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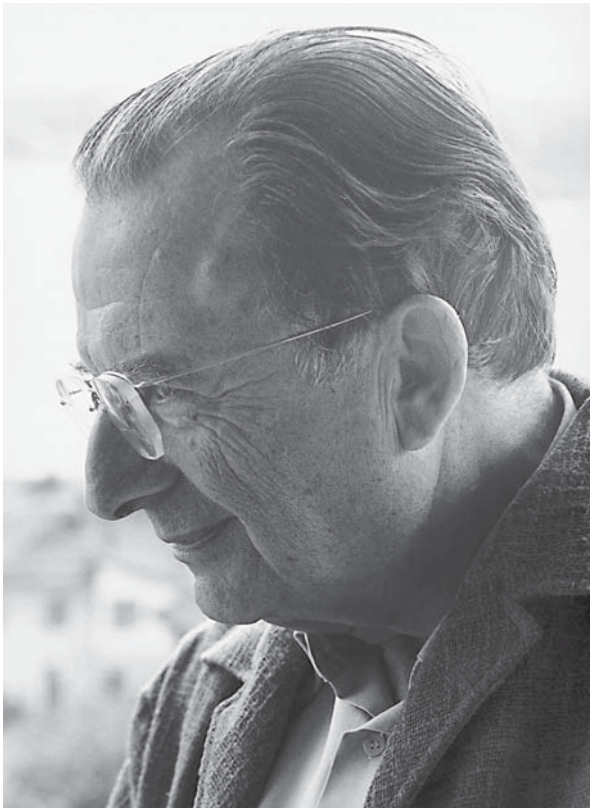
142

Mika Pekkola

Prophet of Radicalism

Erich Fromm and the Figurative Constitution of the Crisis of Modernity



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Editor
Seppo Zetterberg
Department of History and Ethnology, University of Jyväskylä
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ABSTRACT

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In this thesis I will discuss the work of German-born psychoanalyst and social critic Erich Fromm (1900–1980) as a metaphorically constituted response to the crisis of modernity. As a popular and suggestive writer Fromm's critique and utopian vision provide an exceptional perspective to this discourse. The emphasis is on Fromm's "voice" or "presence". Fromm's work constitutes an original synthesis of Jewish tradition, psychoanalysis and Marxism. His narrative of modernity was dialectical: while recognizing the achievements of modernity, he insisted that the promises of progress were betrayed as the prevailing conditions forced individuals to seek security from authoritarianism and conformity. Fromm's social critique is essentially a discussion of the psychological consequences of alienation in liberal-capitalist societies. His work should be seen as a part of a wider Freudo-Marxist movement, which attempted to uncover new forms of control. The metaphor of "sick society" provides a focal point for his critique of capitalist consumerism. Fromm's views had their roots in his multiple experience of exclusion. Rhetorically, the emphasis on the "nowness" of the crisis highlighted his notion that the crisis of modernity presents a decisive phase of alienation in the history of humanity. Fromm saw social criticism as psychoanalysis: the task of the analyst is to lead the patient to face the causes of neuroses and to initiate a process of healing and liberation. His humanist inclinations are evident in his theory of the existential needs of man, which also provide the basis for his ideal of "the New Man". Here Fromm concurs with the emphasis by the New Left on the political importance of the radical reworking of subjectivity. Despite being sympathetic to the 1960s revolt, Fromm remained sceptical to its realities. His visions of the messianic "New Society" and his metaphorical reworking of the fundamental meanings of religiosity should be seen as a part of the exceptional flourishing of the Judeo-Germanic radicalism at the beginning of the 20th Century. These utopian tendencies were balanced with his emphasis on the ambivalences of modernity. Fromm's work can highlight how the struggle over material conditions and future of society also takes place over figurative meanings in culture. Even though his work can be seen as a response to the "organized modernity" of his time, several themes voiced by him seem more relevant now than ever. Considering the global challenges we are facing – population crisis, energy crisis, food crisis, climate change, growing concentration of economic power, rising levels of inequality etc. – Fromm's emphasis on spreading the crisis consciousness can contribute to our awareness of these problems. Similarly, his call for the building of the culture of liberation highlights the importance of subversive and inventive metaphorizations in the effort to create an alternative modernity.

Keywords: Erich Fromm, modernity, crisis, utopianism, Critical Theory

Author's address

Mika Pekkola
Department of History and Ethnology
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Supervisors

Petteri Pietikäinen
Academy of Finland

Anssi Halmesvirta
Department of History and Ethnology
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Reviewers

Olli-Pekka Moisio
Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Markku Hyrkkänen
Department of History and Philosophy
University of Tampere, Finland

Opponents

Juhani Ihanus
Institute of Behavioural Sciences
University of Helsinki, Finland

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CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Modernity and Crisis Consciousness

The concept of modernity has dominated the discourse on contemporary societies and cultures for two centuries. Baudelaire's wistful utterance on the fleeting nature of clouds,[1] a mirror image of modernity, has gone through various metamorphoses and variations, but the ambiguous concept itself has retained much of its argumentative force – despite all drastic social and cultural changes during this era. Even the challenge posed by the equally ambiguous paradigm of postmodernity has been effectively countered by arguments emphasizing the birth of so-called postmodern elements in contemporary societies from the dialectics of modernity itself.[2]

Considering the history of the concept,[3] how could we grasp modernity so as to use it productively in the understanding of particular problems of contemporary societies? First of all, there should be no need to resort to the idea of modernity as a monolithic and immutable phenomenon. This rigid "systemic" view of modernity reduces the endless sociocultural variations

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1 Baudelaire's "The Stranger" states: "I love the clouds… the clouds that pass… up there… up there… the wonderful clouds!" Baudelaire, Charles, *Paris Spleen*. New Directions Books, New York 1970 (1869), 1.

2 This is the stance of scholars like Zygmunt Bauman, Marshall Berman, Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash and Alain Touraine. See Bauman, Zygmunt, *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Polity Press, Cambridge 1995 (1991); Berman, Marshall, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air. The Experience of Modernity*. Penguin Books, New York 1988 (1982); Beck, Ulrich & Giddens, Anthony & Lash, Scott, "Preface". In Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Polity Press 1994; Touraine, Alain, *Critique of Modernity*. Blackwell, Oxford 1995. The notion that postmodernity should be understood as the continuation of modernity naturally does not mean that the developments to which the concepts like postmodern or late-modern refer should be neglected.

3 See for example Peter Wagner's analysis on the concept of modernity from the perspective of the history of sociology. Wagner, Peter, *Sociology of Modernity. Liberty and Discipline*. Routledge, London & New York 1994, 108–119, 141–153.

within modernity to its abstract and one-dimensional logic. In order to be of any use in the analysis of various localities and temporalities of contemporary societies, modernity should be seen as a malleable and liquid concept with a potential for different kinds of variations and hybrids. Perhaps it could even be proposed that the idea of singular modernity should be replaced with the idea of plural modernities. However, it is also evident that the concept should preserve enough of its coherence to remain a useful tool in the analysis of these various social and cultural realities.

The emphasis on the ambivalent nature of modernity points to the idea of *modernization*: modernity as a *process*, which is in a constant state of flux. Experientially, this state is characterized by the sensation of constant change. On the one hand, modernity sets things in motion, opens up new realities and vistas and destroys traditional authorities. On the other hand, it forces us to look at the world cleansed of illusions and compels us to give meaning to it. During the early stages of modernity Condorcet and his fellow *philosophes* of the Enlightenment dreamt of building a modern Utopia of Reason from the ashes of the *ancien régime*. While this vision inspired countless projects of liberation, by the end of the 19th Century the undesirable ramifications of industrialism, the horrors of nationalism and imperialism, the cultural disillusion of *fin-de-siècle* and the ravages of the Great War all raised serious doubts about the plausibility of the idea of progress and its promises for the creation of New Man and New Society. These developments were reflected in the changing horizons of expectation. Even though the ideologies of progress and modernity had always had their critics, it became evident that a more dialectical view of modernity was needed – a view which emphasized equally the shadows or malaises of modernity. The negative force of modernity (as a destroyer of traditional forms of life and authority) had become evident, but at the same time the modern project had to confront the difficulty of creating new principles, values and sanctities.

The sensations of loss, of the disappearance of foundations and of the dissolution of meanings and points of reference were pivotal for almost all critical analyses of modernity and its crisis. In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) Marx and Engels prophesied that "All fixed, fast-frozen relations … are swept away", so that finally "all that is solid melts into air".[4] Nietzsche, in turn, proclaimed that God is dead, a remark on the dissolution of meanings and deflation of the spiritual horizon of Western culture: "Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon?"[5] José Ortega y Gasset reflected on the

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[4] Marx, Karl & Engels, Friedrich, "Manifesto of the Communist Party" In Marx, Karl & Engels, Friedrich, *Collected Works. Vol. 6*. Lawrence & Wishart, London 1976a (1848), 487.

[5] Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay Science*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003 (1882), 120. On the "death of God" in Nietzsche's work see, for example, Bauman 1995, 193; Dannhauser, Werner J., "Nietzsche, Friedrich". In *Political Philosophy. Thinkers, Theories and Concepts.* Ed. Seymor Martin Lipset. CQ Press, Washington D.C., 2001, 260–262; Nehamas, Alexander, *Nietzsche. Life as Literature.* Harvard

melancholic hopes of the disillusioned world in his *Revolt of the Masses* by emphasizing the ambivalence of modernity, simultaneously proud of its own strength and deeply horrified by it.[6] Modernity had, indeed, liberated the world of its illusions, of its magic; it had dismantled the oppressive structures of feudal societies; it had taken away the hitherto self-evident authority of traditions and created conditions for the liberation of individual from the shackles of the old world; it had broken The Great Chain of Being and God's cosmic order, but was now faced with the emptiness it had created in its all-devouring negativity. Its affinity to Sisyphus, the mythical giant whom gods had sentenced to roll the same stone again and again to the top of the mountain, became more and more evident as Albert Camus noted.[7]

If premodern[8] societies fundamentally legitimize themselves through the mediating authority of traditions, modern societies, in turn, are engaged in an endless struggle against tradition. Modernity recognizes no value in traditions per se; the mere fact that they exists no longer justifies their position as mediating authorities – modernity always wants to have a peak behind the curtains, so to speak. Max Weber's famous characterization of modernity as disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) points to this very notion of abandoning the legitimacy of all magical explanations. Order has become a complex problem; it has to be built rationally through endless reflection and critique. Likewise, social relations are often mediated through a complex web of interactions; they have become "disembedded"[9] and have to be reconstructed artificially.[10]

This persistent struggle against chaos, the attempt to create order from a hopelessly disordered reality, is ridden with uncertainty, since modern reason has no recourse to the naiveté of premodern traditionalism. There is no "Great Chain of Being" or cosmic world order safeguarded by divine authorities. What is more, the whole process seems to blindly obey its own unknown laws, being

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University Press, Cambridge 1985, 71, 91; Taylor, Charles, *Sources of the Self. The Making of Modern Identity*. Cambridge University Press 2002 (1989), 17.

6 Ortega y Gasset 1950.

7 See Camus, Albert, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Penguin, London 1990 (1942).

8 A thorough discussion on the concepts of premodern, traditional and modern societies will follow in Chapter 1.2.

9 A term borrowed from Anthony Giddens: "By disembedding I mean the 'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their reconstructuring across indefinite spans of time-space." Giddens, Anthony, *The Consequences of Modernity*. Polity Press, Cambridge 1995 (1990), 21.

10 On the legitimacy of modernity and its relation to tradition, see for example, Bauman 1995, 5, 11-12, 75; Beck & Giddens & Lash 1994, vi–viii; Giddens, Anthony, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society". In Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Polity Press 1994, 83, 129, 147; Giddens 1995, 20–29, 177; Therborn, Göran, *European Modernity and Beyond. The Trajectory of European Societies 1945-2000*. SAGE, London 1995, 4–5; Touraine 1995, 10–11. On Weber's notion of "disenchantment", see Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Transl. Stephen Kalberg. Blackwell, Los Angeles 2002 (1904), 60. See also Bocock, Robert, "The Cultural Formations of Modern Society". In *Formations of Modernity*. Ed. Stuart Hall & Bram Gieben. Polity Press & Open University, Cambridge 1992, 261; Taylor, Charles, *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2000 (1991), 3; Taylor 2002, 17.

largely independent from the intentions of its designers. Often the unintended ramifications seem to overshadow the intended consequences. The vision of the Earthly City of Progress, engineered and ordered rationally, has lost most of its former attractiveness. Criticism has found its metaphors, utilizing the darker side of the scale: modernity is perceived as a storm (Walter Benjamin), as a monster (Marx), a juggernaut (Anthony Giddens) or a compulsive march (Zygmunt Bauman), which proceeds towards its unknown destination like a confused and unwitting protagonist of Samuel Beckett's novel *Molloy*. Modern culture is in struggle with itself. The secular modern dream – based on the authority of science and endless scrutiny – of cleansing all myth-like elements from society, has made modernity blind to its own myth-like character – at least so the critics claim. The fight against ambivalence, eventually, seems to create even more ambivalence.[11]

However, it seems we cannot afford to live without order (Zygmunt Bauman)[12], horizons of interpretation (Charles Taylor)[13] and ontological security (Anthony Giddens)[14]. Since reason, the founding principle of modern thought, cannot seek refuge in any absolute foundation, modern order is plagued by uncertainty, ambivalence and incessant change. And since chaos, the "Other of order", is pure negativity that defies any order, the search for meaning and order has its repercussions in the vicious circle of exclusion and inclusion, which is reflected in the endless social and cultural struggles characterizing modernity.[15]

But this picture of modernity, or its crisis, is far from complete. It is inadequate to characterize modernity by referring simply to incessant changes in social conditions and structures or by referring to the dissolution of meanings and vantage points in the cultural sphere. Nor should modernity be depicted through notions of rationalization or disenchantment alone. Perhaps, to widen the perspective, we could use a perspective, advocated by both Charles Taylor and Alain Touraine, according to which modernity is characterized by an endless friction between *reason* and *subject*.[16] Modernization created conditions for the emergence of a new kind of subjectivity. Emphasis on

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11 On this kind of criticism of modernity and Enlightenment, see for example Adorno, Theodor & Horkheimer, Max, *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford University Press, Stanford 2002 (1944), 1–34; Bauman 1995, 6–7, 9–11, 230; Beck, Ulrich, "The Reinvention of Politics: Towards a Theory of Reflexive Modernization". In Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Polity Press 1994; Giddens 1995, 39, 48–53, 138–139; Taylor 2000, 3; Taylor 2002, 191; Touraine 1995, 1–4, 100.

12 Bauman 1995, 1–17.

13 Taylor 2000, 31–41; Taylor 2002, 14–24.

14 Giddens 1995, 92–100.

15 See, for example, Bauman 1995, 5–8, 15, 252; Habermas, Jürgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Twelve Lectures.* Polity Press, Oxford 1987, 306; Lash, Scott & Friedman, Jonathan, "Introduction: subjectivity and modernity's Other". In *Modernity and Identity*. Ed. Scott Lash & Jonathan Friedman. Blackwell, Oxford 1992, 2; Touraine 1995, 9, 19, 28–32, 92–95.

16 See Taylor 2002 and Touraine 1995.

individual freedom and autonomy has always been one of the key elements of modern culture. However, it is equally important to pay heed to the limitations and burdens of individualization under modernity. The relatively clear-cut order of the premodern world is gone. Nazi and Communist efforts to restore it have left deep wounds in the modern consciousness. Ambivalence, uncertainty and the disappearance of boundaries are not external to the individual, but something we all face in our daily lives. Liberation comes at a price: the necessity to create a life of meaning under relativizing circumstances and to engage in an endless process of the creation of new bonds and connections to the world. As sociologist Ulrich Beck writes: "Opportunities, threats, ambivalences of the biography, which it was previously possible to overcome in a family group, in the village community or by recourse to a social class or group, must increasingly be perceived, interpreted and handled by individuals themselves." The potential emancipation of the individual in the modern era has been countered by new kinds of dependencies. These new authorities execute their manipulative influence on unwitting subjects, and thus, critics claim, are even more efficient than more explicit forms of domination.[17]

As Paul Ricouer has noted, the sense of crisis in culture can be seen as a consequence of the growing gap between the imaginary horizons of expectation and existing social realities: " ... if the belief in new times rest on expectations that distance themselves from all prior experience – then the tension between experience and expectation could only be recognized at the moment when its breaking point was already in sight".[18] A critique of modernity takes this as a starting-point in an attempt to reveal the unintended consequences of modernization. Crisis demands an answer. Alarmist tendencies in culture point out the experience of threat that must be reckoned with in one way or another.[19] All in all, it is undeniable that the sense of crisis is "one of the major meanings of our present".[20]

Does this mean that we should abandon the ideals and values of modernity? Or should we instead strengthen our belief in the unfinished project

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17 These themes have been voiced by various critics of modernity. For an overview to the critique of modernity, see Bauman 1995, 75–79, 177, 197, 201; Beck 1994, 8, 14–16; Berman, Marshall, "Why modernism still matters?". In *Modernity and Identity*. Ed. Scott Lash & Jonathan Friedman. Blackwell, Oxford 1992, 33, 42; Bocock 1992, 265–266; Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*. Transl. Alan Sheridan. Penguin Books, London 1977 (1975); Giddens 1995, 37; Taylor 2000, 4–12; Touraine 1995, 41, 70, 148, 164–172, 201–233. On the various metaphorizations of these new kinds of dependencies, see for example Adorno's and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, especially his interpretation of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon as a symbol of new forms of domination and Huxley's *Brave New World* with its new technologies of control and manipulaton. Adorno & Horkheimer 2002; Foucault 1977; Huxley, Aldous, *Brave New World*. Granada, London 1982 (1932).

18 Ricoeur, Paul, *Time and Narrative. Volume 3*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London 1990c (1985), 215.

19 On the sense of crisis in culture, see especially Koselleck, Reinhart, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*. Berg Publishers, Oxford 1988 (1959).

20 Ricoeur 1990c, 213.

of modernity despite the criticism? Or should we strive towards more a dialectical approach, in which modernity is characterized simultaneously by *grandeur et misére*, as Taylor suggests? Answers have varied from persistent faith in progress to bitter cultural pessimism. Condorcet's firm belief in the coming kingdom of reason has become a classical example of utopian wishes cherished by Enlightenment philosophers.[21] Disillusioned by the horrors of the Holocaust, the Frankfurt School thinkers Adorno and Horkheimer argued that they recognized the dialectics of the Enlightenment itself behind the new barbarism of the 20th Century.[22] Schiller, Wagner and Mahler, among others, sought to remedy the disenchantment and loss of faith by new art, which was seen as a vehicle in the revitalization of both society and culture.[23] The Futurists, who sought intoxication through speed, the noise of industry and war and violence, declared: "Why should we look back, when what we want is to break down the mysterious doors of the Impossible?".[24] Freud's pessimist view in the 1930s was that the more civilized man became, the more he would suffer from neuroses resulting from the repression of his natural wishes.[25] Following the steps of Edgar Allan Poe, pulp writer H. P. Lovecraft created a vision of cosmic chaos, of a world in the grip of malignant deities, purposes are unknown to man.[26] The existentialists' stance towards the crisis hovered between political activism (Sartre), complete disenchantment (Beckett) and humanist sympathies (Camus). More recently, Emanuele Severino has characterized modernity as machinery that has become an end in itself.[27] Not to mention expressionism, surrealism, political extremism, conservatism etc. that can all be interpreted in the context of the crisis of modernity – by seeing them as "modernist" attempts "to make ourselves at home in a constantly changing world", as Marshall Berman has written.[28]

The work of German-born psychoanalyst and social critic Erich Fromm (1900–1980) can be seen as a deeply personal answer to the very problems and potentialities of modernity. Fromm's stance on modernity was above all

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21 On Condorcet's secular visions, see for example Taylor 2002, 353–354.

22 See Adorno & Horkheimer 2002.

23 On the aesthetic critique of modernity, see for example Habermas 1987, 34, 45–48. See also Schiller's pivotal *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Dover Publications, New York 2004 (1795).

24 Quoted from Fromm 1973, 344. See also, Baumer, Franklin L., *Modern European Thought. Continuity and Change in Ideas 1600-1950*. Macmillan, New York 1977, 503; Burrow, J.W., *The Crisis of Reason. European Thought 1848-1914*. Yale University Press, New Haven & London 2000, 234–235.

25 Freud, Sigmund, "Civilization and its Discontents". In Freud, Sigmund, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. 21*. Ed. James Strachey. London, The Hogarth Press 1981a (1930).

