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## Foreword

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„Foreword,“ in: E. Fromm, *On Being Human*, New York (Continuum) 1994.

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Whoever attempts to identify the „scarlet thread“ that runs through the entire corpus of Fromm's writings will, first of all, discover the socio-psychological approach by which he searched for man's socially molded passionate strivings. Yet, no later than the late 1930s, in conjunction with his departure from the Institute for Social Research and his disputes with Horkheimer, Marcuse, and Adorno, something different and unmistakably Frommian becomes noticeable and runs through his life and work like a scarlet thread: his humanistic view of man and the world. Whenever Fromm wants, from this point on to characterize even his own thought, he uses the attribute „humanistic.“ He speaks of a humanistic science of man, of humanistic socialism, of humanistic industrial society, of humanistic conscientiousness, of humanistic religion, of humanistic management, of a humanistic view of the world, of humanistic psychoanalysis, of humanistic character, of humanistic ethics, and of humanistic utopia.

In evaluating Fromm's thought, it is often exactly this humanistic belief in man that leads to a „parting of the minds“: How can Fromm, who has recognized the deleterious effects of man's self-alienation with such clarity, and who has explained them in terms of our culture's socio-economic relationships and yet has simultaneously unmasked any salvation from without as merely an expression of self-alienation-how can Fromm nevertheless believe in man? {010}

The texts of this volume from Fromm's unpublished writings answer this question in a twofold manner: They show the entire extent of the destructive and terrible self-alienation of today's man, and yet simultaneously they speak of the real possibilities that can lead to man's becoming happy. There is a „real“ utopia as long as man has at least partial access to his own powers that promote growth.

The departure point of Fromm's humanism, made possible by the insights of psychoanalysis, is that the unconscious represents the entire person-and all of humanity. The unconscious contains the entire spectrum of possible answers, and it very much matters which possibilities are cultivated and which are hindered and repressed. Fundamentally, though, „... man, in any culture, is faced by a gamut of possibilities: He is the archaic man, the beast of prey, the cannibal, the idolater; but he is also the being with the capacity - for reason, for love, for justice.“<sup>1</sup> Since man does not exist except as a social being, the particular type of society in which he lives determines which possibilities are favored. Every society shapes the energies of people in such a way that they *want* to do

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<sup>1</sup> E. Fromm, „Humanism and Psychoanalysis,“ in *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, Vol. I (1964), p. 27.



what they *must* do in order for society to function. „Social necessities become transformed into personal needs, into the 'social character.'” (*Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.)

Yet every society does not only promote certain possibilities that are at the disposal of humans' unconscious, insofar as society makes these possibilities known and the individual identifies with them. Possibilities and tendencies that contradict social patterns of behavior—the character of society—are quelled and repressed. That is why „our conscious mind represents mainly our own society and culture, while our unconscious represents the universal man in each of us.”<sup>2</sup>

In his unconscious, man experiences all humanity and himself as „saint and sinner, child and adult, sane and insane, man as {011} he was in the past and man as he will be in the future.” (*Ibid.*) This condition is why humanism has its ultimate justification in humanistic experience, that is, in the humanizing and productive effect of making conscious that which is unconscious. Writes Fromm:

This humanistic experience consists in the feeling that nothing human is alien to one, that „I am you,” that one can understand another human being because both of us share as our common possession the same elements of human existence. ... The broadening of self-awareness that humanistic experience brings about—including as it does the transcending of consciousness and the revelation of the sphere of the social unconscious—enables man to experience himself in the full dimensions of his shared humanity. (*Ibid.*)

Thus, with the knowledge that the unconscious, independent of that which is socially conscious and repressed, represents the entire person with all his possibilities, Fromm justifies the humanistic belief in the unity of people not only theoretically; as soon as one opens oneself to one's unconscious, becomes conscious of one's unconscious and thus comes to experience one's other possibilities, one then unfurls, grows, and has the paradoxical and productive—or, as Fromm also says, the humanistic—experience that one can be related reasonably and lovingly to the world and to people because nothing foreign is any longer really strange to one. Only in opening oneself up to the unconscious, to the entire person in oneself, in the realization of one's individuality, does a person come to the experience of the universal human, for „only the fully developed individual self can abandon the ego.”<sup>3</sup>

What interests Fromm most about humanism, what leads him to use the attribute „humanistic” so often, and why he {012} advocates a renaissance of humanism has to do with this humanistic experience. He is concerned with what is humanistic in the sense of the development of man's own loving and reasonable powers, as well as with a humanistic orientation and attitude (as he made clear within his characterology) by his concept of productivity and of productive orientation, of biophilia and the mode of being. As a person experiences himself more and more as author, actor, and subject of his life—and is thus himself who thinks, feels, and acts with his *own* forces—he also develops his forces of reason and love, with which he can be entirely with the world and other persons without losing himself.

The individual texts of this volume were composed during the last twenty years of Fromm's life. These texts were characterized as much by the insight into the entire extent of humans' self-alienation as by a faith, unbroken to the very end, in man. They are

<sup>2</sup> E. Fromm, *The Heart of Man: In Genius for Good and Evil*, New York, 1964, p.93.

<sup>3</sup> E. Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion: My Encounter with Marx and Freud*, New York, 1962, p. 178.



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based on lectures (especially Part I) and manuscripts that Fromm formulated for specific occasions (especially Part II, which contains humanistic initiatives and declarations) or that he wrote as book manuscripts (such as the concluding Part III, concerning the real utopia of the being mode of existence, according to Meister Eckhart and Karl Marx). The editor has provided the grouping, coordination, and division of the texts, as well as most of their titles. Editorial notes concerning the origin of the individual manuscripts appear in cursive script and precede the texts. As in all unpublished writings, several omissions and additions are made easily recognizable by brackets.

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