm’s version state that: “...material production is *for man* not man for material production” (my emphasis) (1955a: 205).

Despite Fromm’s humane and spiritually grounded discourse on self-actualisation or x experience, he still encountered criticisms.

The Criticisms

Generally, the notion of “self-realisation” or “self-actualisation,” as the ultimate aim or the ultimate goal is strongly challenged by Victor Frankl, the major critic of the idea. He strongly dismisses the idea of self-actualisation because it devaluates the world and its objects to a mere means to an end (1970: 45). In this context, Frankl states: “it appears to me to be quite obvious that self-actualisation is an *effect* (my emphasis) and cannot be the object of intention” (ibid). This is because self-actualisation is nothing but the problem of that aspect of the self which struggles to find meaning in his existence, “a frustration to his will to meaning” (ibid: 43-44). Furthermore, Frankl posits that man is not only “a finite being” but also an existentially tragic one (1969: 16, 56). In addition, he insists that these existential aspects of us must be expressed in a concrete form. Thus self-actualisation cannot be his ultimate aim because of its transcendental structure. On the other hand, a person looks for the realisation of values and meanings which are not found within his own self or psyche, but found only in the outer world (ibid: 68).



To reinforce this critique, Frankl cites Charlotte Buhler dismissing the word self-actualisation and suggesting instead “the pursuit of potentialities” (ibid: 2). Frankl quickly reduces it to “potentialism” (ibid). To clarify his point, Victor Frankl introduces the notion of the “will to meaning.” Subsequently, Frankl insists that this “will to meaning” has its ultimate meaning, which is the realisation of that ultimate Being– God. As he puts it, “God is not one thing among other but being itself or Being (capitalized by Martin Heidegger)” (ibid: 147). This God is accessible by one’s spiritual unconscious. This leads to his notion as the “unconscious God.”

As he religiously states: ‘However one wishes to formulate it, we are confronted with what I should like to term “the transcendental unconscious” as part and parcel of the spiritual unconscious. This concept means no more nor no less than man having always stood in an internal relation to transcendence, even if only on an unconscious level. If one calls the internal referent of such an unconscious relation “God,” it is apt to speak of an “unconscious God”’ (ibid: 68).

As a result of the concept of the transcendental unconscious, he introduces “self-transcendence” (ibid: 110). This self-transcendence is described as the actualisation of that quality which is called selflessness or non-egoistic. As he explains: “... what is missing in the frame of such an image of man is that fundamental characteristic of the human reality which I have come to term its self-transcendent quality. It thereby wants to denote the intrinsic fact that being human always relates and points to something other than itself–better to say, something or someone. That is to say, rather than being concerned with any inner condition, be it pleasure or homeostasis, man is oriented towards the world out there, and within this world, he is interested in meanings to fulfill, and in other human beings. By virtue of what I would call the pre-reflective ontological self-understanding he knows to which he is forgetting himself, and he is forgetting himself by giving himself, or loving a person other than himself. Truly, self-transcendence is the essence of human existence” (ibid: 138).

Fundamentally, Frankl’s spirituality is the “human in man” (Frankl, 2000: 28) with the unconscious God overshadowing it.

Elkin (1958) decries specifically the Eastern mystical influence on Fromm’s and Horney’s psychoanalysis. Similarly, according to Maccoby, Fromm sometimes shifts to a Zen sage who only responds to students’ inauthentic behaviour, instead of using conventional psychoanalytic methodology (1994: 3).

Eastern spirituality which stresses the notion of being or human being is another major concept central to Fromm’s spirituality that is being questioned. The first critics of this idea were Deleuze and Guattari. They generally questioned the supremacy of the discourse that man is a being or a human being. Instead, they found a contextual alternative – “becoming” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980).

Finally, as to the spiritualisation of psychoanalysis, the first critic was Herbert Marcuse. He considered Fromm a conformist who does not subscribe to the idea of radical social change when necessary. He also labelled him a moraliser and a preacher. Furthermore, he criticises Fromm’s spirituality as moralising and spiritualising psychoanalytic perspectives (Marcuse, 1956: 274).

The Defences

Frankl’s criticism of the notion of self-actualisation as the ultimate drive of an individual is valid only if self-actualisation is interpreted in the light of egoistic self which is unloving, unreasonable, and indifferent to human suffering. However, Fromm’s and Horney’s version of self-actualisation is grounded on the contrary. Interestingly, if Frankl considers the spirituality of self-actualisation or “x experience,” he is actually echoing Fromm’s and Horney’s psycho-spirituality, which also



focuses on self-transcendence, with the exception that theirs is a non-theistic spirituality or humanity (unconscious universal man) centred rather than Frankl's theistic spiritual approach called the unconscious God.

Elkin and Maccoby decry the Eastern mystical influence on Fromm's and Horney's psychoanalysis, because they both could not appreciate the significance of Christian and Zen mystical relevance to Fromm's and Horney's psycho-spirituality in relation to human suffering.

Deleuze's and Guattari's "becoming," as the contextual alternative to being, is an idea which is territorialised by the mechanistic and materialistic obsession of the oedipal or paranoid "individual." In other words: this is their version of an egoistic person or the "having-mode of existence," which is not really the alternative to being in context.

Finally, Marcuse's criticism of spiritualising psychoanalysis, unfortunately, missed the essence of Fromm's psycho-spiritual dialectic which is nothing but Zen psycho-spirituality situated in the Western Judeo-Christian context. Fromm's x experience with his Zen teacher Professor Suzuki cannot be ignored but can only be appreciated if it is perceived as an extension of psychoanalysis in the light of its humanistic spirit– "greater unities" and "higher development," according to Freud. As he puts it, "...sexual or life instincts, which are best comprised under the name of Eros; their purpose would be to form living substance into ever greater unities, so that life may be prolonged and brought to higher development" (1923a: 157; 1940: 18).

Conclusions

The criticisms of Fromm's psycho-spiritual dialectic, the spiritualisation of psychoanalysis, are not really criticisms. They are forms of misunderstanding Fromm's humane and compassionate idea which is unequivocally humanistic. It is humanistic because he emphasises on the need to relate to our fellow human beings guided by reason and love, to love our neighbour and to understand non-judgementally through reasoning. It emphasises self-actualisation or x experience, which is the actualisation or the experience of the loving spirit of the Bible in addition to the non-judgemental spirit of Zen in us human beings, the principle of the being mode of existence, altruism, activity-centred orientation. Its spirituality is centred on humanity as the end rather than the means. In other words: humanistic spirituality.

Thus, Fromm's humanistic psycho-spiritual discourse is a form of psychoanalytic spirituality that is an appropriate method for personal transformation towards the humanisation of oneself as a human being within the context of social solidarity; in other words: the transformation of a person towards a socially integrated, cultured spirit or civilised human being. As Fromm concludes: "We had concluded that the full humanization of man requires the breakthrough from the possession-centered to the activity-centered orientation, from selfishness and egotism to solidarity and altruism" (1993: 1).

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