26 Lovecraft's short stories usually follow the same pattern: the protagonist delves deeper and deeper into forgotten and forbidden secrets, until he (and usually it is *he*) finds out that he is facing a chaotic reality controlled by monstrous gods like Cthulhu, Azathoth and Yog-Sothoth.

27 Severino, Emanuele, *Kärsimys kohtalo kapitalismi*. Transl. Markku Salo & Jussi Vähämäki. Loki, Helsinki 1997.

28 Berman 1988, 6. Berman uses "modernism" here in a broad sense, pertaining to any symbolic response to the changes brought by modernity.

dialectical: on the one hand, he saw no possibility to return to a premodern order or to cancel the developments that had occurred during the last few centuries. But on the other hand he refused to accept the ideology of bourgeois modernity. When asked in old age what precisely it was that he did not like about contemporary society, Fromm remarked bitterly: "There are so many things in contemporary society that I dislike that it is difficult to decide with which particular complaint to begin".[29]

Fromm acknowledged that modernity was characterized by emancipation from the shackles of traditional societies, but at the same time he asserted that the inhuman conditions and structures of society and the economy had prevented mankind from entering into a truly human condition. He was no conservative, however. For Fromm, modernity contained the seeds of salvation and destruction, of life and death, alike. His thought is a highly unique synthesis of cultural and social criticism, Jewish tradition, psychoanalysis, Marxism, modern prophetic messianism and secular non-theistic religiosity. What makes Fromm's ideas particularly interesting for the understanding of modernity and its various metaphorizations is his attempt to write a more or less complete account not only of the systemic and existential problems of industrialisation and alienation, but also on the struggle to regain control of this out-of-control process. He does all this in a highly suggestive and metaphoric language, writing for a large audience – which he certainly reached – and presenting himself as a sort of a prophet for a different kind of modernity.

Given Fromm's style and his approach to modernity, it is possible to see him as an emblematic figure in the understanding of both contemporary culture and its metaphorizations. This is indeed one of the starting points for my analysis. The analysis proceeds simultaneously into two different directions. The aim of the study is 1) to consider Fromm's life and work in the context of discourses on modernity, and 2) to consider modernity through Fromm's metaphorizations and narratives. This analysis is carried out through understanding the various historical and sociological contexts of Fromm's work. Since Fromm, as a Freudo-Marxist writer, was particularly interested in the unconscious elements of control and liberation, the emphasis will be on subjective experience of modernity. In this regard, the perspective of the study is influenced by that of social thinkers like Zygmunt Bauman and Charles Taylor.[30]

The research question itself can also be divided roughly into two parts. First, questions like the following have to be asked: what is the genesis of modernity for Fromm and what kind of narratives does he use to portray the process which has led to our current condition? What kind of pathologies or syndromes plague modernity? How are these *malaises* of modernity reflected in the relations between human beings, and in their personality structures, wishes, needs etc.? And if there is still hope for modernity, if the potentialities of

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29 Fromm, Erich, *On Being Human*. Continuum, New York 1994a, 38.
30 See for example, Bauman 1995 and Taylor 2002.

emancipation are still realizable, what is needed to fulfil the promise? These questions, in turn, point to Fromm's view of human nature and its potentialities and to the further question of how we should organize our society to turn it into a human one, to find a way out of the impasse. Secondly, all these questions can be asked from another perspective, so that Fromm no longer occupies the centre of the stage, but the stage itself becomes the question. How does Fromm's work – and especially the rhetorical and figurative aspects of his work – help us understand the conditions of modern societies? How can we situate Fromm within the contexts of his own time, and, perhaps, also within the contexts of *our* time? However, the discourse on modernity, as a context, has to be divided into several subcontexts relevant for the study of Fromm's thought and life. This means contexts like the cold war, immigration and strangerhood, the rise and fall of National Socialism, 1960s radicalism and counterculture, psychoanalysis, Jewish thought, Marxist social criticism etc.

The departure point for the attempts to find answers to these questions is such that Fromm's thoughts, metaphors and narratives are not considered as abstract theories (or as "universal" philosophical arguments), but as statements uttered in their respective sociocultural contexts. I see Fromm's work as answering certain questions posed by crucial historical and social developments of his time. Since Fromm's answer was conditioned by the questions themselves – which is self-evident, as an answer always presupposes a question – it is impossible to separate Fromm's rhetorical acts from their contexts. The intertwining of historical contexts and subject serves as a basis for the aforementioned scheme of a bidirectional setting for research questions. This emphasis on contextualization is based on the conviction that struggle for cultural symbolizations and *imaginary* meanings is not something that just happens in the cultural superstructure, but is translated into real or material struggles for the control of society and its future. From this perspective we can understand Fromm's metaphoric representations of modernity not only as rhetorical figures or imaginaries, but as concrete tools in the attempt to form a new vision of modernity itself.

1.2 On Primary and Secondary Sources

The focus of the analysis will be on Fromm's later and more polemical works (written mainly in English). These differ considerably from his earlier works written in German during the 1920s and 1930s, which utilise a more rigid academic style. However, it is difficult to understand the full meaning of Fromm's later work without understanding the starting points of his analysis.[31] In his later works, starting with the acclaimed *Escape from Freedom* (1941), Fromm takes the role of a reluctant modern prophet, trying to raise awareness of the existing suffering caused by the alienating structures of modern societies – while at the same time always keeping in sight the possibility for a radically different kind of modernity. A certain progression towards more and more "affective" forms of writing can be observed in Fromm's later work. This change in style is particularly evident is his *To Have or To Be?* (1976) and in the numerous interviews he gave during the 1970s. In the last decades of his life Fromm had plans for a series of academic writings on Marx, Freud, Meister Eckhart and the psychoanalytic method. However instead of carrying out these plans he chose to concentrate on other projects, like the abovementioned *To Have or To Be?* I will argue below that this choice by Fromm is consistent in regard both to his view of himself as a modern prophet and to his understanding of the acute and constantly deteriorating crisis of modernity.

Fromm's private notes, letters, interviews, articles etc. will be used as supporting material. Fromm's output is quite impressive: in addition to an impressive output of books, he wrote numerous articles for various publishers, magazines and newspapers. Some of these texts are academic articles on issues like psychoanalysis and society, the Cold War, character structures in capitalist societies etc., while others are written in a polemic style, being often commentaries on topical issues. Correspondence with figures like Lewis Mumford is particularly noteworthy, since in his letters Fromm naturally writes in a more personal tone. In must be noted, however, that his letters do not reveal anything that would contradict his views or set them in a radically different constellation. The above reference to his correspondence as supporting material should be understood in the sense that it complements the themes that are expounded at length in his published works but usually does not contain anything particularly surprising. Fromm also gave lectures and interviews, mainly during the 1960s and 1970s. This material, which is available as audio and video recordings, is especially important from the perspective of analyzing Fromm's "voice" or "presence".[32] And when it comes to the content of his lectures and interviews, they follow quite consistently the lines established in

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31 Since this study is centered on the metaphorical and rhetorical aspects of his work, Fromm's early writings are used in this study mainly as contextualizing material, which help in highlighting the sources (Orthodox Judaism, psychoanalysis, Marxism etc.) of his work and style.

32 On the concepts of "voice" and "presence", see Chapter 2.

his published works. Most of this supporting material comes either from the Erich Fromm Archive in Tübingen, Germany, or from the website of the International Erich Fromm Society (published as .pdf files).

The secondary literature on Fromm is quite numerous and divergent ranging from straightforward Frommian confessionalism to a more detached analysis of his ideas. Texts belonging to the former category do not usually represent any particular problems from the perspective of source criticism, since the advocacy of Fromm's ideas is usually very explicit. Texts belonging to the latter category are slightly more difficult to characterize in short here because of the heterogeneous nature of the material. Furthermore, a great deal of secondary literature on Fromm is of limited value to the current study because of its descriptive approach (many of these texts are written as a sort of introduction to certain aspects of Fromm's work).

However, there are some texts on Fromm particularly worth mentioning. First of all Rainer Funk's *Erich Fromm: The Courage to Be Human*, which can be considered as one of the most comprehensive and systematic studies on Fromm's thought ever made. As an executor of Fromm's literary estate and his last assistant, Funk is an authority on the study of Fromm's ideas. Daniel Burston's informative *The Legacy of Erich Fromm*, in turn, is written from a psychoanalytic perspective, and for this very reason of limited value for the current study which is focused on the figurative and historical aspects of Fromm's work. John H. Schaar's *Escape from Authority* is a clear-cut critique of Fromm, which suffers from a one-sided (and arguably unsound) linking of Fromm's ideas to the beatnik culture. Michael Löwy's *Redemption and Utopia*, a study of Jewish messianic radicalism of the Weimar era, deserves as special mention here for helping to link Fromm's work to its sociological and historical contexts. When it comes to the biographical literature, Gerhard P. Knapp's *The Art of Living. Erich Fromm's Life and Works* is among the most important. Funk's *Erich Fromm. His Life and Ideas* also gives a full depiction of Fromm's life through excerpts from private notes, extended use of family photographs, short analyses on his major ideas and detailed contextualization of his career as a psychoanalytic and a social critic.[33]

The emphasis on the rhetorical dimension opens new perspectives for the understanding of modernity, but also fills a gap in research on Fromm's thought, since his symbolizations and narrative choices haven't been analyzed in a comprehensive study before – one exception being B. R. Betz's important dissertation from 1974 *An Analysis of the Prophetic Character of the Dialectical Rhetoric of Erich Fromm*, which is a systematic analysis of Fromm's dialectical and prophetic rhetoric. The main difference between the text at hand and Betz's work is that the latter's approach to Fromm is from rhetorical analysis, while

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33 The current study is a continuation of the analysis commenced in my master thesis (in Finnish). See Pekkola, Mika, *Sisyfoksen jälkeläiset. Erich Fromm ja modernisaation kriisi*. Master thesis, University of Jyväskylä, Department of History and Ethnology, Jyväskylä 2005.

the current study is an attempt to utilize metaphor and narrative alongside historical contextualization.

Since my study is focused on the *experience* of modernity rather than its institutional or structural aspects, the literature on modernity used here reflects this choice. Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self* and Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and Ambivalence* have greatly influenced this study; the approach of both writers is characterized by strong emphasis on the subjective experience of modernity. Other particularly important works on modernity that variously also emphasize the subjective experience of modernity are Peter Wagner's *Sociology of Modernity* and *Theorizing Modernity*, Marshall Berman's classic work on the experience of modernity *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, Alain Touraine's excellent *The Critique of Modernity*, which however tends to overemphasize Foucault's critique of modernity and downplay Frankfurt School's counterpart, Jürgen Habermas' *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* and Anthony Giddens' *The Consequences of Modernity*. Douglas Kellner's *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity* should also be mentioned here, since it is the only study which links Fromm's work to the analysis of modernity. However, this linkage is rather weak, since Kellner is primarily interested in Fromm's work at the Institute of Social Research, and in his discussion of Fromm's ideas he does not deal specifically with questions relating to modernity.

The perspective of the hermeneutic method in this study is influenced to a large extent by Hans-Georg Gadamer, Bauman and Paul Ricoeur. When it comes to the literature dealing with figurative analysis (metaphor and narrative), I have utilized a multidisciplinary approach. The attempt at a synthesis of conceptions of figuration by theorists representing various fields is carried out with the purpose of establishing a firm connection between the use of language and sociocultural circumstances. To name some key texts for this discussion: George Lakoff's & Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live by* (cognitive linguistics), Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor* (philosophy), Roy Wagner's *The Invention of Culture* (symbolic anthropology), Hayden White's *Metahistory* and *Tropics of Discourse* (historiography) and Jacques Derrida's "White Mythology" (philosophy). The understanding of narratives is facilitated mainly by Ricoeur and White.[34]

In addition to these above-mentioned secondary sources, a large number of works is used to build contexts for proper historical understanding of Fromm's ideas. These texts belong to such categories as the history of psychoanalysis, Critical Theory, Jewish tradition, Marx and Freud, 1960s counterculture, and Fascism and the Holocaust etc. Furthermore, a number of writings of Fromm's contemporaries have been utilized as well. Some of these sources go beyond mere analysis. The aesthetic dimension is included from the conviction that the experience of modernity is sometimes grasped in fuller detail and richness only by literary works which disregard never-ending self-

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[34] Theoretical and methodological literature is given full analysis in the next section.

analysis for the sake of the free expression of wishes, fears, joys, ecstasies, uncertainties and so on.

1.3 Theoretical and Methodological Issues

This study is an attempt at a *contextualizing interpretation* of the *metaphoric* and *narrative* aspects of Fromm's understanding of the *crisis of modernity*. In this chapter I propose to elucidate what these central concepts – interpretation, context, metaphor, narrative, modernity and crisis – could mean for a study of Fromm's life and ideas. A comprehensive account of the possible interactions of these concepts is naturally out of the question here. Instead, I shall try to present a possible way to bring them together. As any theory of metaphor could teach us, this choice means limiting the scope of the study. Choosing is an act of hiding, a deliberate setting aside of certain perspectives. By highlighting we hide – and vice versa. So this account of Fromm's thought is unavoidably partial one.

Before the aforementioned conceptual constellation is applied to the study of Fromm's ideas, a short excursion to the theory of interpretation is needed. The concept of context will soon occupy a central stage here. As contextualization implies metaphorization, the two being one another's near mirror images, a move to the theory of figuration is needed, as I shall argue below. Groups of metaphors, in turn, constitute narratives, which will be discussed thoroughly as a part of the discussion on creating meanings through figurations. Eventually this abstract theorizing is translated into concrete terms by applying it to the understanding of the metaphor of crisis in modernity. This concrete illustration of the "invention of culture" through metaphoric means forms the basis for the subsequent analysis of Fromm's prophetic rhetoric and his view of the dialectics of modernity.

Interpretation and Hermeneutics: Reinvigorating the Relation Between the Past and the Present

Making sense of human acts – i.e. acts which are mediated through cultural symbolizations – demands more than just analysis of the causal connections between these acts. One has to able to understand *meanings*. This presupposes a shift from *explaining* to *understanding*. Here the field of humanities differs fundamentally from that of the natural sciences. The failure of the positivist attempt to make history a "science" signalled also the potential for a resolute denial of one-dimensional interpretations of human realities. Thus, proceeding from causal explanations to the understanding of meanings can be seen as

going deeper into the problem and gaining a richer account of the subject matter.[35]

Meanings are created through interpretations. Hermeneutics, being a theory of interpretation, can be defined as "the art of bringing what is said or written to speak again" (Gadamer). By unearthing implicit presuppositions and associations in texts we can strive to actualize their hitherto unused potentials. As Michel Foucault writes: "To interpret is a way of reacting to enunciative poverty, and to compensate for it by a multiplication of meaning; a way of speaking on the basis of that poverty, and yet despite it". Instead of seeing texts as *documents* which reveal to us all we need to know if we just put them together properly, we should pay attention to the *worklike* character of our sources, to their transformative power and their relevant sociocultural linkages.[36]

Emphasis on interpretation raises the question regarding the role of subjectivity in research. Since every interpreter is already part of the world he or she tries to interpret and is conditioned by it, every interpretation is made from a particular, limited perspective. We are always already situated in certain conditions, which form our horizon of interpretation. As Ricoeur notes, this does not imply, however, that we have no possibilities but to succumb to total relativism: "No discourse can be radically stripped of presuppositions; nevertheless, no thinker is dispensed from clarifying his presuppositions as far as he is able."[37]

This idea of self-critique as an integral element of the research process has important consequences regarding the fundamentals of doing research in the first place. If we understand the process of interpretation as *working through*[38]

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35 On the discussion regarding methodological differences between humanities and natural sciences, see Bauman, Zygmunt, *Hermeneutics and Social Science*. Columbia University Press, New York 1978, 33–34, 70–71, 212–213; Collingwood, R. G., *An Autobiography*. Oxford University Press, London 1967 (1939), 101–105; White, Hayden, *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism.* The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore & London 1985, 23, 51–54; White, Hayden, *The Content of the Form. Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore & London 1990 (1987), 60.

36 Foucault, Michel, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Routledge, London 2002 (1969), 136; Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *The Gadamer Reader. A Bouquet of Later Writings*. Ed. Richard E. Palmer. Northwestern University Press, Evanston 2007, 251. On the distinction between documentary and worklike approach to texts, see LaCapra, Dominick, *Rethinking Intellectual History. Texts, Contexts, Language*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca & London 1983, 29–30. See also Ricoeur, Paul, *The Rule of Metaphor. The Creation of Meaning in Language*. Routledge, London & New York 2003, 106.

37 Bauman 1978, 156–157, 162–163, 168; Gadamer 2007, 41–71, 72–88; Ricoeur 2003, 303. The determining role of presuppositions in the interpretation process is emphasized also by non-hermeneutic scholars, such as anthropologist Roy Wagner:"Whatever he 'learns' from his subjects will therefore take the form of an extension or superstructure, built upon that which he already knows, and built *of* that which he already knows." Wagner, Roy, *The Invention of Culture*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London 1981 (1975), 8.

38 This psychoanalytically inspired notion of *working-through* as an integral part of the research process has been emphasized by LaCapra. See LaCapra, Dominick, *History*

our own presuppositions and limitations (namely: as self-criticism), as hermeneutic theory suggests, and, moreover, if we consider the social and cultural dimensions of this process by translating it into working through our various sociocultural determinations, we arrive at the idea that doing research is not merely an academic undertaking, but also a question of reclaiming our autonomy. For example, in the case of Fromm, "historical reconstruction" (the attempt to understand his ideas in their proper temporal and cultural context) is only a first step in the process, and has to be complemented by "rational reconstruction" (the attempt to find out how the understanding of Fromm's view of modernity could help us in our own particular situation).[39] By recognizing the idea that all cultural and social existence is to a certain degree determined by existing institutions, forms of relatedness etc., and by recognizing that not all determination is beneficial, the working through of this determination in the research process can be seen as an emancipatory activity.[40]

Self-critique and emancipation from negative sociocultural determinations are possible, however, only if the researcher is willing to recognize the identity of the Other and to accept the unfamiliar experience. An intellectual exercise has to be turned into a lived experience. The idea of *dialogue* serves as a model for the interpretation process: meanings are created through negotiation with both participants attempting to speak the same language and to seek metaphors which correspond to their experiences. In understanding others I understand myself – and vice versa. The role of historian is to act as a translator between two worlds, to form a *relation* between them. In this scheme the interpreted culture can be understood only through the structures and meanings of the interpreter's own culture.[41]

The attempt at a fusion of the horizons of the interpreter and the interpreted must be complemented, however, with the affirmation of *differences*. As LaCapra has warned, uncritical and excessive identification not only narrows the perspective of the interpreter, but can also lead to the disappearance of the transformative power of otherness. One way to answer this double demand of recognizing both subjectivity and non-partisanship is to refer to the necessary tension between *distanciation* that is characteristic to

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in Transit. Experience, Identity, Critical Theory. Cornell University Press, Ithaca & London 2004, 10.

39 On the concepts of historical and rational reconstruction, see Rorty, Richard, "The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres". In *Philosophy in History. Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy*. Ed. Richard Rorty, J. B. Schneewind & Quentin Skinner, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1984.

40 No research can get rid of its ethical and political implications. There are no neutral or "value-free" studies, as Hayden White has noted. See White 1990, 82. Even a detached "objective" study betrays its partisanship by contributing to the continued existence of the status quo.

41 See Bauman 1978, 217; Bauman, Zygmunt, *Culture as Praxis. New Edition*. SAGE Publications, London 1999 (1973); 64; Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Transl. & ed. David E. Linge. University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1977, 64; Gadamer 2007, 70, 96–97; LaCapra 2004, 80; Lakoff, George & Johnson, Mark, *Metaphors We Live By*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London 1980, 230–232; Wagner 1981, 2.

philosophical discourse and *belonging* that is characteristic of poetic imagination, as Ricoeur has done.[42] Even though we acknowledge that all knowledge is culturally and historically determined (and thus both relative and contextual), we can still distinguish between good and bad historiography by referring to "such criteria as responsibility to the rules of evidence, the relative fullness of narrative detail, logical consistency, and the like to determine this issue".[43]

Going back to the idea that all interpretations are determined to a large extent by historical and cultural conditions, the theme of the historian as a mediator or translator between two worlds can now be developed. Obviously such a task demands simultaneous contextualization into two different directions: towards the interpreter's own culture and towards the culture which is being interpreted. Wagner elucidates the situation the interpreter is faced with: "He will 'participate' in the subject culture, not in the way a native does, but as someone who is simultaneously enveloped in his own world of meanings, *and these meanings will also participate*."[44] This notion prompts a reformulation of the focus of historiography from the understanding of the past per se to the understanding of the specific relation between the past and the present.[45]

Since the researcher is part of a community which, in practice, takes part in defining what can considered as real and possible, instead of trying to deny or play down the connection between the existing cultural, subjective, historical etc. constellations and our interpretations of them there should be an attempt to bring their particular relation out into the open.[46] As Horkheimer warned in the 1930s: "Mankind has already been abandoned by a science which in its imaginary self-sufficiency thinks of the shaping of practice, which it serves and to which it belongs, simply as something lying outside its borders and is content with this separation of thought and action."[47] From this point of view it is evident that historiography cannot remain indifferent to the present realities,

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42 LaCapra 2004, 83; Ricoeur 2003, 371. LaCapra, however, criticizes Ricoeur's clear-cut distinction between speculative and poetic discourses. See LaCapra 1983, 123, 131–132.

43 See White 1985, 97.

44 Wagner 1981, 8. In his *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life* Nietzsche argued for a similar position: "*If you are to interpret the past you can do so only out of the fullest exertion of the vigour of the present*: only when you put forth your noblest qualities in all their strength will you divine what is worth knowing and preserving in the past." Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Untimely Meditations*. Ed. Daniel Breazeale. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997 (1874), 94.

45 On this idea, see, for example Ricoeur 1990c, 144–151.

46 White 1990, 95. For White the choice is between repressing the political commitment and carrying out explicitly political research. See White 1990, 58. White's polemics can, however, lead the reader to think that he is giving an open license for propaganda and manipulation in the guise of historiography, which certainly is not the case, since these "ideological" commitments can never override the demands of critical rationality (logical consistency, adherence to the rules of evidence, self-criticism etc.).

47 Horkheimer, Max, "Traditional and Critical Theory". In *Classical Sociological Theory*. Ed. Craig Calhoun et al. Blackwell Publishing, Malden 2007, 360.

but must take part in the invention of culture by showing through the transformative understanding of the Other that things that are assumed to be self-evident are not necessarily so and that social and cultural life can be organized differently. This is the fundamental motive behind the bidirectional setting of research questions in this study (as explained above).

Contexts and Perspectives

Contextualization, in short, means understanding something in relation to something else.[48] By setting something we want to understand in a particular relation we eliminate certain meanings and highlight others.[49] If we claim that all meanings are contextual – and thus determined to a large extent by their relevant perspectives and circumstances – we must be prepared to pay special attention to the "history of motivation" of questions we are trying to interpret, as Gadamer writes: "For the motivational background of a question first opens up the realm out of which an answer can be brought and given."[50] This constitutes the kernel of R. G. Collingwood's famous "logic of question and answer". The question is emphasized, since it sets the perspectives and contexts through which the proposition can be understood. Before we can give a plausible account of any preposition, we must reconstruct the historical context and the communicatory situation in which it appeared.[51]

Contextualization always implies a choice of highlighting certain aspects of reality and hiding others. Since cultural meanings are product of an endless process of contextualization they are threatened simultaneously by complete relativization (a possible end result of unhindered figurative invention) and trivialization (a possible end result of unimaginative conventionalization).[52] This reference to the dialectic of *invention* and *convention*, as formulated by Wagner, requires a closer look here, since it offers a viable theoretical

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48 See Bauman, Zygmunt, *Culture as Praxis*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London & Boston 1973, 82, Ricoeur 2003, 89 and Wagner 1981, 37 for a discussion on the meanings and history of the concept of context.

49 See, for example, Bauman 1973, 101. Marilyn Strathern, too, emphasizes that contextualization is, by its very function, exclusive: "… when some people are aware of shifting from one context to another, the use they make of some forms of knowledge anticipates the uselessness of others". Strathern, Marilyn, *Shifting Contexts: Transformations in Anthropological Knowledge*. London Routledge 1995, 11.

50 Gadamer 1977, 67. This same emphasis on the primacy of questions is shared by Foucault, too: "The description of the events of discourse poses a quite different question: how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another". Foucault 2002, 30.

51 Gadamer 2007, 62–71. On Collingwood's "logic of question and answer", see Collingwood 1967, 25–26, 37, 39, 66, 74. LaCapra, on the other hand, warns us about one-sided emphasis on contextualization. He argues that historical texts cannot be reduced to their contexts, but have the potential to address a contemporary reader, too. However, LaCapra's use of the concept of "context" is somewhat misleading, since he seems to equate "context" with historical and cultural contexts alone – ignoring the fact that understanding a text in connection with our contemporary concerns is also an act of contextualization. See LaCapra 2004, 18.

52 Wagner 1981, 58. See also Bauman 1978, 229–230.

framework for the understanding of Fromm's grand narrative of modernity, but also because it can be used here to develop a more comprehensive theory about the metaphorical constitution of contexts (only hinted at by Wagner).[53] For Wagner, invention is the dynamic force in culture through which cultural meanings are creatively interpreted into particular, everyday situations. Convention, on the other hand, is a way to limit the possible contexts of understanding for the purpose of order and intelligibility of communication. Thus, contextualization implies "an interplay of restriction and expansion."[54]

This idea of the invention of culture will be one of the starting points for my interpretation of Fromm's view of modernity and its crisis. By participating in the invention of culture through his writings and public appearances, Fromm, as a prominent analyst and critic of contemporary society, undoubtedly took part in the moulding of the multi-faceted and changing discourses on modernity. Since the invention of culture through creative interpretations and contextualizations is carried out inevitably via figurative means, particular emphasis will be paid on Fromm's metaphors and narratives.

It is important to note, however, that the view of contextualization presented here is a simplified representation of the actual functioning of contextualization. When we say that contextualization is about understanding something in relation to something else, we are ignoring the fact that contextualization rarely is an affair between merely two distinct phenomena, but instead a more complicated issue, in which *several* phenomena are intermingled. One way to address this intermingling of multiple contexts is to refer to contextualization as *polycontextualization*. An example might help illustrate this. If we want to see what kind of interesting meanings we could create by setting Fromm in relation to National Socialism, for example, we must take into account at least the following crucial contexts: his Jewish background, his understanding of Marxism and psychoanalysis, his emigration into United States, his general idea of a crisis of modernity, sociological and psychological details on the German character-structure, the similarities and differences between fascism and western "democracies", modern obsession with order-building and control etc. This example shows clearly that limiting the possible contexts of understanding is not merely a manipulative act of hiding, but an imperative aspect of the interpretation process. From the perspective of the current study this act of limiting can be accomplished, for example, by discussing certain aspects (and experiences) of modernity through certain themes by Fromm.[55] In fact, this brings us to one of the fundamental starting-points of this study: to see what kind of perspectives Fromm's ideas could give

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53 This theme will be developed in full detail below.

54 See Wagner 1986, 27, 30, 39, 44, 45.

55 Thus, for example, the theme of totalitarianism will be discussed through Fromm's views on individuation and assimilation, mechanisms of escape, alienating structure of capitalism etc. Of course, as the setting of research question indicated earlier, this can be turned upside down by focusing the contextualization towards the understanding of Fromm's ideas in relation to the central themes of modernity.

us for the understanding of modernity in general – and also for the understanding of our current late- or post-modern context.

By now we can already see that the figurative use of language is not only a question of mere "aesthetics" in the sense of decorating the factual propositions with stylized ornaments, but a more complicated and consequential issue. This view emphasizing the primacy of figuration in the creation of all cultural meanings will serve at least as a partial answer to the question of the why indeed we should be interested in Fromm's use of figurative language.

To rephrase: I am not interested in Fromm's figurations and narratives for the sake of mere stylistic curiosity or even for the sake of understanding how he manages to use rhetorics to influence his audience. What really interests me is how these figurations and narratives are interwoven in the invention of modern culture with all its political, ethical, cultural etc. implications – and, eventually, how these innocent-looking linguistic devices contribute to defining what direction our culture and society will take. This notion will be developed further firstly under the discussion on metaphors and narratives, secondly through an application of the theoretical material to the figurative understanding of the crisis of modernity and thirdly in the course of a thorough analysis on Fromm's view on modernity.

Metaphoric Contexts – Contextual Metaphors

The re-evaluation of the concepts of context and metaphor in the human sciences is a part of a broader change towards emphasizing the textual and historical conditions of understanding. However, the similarities between these two concepts are not limited to their new[56] pivotal role in the interpretation process. Both are used to limit the perspective of analysis, to rule out those aspects of reality which are considered secondary or irrelevant, but also to direct our gaze toward that which is considered as relevant and essential.[57] Both are tools of inclusion and exclusion; both highlight and hide; and, eventually, both can be used for manipulation and control.

Our language is thoroughly metaphorical. This statement regarding the fundamental role of metaphors in all understanding emerged in opposition to the traditional view of metaphor, which considered it a deceptive rhetorical trope which threatened the objectivity of all scientific analysis.[58] The re-

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56 The word "new" here is, of course, slightly misleading, since this "new" emphasis on textual and historical limits of understanding has been an important part of academic discourse at least since the 1960s and 1970s. However, from a wider perspective of the history of modern science and philosophy this understanding is a recent one.

57 "Relevant" and "irrelevant" being always, of course, relative, and depending on the circumstances of understanding and choices made by the interpreter.

58 On the re-evaluation of the role of metaphor, see Cohen, Ted, "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy". In *On Metaphor.* Ed. Sheldon Sacks. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London 1979 and de Man, Paul, "The Epistemology of Metaphor". In *On Metaphor.* Ed. Sheldon Sacks. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London 1979. In fact, the view of metaphor as a fundamental linguistic phenomenon behind our language is not a recent one, even though it has been

evaluation of metaphor, initiated by Max Black, I. A. Richards and others was continued, in their respective fields, by thinkers like Paul Ricoeur, Roy Wagner, Jacques Derrida, George Lakoff and Hayden White, who introduced metaphor as a basic tool of academic discourse. If we presume that the question regarding *what* is the content of the representation is interwoven inexorably with the question regarding *how* this content is represented, then metaphor, as a key trope, has a critical role in the interpretation process. Through this constellation, we can attempt to answer questions here, that were posed by Quentin Skinner, in relation to Fromm's view on modernity: " ... why the text is organized in a certain way, why a certain vocabulary is deployed, why certain arguments are particularly singled out and emphasised, why in general the text possesses its distinctive identity and shape".[59]

Metaphorical meanings are formed when something is understood through something else. For Aristotle, this metaphorizing ability is based on the intuitive ability to perceive similarities between things that are non-similar. Or, as Nietzsche wrote: "Every concept arises from the equation of unequal things". The liveliness of metaphor comes from its unexpectedness: a novel combination of associations illuminates reality from a fresh perspective, and as a result some of the previously hidden aspects of it are revealed. Figurative use of language transforms the conventional point of reference into a prism by making the literal understanding impossible – hence meanings must be created through interpretation.[60]

An example might help to illustrate this. For instance, when Fromm is arguing that democratic western *societies* are in fact psychologically severely *sick*, he is suggesting a bodily metaphor of sickness to facilitate the understanding of social problems. Just as a human body can get sick, so can society too. There are several associations we draw instantly from this combination. Most metaphors are not evident; they are not underlined by the author, but are embedded in the narrative structures and details of representation. It is precisely this aspect of metaphor which makes it potentially a powerful tool of manipulation and control. However, there is nothing manipulative or deceitful in metaphors per se – in this respect they are like drugs: it is how they are employed which determines whether they are used or abused.

Usually metaphor is depicted as a trope which brings together two more or less divergent images. This is slightly misleading, since nothing limits the

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widely accepted in the academic discourse only recently. For example, in his "On Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral Sense" Nietzsche carried out his critique of Western philosophical tradition by appealing to the metaphorical constitution of all language. Rational control and domination of reality is accomplished by forgetting the "primitive world of metaphor" and petrifying the stream of endless images. See Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Nietzsche Reader*. Blackwell Publishing, Malden 2006 (1873), 114–123.

59 Skinner, Quentin, *Visions of Politics. Volume 1: Regarding Method*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002, 83.

60 Lakoff & Johnson 1980 5; Nietzsche 2006, 117; Ricoeur 2003, 4, 54; Wagner 1981, xiv; Wagner 1986, 6; White 1985, 91.

number of possible images to just two. Poetic discourse, for example, utilizes multiple overlapping metaphors to rouse slumbering associations in the mind of the reader in an attempt to expand the narrow limits of conventional language. Thus, understanding is not gained through a definite and clear-cut tension between two images, which, in turn, give birth to a third image, but instead through an intuitively grasped, chaotic and conflicting mass of metaphors and contexts. Most metaphorization is, indeed, polymetaphorization.

Metaphors are also utilized to depict the stage at the front of our eyes in the right illumination and colour.[61] I will argue later that it was precisely this potential of metaphorization to transform facts into realities at hand, which encouraged Fromm to use strongly figurative language. A conviction that mankind was faced with a severe crisis, with a decision between life and death, combined with a conviction that the madness was continuing only because people were repressing the awareness of their suffering impelled Fromm to invest his texts with maximal figurative and persuasive power.

Metaphor, like context, is first and foremost a means of setting something in *relation* to something else. The crucial thing is to understand what kinds of conventions are used to support particular relations between concepts, images, propositions, narratives etc. in a given cultural context.[62] Another way to put this is to say that understanding is possible only in reference to certain already existing structures, by creating an analogy – via metaphor – between the unknown and the known.[63] This act of creating artificial structures is essential for all metaphorization and contextualization. Metaphor creates an illusion of totality by highlighting certain aspects of particular phenomenon *and* by claiming that these are its only characteristics (worthy of recognition). The illusory nature of a metaphorically created image is, however, explicit: this image is simultaneously both true and false.[64] For Wagner, all creation of meaning in the cultural process is based on the resolute confusion between the *symbolic* and the *real*: " ... the whole force of human creativity lies in the ability to objectify, to identify symbolic elements *as* reality (to confuse them with reality, we might say) and 'mask' their effects ... ".[65]

In conclusion, we can say that metaphors are used to form a synthesis between certain aspects of reality by bringing two (or three or four etc.) images together and creating a hybrid out of these images. Contextually the same is achieved by bringing two (or three or four etc.) spheres together. Both are tools for setting in relation, for understanding something through something else. However, the familiar relationship between the concepts of context and metaphor amount to more than this. Symbols require circumstances of use;

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61 Thus, Lakoff and Johnson define metaphor as "imaginative rationality". Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 193.
62 See Bauman 1973, 5; Ricoeur 2003, 89; Wagner 1981, 38.
63 White 1986, 20.
64 See Ricoeur 2003, 265 and Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 13.
65 Wagner 1981, 144.

circumstances, in turn, are created symbolically. The aforementioned concept of invention, conceived by Wagner, can be seen as a tie binding metaphorization and contextualization together: "Invention, which has the effect of continually differentiating acts and events from the conventional, continually puts together ('metaphorizes') and integrates disparate contexts."[66]

Invention – i.e. the creation of cultural meanings through an endless process of contextualizing interpretation – not only reproduces cultural conventions by relating universal meanings to particular situations, but also goes beyond the limits of these conventions, breaks them and suggests new symbolizations. As Marcuse writes: "Naming the 'things that are absent' is breaking the spell of things that are; moreover, it is the ingression of a different order of things into the established one … the effort which makes live in us that which does not exist."[67] Thus, a creative metaphorization doesn't just change the meaning of one word, but can also pose a threat to the existing modes and structures of understanding. It is not a mere ornament, but also a radical tool in the linguistic reworking of cultural reality. This revolutionary potential of creative and disruptive figurations is evident in Fromm's writing, too, and will be subjected to a thorough examination in this work.

The Metaphorical Constitution of Language and the Invention of Culture

This brief introduction to the concepts of context and metaphor needs to be complemented with a further discussion on the metaphorical constitution of language. My intention is not to provide a comprehensive theory of language, but to show how the understanding of the figurative basis of language could help us understand both Fromm and modernity.

Thinking and communication are mediated through language. Since communication is impossible without certain conventions which guarantee the relative stability of meanings, *order building* is a "superior function of culture", as Bauman suggests. The function of structures is to bring order where chaos has reigned. Order is created linguistically by limiting and controlling potential meanings, by biasing and differentiating.[68] This implies transforming "a continuous, shapeless stream of perception into a set of discrete entities".[69] The close relation between *meaning* and *perception* shows that the use of language is not merely an abstract question of interest to linguists only, but an issue which has an immediate bearing on the concrete life-processes of human beings. The

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66 Wagner 1986, 53.

67 Marcuse, Herbert, *One-Dimensional Man. Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Routledge, London & New York 2002 (1964), 71. See also Ricoeur 2003, 174

68 Bauman 1973, 54–57, 60–63, 95–97. Bauman's reference to order building is echoed by Lakoff and Johnson: "Once we can identify our experiences as entities or substances, we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them – and, by this means, reason about them." Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 25.

69 Bauman 1973, 123. Wagner stresses the same connection between meanings and perception: "Inasmuch as meaning (as perception) is the ground of our apprehension and understanding of things, any perception or representation of anything is achieved through meaning." Wagner 1986, 85.

determining force of cultural conventions in guiding all perceptions and all sensory experiences is immense.[70] Thus, there is always a dialectical relationship between the prevailing social values and the metaphorical structure of language. By manipulating the correct uses of language society is exercising a potent form of control over individuals. The dominant tropes in culture determine what can be perceived, experienced and understood.[71]

Wagner takes this argument further by arguing that cultural meanings are essentially based on *illusions*. Just as for Bauman order building is carried out through artificial and determined limiting of potential meanings, for Wagner the creation of cultural meanings in language involves both *controlling* and *masking*. By controlling he refers to the conventionalization of socially accepted meanings and associations; and by masking he refers to the exclusion of socially unaccepted meanings and associations. This twofold activity forms the basis of cultural *objectivation*, which define "the accepted and conventional form of human action". The element of control and manipulation lies in the tendency of cultural conventions to absolutize themselves – namely to turn "as if" into "is" – to represent existing uses of language as "natural" and challenging inventions as "artificial".[72]

An interesting question for this study is to see how Fromm challenges the prevailing cultural conventions for understanding modernity. There are two sides to this problem. Firstly, we can analyze how Fromm's figurative inventions relate to the conventions of his own cultural and historical contexts. Secondly, this analysis can be taken further by asking how these inventions relate to our own understanding of modernity. Furthermore, in addition to this analysis on Fromm's inventions, we can examine where Fromm was simply adhering to the conventional understanding of modernity. However, as the main purpose of the study is to analyze Fromm's view on the *crisis* of modernity, it is evident that a certain rupture in relation to the conventional understanding of modernity will be evident in Fromm's writings. Thus, the focus of the discussion will be on his figurative inventions and attempts to influence the public through creative speech acts. By taking part in the

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70 In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* Marx made a similar notion regarding how the use of senses is determined by certain pre-existing conditions. Young Marx was interested in showing how the social process determines the senses to a great extent. An often quoted example on the alienating influence of capitalist economy on senses is Marx's reference to the mineral dealer, who sees only the commercial value of minerals but not its beauty and specific character. Marx, Karl, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844". In Marx, Karl & Engels, Friedrich, *Collected Works. Vol. 3*. Lawrence & Wishart, London 1975b (1932), 302. Lakoff and Johnson, too, emphasize the preconditions of *experience*, which is always structured with and limited by certain culturally dominant guiding concepts and metaphors. See Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 84.

71 See, for example, Gadamer 1977, 64–68; Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 22, Wagner 1981, 106; White 1990, 116.

72 Wagner 1981, xii, 49, 53, 106, 108–110; Wagner 1986, 8. On the use of metaphorically constituted conventions and traditions in social control, see also Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 160, 163; Ricoeur, Paul, *Time and Narrative. Volume 2*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London 1990b (1984), 19; Ricoeur 2003, 20; White 1990, 117.

moulding of the (multifaceted and often contradictory) discourse on modernity Fromm played his part in the invention of modern culture.

Metaphor will play a central role in this analysis, since the expansion and contextualization of meanings is achieved through metaphoric speech constructions. Wagner writes: "The conventions of language must be 'metaphorized' through some interrelation with situational phenomena (the context of speech, 'the world') if they are to produce meaning."[73] Wagner's theory of the invention of culture will be of particular value here. His theory starts with the assumption that meanings are constantly evolving in an endless cycle of interpretations and reinterpretations. All inventions are in a dialectical relationship to cultural conventions: "*The necessity of invention is given by a cultural convention, and the necessity of cultural convention is given by invention.*" Cultural conventions must be constantly interpreted within the daily life-processes of particular situations of particular individuals living within this culture. Conventional contexts and reference points guide the interpretations of individuals towards culturally "meaningful" and "normal" forms. They bring order and decide how life should be organized. In reality, they are nothing but illusions and fictions, which gain their power by posing as an absolute.[74]

Cultural inventions, in turn, act to counter the determining influence of conventions. In this kind of non-conventional use of symbols old concepts are given new contexts of meanings. Wagner calls the creation of differentiating symbols *obviation*. The aim of obviation is the negation of existing cultural forms.[75] One of the strong points of Wagner's theory from the perspective of the understanding of modernity is that it recognizes that cultures are not static monoliths, but exist only through a constant process of interpretation and invention. Similarly the absolute determining force of society and culture is denied: "The 'Culture' we live is threathened, criticized, counterexemplified by the 'cultures' we create – and vice versa." Thus, culture is understood as a dialectic process: people create meanings, these meanings acquire a life of their own and, eventually, create people.[76] What I want to emphasize here is that these abstract theories on culture will be applied to Fromm's understanding of modernity through those particular historical, cultural, biographical etc. contexts which had a bearing on his understanding of the crisis of modernity.

Narratives and Counter-Narratives

Since modernity as a process – as *modernization* – is not a static phenomenon, it calls for an approach which recognizes the significance of change across an

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73 Wagner 1981, 107, 113. See also Wagner 1986, 9.

74 Wagner 1981, s. 25, 41–43, 46, 52, 55; Wagner 1986, x, 25, 129. See also Ricoeur 1990c, 221 for a similar view of the dialectic between conventions and inventions.

75 See Wagner 1981, xiv–xv, 43–44, 48; Wagner 1986, xi, 68.

76 Wagner 1981, 11, 34. This is Bauman's view as well: "The social structure exists through the ever-continuing process of the social praxis; and this particular kind of existence is rendered possible by the fact that the praxis is patterned by a limited amount of cultural models." Bauman 1973, 105.

extended period of time. What this means here is that metaphorical analysis must be complemented by *narrative analysis*. As Ricoeur writes, "time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode".[77] Like contexts and metaphors, narratives are tools of setting in relation, of "grasping together". They can be understood as a sort of "extended metaphors", which contribute to the meaning of every metaphor within their boundaries. Like metaphors, narratives are used to introduce order, coherence, integrity and fullness to an otherwise chaotic reality. Furthermore, narratives, too, are illusions, as White explains: "What is 'imaginary' about any narrative representation is the illusion of a centered consciousness capable of looking out on the world, apprehending its structure and processes, and representing them to itself as having all of the formal coherency of narrativity itself."[78]

Even though methodologically and epistemologically speaking the scientific approach sets certain requirements for the handling of facts (adherence to the rules of evidence, internal coherence, logical consistency self-criticism etc.) historical representations rely to a great extent on literary or poetic means like suppression, highlighting, hiding, characterization, repetition of motifs, variation of tone and point of view, alternative descriptive strategies and so on. A temporal continuum is built between separate events – which, in turn, allows for the organization of heterogenic events into a system. It is through the function of plot creation that narrativization can be characterized as a means of dealing with temporality in language.[79]

Even though there are limits to the kind of narratives that can be represented within a certain culture, as White argues, it is possible to create radically divergent stories out of the same events or factual elements. For example, facts or events can be emplotted by utilizing the conventions of eschatological and apocalyptical narratives – or by utilizing the conventions of comedy, tragedy, romance and so on.[80] Narratives are always social. In this

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77 See Ricoeur, Paul, *Time and Narrative. Volume 1*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London 1990a (1983), 6, 52. Thus, narrativization can be seen as a transcultural form of necessity, a universal constituent of all cultures. For a thorough evaluation on the importance of narrativization for the construction of our identities through the ordering of the flow of time see Ricoeur 1990c, 241–274.

78 See Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 173–174; Ricoeur 1990a, x, 56; White 1990, 4–5, 21, 24, 36, 45–47, 50–53.

79 Ricoeur 1990a, 97, 104, 142, 186; Ricoeur 1990c, 186; White 1985, 62–63, 83–84; White 1990, 41, 50–53, 172–174. Ricoeur criticizes White's position by arguing that White doesn't recognize clearly enough the differences between fiction and history. For Ricoeur it is precisely the conviction to follow the traces of history through careful examination and critique which distinguishes history from fiction. See Ricoeur 1990c, 154.

80 See White 1990, 43. White seems to have strong confidence in the contention that all narratives can be placed under certain fundamental and conventionally determined forms of narratives. It seems to me, however, that most narratives are *hybrids* which contain elements from several modes of emplotment. Even though his somewhat rigid or functionalist view of narratives could be criticized, I think that White's argument regarding certain basic models of narrativization points to the right direction, since it is evident that cultural conventions set certain limits to all linguistic representations, including narratives. However, the question of classifying actual

sense society is a "quasi character" in every story and, subsequently, emplotment is a means of making sense of the actions of this character.[81]

An inventive narrativization reveals something which has remained hidden under previous narratives: "The primary *meaning* of narrative would then consist of the destructuration of a set of events (real or imagined) originally encoded in one tropological mode and the progressive restructuration of the set in another tropological mode."[82] Since Fromm was concerned, first and foremost, in warning the public about the crisis of modernity and in showing that another kind of modernity was possible, special attention must be made to his attempts to invent modernity again through new kind of narrativizations. Here White's apt characterization of narratives is relevant: "Not exactly a dream, rather more a daydream, a wish-fulfilling fantasy that, like all such fantasies, is grounded in the real conditions of the dreamer's life but goes beyond these to the imagining of how, in spite of these conditions, things might be otherwise."[83] Thus, inventive use of narratives can be seen as a way of unearthing the potentialities inherent in the present form of modernity, which, however, have remained unfulfilled and ignored within the previous narratives. Fromm, as a writer inspired by Marx's historical materialism, was certainly aware of this, and my attempt is to show that this was (explicitly and implicitly) reflected in his narratives of modernity.

Thus, narratives always have their respective ontological, epistemological and political implications. It is precisely this aspect of narratives which has been the target of numerous criticisms, particularly by "postmodern" writers. Narratives can be seen as mythologizations, as strategies of domination, and as means of mystification. Narrative can be seen as a part and parcel of a process of social domination which proceeds by assigning roles, by giving rewards and judgments, by excluding certain undesirable elements from society and so on.[84] This criticism of narrative is highly relevant to Fromm's narrativizations too, and will be given full consideration in the following chapters.

However, this one-sided representation of narratives as a means of domination must be complemented with a view emphasizing the insurgent potential of narratives. Ricoeur points out that "emplotment is never the simple triumph of order", but always includes contingencies and "reversals of fortune". Narratives have a subversive point which can be turned against moral and social orders. Ricoeur stresses that it is precisely fiction which makes language a "supreme danger". Narratives can be used to change the prevailing

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narratives under these "models", suggested by White, might be a more troublesome task than he seems to think.

81 See Ricoeur 1990a, 69, 195–197; White 1985, 60–62.

82 White 1985, 96. Ricoeur, too, stresses the dialectic relationship between linguistic innovations and traditions: innovations are not born out of thin air, but are bound in one way or another to the existing paradigms of narrativization. See Ricoeur 1990a, 69.

83 White 1990, 157.

84 See, for example, Ricoeur 1990b, 60; White 1990, xi, 34–35, 91, 158.

conceptions of "possible and "real". Fictions lie, but are necessary in the creation of meanings.[85]

All in all, the narrative approach to Fromm's writings is particularly relevant considering the fact that he tried to create a holistic view, a grand narrative, not only of the rise of industrial society and its various ramifications, but also a story – or a myth – of man fallen from the state of grace, from preindividual and prehuman harmony with nature. The ending of this myth offers even further material for narrative analysis, since in Fromm's vision the conclusion or climax of the story has almost biblical proportions. For Ricoeur there are two prerequisites for a successful ending: the ending has to have a certain inner coherence and it has to be acceptable, though not predictable.[86] The immense popularity of Fromm's works suggests these prerequisites were met. As a secular though religious thinker Fromm painted the story of modernization with rich colours – emphasizing simultaneously the materialist and the spiritualist dimensions of change in history. The adequate understanding of his tension-laden narrativizations is a central precondition for the understanding of his conception of modernity and its crisis.

An Excursus to the Metaphorical and Narrative Aspects of the Discourse on the Crisis of Modernity

In the preceding sections I have laid the foundations for a figurative understanding of culture and society, while keeping in sight the particular contexts of Fromm's thought and modernity. A brief excursion into discourses on modernity and its crisis helps to illustrate how theories of figuration and invention of culture could be applied to the understanding of social and cultural problems. The emphasis on symbolizations makes it easier to understand the discourse on modernity as an endless process of signification, largely based on metaphorically constituted ideas regarding the relations between the real and the possible.

There is a certain affinity between modernity and metaphor, as Wagner has noticed: "Metaphor, the symbol whose gloss is definitively relative, is the perfect and appropriate point of reference for an age of cryptic symbols and inscrutable meanings; its 'discovery' by every critical, scientific, and aesthetic enterprise concerned with meaning is inevitable. It is our mirror image, and we, perhaps, are its."[87] The perceived affinity between modernity and metaphor is further deepened by a reference to the notion that both modernity and metaphor are all about *hybrids*. Metaphor, as a means of setting in relation, cannot exist without hybridization. Similarly, modernity, despite all attempts in order building, is a phenomenon of change, a phenomenon that sets the social and cultural world in perpetual motion, so that it cannot be expected to give

85 Ricoeur 1990a, 73, 79; Ricoeur 1990b, 27.
86 See Ricoeur 1990a, 150–151.
87 Wagner 1986, s. 5.

birth to anything more than hybrids between various temporalities and spatialities.

The conception of culture as a "system", as a monolithic totality, which operates according to certain basic principles and represses individual particularities under its logic has been largely questioned in the academic discourse during the last few decades. This functionalist view of culture has been replaced with a more flexible view of culture as a "junction" or a "gathering place" of various divergent processes. Wagner's theory of the invention of culture exemplifies this process-oriented and ambivalent approach to modernity. It suggests that the discourse on modernity is characterized by incessant contextualization and reinterpretation – by the attempt to reconcile the particular with the universal and the individual with the collective, and vice versa. Modernity is not seen as a one-way street from the collective to the individual, from the universal to the particular, from abstractions to concrete phenomena etc., but as a dialectical process between these poles. We must constantly be seeking fitting and richer tropes to express our theoretical understanding of the change that has taken place in cultural and social conditions.

All discourses on modernity suggest artificial a metaphorical and narrative unity to reality which, in itself, is essentially chaotic and lacking in organization. Similarly, all theories of modernity proceed from the recognition of the differences and identities between modern and non-modern. The question of "what are we", is, essentially, a question of what are we in relation to those who are not like us. Artificial culturally created boundaries are means of creating ruptures in the chaotic and unorganized flow of time.[88] The traditional dualism between modern and premodern perhaps distorts and simplifies our view of both opposites, but this act of relating also enables us to see modernity as a process, as an age of *transition*. With the emergence of modernity, the concept of change becomes a central issue of recognition not only in the social and cultural but also, for example, in metaphysical and moral discourses. The orientation towards the past tends to be replaced with the orientation towards the future. The modernization ideology portrays the process of change as a process of emancipation. Conversely, resistance to change is portrayed as a reactionary activity.[89]

Change is metaphorically masked as liberation and set into contrast with the stagnant oppression of the *ancien regime*. The metaphor of chains is a fitting symbolization for the struggle waged by the early modern ideologists, rallying against overtly concrete obstacles of liberation such as the visible institutions of

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88 During the French Revolution this break in the perceived flow of time was expressed in a concrete fashion: "On the first evening of fighting it turned out that the clocks in towers were being fired on simultaneously and independently from several places in Paris". Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Schocken, New York 2007 (1985), 262.

89 This ideology was reflected also in social practice. Consider, for example, harsh punishments given to Luddites during the early 19th Century in England who participated in the attacks against mills and factory machines.

the church, the state, the aristocracy. But what happens to the metaphor of chains as the visible authorities extend their influence beyond the overt use of force in an attempt at a more total control of the human organism? As the analogy between the symbol and new social realities become harder and harder to sustain, the metaphor has to be renewed or it loses its figurative power. The struggle for freedom and autonomy is now fought on new frontiers within the minds and bodies of modern subjects. Consequently, liberation must be legitimized through inventive metaphorizations. Thus, if they are to remain effectual, metaphorizations of liberation must go through endless transformations and mutations, since they have to respond to the ever-changing social and cultural conditions. The ultimate goal of all discourses, whether they are about law and order or about anarchy and self-expression, is the linguistic control of cultural and social realities. The upper hand is given to those discursive forms which seem to be able to grasp and represent the existing conditions with the richest and most plausible figurations.

If the triumphant early ideology of modernization could place its trust in the metaphor of creative destruction, the great human catastrophes of the modern age – technological wars, human and environmental costs of industrialization, ravages of nationalism etc. – called for a thorough revision of the existing figurations of both progress and modernity. Freud characterized this new confusion by arguing in his late work *Civilization and its Discontents* that the development of culture was inevitably accompanied by growing repression and mental disturbances.[90] Walter Benjamin's depiction of Paul Klee's painting *Angelus Novus* can be seen as an emblematic metaphorization of modernity out of control.[91] The storm blowing from paradise thrusts the angel of history irresistibly towards the future. Benjamin gives us all the associations that are needed to grasp the nature of the crisis: the experience of inevitable change, the forced nature of this change, the tremendous force of objective conditions threatening the frail and frightened subject, the sense of danger and the need for shelter… The angel's gaze is still fixed at the past, "while the pile of debris before him grows skywards": "This storm is what we call progress". Modernity as a continuing state of emergency – this is Benjamin's prophetic message. All in all, the idea of a crisis of modernity implies a shift from a more or less one-sided conception of modernity to a richer view, which doesn't recognize only the *grandeur* of modernity, but also its *misére*.[92] Changes in conditions necessitate changes in metaphorizations and narratives.

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90 See Freud 1981a.

91 Benjamin 2007, 257–258.

92 This notion is borrowed from Taylor. See Taylor 2000, 121. What comes to the new sense of crisis in modern culture, it must be emphasized that the critique of modernity had many voices, and some of them were heard already during the early stages of modern era. In this context an attempt has been made to highlight the new critical stance which surfaced as the unwanted consequences of the process of modernization became more and more evident.

In the original Greek meaning, word *crisis* refers literally to a "final, irrevocable decision".[93] The discourse on the crisis of modernity implies a demand for immediate answers and decisions to meet the threats and potentialities of the situation. As Nina Witoszek and Lars Trägårdh point out, crisis "is a moment of creativity when new modes of thinking and new habits come into play".[94] Some critics of modernity claimed that this creative potential was already lost; others sustained their belief in it, while acknowledging its apparent fragility. Fromm was one of these critics. He feared that the automatization and alienation of modern capitalist societies would eventually reduce the living individual into a powerless atom manipulated by abstract systems and giant bureaucracies. Fromm depicted the crisis as a moment of ultimate decision between humanism and barbarism, freedom and alienation, biophilia and necrophilia, being and having. For Fromm, the crisis of modernity could be characterized as *Kairos*, as moment of great danger and possibility: "But unless we act soon we shall lose the initiative, and circumstances, institutions, and weapons, which we created, will take over and decide our fate".[95]

Fromm's view of the crisis of modernity will be discussed in detail during the following chapters. The succession of chapters is designed to meet the rhetorical and narrative structure of Fromm's own works. This means that we must first recognize the historical process leading to the crisis situation. Thus, the analysis will start with a discussion on Fromm's narrative regarding the emergence or genesis of modernity (Chapter 3). After this, a lengthy discussion on the implications of the crisis will follow (Chapter 4). Here Fromm's scathing critique of modernity and capitalism will occupy the centre of the stage. Fromm, however, was not a prophet of doom, which will become soon evident, as the discussion moves to Fromm's depiction of modernity as an ultimate moment of decision and his idea of the radical regeneration of modernity (Chapter 5). Since this hope is essentially grounded in Fromm's view of human nature and human potentialities, these aspects of his work will be discussed in a separate chapter (Chapter 6). The story ends with a thorough discussion of the utopian elements of Fromm's work. Here the emphasis will be on Fromm's "grand narrative" and on his prophetic mission to envisage another kind of modernity through a rigorous analysis of its existing forms (Chapter 7). However, before any of this can be done, I must take a biographical look at the sociological and historical contexts of Fromm's work (Chapter 2).

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93 See Koselleck, Reinhart, "Some Questions Concerning the Conceptual History of 'Crisis'". In *Culture and Crisis. The Case of Germany and Sweden*. Ed. Nina Witoszek & Lars Trägårdh. Berghahn Books, New York 2002, 13.

94 Witoszek, Nina & Trägårdh, Lars, "Introduction". In *Culture and Crisis. The Case of Germany and Sweden*. Ed. Nina Witoszek & Lars Trägårdh. Berghahn Books, New York 2002.

95 Fromm, Erich, *May Man Prevail? An Inquiry Into The Facts and Fictions of Foreign Policy*. George Allen and Unwin, London 1962 (1961b), 252. See also Paul Tillich's discussion of modern culture from the perspective of the idea of Kairos in his essay "Kairos". Tillich, Paul, *Main Works. Vol. 4. Writings in the Philosophy of Religion.* de Gruyter, Berlin 1987, 327–342.

2 FROMM'S LIFE AND "PRESENCE"

Fromm's biography can be found in almost identical form over and over again in the secondary literature.[96] My intention here is to take a look at his biography in order to 1) clarify the historical and sociological contexts of his work and 2) to reveal his unique perspective on the discourse about the crisis of modernity. A brief discussion on the concepts of "voice" and "presence" gives us necessary tools to achieve this.

Stefan Collini has coined the concept of "voice" in his study on the British "public moralists" of the 19th and early 20th Century. As Collini stresses, the "voice" of a particular subject should be understood in its proper historical context, which includes the "fabric or texture of arguments, assumptions, values, ideas, associations and so on". The aim is to recover the sense of identity of the subject for subsequent analysis.[97] However, Collini's preference on the auditory metaphor of "voice" can be used as a starting-point for a further development. Thus, the concept of "presence" is suggested here as a reinterpretation of Collini's concept. As the metaphor implies, reference is made

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96 See for example, Burston, Daniel, *The Legacy of Erich Fromm*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1991, 8–29; Burston, Daniel, "Erich Fromm: A Brief Biography". In *A Prophetic Analyst: Erich Fromm's Contributions to Psychoanalysis*. Ed. Mauricio Cortina & Michael Maccoby. Jason Aronson, Northvale 1996a, 415–425; Funk, Rainer, *Erich Fromm: The Courage to Be Human*. Continuum, New York 1982, 1–9; Jay, Martin, *The Dialectical Imagination. A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950*. Heinemann, London 1974, 88–89; Knapp, Gerhard P., *The Art of Living. Erich Fromm's Life and Works*. Peter Lang, New York 1989; Lundgren, Svante, *Fight Against Idols. Erich Fromm on religion, Judaism and the Bible*. Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 1998, 77–82; Pietikäinen, Petteri, *Alchemists of Human Nature. Psychological Utopianism in Gross, Jung, Reich and Fromm*. Pickering & Chatto, London 2007, 168–173; Thomson, Annette, *Erich Fromm. The Explorer of Human Condition*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2009; Wiggerhaus, Rolf, *The Frankfurt School. Its History, Theory and Political Significance*. Polity Press, Cambridge 1995, 52–54.

97 Collini, Stefan, *Public Moralists. Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930*. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1991, 3–4. Ricoeur has stressed in a similar fashion the notion of "narrative voice" through which the narrator presents the world to the readers: "Voice answers to the question of 'Who is speaking here?'" Ricoeur 1990b, 88, 99.

not only to the auditory associations, but also to other sensory associations. This means, figuratively, the reading of Fromm's work *as if he were present*. This undertaking naturally requires more than just critical analysis. Student of culture and society should not lose sense of the manifold emotional and non-cerebral associations of "texts" he or she is trying to understand. The student is a link between two worlds, living in both simultaneously, as Wagner has stated.[98] This setting is, in a way, almost schizophrenic: if the researcher is not "inside", he or she cannot sense the experiential richness and density of meanings; and if the researcher is not "outside", he or she might find it difficult to sustain the critical stance required for discerning analysis or that unique perspective of the "outsider".

So, the concept of "presence" insists the researcher to engage both on analytical and emotional level in the study. Like Collini, Gadamer also utilises auditory metaphor in understanding, but Gadamer uses it in order to arrive at the characterization of the idea of presence: "Nevertheless, it is true that a literary text demands to become present in its linguistic appearance and not just to carry out its function of conveying a message. It must not only be read, it must also be listened to – even if mostly with our inner ear".[99] Thus, the emphasis lies on the intricacies and subtle details of interpersonal communication. The aim of the concept of "presence" is same as in the concept of "voice": to recover the writer's sense of identity for analysis, but the means to achieve this end are more varied. We might ask how does Fromm "enter" into dialogue with his audience? How does one "exit" from it? In what tone or atmosphere is the relation between the subject and the audience formed? What is the general impression of a certain text or speech? What is its mood? Or, as Skinner asks: " ... what an agent may have been doing *in* saying what was said."[100] As Fromm himself always insisted on rejecting the detached, "objective" or "clinical" perspective and advocated a stance of radical engagement, the assumption is that this approach will be particularly fitting for the subsequent discussion of Fromm's metaphorizations and narratives. However, limitations of this kind of approach are also obvious: reconstructing the sense of identity of a historical subject is always a complex task, involving selective interpretation and historical contextualization. Thus, the view of Fromm's presence given in this study is, inevitably, a partial one, and does not constitute an attempt to give a full account of Fromm's sense of "identity".

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98 Wagner 1981, 4.

99 Gadamer 2007,182.

100 Skinner 2002, 104. Skinner has made a similar remark regarding the relevance of *motives* and *intentions* to our interpretations: "Now it may well be that to know, say, that a certain writer was largely motivated by envy and resentment tells us nothing about 'the meaning' of their works. But once a critic possesses such knowledge it can hardly fail to condition their response to the work. The discovery, say, that a work was written not out of envy or resentment, but out of a simple desire to enlighten and amuse, seems virtually certain to engender a new and different response to it". Skinner 2002, 96. Concepts of "voice" and "presence" should be seen as tools which help the interpreter in deciding whether the appeal to such motives and intentions, for example, might prove reasonable and productive.

It is difficult to understand Fromm's "voice" or "presence" adequately without paying special attention to his childhood environment, namely the Jewish community of Frankfurt, with its spiritual traditions and its unique relation to mainstream German society during the early 20th Century.

Erich Pinchas Fromm was born in 1900 at Frankfurt-am-Main to an Orthodox Jewish family. His father was a wine merchant, but was ashamed of his profession, having put aside a dream of becoming a rabbi. Fromm himself characterized his childhood environment as "medieval", an islet in the middle of a changing world intoxicated with the lure of economy which seemed to override all moral, communal and spiritual commitments. The Jewish community, strengthened by its age-old traditions, was not only at odds with mainstream Christian society, but also shunned Reform Judaism, which was more sympathetic to the rising liberal and capitalist spirit. Young Fromm was greatly impressed by the Jewish tradition and its emphasis on spiritual values and the perfection of mankind. A striking example of this spirit is a story of Fromm's great-grandfather, Seligmann Fromm, who drove out customers from his store if they disturbed his reading of the Talmud. Fromm also remembered feeling embarrassed as a boy, when he heard someone say he was a businessman; the idea that someone was wasting his whole life on making money seemed hopelessly absurd for young Fromm.[101]

Three Jewish rabbis and scholars made a special impression on Fromm. His great-uncle, Ludwig Krause, who lived the last years of his life with the Fromm family, was a staunch traditionalist. Apparently at least partly under the influence of Krause, Fromm wanted to go to Riga to be a rabbi, but his father objected to this plan. Another important teacher of Fromm was Nehemial Anton Nobel, who sought a synthesis of mysticism, socialism, philosophy and psychoanalysis, while remaining loyal to the conservative Jewish tradition. As a talented speaker Nobel gained a considerable following, consisting of young Jewish students. However, it was rabbi Salomon Baruch Rabinkow, a scholar of socialism and Hasidism, who had the greatest influence on Fromm's thought: "Rabinkow influenced my life more than any other man, perhaps, and although in different forms and concepts, his ideas have remained alive in me". Hasidism had risen as a protest against dogmatism and excessive rigidity of faith, emphasizing joy, sincerity of faith and everyday spirituality. Fromm's humanistic interpretation of Judaism is also greatly indebted to Rabinkow, as Funk has shown. Nobel and Rabinkow were both deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition, while remaining open to other traditions as well. Inspired by their teaching, Fromm turned away from theology towards mysticism, from *believing*

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101 Bamberger, M. L., "Seligmann Baer Bamberger". In *Jewish Leaders (1750–1940)*. Ed. Leo Jung. Bloch Publishing Company, New York 1953, 183; Burston 1991, 8–10; Burston 1996a, 415; Fromm, Erich, *Beyond The Chains of Illusion. My Encounter With Marx and Freud*. Pocket Books, New York 1966 (1962), 5; Fromm, Erich, Letter to Lewis Mumford, 29.4.1975; Fromm, Erich, Interview with Gerard Khoury. Locarno, 1978–1979 (audio); Funk 1982, 1; Funk, Rainer, *Erich Fromm. His Life and Ideas. An Illustrated Biography*. Trans. Ian Portman & Manuela Kunkel. Continuum, New York & London 2000, 8–12, 36; Jay 1974, 88; Knapp 1989, 4, 7–10; Lundgren 1998, 77.

in God towards *living* according to the example set by God. In the 1960s Fromm made a comment on the spiritual teachers of his youth and stated that "my views have grown out of their teaching, and it is my conviction that at no point has the continuity between their teaching and my own views been interrupted".[102]

This is precisely what the concept of "presence" tries to capture. But how was this "presence" – deeply influenced by the Jewish tradition – manifested in Fromm's work and actions? An example of this was his insistence on biblical themes in lectures he gave to student audiences during the 1960s, despite the fact that the rebelling students were not particularly enthusiastic about the Christian tradition, which was seen as part and parcel of the oppressive Establishment of their parents' generation. This is important to note: analysis of the figurative aspects of Fromm's work – i.e. of the metaphors and narratives he employs – is not here executed in the belief that figuration is merely a tool in the rhetorical persuasion and deception of the audience. Instead the analysis will proceed on the presupposition that figuration, or rhetorics and tropics general, are not to be analyzed in separation of the larger context, but have deeper relations to the sense of identity of the "speaker", even though elements of persuasion are undeniably present.

Fromm felt himself a stranger in secular German society. As the modern world seemed to descend deeper and deeper into relativism and materialism – a mere glimpse at the daily realities of the Weimar Republic is enough to give an idea of the sense of fragmentation – the Jewish tradition, as interpreted by Rabinkow and others, insisted on values like justice, egalitarianism and the dignity of the individual. Fromm later claimed that because Jews were a persecuted minority, they managed to create an open tradition, devoid of a thirst for power. His spiritual teachers seemed to embody this idea. Following Moses Maimonides'[103] lead, Jewish theology was essentially negative: it shunned dogmatism and parochialism, favouring instead openness to new influences and constant renewal. Growing up in an Orthodox Jewish environment gave Fromm a twofold perspective on modern society: being a Jew in a German society and being an Orthodox Jew in the Jewish community –

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102 Burston 1991, 12–14; Burston 1996a, 415–415; Fromm, Erich, *You Shall Be As Gods. A Radical Interpretation of the Old Testament and Its Tradition*. Henry Holt and Company, New York 1991 (1966), 12–13; Funk 1982, 1–2; Funk, Rainer, "Von der jüdischen zur sozialpsychologischen Seelenlehre. Erich Fromm's Weg von der einen über die andere Frankfurter Schule". In *Das Freie Jüdische Lehrhaus – eine andere Frankfurter Schule*. Ed. Raimund Sesterhenn. Verlag Schnell & Steiner, München & Zürich 1987, 106; Funk 2000, 37–39; Jay 1974, 88; Knapp 1989, 10; Lundgren 1998, 77–80. See also Fromm, Erich, "Reminiscences of Shlomo Barukh Rabinkow". In *Sages and Saints.* Ed. Leo Jung. Ktav Publishing House, Hoboken, (1987). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1987a-e.pdf.

103 Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) was perhaps the most significant of medieval Jewish thinkers. The roots of his negative theology lie in Neoplatonism. He had a considerable influence not only on the Jewish rationalism but also on the mysticism of Meister Eckhart. Considering the relatively undogmatic nature of his negative theology, it is ironic that after formulating the 13 principles of faith he became the guardian of Jewish orthodoxy for centuries to come. See Funk 1982, 183–188.

a perspective of a person who simultaneously *belongs* and is an *outsider*. This perspective of "optimal marginality", to borrow a term coined by Neil McLaughlin in his analysis of Fromm's critical position, was to prove crucial for his understanding of modern societies and their ills.[104]

Nobel and Rabinkow showed that the unlikely synthesis of Jewish mysticism and political radicalism was possible. Especially important for Fromm's later attempts at this synthesis of the religious and the political was the idea of messianic time, as preached by the Old Testament prophets. Fromm wasn't particularly enthusiastic about the eschatological visions of certain prophets; however, he was drawn to prophets like Isaiah, Amos and Hosea, who proclaimed that no divine intervention could bring about messianic time, which was in essence a collective and historical creation of mankind as a whole, "the beating of swords into ploughshares", which could be materialized only if mankind succeeds in actualizing all its human potentialities.[105]

All in all, Fromm's Jewish upbringing had a decisive influence on his "voice" or "presence" – despite the fact that he turned his back on Jewish orthodoxy at the end of the 1920s. A certain prophetic tone, reminiscent of the style of the Old Testament and the Talmud, can be recognized in all his works (and particularly in his later writings). Even though prophets aren't moralists per se, the prophetic stance in Fromm's work gives us reason to associate him with a group of thinkers and writers generally referred to as "public moralists".[106] These prophetic influences were not only stylistic, but had a considerable impact also on the contents of Fromm's work.

Fromm's prophetic stance towards modern culture was given further strengthened by his experience of the First World War. Fromm was 14 when the war erupted. The war and the hysterical mood of chauvinist nationalism left him in a state of deep confusion. Instead of fulfilling the messianistic hopes, modern world had plunged into maelstrom of senseless destruction. Fromm wanted to find out why people were driven into destruction, brutality and irrationality. The disaster also made him extremely critical towards official ideologies. He had already understood that instead of following their outspoken motives, most people were led by forces they weren't aware of. The

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104 Burston 1996a, 416; Fromm, Erich, *On Being Human*. Continuum, New York 1994a, 105–110; Funk 1999, 46; Lundgren 1998, 78–81; Thomson 2009, 2, 4. On Fromm's "optimal marginality", see McLaughlin, Neil, "Optimal Marginality: Innovation and Orthodoxy in Fromm's Revision of Psychoanalysis". *The Sociological Quarterly* Volume 42, Number 2, 2001b. Zygmunt Bauman has written extensively on Jewish strangerhood in his work *Modernity and Ambivalence.* See Bauman 1995, 102–159. This theme is given full discussion through Fromm's work and life in the following chapters.

105 Fromm 1966, 121–133; Funk 1982, 2; Funk 1999, 47; Lundgren 1998, 82.

106 In Collini's definition public moralists try to "persuade their contemporaries to live up to their professed ideals". He goes on to add that public moralists usually see "failings of character as the chief source of civic as well as private woe". Collini 1991, 2–3. Since the latter notion regarding "character-building" as the essence of the public moralist's message refers primarily to Collini's analysis on the 19th Century Victorian moralists, it needs to be rethinked here in connection with the particular form of "public moralism" represented by Fromm.

colossal human catastrophes of the 20th Century seemed to validate the apocalyptic visions of certain critics of modernity. Furthermore, if two world wars and holocaust were possible, what could guarantee that the massacre wouldn't continue in the form of nuclear war? No wonder Fromm stated bluntly that the historical period through which he lived "became a social laboratory which never failed".[107]

In 1918 Fromm went to university to study law, but soon changed to psychology, sociology and philosophy. Among his teachers were existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers and Max Weber's brother Alfred Weber – the latter being the supervisor of his dissertation on Jewish Law.[108] During his time at the university Fromm kept close contact with the Jewish community, gave and attended lectures at the Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus, a center for Jewish adult education in Frankfurt, and studied Talmud daily until 1926 after which he turned gradually away from Orthodox Judaism.[109] His later decision to pursue studies on psychoanalysis could also be seen as a turn away from the Orthodox Judaism and towards (at least partial) assimilation. As Löwy points out, for the Jewish bourgeoisie university studies opened up the possibility to climb up the social ladder.[110]

After being introduced in the mid-twenties to Freud's theories by a psychoanalyst Frieda Reichmann, Fromm founded with her a psychoanalytic "therapeuticum" for Jewish patients in Heidelberg. Their relationship soon led into a marriage, which however lasted only for a brief period of time.[111] Fromm

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107 Burston 1991, 10–11; Burston 1995, 416; Fromm 1962, 6–9; Fromm 1966, 11; Funk 1982, 2; Funk 1999, 48; Funk 2000, 34–35; Knapp 1989, 11–12. In his book *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* Fromm mentions another incident from his youth that stimulated his thoughts and had an impact on his later interest in Freud's theories. He "had known a young woman, a friend of the family", a painter, who "was almost invariably in the company of her widowed father". One day shocking news arrived: her father had died and she had killed herself immediately after his death, leaving a testament in which she stated her wish to be buried together with her father. Fromm 1962, 4.

108 See Fromm, Erich, "Das Jüdische Gesetz. Dissertation". In *Erich Fromm Gesamtausgabe in zwölf Banden.* Ed. Rainer Funk. Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München 1999 (1922).

109 The school was founded by Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929) and Martin Buber, the author of *Ich und Du*, was (1878–1965) one of its teachers. Despite apparent similarities between Buber and Fromm, especially what comes to the analysis of alienation through concept-pair's like Thou/It (Buber) and Having/Being (Fromm), Fromm denied any influence by Buber on his thought. See Betz, Brian Richard, *An Analysis of the Prophetic Character of the Dialectical Rhetoric of Erich Fromm.* Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois 1974, 330. On Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus, and Fromm, see Funk 1987, 96–99. Funk also touches briefly Fromm relationship to Buber by pointing out that Fromm wasn't particularly impressed with Buber's teaching.

110 Burston 1991, 15; Burston 1995, 416; Funk 1982, 2–3; Funk 1999, 46; Knapp 1989, 12–15; Löwy, Michael, *Redemption and Utopia. Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe. A Study in Elective Affinity*. The Athlone Press, London 1992 (1988), 31.

111 Reichmann was 11 years older than Fromm, who was initially Frieda's analytic patient and a friend. After their separation, Erich arranged a job for Frieda as a psychiatrist in the United States. She became known later for a work she had done in the treatment of schizophrenia. On Fromm-Reichmann and her relationship to

was also active in the Frankfurter Psychoanalytische Institut and opened his own practice in 1930. He soon got acquainted with a group of revisionist analysts, who all shared the criticism of Freud's Oedipus theory. At the same time he was studying Marx's philosophy intensively. He had a special interest in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, which were released for the first time in 1932. Themes like the alienation of labour and the nature of man, discussed by Marx in his book, became crucial for Fromm's subsequent work. In his eyes the Marxist idea of a coming communist society concurred with the Jewish idea of a messianic time. However, both Freud and Marx led Fromm increasingly away from the strict Orthodox Judaism and its daily rituals and towards a more secular worldview.[112]

By adding to this picture Fromm's growing interest in Buddhism which started in the late 1920s we can already see his "presence" or "voice" forming. His later social and cultural criticism and his vision of the New Society and the New Man had their roots in his original synthesis between Jewish spiritualism, Freudian psychoanalysis, Marxist socialism and humanist thought. This unlikely amalgamation was no accident however. As Michael Löwy has written: "From the middle of the nineteenth century up to 1933, the culture of the Central European Jewish community blossomed in the most extraordinary way, experiencing a *Golden Age* comparable to that of the Judeo-Arab community in twelfth-century Spain".[113] The historical context was ripe for strange syncretic hybrids between Jewish messianism and German romanticism. Fromm's thought was part of this broader phenomenon. The son of a family with a long line of rabbis simply continued the spiritual tradition in a highly unique and controversial way.

This strange synthesis of "materialist" and "spiritualist" thought was largely behind Fromm's strong emphasis on the psychological or "inner" aspects of both capitalist domination and emancipatory politics. For Fromm, social and cultural criticism was essentially psychoanalysis applied on a grand scale. This is what characterized Fromm's "voice" or "presence" as a social critic and a utopian. He sat the whole of western culture on the analyst's couch. However, the diagnosis that society was sick was only a starting point in his grand analysis: a prognosis was needed, a plan to cure the patient from his or her sickness. Collective neuroses were simply larger and more complicated

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Fromm, see Gail A. Hornstein's biography *To Redeem One Person is to Redeem the World*, and Daniel Mackler's criticism of it. Hornstein writes of their affair as a relationship between two consenting adults and sees no particular element of domination in it. Mackler however accuses Frieda of abusing her position as an analyst and an older woman. See Hornstein, Gail A., *To Redeem One Person Is To Redeem The World: A Life of Frieda Fromm-Reichmann*. Free Press, New York 2000, 58–61, 288 and Mackler, Daniel, "An Analysis of the Shadow Side of Frieda Fromm-Reichmann". http://iraresoul.com/ffr.html, 25.1.2010. See also Burston 1991, 23 and Funk 2000, 58–65.

112 Burston 1991, 15–16; Burston 1996a, 417; Fromm 1966, 117–121; Funk 1982, 3; Funk 1999, 48–49; Funk 2000, 58–67; Jay 1974, 42, 89; Knapp 1989, 16–20; Wiggershaus 1995, 5, 55.

113 Löwy 1992, 1–3.

variations of the same forces and patterns which individuals suffer from. To be cured from such neuroses required a readiness to give up illusions – something which was not self-evident in a social system order which seemed to thrive only under all kinds of illusions. Psychoanalysis and socialism were seen by Fromm as two complementary emancipatory traditions whose principles were essentially prophetic: to make people aware of the forces and choices they are really confronted with.

Fromm's interest in both Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxist historical materialism led him to a group of radical thinkers later known as the Frankfurt School. Centered around the Institute for Social Studies, or *Institut für Sozialforschung*, the group was lead by Max Horkheimer. Fromm was largely responsible for the Institute's attempt to form a synthesis between Freud and Marx. Pivotal for this Freudo-Marxist analysis of capitalism and fascism was Fromm's concept of "social character", which he used to explain how the economic or material base influenced the superstructure of society and further the consciousness of individuals. Fromm was convinced that "psychoanalysis can show how the economic situation is transformed into ideology via man's drives".[114] In a class society the ruling minority maintains its domination of majority through the repetition of those psychological structures (reproduced by family, school, workplace and other important social institutions), which are considered beneficial for the smooth working of the existing economic system. This libidinal structure or social character is the cement which keeps the society together by making its objects desire and wish precisely what is wanted from them – even though at a conscious level the oppressed majority might still think they are totally free. This theoretical basis formed the backbone of the Institute's studies on the working class and the family. By the end of the 1930s Fromm however became increasingly critical towards orthodox Freudianism and started to build his own theory. This led to disagreements between Fromm and certain members of the Frankfurt School – namely Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. These theoretical disagreements were furthermore intensified by personal schisms between Fromm and Adorno, and also by the fact that Fromm was constantly travelling because of his tuberculosis. As a result, at the end of the 1930s Fromm became estranged from the Institute and eventually departed from it.[115]

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114 Fromm, Erich, *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis. Essays on Freud, Marx, and Social Psychology*. Henry Holt and Company, New York 1991 (1970), 155.

115 See Funk 2000, 71–101 and McLaughlin, Neil, "Origin Myths in the Social Sciences: Fromm, the Frankfurt School and the Emergence of Critical Theory". In *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*. Volume 24, Number 1, Winter 1999, for a thorough discussion on Fromm's relationship with the institute. See also Burston 1991, 18; Burston 1995, 418–419; Fromm, Erich, Letter to Martin Jay, 14.5.1971, Funk 1982, 3–4, 21; Funk 1999, 49–50; Jay 1974, 88, 98–99, 104–105; Knapp 1989, 20–21, 27–38; Wiggershaus 1995, 56, 161–162, 265–273. On Fromm's work and publications at the Institute, see, among others, *The Working Class in Weimar Germany. A Psychological and Sociological Study*. Trans. Barbara Weinberger. Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1984 (1980a) and Fromm "Part II. The Problem: Its Psychological Aspect". In *Autorität und Familie. Studien as dem Institut für Sozialforschung*. Librairie Félix Alcan, Paris 1936.

The rise of National Socialism in Germany had forced the Institute to relocate from Frankfurt to New York.[116] Fromm, however, had also received an invitation from psychoanalyst Karen Horney to lecture at the Psychoanalytic Institute of Franz Alexander in Chicago. He also soon opened his own practice in New York. Besides these professional reasons for emigration, he also had a relationship with Horney at that time. In New York he joined a group of Neo-Freudian psychoanalysts, united by their critique of Freud's shortcomings. The International Psychoanalytic Association was not particularly fond of this criticism and expelled the "revisionists", including Fromm, from its ranks. This, in part, led to the founding of the William Alanson White Institute in New York – Fromm being one of its founding members. Fromm also gave lectures at some American universities. After Horney and Fromm parted ways, Fromm married a German-born Jewish expatriate Henny Gurland in 1944. Because Henny suffered from rheumatoid arthritis, the couple moved to Mexico in the hope that she would get better, where Fromm took up a professorship at the Universidad National Autónoma de Mexico, while still teaching part-time in America. Henny's condition didn't improve and she died in 1952. Fromm, however, continued his work on psychoanalysis in Mexico.[117]

American mass culture was fundamentally alien to German-Jewish intellectuals who had immigrated to the United States after the rise of National Socialism.[118] Fromm was no exception in this. Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Fromm and other members of the Frankfurt School saw American mass and popular culture as an integral part of capitalism, which strived on conformism and the eradication of individuality. The strangerhood, the feeling of being an outsider, had simply changed its form. In Europe Fromm and his colleagues were Jews in the midst of German mainstream culture; in America they were Jewish intellectuals living in the midst of a rising consumer and mass culture. For the moulding of his "presence" these experiences of strangerhood were as important as his early experiences of living in an Orthodox Jewish environment.

However, Fromm's marginality was "optimal": on the one hand, he could utilise his connections, education and experiences he had gained by working as a psychoanalyst, while, on the other hand, he could take a position outside all institutions. This "optimal marginality" offered a possibility for a "public

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116 The Institute also had branches in Geneva, Paris and London, but New York became a base for its operations. On a more comprehensive account on the Institute's different phases and its relocation to New York, see Funk 2000, 77–81; Jay 1974, 3–40, Wiggershaus 1995, 127–148.

117 Burston 1991, 18–20; Burston 1995, 418–420; Funk 1982, 4–5; Funk 1999, 49–50; Funk 2000, 63, 116–130; Ingleby, David, "Introduction to the Second Edition". In Fromm, Erich, *The Sane Society*. Routledge, London & New York 2002, xlv; Jay 1974, 297; Knapp 1989, 37, 39–43, 67; Thomson 2009, 15.

118 In her study on European intellectual immigrants in the United States, Laura Fermi notes that Germans were often more critical towards American culture than intellectuals of other nations. She attributes this criticism in part to the rich cultural heritage of Germany. Fermi, Laura, *Illustrious Immigrants. The Intellectual Immigration From Europe 1930–1941*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London 1968, 99–100.

moralism", if we follow Collini's characterisation of a public moralist as a figure who never speaks "from somewhere located, mysteriously, 'outside' society", but instead tries to form a more intimate relation with the audience.[119]

The sociocultural context was favourable for a German psychoanalyst starting to build a career in America. The appreciation of psychoanalysis was on the rise and prominent European specialists were particularly respected, since, after all, it was Germany where the whole movement had originated. In addition to this, American universities used the political situation to their advantage and offered positions for prominent European scholars. In addition, American institutions were generally receptive to the immigrant intellectuals – assuming of course they were willing to work in English. Fromm's unique perspective on American society and culture was certainly deepened through his psychoanalytic work. As Laura Fermi notes on immigrant analysts: "Practicing analysis on American patients opened a window on the most intimate aspects of American life, its conflicts and motivations".[120]

After the split with the Institute Fromm started to publish independent works in English. His first book, *Escape from Freedom* (1941), was a great success and formed a basis for his later popularity. At least partly under the influence of American academic style, Fromm tried to avoid technicalities and scientific jargon as much as possible and directed his writings to professionals and laymen alike. His attempt at a grand scale narrative of modern societies and their genealogy also attracted readers. All these decisions were reflected positively in the book sales. Among his most popular books were *The Sane Society* (1955), a modern classic in social criticism, *The Art of Loving* (1956) an analysis on the absence of love in capitalist societies and *To Have or To Be?* (1976), an ambitious synthesis of his later thought. Commercial success, in turn, was followed by academic criticism of Fromm's position.[121] Prophetic stance

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119 Collini 1991, 3. In the case of social critics like Fromm and other Frankfurt School thinkers the question of moralism is, however, complicated, since their point was not to accuse the individual for his or her shortcomings or demand improvement, but to analyse the social aspects of their suffering. In the case of Fromm alone, the situation gets even more complicated, since after leaving the Institute Fromm quickly developed his own approach to radical politics by stressing both personal or inner and social aspects in emancipation.

120 Fermi 1968, 139–173. On Fromm's adaptation to American society, see also Bronner, Stephen Eric, "Fromm in America". In *Erich Fromm und die Frankfurter Schule*. Ed. M. Kessler & R. Funk. Akten des internationalen, interdisziplinären Symposions Stuttgart-Hohenheim vom 31. 5. bis 2. 6. 1991, Tübingen (Francke Verlag) 1992. http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/Bronner,%20S.%20E.,%201992.pdf. 25.1.2010; Burston 1991, 20–22 and Wiggershaus 1995, 146.

121 For example, in his review of Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*, psychiatrist Karl Menninger wrote that "Fromm wrote as if he considered himself a psychoanalyst" and that he represented a "unique cross between a psychoanalytic heretic and a cultural celebrity". Hornstein counters this critique in her biography of Fromm's first wife Frieda by characterizing Menninger's critique as "an extraordinary statement from a man whose training was far less rigorous than Erich's and whose own books were best sellers". See Hornstein 2000, 288. On the academic criticism – and appraisal – of Fromm's work, see also Burston, Daniel & Olfman, Sharna, "Freud, Fromm, and the Pathology of Normalcy". In *A Prophetic Analyst: Erich Fromm's Contributions to Psychoanalysis*. Ed. Mauricio Cortina & Michael Maccoby. Jason Aronson, Northvale

and willingness to paint a big picture on modern societies' hopes and woes seemed to demand certain compromises regarding the details of the analyses. However, psychoanalytic discussion on alienation aroused considerable interest in the American public, especially as the writer was known as a prominent European specialist in the field. Gaining a wide audience suited Fromm's prophetic mission perfectly – never, however leading him to compromise his ideals or hide his views. His image as a public intellectual was further strengthened by his attempt to act as a mediator between different streaks of modern culture.[122] In this respect, certain attention must be paid to the rhetorical strategies he used to reach popular success and to bridge the gap between discourses which were conventionally seen as separate or even categorically incompatible.

Fromm never abandoned his fascination with political messianism. He had been interested in politics since his childhood, but wasn't politically active until the 1950s, when he joined the Socialist Party of America and later participated in the peace movement. In the 1950s and 1960s Fromm was a fierce critic of the Cold War and nuclear armament, condemning, like Herbert Marcuse, both Western capitalism and Soviet totalitarianism. He kept a close correspondence up with several internationally well-known critics of war and aggression in an attempt to persuade the public to seek peace instead of war. He was also one of the founding members of SANE, The Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy, and took part in action against the war in Vietnam. For Fromm, the Cold War represented an acute threat against the survival of mankind: the human world was standing on the brink of nuclear destruction and had finally arrived at the stage where the idiom "barbarism or humanism" had become a gruesome reality. The threat of nuclear disaster, escalation of the war in Vietnam and the general atmosphere of protest and disorder of the 1960s all added credibility to Fromm's rhetoric that a radical change was needed right now. Indeed, a metaphor of mankind standing at the "fork of the road", was an indispensable part of Fromm's figurative toolbox, even though he stated it explicitly only once. Despite all the signs against it, Fromm never ceased to believe that a radical change was possible. In the late 1960s his popularity was at its peak. After suffering a heart attack in 1966, he decided to reduce his public appearances and concentrate on writing. In 1974 he moved to Locarno in

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1996, 321; McLaughlin, Neil, "Nazism, Nationalism, and the Sociology of emotions: *Escape from Freedom* Revisited". In *Sociological Theory*. Volume 14, Issue 3, November 1996, 241–244, McLaughlin, Neil, "Why Do Schools of Thought Fail? Neo-Freudianism as a Case Study in the Sociology of Knowledge". In *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*. Volume 34, Number 2, Spring 1998b, 123–125 and commentaries from various academics at the end of article Fromm, Erich, "War Within Man. A Psychological Inquiry into the Roots of Destructiveness". American Philadelphia Service Committee, Philadelphia, (1963b). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1963g-e.pdf.

122 Burston 1991, 20–22; Burston 1995, Funk 1982, 6–9; Knapp 1989, 44–45, 65–66. On Fromm's popularity in America, see especially Bronner 2010.

southern Switzerland with his third wife, Annis Freeman, where he died in 1980.[123]

Radical social change, or material revolution, however, was for Fromm only a prerequisite for a more profound spiritual revolution. In his view, revolution in the socioeconomic sphere wasn't sufficient, but had to go hand in hand with an inner revolution, with a change in the character structure of individuals. This emphasis on the psychological or inner conditions of liberation had its roots in Fromm's Jewish background, but also in his interest in Buddhism. Through the influence of the prominent Zen scholar Daisetz T. Suzuki, Fromm became particularly interested in Zen Buddhism. Here Fromm seemed to relive his relationship with the rabbis of the Frankfurt Jewish community of the 1920s. This setting between the pupil and the master was again repeated in the 1970s when Fromm and his wife Annis were introduced to Theravada Buddhism by Nyanaponika Mahathera. Despite his insistence on autonomy and the integrity of the individual, Fromm always had his masters. This doesn't necessarily constitute a contradiction in his views, since he never tried to topple authority altogether, only its "pathological" forms.[124]

Religiosity, for Fromm, was not a matter of holy dogmas and mindlessly repeated dependencies, but an experience of constant renewal, of unity with all living beings, of active and productive being-in-the-world, of biophilia (love of life in all its forms). Even though there was not much room for religion in his materialistic critique of capitalist domination or in his utopian vision of the City of Being, Fromm felt he was not taking a stand against religion per se, but instead continuing the spiritual tradition in a radical fashion. In his view systematic and holistic change of the whole structure of society could be achieved only by coupling the material struggles against injustice, poverty and capitalist exploitation with the spiritual struggles aiming at a full actualization of human potentialities.

Fromm's thought can be characterized as an original synthesis of unlikely opposites like socialism and religion, rational thinking and mysticism, individual freedom and a sense of community, critique and prophecy, strangerhood and belonging.[125] The strong humanist emphasis of the Jewish tradition, the spirit of "modern prophecy" and critical analysis in the vein of

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123 Bronner 2010, 7–8; Burston 1991, 27–28; Burston 1995, 421–422; Funk 1982, 5–6; Funk 2000, 142–153; Knapp 1989, 141, 143–144, 158–167. In the 1960s Fromm also wrote some speeches for Eugene McCarthy in his campaign to be nominated as the presidential candidate for the Democratic Party. See Fromm 1994a, 50–61, 88–96. McCarthy's race, however, was not successful.

124 Burston 1995, 421; Funk 1982, 3, 8, 113, 332–333; Lundgren 1998, 30–38. See also Fromm, Erich, *The Art of Being*. Constable, London 2001 (1993), 49–54.

125 On this idea, see for example Burston 1991, 14–15 and Knapp 1989, 2. Michael Maccoby, Fromm's assistant in Mexico during the 1960s, distinguishes two voices in Fromm's work: analytical and prophetic. In Maccoby's view, best results could be expected when these two voices were in balance with one another. Maccoby, Michael, "The Two Voices of Erich Fromm: The Prophetic and the Analytic". In *A Prophetic Analyst: Erich Fromm's Contributions to Psychoanalysis*. Ed. Mauricio Cortina & Michael Maccoby. Jason Aronson, Northvale 1996, 61–91.

Marx, Freud and others formed a synthesis which, for some, was a collection of lofty prophetic ideals that was out of touch with current social conditions, but for others it offered a feasible vision of radical change.

Löwy uses the concept of *elective affinity* to describe this dialectical relationship between Jewish messianism and 20th Century libertarian utopias. This synthesis formed the basis for various exceptionally creative and inventive hybrids created by young Jewish radicals.[126] Fromm's thought, too, was characterized by multiple instances of elective affinity: his work represented not only an example of the Judeo-Germanic synthesis analyzed by Löwy, but also a synthesis between Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxist social critique, between Jewish tradition and leftist radicalism, between European scholarship and American popular psychology. Both the strength and weakness of this unique synthesis lie in the immense distance between the opposites Fromm was trying to pull together. As any theory of metaphor can tell us, it is precisely this distance which makes the attempt at figuration worthwhile and interesting, since any attempt at a radical invention of language – and, thus, of culture itself – must aim at a resolute reorganization of the conventional associations between concepts, ideas, discourses etc.

Despite being a stranger in a strange land in more ways than one, Fromm refused the role of detached outsider and instead took on an "ultimate concern" for it.[127] He wanted to heal the society by analyzing its neuroses in the conviction that the fate of the individual was connected to that of the society. Since everything eventually flows from the One – as the great spiritual and humanistic traditions all over the world have taught – men, too, are interdependent on one another in myriad ways. With the sensibility of a dialectician who understands the immense and sometimes mystifying role of change in history, instead of offering a sermon of despair or a detached analysis of alienation Fromm sought to deliver a vision of a regeneration and reinvigoration of modernity. It is the painful recognition of the almost complete alienation of modern life coupled with the insistence on the possibilities of the universal flowering of human potentialities which characterizes Fromm's ambivalent "presence" more than anything else.

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126 On the concept of elective affinity, see Löwy 1992, 6–13.

127 The concept of ultimate concern was coined by the existentialist theologian Paul Tillich. He writes: "If religion is defined as a state of 'being grasped by an ultimate concern' – which is also my definition of faith – then we must distinguish this as a universal or large concept from our usual smaller concept of religion which supposes an organized group with its clergy, scriptures, and dogma, by which a set of symbols for the ultimate concern is accepted and cultivated in life and thought". Tillich, Paul, *Ultimate Concern - Tillich in Dialogue by D. Mackenzie Brown*. http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=538&C=598. 26.1.2010.

3 TO ARRIVE. Narratives of Triumph and Decay

3.1 The Great Promise

Fromm's understanding of modernity relies to a great extent to the overlapping concepts of *crisis* and *alienation*. Our world is beset by man-made tragedies. The almost complete alienation in both the structural-institutional and subjective-experiential spheres of society and culture is the most tangible symptom the multidimensional crisis plaguing modernity. This is Fromm's message as an analyst and a social critic. Fromm, however, was no defeatist. The sometimes apocalyptic tone of his writing is not meant as a doomsday prophecy (which is evident if we understand it in the context of his whole work), but as a warning against the dehumanization of society and as a call for a thorough re-evaluation of the hitherto neglected potentialities of modernity.

Fromm's narrative of modernity is fundamentally a story of a protagonist fallen from the grace at the ultimate moment in history. This chapter is an attempt to grasp Fromm's view regarding the genesis of modernity and its evolution from a force promising salvation and emancipation into inhuman machinery which turns against its creators and subjugates them under endless dependencies. At the outset, it is important to note the "historical" nature of Fromm's theory: even though he had strong sympathies towards universalist humanist ideals, he is not proposing a timeless theory of emancipation situated somewhere outside history, but instead follows the tradition of Critical Theory and Marxism in building a theory based on the understanding of central historical processes.[128]

Despite his strong Orthodox Jewish influences, Fromm didn't see modernity as a mere catastrophe, but instead adopted a highly ambivalent approach to it. In his view, modernity was also about a promise for a better world. This promise was pivotal in the creation of the atmosphere of hope

128 This stance is expressed forcefully by Horkheimer in his formative essay "Traditional and Critical Theory" from 1937. See Horkheimer 2007.

which characterized the early modern era. Fromm starts building the tension already at the beginning of his narrative. Decisive moments are at hand: the sense of danger comes together with great promises. This is the dialectics of all emancipation, as Fromm remembers to tell us in his *Escape from Freedom* – freedom comes with a price of uncertainty. The moment of liberation is simultaneously the moment of the greatest peril.

Inspired by "the great promise", Western civilization reached unforeseen heights. The new self-confidence and pride was not without substance. By using his reason man[129] had liberated himself from the blind rule of chance and was rapidly increasing his powers to control nature. By developing the forms of production man had guaranteed material satisfaction and increased leisure time for growing number of people. And by developing the technologies of transportation and communication man had overcome geographical constraints and united the world in a totally new way. The Renaissance and the Enlightenment had paved the way for the liberation of man from the shackles of the medieval world. This was a necessary prerequisite for the birth of a new kind of subjectivity. For Fromm, this new emphasis on the value and rights of the individual constitutes the single most important achievement of modernity. The idea of an autonomous modern subject, capable of determining his own social conditions and creating his own history is an indispensable part of this new subjectivity, which was further strengthened by the synthesis between rationalist and religious-spiritual traditions, and between intellect and moral conscience. Furthermore, industrialism seemed to offer mankind the tools to build a new society envisaged by the various (socialist, anarchist etc.) utopias of total transformation.[130]

From all this, we can see that Fromm agrees with certain features of progressivism. The progressivist argument is that we can evaluate historical processes by using certain criteria and thus determine in which respect genuine progress has been made (i.e. alleviation of suffering, improvement in living conditions, extension of autonomy etc.). This view of Fromm as a proponent of

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129 The dated and arguably sexist practice of adopting the word "man" to refer to humanity in general is used here to highlight Fromm's own linguistic choices. For a brief discussion on Fromm's view regarding the sexist use of language, see Chapter 7.4.

130 Fromm, Erich, *Escape from Freedom*. Henry Holt and Company, New York 1994 (1941), ix, 2, 106–108; Fromm, Erich, *Man for Himself. An Inquiry Into The Psychology of Ethics*. Routledge, London & New York 2003 (1947), 1–2; Fromm, Erich, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press 1978 (1950), 1; Fromm, Erich, *The Sane Society*. Routledge, London & New York 2002 (1955a), 346–347; Fromm 1962, 194; Fromm, Erich, *Dogma of Christ and Other Essays on Religion, Psychology and Culture*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1963a, 70; Fromm, Erich, *The Heart of Man. Its Genius for Good and Evil*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1965 (1964a), 21; *To Have or To Be*. Jonathan Cape, London 1978 (1976), 1; Fromm, Erich, *On Disobedience and Other Essays*. The Seabury Press, New York 1981, 58–59; Fromm 1994a, 20. In an interview by Mike Wallace from 1958 Fromm praises United States largely for the same achievements. See Fromm, Erich, "Interview with Mike Wallace". In *Survival and Freedom*. No. 5. The Fund for the Republic, New York, (1958). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1958b-e.pdf, 1.

progressivism is, however, misleading, as we can see later on. Suffice to say here that Fromm shares with progressivism the idea that we can determine the value of historical processes by utilizing the concepts of progression and regression. In fact, this concept-pair forms the basis for Fromm's understanding of the development of humanity and the individual alike, as the subsequent analysis will show.

For Fromm the early modern belief in progress wasn't merely ideology, but was also characterized by deeply religious sentiment. This earthly religion of progress had its holy trinity: limitless growth of production, complete freedom and growing happiness. It wanted to replace the other-worldly City of God with a this-worldly vision of perfection, which filled the hearts of the builders of this new world with hope, vigor and enthusiasm. For Fromm, the early modern era was as religious as the 13th Century, for example, had been. Religiosity had simply gained new meanings and was expressed through new concepts.[131] However, by referring to the religious roots of progressivist ideology Fromm didn't mean to discredit it, but instead wanted to highlight his conviction that there is a universal humanist tradition of emancipation, which has been manifested in countless forms throughout history, but remains in essence largely unchanged.

Fromm's view of the religion of progress – the continuance of religious wishes and ideals in a secular form in modern cultures – is shared by Karl Löwith in his well-known secularization theory. For Löwith, there is no decisive rupture between premodern and modern. Religiosity didn't disappear with modernity, but instead went through a metamorphosis. Other-wordly visions were replaced with this-worldly hopes, as the various socialist utopias showed. Likewise, German romantics like Schiller and others saw art as a "substitute" for the lost religious sentiments in modernity, as Habermas notes. Koselleck. too, sees modern philosophy of history as a successor of theology: "Christian eschatology in its modified form of secular progress, Gnostic-Manichean elements submerged in the dualism of morality and politics, ancient theories of circularity, and finally the application of the new laws of history to history itself – all contributed to the development of the eighteenth-century historic-philosophical consciousness".[132]

The rise of the ideology of progress, which Fromm uses as a starting-point for his analysis of modernity in the form of "the religion of progress", was of course an essential part of the early modern and especially 19th Century discourses on civilization, society, culture and technology. The intellectual foundations of this ideology were laid, to a great extent, by Enlightenment

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131 Fromm, Erich, *Marx's Concept of Man. With Translations of Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts by T.B. Bottomore*. Continuum, New York 1997 (1961a), vi; Fromm 1976, 1–2; Fromm 1994a, 20.

132 Habermas, Jürgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Twelve Lectures.* Polity Press, Oxford 1987, 45–50; Koselleck 1988, 130. On Löwith's theories see Blumenberg, Hans, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*. MIT Press, Cambridge 1993 (1966), 15–16 and Wallace, Robert M., "Translator's Introduction". In Blumenberg, Hans, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*. MIT Press, Cambridge 1993 (1966), xiv–xvii.

philosophy, even though the idea of the control and domination of nature had its roots in the thought of philosophers like Bacon and Descartes. This signaled also a shift in the approach to philosophy, which had traditionally followed the ancient ideal of contemplation. Philosophy was to take a new active role in the world; its utility and instrumental value was emphasized. The function of science, however, was not confined merely to the control of nature. Science was seen as an invaluable tool in the rational reorganization of society. The progress of science and reason was to be followed by corresponding progress in happiness and morals. The evolution "from darkness to light" necessitated a turn from the past towards the future, from tradition towards rationally created order. Positivists, Hegelians, Marxists, Social Darwinists and even some traditionalists shared the progressivist approach and dealt with the ever-accelerating social change by referring to evolutionary schemata. As Löwy writes: "This paradigm of progress was so attractive that it even shaped the thought of its traditionalist adversaries, who tended increasingly to accept it as an inevitable fate and merely placed a minus sign where the dominant ideology marked a plus". The ideology of progress transformed the idea of modernity into a *will*, as Alain Touraine aptly notes.[133]

Profound belief in man and his possibilities was not only shared by the Enlightenment thinkers or the ideologists of progress, but was a much wider phenomenon. For example William Blake, who was highly critical of Enlightenment thought, still shared the belief in the capacity of man to shake off all "mind forged manacles" and to create a New Jerusalem where reason and energy would come together.[134] The same mood of hope can be found in the writings of continental romanticists, such as Goethe, even though romantics rarely shared the Enlightenment belief in instrumental reason and technological progress. However, they usually shared the general optimism of the earlier 19th Century.[135]

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133 On modernity and progress see, for example, Adorno & Horkheimer 2002, 2; Baumer 1977, 31, 246–248, 302-366; Habermas 1987, 5, 13; Hamilton, Peter, "The Enlightenment and the Birth of the Social Science". In *Formations of Modernity*. Ed. Stuart Hall & Bram Gieben. Polity Press & Open University, Cambridge 1992, 37; Löwy 1992, 203–204; Stromberg, Roland N., *European Intellectual History Since 1789*. 4th ed. Prentice Hall, New Jersey 1986, 74–84, 91–132, 164–166; Taylor 2002, 105, 143–158, 230–233; Touraine 1995 61–65.

134 See, for example, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and *Jerusalem*. Blake, William, *The Complete Prose & Poetry of William Blake*. Ed. David V. Erdman. Anchor Books, New York 1988, 33–45; 144–259. Perhaps one reason why the Enlightenment philosophers are usually portrayed as representatives of the early modern belief in man is that the Enlightenment thought fits perfectly with theories emphasizing rationalization as the fundamental idea of modernity. However, since modernity cannot be reduced to rationalization alone, as several contemporary theorists have argued, my intention here is to point out that many modern beliefs and practices which are often assigned to Enlightenment alone are much more widespread.

135 See, for example, Baumer 1977, 268–301 and Stromberg 1986, 37, 44–46. Like many other Jewish intellectuals of the early 20th Century, Fromm admired Goethe tremendously. He was particularly inspired by Goethe's faith and hope in the perfection of man. See for example, Fromm 1962, 195.

Alain Touraine sees this early modern belief in progress as an indispensable part of the first phase of modernity which he characterizes as *negative modernity*. Touraine's reference to the negative character of this phase of modernity is not a normative argument against it, but a characterization of its dynamics. Negative modernity set itself against the injustices and horrors of the *ancien régime* and declared that all traditions which restricted the freedom of humanity were to be crushed. The rising modernity utilized the metaphor of the *tabula rasa* in the social context by proclaiming that society and culture should be rebuilt from scratch. Reason was given the function of creating order out of the chaotic flux of incessant changes. This notion is found in Freud, too, who saw order-building as the fundamental principle of any society: "Order is a kind of compulsion to repeat which, when a regulation has been laid down once and for all, decides when, where and how a thing shall be done, so that in every similar circumstance one is spared hesitation and indecision". Bauman associates the ideal picture of the project of modernity with a garden[136], with every tree and plant growing in a carefully designated place and in a carefully designated fashion. The same metaphor was utilized by Foucault in his *Discipline and Punish* which includes an image of a crooked tree supported by a pole so that it can grow straight again. As long as modernity had a visible enemy and as long as the traditional social order represented a threat to its existence, the negative phase of modernity was legitimized. Touraine writes: " … the joyous destruction of the sacred and its taboos and rites was an indispensable part of the entry in to modernism". This ethos was characterized by a thirst for life and a wish to create a new world, limited only by the imagination of its creators and based on reason instead of religious dogmas or traditional authorities.[137]

Fromm's depiction of the rise of Western civilization is characteristic of his style of writing in the sense that he is interested primarily in contextualizing his narrative of modernity within huge historical processes and not with intricate local minutiae. This perhaps results in a poor historiography, particularly if we are interested in the accuracy of the details of the story. Instead resolving how Fromm's sweeping generalizations distort our view of the diversity of the pas, perhaps a more productive way would be to figure out why he was fascinated with grand narratives in the first place. Partial answer can be found in the

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136 The gardening metaphor, used by critics and proponents of modernity alike, refers principally to the differentiation between the organic (or natural) and the artificial (or man-made). The difference between the two uses of the same metaphor comes from its designated associations. One interpretation would be that the critics want to highlight how this kind order treats the plants (i.e. humans) as a material to be moulded and confined, while the proponents aim to represent the process of ordering as an encouragement and perfection of the potentialities inherent in the plants (humans).

137 Bauman 1995, 5–7, 20–39; Foucault 1977; Freud 1981a, 93; Touraine 1995, 1, 3, 9–12, 18–19, 28–32. Berman, in turn, refers to Baudelaire view of progress as an inherently negative process, which simultaneously gives "new enjoyments to offer" and still constitutes the "most cruel and ingenious torture". Baudelaire saw progress as a scorpion stinging its own tail. See Berman 1988, 142.

influence of 19th Century German neo-romantic German philosophy of history and Marxist philosophy of history on Fromm's thought. In this sense Fromm was simply repeating the conventional narratives of history. Theological and religious influence of the Jewish tradition further strengthened his fascination with processes taking place at the macro-level.

Fromm's enthusiastic appraisal of the achievements of modernity raises a question regarding the rhetorical strategies of his narrative. This is not meant to imply that Fromm was fundamentally an anti-modernist and saw no genuine progress in modernity. However, for Fromm the very achievements of modernity (the development of technology, the improvement of material conditions and new emphasis on subjectivity etc.) contained also the seeds of alienation and ruin. It was the dialectical nature of modernity, which gave birth to the crisis. Thus, the choice of highlighting the "genuine achievements" of modernity as a sort of a preface to a harsh criticism of modern societies can be seen as a rhetorical act in the sense that throughout his work Fromm was simultaneously trying to avoid been understood as an idealistic optimist, on the one hand, and as a misanthropic pessimist on the other. Fromm particularly wanted to avoid being seen as a pessimist by his American audience, since there was a plausible chance that his extremely critical view of the United States as a fundamentally sick society would scare away the audience and leave an impression of a discontented European intellectual ungratefully scolding his new homeland and finding nothing of value in it.

All in all, Fromm didn't see modernity as a mere catastrophe, but recognized an element of hope in it. This sense of openness to the potentialities of modernity is something he always tried to emphasize in his narrative on modernity. Here Fromm concurs with dialectical approach of Critical Theory to modernity, as spelled out by Horkheimer: " … the theory says that the basic form of the historically given commodity economy on which modern history rests contains in itself the internal and external tensions of the modern era; it generates these tensions over and over again in an increasingly heightened form; and after a period of progress, development of human powers, and emancipation of the individual, after an enormous extension of human control over nature, it finally hinders further development and drives humanity into a new barbarism…"[138] Rhetorically, the emphasis on the "positive" or "benign" aspects of modernity can be seen as a way of building up the tension, preparing the stage for the "fall" and thus strengthening the tragic element. There are at least two approaches to this rhetorical strategy. On the one hand it can be seen as mere trickery which has the intention of misleading the public by representing the current situation in hyperbolic contrasts. On the other hand, it can be seen as a way of dealing with the dialectics of modernity itself. Here the point is that the processes leading to our current situation are not by any means

138 Horkheimer 2007, 356–357. See also Fromm's lecture "Mental Health" from 1953, in which he presents a similarly ambivalent narrative on the achievements and malaises of modernity. Fromm, Erich, Mental Health. Lecture given at HUCSTR, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1953 (audio).

unambiguous and linear, but instead hopelessly contradictory and contested. It is only Fromm's narrative technique of representing the achievements of modernity as a prelude to the story of the fall or alienation which questions his dialectic approach, since in the context of his whole work his adherence to dialectics is more than evident.[139]

3.2 The Fall

There is a statue of Prometheus in Chernobyl holding a fire stolen from the gods.[140] Prometheus, a tragic hero rebelling against the gods, was adopted as the patron saint of both romantics and revolutionaries of the 1848 in their struggle against the injustices of their time. The myth of Prometheus was not alien to Fromm either. He saw Prometheus as a symbol of mankind's quest in history and as a beginning of its self-consciousness through the first act of disobedience. Prometheus showed that man can make his own history without help from gods.[141] However, the fate of Prometheus in the myth was not particularly enviable. As a punishment, Zeus chained him to the rock in the mountains, where a mythic eagle called Aethon tore at his liver day after day.

The narrative structure of virtually every presentation of modernity given by Fromm follow basically the same pattern. He portrays the rise of modernity with stark contrasts: its achievements are seen as a prelude for a colossal fall from grace.[142] In his work a Fromm returns repeatedly to this crucial question: why did everything crumble to pieces at the very moment when man seemed to stand at the highest peak of his historical achievement? How can we understand the enormous gap between expectations and realities? Essentially, the question posed by Fromm is the same which Adorno and Horkheimer took as the starting point for their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: "Why humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism?" This question is rephrased by Fromm in a lecture against the Vietnam war: "How is it possible that at the very moment when the human race seems to be on the verge of fulfilling the dreams of centuries, there is this tremendous indifference to the destruction of all?"[143]

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139 The dialectical rhetorical strategy would have been, obviously, to represent the hopes and woes of modernity together, as interwoven.

140 For a picture, see Anon, "Kiddofspeed – GHOST TOWN – Chernobyl Pictures – Elena's Motorcycle Ride through Chernobyl". http://www.kiddofspeed.com/chapter27.html, 27.1.2010 .

141 Berman 1992, 39; Fromm 1963a, 114.

142 See, for example, Fromm 1941, 108; Fromm 1962, 194; Fromm 1963a, 70; Fromm 1994a, 21.

143 Adorno & Horkheimer 2002, xiv; Fromm, Erich, "The War in Vietnam and the Brutalization of Man". Unpublished, (1990c). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1990r-e.pdf, 1.

Ultimately, for Fromm, the crisis is not just about technology, but has much deeper roots. As a psychoanalyst Fromm was primarily interested in the psychological conditions of emancipation. Thus, Fromm's point of departure into the socio-psychological dynamics of modernity is to question why freedom (and responsibility which followed it) was experienced as a burden and not as a possibility, and why people were willing to give up their new freedoms for the sake of security and certainty. This theme of the escape from freedom is expressed aptly by Berman: "How many people out there are rooting for Zeus, how many would give back the fire and apologize to the gods, if only they could".[144]

Fromm portrays 20th Century history as a series of catastrophes following one after another. The moral breakdown begins with the First World War, which was supposed to be a war that would end all wars. Instead there was the rise of National Socialism, the dictatorships of Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin, the destruction of millions of Jews during the Holocaust, Hiroshima, the Cold War and the nuclear arms race… For Bauman, the marginalizing of the Holocaust and seeing it only as a question pertaining to the relation between Jews and Germans nullifies the lesson given to us by history. Fromm, and in fact the Critical Theory as a whole, would wholeheartedly agree with this. From this perspective, 20th Century human catastrophes were an integral part of the dynamics of modernity, not some external or random events that just happened to take place outside the actual historical processes.[145]

For Fromm, the unwanted ramifications of modernity weren't limited to these material catastrophes, but were manifested also as psychological or spiritual ailments. Psychologically, the average person[146] is characterized by

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144 Berman 1992, 39.

145 Bauman 1995, 18–19; Fromm 1941, 2–3; Fromm 1963a, 70; Fromm 1964a, 21; Fromm 1981, 59; Fromm 1994a, 20–21; Jay 1974, 134. Giddens, too, recognizes the connection between modernity and totalitarianism. Giddens 1995, 172. This conception shared by Bauman, Giddens and others, is against the picture given to us by the ideologists of modernity and civilization, according to which violence and brutality is predominantly an archaic phenomenon, a remnant of our premodern past, while modern societies are seen as principally pacifist ones. For a further discussion, see Giddens 1995, 9.

146 The dubious concepts of the "average person" and "normal person" appear in Fromm's writings repeatedly. We could ask a simple question: what kind of "person" is this abstraction supposed to be? Who is this universal "person" devoid of any particular qualities? We dealing here with the definitions and uses of "normality", which will be discussed in detail in the Chapter 4.2. However, there is one point that should be made here. It is obvious that Fromm uses the notions of "average" and "normal" as a linguistic tool which help him to carry on his socio-psychoanalytical critique on a general level, but the question is why does he resort to this kind of abstraction even though as an analyst he must be perfectly aware of the fact that such a "person" has never existed? Reference to the wide-spread use of these kinds of formulations during the early 20th Century discourse on society is not enough here. First of all, the answer has to do with Fromm's observation or idea that various psychological symptoms of alienation constitute together a broader syndrome of decay. Thus, people who are more or less assimilated into the dynamics of sick societies most probably suffers from the same kinds of neuroses. In this sense, a person is "normal", as it is normal to suffer under unfavourable conditions.

overwhelming passivity. He or she identifies more or less completely with the prevailing values and norms presented to him as necessities by the existing socio-economic institutions. People live under the illusion that they are free, even though in reality their lives are strictly regimented to suit the demands of the dominant socioeconomic structure. They have been transformed into "eternal consumers", "eternal children" and "eternal sucklings", who strive obediently to satisfy their artificial needs, which are manipulated by the apparatus. The capitalist mode of production reduces men and women to *objects*; it turns them into cogs in a huge machine. This deadening of life results in alienation. To make the picture even bleaker, liberatory movements like psychoanalysis and socialism have deteriorated into ideologies and frozen dogmas and have thus lost their former role in the emancipation of man.[147]

> *"We have affluence, but we do not have amenity. We are wealthier, but we have less freedom. We consume more, but we are emptier. We have more atomic weapons, but we are more defenceless. We have more education, but we have less critical judgement and convictions. We have more religion, but we have become more materialistic."*[148]

However, tragedy comes ultimately from the realization that these developments are still under way, which implies that the conditions are constantly deteriorating if nothing is done. The contradiction between ideals and realities is staggering: "We continue to profess individualism, freedom and faith in God, but our professions are wearing thin when compared with the reality of the organization man's obsessional conformity guided by the principle of hedonistic materialism".[149] This can be seen as rhetoric of a public moralist pointing out the hypocrisies of society. The strategy is to take a widely accepted notion regarding morality, society etc., as a starting point, and then show that in reality these ideals amount to nothing more than just useless chatter. Fromm gives us another example of this method in "Citizens for Reason", written in 1955: "We believe that the majority of Americans have enough reason, enough common sense, enough love for their children and for life, not to want any gamble with war".[150] However, the notion of moralizing is

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Secondly, the use of the conceptions of the "normal" or "average" person, comes from Fromm's conviction regarding the illusory nature of modern individuality. In this sense, the reference to the abstract notion of the "normal" or the "average" can be seen as an indictment against the levelling influence of conformist culture which has taken away the particularities of individuals by subjugating them to the determining power of socio-cultural abstractions.

147 Fromm 1941, 3–4; Fromm 1955a, 347–348; Fromm 1961a, vi–vii; Fromm 1962, 194; Fromm 1976, 2–3; Fromm 1994a, 21–26. On Fromm's view regarding the distortion of Marx's and Freud's legacy, see Fromm 1962, 146–260.

148 Fromm 1981, 61.

149 Fromm, Erich, *The Revolution of Hope. Towards a Humanized Technology*. Bantam Books, New York 1971 (1968a). 28. Another quotation repeats the same message: "Children in Sunday school learn that honesty and integrity and concern for the soul should be the guiding principles of life, while 'life' teaches us that to follow these principles makes us at best unrealistic dreamers." Fromm 1950, 2.

150 Fromm, Erich, "'Citizens for Reason'". Unpublished, (1990d). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1990u-e.pdf. 2.

a bit troublesome here. If we assume that the moralist is principally interested in exposing the inadequacies in following the outspoken ideals of society, then we should consider all social criticism directed against the manipulative use of language as mere moralizing. This is a difficult position to hold. Thus, Fromm's criticism regarding the gap between ideals and realities can be seen as a rhetorical attack against the distorting use of language. This kind of critique was easily accessible to a wide public, especially during the 1960s when the mismatch between ideals and realities seemed so evident.

The psychological symptoms of alienation are manifested by increasing anxiety and disorientation. Western man is dimly aware of the futility of all the pains he has gone through. He is insecure and lonely, doesn't find happiness in his life despite the affluence that surrounds him. For an increasing number of people life has lost its meaning. Meaningless life, in turn, would be intolerable without the figurative and literal sedatives given to man by the cultural "noise", which make him numb to the inhuman realities. Nietzsche's cry: "God is dead!" gains even bleaker formulation in Fromm's use: "Man is dead!" No wonder Fromm stated that "sentimental optimism is not my mood of thought".[151]

But how does Fromm narrate this mismatch between expectations and realities in modernity? How does he manage to weave together the seemingly contradictory plotlines of *triumph* and *decay*? First of all, he states explicitly the need for certain guiding narratives. He does this by utilizing a cartographic or topographic metaphor:

> "*We are not on the way to the places toward which our ideological maps tell us we are moving. We are marching in an entirely different direction. Some see the direction quite clearly; among them are those who favor it and those who fear it. But most of us look at maps which are as different from reality as was the map of the world in the year 500 B.C. It is not enough to know that our maps are false. It is important to have correct maps if we are to be able to go in the direction we want to go.*"[152]

This notion relies on various metaphorical associations. History is seen as a *journey*, which can be understood and directed by using up-to-date *maps*. However, it seems that we have been *led astray* because our maps are obsolete. This has given birth to the current *crisis*. With his metaphor of "maps", Fromm gives us here a straightforward illustration of the attempt to make sense of time and change through narrative means. What he is implying figuratively, of course, is that his words are maps showing the way to another kind of modernity. Taylor conceptualizes this kind of narrative under the idea of a "moral topography", which he sees as a means of accounting with the conventional ways of perceiving (moral) reality.[153] Needless to say, Fromm clearly sets himself against the prevailing conventions, while admitting at the

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151 Fromm 1947, 1–2; Fromm 1955a, 352; Fromm 1963a, 74–75; Fromm 1964a, 21; Fromm 1981, 65–66; Fromm 1994a, 27.

152 Fromm 1968a, 26.

153 On moral topography, see Taylor 2002, 3–24; 111–114. See also Taylor 2000, 31–41.

same time that others too have recognized the danger inherent in the current situation.

Fromm starts charting these maps of modernity from the Middle Ages, which he sees in certain aspects as the antithesis of modernity. He explicitly tries to avoid the idealized picture of the Middle Ages (favored by conservatives and reactionaries), and the picture of it as a dark age (favored by modern rationalists). For Fromm medieval societies are built on the solid foundation of order, guaranteed by strong secular and religious authorities. Psychologically, this order was immensely important, since it gave people certain ontological security. God had created the world and given humans a designated place in the order of things. Because the individual saw himself always in relation to this "natural" order, there was no place for existential angst about meaninglessness. The relative absence of competitiveness and the strong communality strengthened further the sense of security.[154]

Even though by modern standards a person living in a medieval society was not particularly free, neither was this person alone or isolated. Here Fromm adds that since there was no conception of the individual in the modern sense, neither could there be a corresponding conception of freedom. By using an analogy between the psychoanalytic view of the individual and the premodern worldview, Fromm argues that people living in the Middle Ages were still connected to the world by "primary ties", and not yet individuated from this all-giving totality. The individual identified more or less completely with his or her social role and status. Those who didn't fit in to the hierarchical system were excluded from the community as strangers.[155]

Fromm's view of the psychological conditions of the Middles Ages can be seen as a bold or even a naïve generalization, particularly if we pay attention to the huge span of time and vast geographical area to which the loose concept of the Middle Ages refer.[156] This is nothing exceptional in the field though, as even a quick glance at the picture of premodernity given to by various theorists of modernity shows. Since theories of modernity aim primarily at grasping current socio-cultural circumstances and processes, the view they give of premodernity is usually more or less instrumental in the sense that it is used to highlight the particular characteristics of modernity. Giddens, for example, sees the ontological security guaranteed by strong traditions as the fundamental feature of premodern societies. Traditional authority justifies itself by referring to the past as the organizing principle of the present and the future. Traditions are saturated with strong emotional commitments, which provides the individuals with a fairly reliable and constant horizon of meaning. They provide "formulated" truths for their followers and present their authority as "natural". Taylor makes the same notion by arguing that premodern hierarchy and social order was based on a relatively fixed idea of cosmic order. The order

154 Fromm 1941, 39–42; Fromm 1962, 110.
155 Fromm 1941, 42–47.
156 On a critique of Fromm's view of the Middle Ages, see Knapp 1989, 50.

of traditions was not only cultural and social, but had ontological roots, too – just like Giddens argues in his theory of ontological security.[157] In general this view of traditional societies is not so far from the view given by Fromm. The relative psychological security which Fromm sees as an integral part of the medieval world view is made possible by strong traditions, as Giddens explains.

> *"Tradition hence is a medium of identity. … Identity is the creation of constancy over time, that very bringing of the past into conjunction with an anticipated future. In all societies the maintenance of personal identity, and its connection to wider social identities, is a prime requisite of ontological security. This psychological concern is one of the main forces allowing traditions to create such strong emotional attachments on the part of the 'believer'. Threats to the integrity of tradition are very often, if by no means universally, experienced as threats to the integrity of the self."*[158]

For Fromm the world view of medieval society and the sense of psychological security that comes with it serves as a two-fold starting-point for his analysis of modernity: on the one hand it is something we have *lost*, and, on the other, it is something we have *liberated* ourselves from. The problematic relationship between psychological security and freedom is a fundamental theme in Fromm's writing. Not only does Fromm make use of it in discussing historical events like the rise of fascism, but he adopts it as a basis for his grand narrative on the "life-path" of mankind. For this reason, it will be a constantly recurring theme in the subsequent analysis.

So liberation comes at the price of insecurity. As we move from the Middle Ages into the Renaissance and the Reformation the situation changes dramatically in Fromm's narrative. The gradual breakdown of medieval forms of economic, social and cultural organization paved the way for the rise of modern subjectivity. This new sense of subjectivity gave the elites material for the creation of a new kind of culture but also made them feel insecure. The breakdown of old traditions and absolutes was followed by the emerging ethos of competitiveness and the instrumentalization of social relations.[159]

As a Marxist writer Fromm considers the impact of economic changes as crucial in the transition to modernity. The medieval economic system was still relatively static. Trade was fairly unaggressive and was usually confined to the face-to-face level. Pursuit of economic interests was limited by moral considerations and traditional authorities. Massive profits and the accumulation of capital were considered immoral. As Weber writes: " … dominant teaching rejected the spirit of capitalist acquisition as moral turpitude, or at a minimum refused to value it as ethically positive". Medieval traditionalism didn't encourage greed and self-interest in people, but instead advocated a simple life and conformity to the existing material conditions. As the power of economic interests in society strengthened, changes at the

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157 Giddens 1994, 61–66, 79–82; Taylor 2004, 9–10. See also Touraine 1995, 205.
158 Giddens 1994, 80.
159 Fromm 1941, 43–48; Fromm 1994a, 19.

psychological level soon followed: time was measured with clocks, the value of work was emphasized and efficiency became the new ideal for the emerging economic order.[160]

For Fromm Lutheranism and Calvinism offered compensative security and certainty for those suffering the consequences of social and economic change. This compensation was particularly important for the lower social strata, i.e. for those who were left most vulnerable in the new situation. The psychological impact of the Reformation, however, was more complicated than this: undoubtedly it offered compensation for anxiety, but, paradoxically it also strengthened it. Medieval theology contained a strong emphasis on Free Will, human dignity and God's love. Moreover, through confessing or the buying of indulgences the believer could be freed from sins and feelings of guilt. Luther's theology spared believers from certain abuses by the clerical authorities and fostered the emergence of new subjective religiosity, but it also weakened the psychological capacity of individuals to answer to the challenges posed by the increasing liberties. The Lutheran emphasis on original sin contributed to the transformation of freedom into a burden. This was further strengthened by the Lutheran idea of surrendering to the ultimate authority in the attempt to gain ultimate security. The individual, reduced to the passive role of a mere instrument, loses the capacity to defy authorities and is ready to submit to any suggestions given to him by the powers that be. Calvin's theology, with its emphasis on predestination and material success, represented this subjugation of the individual in an extreme fashion.[161]

This critique of the Reformation is another example of Fromm's dialectical approach to modernity. As with many other developments in the transition to modernity, Reformation brought both possibilities and difficulties. In his understanding of Luther, Fromm follows Marx's lead: "*Luther*, we grant, overcame bondage of *piety*, by replacing it by bondage of *conviction*."[162] It is

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160 Fromm 1941, 51–63, 93; Fromm 1955a, 82; Fromm 1970, 179–187; Weber 2002, 33–34. Kerkelä criticizes Weber's psychological categorizations and argues that the features he claims that are characteristic to modern man are, in reality, universal features of man. However, it is unclear what Kerkelä's criteria are for these universal features. In any case, instead of trying to grasp the situation through psychological categorizations of modern and premodern, perhaps a more productive way would be to pay attention to how the ever-present need for self-preservation was dramatically emphasized in relation to other forms of relatedness in the transition to modernity. As Giddens interprets Weber, economic traditionalism, too, "quite often recognizes material gain as a legitimate motive, but always grounds it in a wider morality, and includes, usually, a notion of excess". Giddens 1994, 69; Kerkelä, Heikki, *Vanhan maailman peilissä. Modernin yhteiskunnan synty ja pohjoinen aineisto*. Gaudeamus, Tampere 1996, 299.

161 Fromm, Erich, "Selfishness and Self-Love". In *Psychiatry. Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Process*. Vol. 2. The William Alanson Psychiatric Foundation, Washington (1939b). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1939b-e.pdf, 5–6; Fromm 1941, 63–83; *Love, Sexuality and Matriarchy: About Gender*. Ed. Rainer Funk. Fromm International Publishing Corporation, New York 1997, 43.

162 Marx, Karl, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Introduction". In Marx, Karl & Engels, Friedrich, *Collected Works. Vol. 3*. Lawrence & Wishart, London 1975a (1844), 182. Marx continues with his usual dialectical method:

precisely this dual nature of Reformation which Fromm wants to highlight. Here Fromm was simply carrying out the Freudo-Marxist task he set to himself in the 1930s when he introduced the concept of social character as a mediating factor between the socioeconomic substructure and the cultural superstructure. His task was to examine how the Marxist critique of modernity could be reinforced with the findings of psychoanalysis by showing how the dynamics of historical materialism reached the unconscious minds of historical subjects. This whole theme of the internalization of power relations, central to both Marx's and Fromm's view of the Reformation, plays a decisive role in Fromm's subsequent criticism of 20th Century Western democracies.

Fromm's analysis of the role of economy in the transition to modernity corresponds with Weber's theory of the spirit of capitalism. For Fromm, too, this new approach to work is perhaps the most significant psycho-social development of the shift from medieval to contemporary society. As Weber argued, modernity witnessed a profound change in the form of religiosity. The emphasis on otherworldly aspects of religion was to a large extent replaced by innerworldly orientation. This facilitated a new interest in economic affairs and an ascetic work ethic – as exemplified by the maxim *ora et labora*. Work was seen as a vocation, a calling, and gained an aura of sanctity. Eventually economy became an end in itself, as Weber wrote: "Now *every* Christian must be a monk for an entire lifetime". However, the fruits of this new economy flowed to the upper social strata, which led to the birth of new elites, which in turn was reflected in the growing oppression of the proletariat. For the emerging capitalist order the rise of innerworldly asceticism constituted a vital element of control.[163]

During the 19th Century the economy started to gain certain autonomy from moral or political considerations. The disappearance of moral limitations for the economy were reflected in growing competition, demands for a maximal productivity, emphasis on efficiency, need for a constant growth and continuing oppression of the workers. Economic growth was further strengthened by technological developments. For Fromm, however, the main

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"He shattered faith in authority because he restored the authority of faith. He turned priests into laymen because he turned laymen into priests. He freed man from outer religiosity because he made religiosity the inner man. He freed the body from chains because he enchained the heart." These lines were specifically underlined by young Fromm in his copy of Marx's "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie" (available at the Fromm Archive at Tübingen).

163 Fromm 1941, 83–106; Weber 2002, 74. See also Bauman 1978, 76. Fromm however criticizes Weber for over-emphasizing the religious aspect of modernity. Fromm proposes an alternative theory, based on his concept of "social character", to explain the emerging of the so-called "spirit of capitalism". From the standpoint of this theory the spirit of capitalism is born of the dialectic between increasing freedom and subsequent insecurity. See Fromm 1941, 294. Fredric Jameson, in turn, sees the emergence of the ascetic work ethic as a part of the bourgeoisie cultural revolution. Jameson, Fredric, *The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Routledge, London & New York 2006 (1981), 81. See also Taylor's analysis on Puritanism and the modern notion of work as vocation. Taylor, Charles, *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Duke University Press, Durham & London 2004, 73–74.

symptom of the rising modernity was the instrumentalization of social relations. The idea of man as an end in himself started to give way to the idea of man as an instrument for the economy.[164]

It is easy to follow Wagner and argue that these symbolizations of work and productivity in this new context constitute not only the basis of our credit system, but also the basis of our value system. *Money* and *wealth* are symbols of *work*. From a figurative point of view, it is precisely this symbolization which makes possible the continuing existence of inequality in society. The conventionally established analogy and association between wealth and work justifies the accumulation of wealth on the grounds that this wealth is gained through hard work and is thus well-earned.[165]

Taylor continues this analysis by highlighting the importance in modern thought of the idea of "self-preservation". Notions like "discipline" and "improvement" can be seen as elements in the sphere of morals borrowed from the sphere of economics, the rising capitalist economics setting new moral standards. This is reflected in the role of the metaphor of *trade* as the guiding symbolization for *morality*. As Taylor writes, with the rise of modernity moral conduct is perceived increasingly through the metaphor of trade, which challenges the metaphor of hierarchy as the founding principle of society. It is difficult to understand how the economy gained its momentous role in modernity without paying attention to the dynamics of how the metaphors like trade became decisively influential in other spheres of society too. With figurative tools like these, the economy eventually could determine the forms of relatedness in modern societies: "But the economy could become more than a metaphor: it came to be seen more and more as the dominant end of society."[166]

We can use Wagner's concept of "figure-ground reversal" to examine how the new dominant role of the economy was legitimized symbolically. By "figure-ground reversal" Wagner refers to the dramatic change in cultural conventions: certain figuration becomes a fundamental force – a "ground" – which determines to a great extent all cultural understanding.[167] This is precisely what happened in the transition to modernity, at least so its critics claim: with the gradual evaporation of the sacred, money and rationalism together became the new dominant collectivizing ideology. Figure-ground reversal was completed when the symbolizations previously in use only in the sphere of the economy became universal symbolizations in culture and society. As Wagner notes, figure-ground reversal poses always a serious threat to the whole community. From the standpoint of the Frommian critique of modernity, perhaps we are still trying come to terms with the ongoing reversal of the figurative domination of society by the economy.

As the subsequent chapters will show, it was precisely this dominant role of the (capitalist) economy in society which worried Fromm. Even though

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164 Fromm 1955a, 81–100; Fromm 1968a, 26–57; Fromm 1976, 144–146.
165 See Wagner 1981, 23, 130–131.
166 Taylor 2004, 15, 72–76. See also Berman 1988, 111.
167 On figure-ground reversal, see Wagner 1986, 69.

Fromm never explicitly mentioned it, the analysis on how metaphors originated from the sphere of economy became dominant metaphors in society in general. From this perspective the appeal of Marxism for young Fromm can be easily understood. While the Orthodox Jewish tradition, which had a tremendous influence on him, developed no theory to answer the challenges of the rising capitalist economy, favoring instead the cultivation of its spiritual heritage in isolation from the increasingly materialistic society, Marx, on the other hand, devoted his whole life to explain how capital and universal competition "destroyed as far as possible ideology, religion, morality etc." and resolved all natural relationships into money relationships.[168]

Fromm agreed wholeheartedly with Marx's dialectic method in understanding modernity and capitalism. What distinguishes Fromm from Marx is that while the latter concentrated more and more on a thorough and painstaking analysis of the dynamics of the capitalist economy, Fromm's work was characterized increasingly by prophetic and moral (if not moralistic) tones. For Fromm, the crisis of modernity and capitalism was more than just a crisis pertaining to the transition from one mode of production to another – it was essentially a *spiritual* crisis even though it had roots in the changing material conditions.

The disintegration of the moral limitations of the economy triggered, in Fromm's analysis, a new era of competitiveness and greed. This change had profound psychological consequences, which were manifested in increasing insecurity, anxiety etc. If this was the case, was Fromm, then, proposing a return to medieval limitations of the economy? He certainly agreed with the notion that 20th Century societies were characterized by increasing materialism and disbelief, which nullified all attempts at moral control of the economy. In this sense, a profound change in consciousness was needed. However for Fromm all attempts to return to any previous state were essentially pathological, as the subsequent analysis will clearly show. We have no way of undoing the historical processes that separate us from the past. Moreover, from the perspective of a dialectical understanding of history, the whole notion of return would be completely absurd. But the main problem of this presupposition has to do with the fact that to propose a moral (and thus subjective) answer to a social problem would in Fromm's view amount to nothing. A change in the moral outlook was necessary, but needed to be complemented with a radical change in the structures and institutions of modern society if this subjective change was to prove effective and sustainable.

The immense economic changes during the transition to modernity had substantial consequences which were not limited to the sphere of the economy alone, but could be felt in society in general. The notion of the

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168 Marx, Karl & Engels, Friedrich, "The German Ideology. Critique of Modern German Philosophy According to Its Representatives Feuerbach, B. Bauer and Stirner, and of German Socialism According to Its Various Prophets". In Marx, Karl & Engels, Friedrich, *Collected Works. Vol. 6*. Lawrence & Wishart, London 1976b (1932), 73. See also Marx & Engels 1976a, 482–496.

instrumentalization of reason, highly relevant also for Fromm's understanding of modernity, tries to capture one aspect of this socio-economic change. The idea of understanding modernity through the process of growing rationalization comes from Weber. While premodern societies guaranteed certain ontological security by referring to traditional and mythic authorities, modern societies have lost these kinds of ultimate points of reference. Weber uses the concept of *disenchantment* to characterize this loss. On the one hand, we are liberated from the spell, but on the other hand, it is taken away from us. Disenchantment is simultaneously a moment of liberation and loss. Reason soon, however, found its new role as a tool in the service of technological and economic progress. For Habermas, it is precisely this powerful combination of technology and instrumental reason, which characterizes modernity. The ideology of technology portrays itself as the end of ideology and at the same time hides its own ideological nature. Reason is seen as "objective" since the only task it sets for itself is the development of its own efficiency and adaptation to the prevailing social order. As Touraine adds, reason becomes an instrument in the service of efficiency; it becomes an instrument whose role is to serve ends which themselves evade rational analysis.[169]

The critique of instrumental reason forms the basis for Critical Theory's analysis of modernity. This is particularly evident in the work of Adorno and Horkheimer. In their analysis the Enlightenment had driven itself into an impasse: reason had become an instrument of domination and turned a blind eye to the human cost of modernization. The idea of reason as the domination of nature – executed through order-building, abstraction and systematization – was inexorably interwoven with the great human catastrophes of the 20th Century and the closing of the social horizon. Reason is nothing but an instrument of self-preservation: " … reason itself has become merely an aid to the all-encompassing economic apparatus".[170]

Even though the dark undertones of Adorno and Horkheimer are absent from Fromm's analysis of modernity, he undoubtedly shared certain central features of their analysis. One of these features is the idea of modern society as an impersonal apparatus, a force which has gained terrible autonomy and is now controlling and manipulating the lives of its creators. Since this metaphorization has to do first and foremost with the idea of alienation, its use

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169 Bocock 1992, 257–260; Habermas 1987; LaCapra 1983, 159–163; Touraine 1995, 24–28, 101, 145–149; Weber 2002. LaCapra criticizes Habermas for a dualist view of modern and premodern. The problem with this is, as LaCapra argues, that Habermas doesn't recognize those institutions which set effective limits for the ideology of technology. See LaCapra 1983, 161. Touraine, in turn, criticizes the idea of understanding modernity from the perspective of rationalization alone. He argues that modernity cannot be reduced to the rise of the capitalist mode of production, even though this process is an important part of it. Alongside rationalization, other elements of modernity, such as the rise of subjectivity, should be emphasized as well. See Touraine 1995.

170 See Adorno & Horkheimer 2002, 23; Bocock 1992, 264–266; Kellner, Douglas, *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity*. Polity Press, Cambridge 1989, 83–104; Jay 1974, 253–280; Touraine 1995, 91–103; Wiggershaus 1995, 326–350.

by Fromm will be discussed thoroughly later. What is worth examining here, however, is Fromm's narrative regarding the genesis of this social machinery.

In Fromm's analysis 19th Century capitalism was still characterized by relatively small-scale economic activities. As we move to the 20th Century, growing competition, technological developments and accumulation of capital tend to encourage bigger and bigger structures. This is reflected in the increasingly impersonal character of trade and the emergence of giant bureaucracies. Furthermore, while 19th Century capitalism was generally characterized by frugal spending, in the 20th maximal consumption gains a central role in the economy alongside maximal production: "Our whole economic machine rests upon the principle of mass production and mass consumption".[171] Two psychological premises of modern capitalism constitute the basis of these developments: *radical hedonism* (the pursuit of pleasure as the goal and meaning of life) and *egoism*. Bureaucratization, specialization and the spreading of giant organizations all contribute to the growing sense of alienation. Capitalist economy doesn't ask what is good for man, but only what is good for the growth of the system.[172]

The individual, surrounded by hostile social conditions, was reduced to an instrument in the service of economic and political authorities. In this context the transformation of negative freedom (the absence of external limitations) to positive freedom (the actualization of desirable potentialities inherent in the individual) proved unattainable. Here we can begin to see why Fromm and other critics saw modernity as a tragedy and a paradox. The disintegration of traditional authorities created unforeseen possibilities for the flourishing of human freedom. These possibilities were not actualized however since the psychological prerequisites of emancipation could not be met. Freedom was thus experienced as a burden. Instead of offering individuals the necessary means to actualize the potentialities of liberation, the apparatus of modern society left them powerless and isolated.[173]

Giddens' notion of *disembedding* helps us to understand better Fromm's view regarding the ambivalent consequences of liberation. Giddens writes: "By disembedding I mean the 'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space". Disembedding breaks the relatively unmediated character of premodern social relations. It implies that relations must be created anew, across temporal and spatial distance. The money economy can be used as an example of a disembedding mechanism.[174] Fromm's conception of 20th Century capitalism is

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171 Fromm 1955a, 105.

172 See for example Fromm 1955a, 100–201; Fromm 1968a, 26–57; Fromm 1976, 3–8.

173 Fromm 1941, 103–134; Fromm 1955a, 115–116.

174 Giddens 1995, 21–29, 140–142. See also Georg Simmel's essay "Money in Modern Culture" in Simmel, Georg, *Simmel on Culture*. Ed. David Frisby & Mike Featherstone. SAGE Publications, London 2000, 243–255. Giddens' theory can be criticized by noting that all social relations are mediated or "disembedded" to some extent and that all cultures are engaged in a constant renewal of conventions. See, for

another example: the emphasis on face-to-face relations is replaced by emphasis on impersonal relations; similarly, direct interactions in the economy are replaced by the abstract mediation of giant bureaucracies, transnational corporations etc. This implies that disembedding tends to be accompanied by an element of anxiety and disorientation, even though it can simultaneously open up new possibilities.

Fromm is not alone in his view that freedom is turned into a burden under modern conditions. There is a strong current in sociological research which links increasing freedoms with increasing insecurities. This connection has been utilized in social criticism more than once. An example of this is Ulrich Beck's view of modern society as a *risk society*. Beck's concept refers to "a developmental phase of modern society in which the social, political, economic and individual risks increasingly tend to escape the institutions for monitoring and protection in industrial society". In a society characterized by individualized risks, freedom can be a dangerous thing: "Individuals are now expected to master these 'risky opportunities', without being able, owing to the complexity of modern society, to make the necessary decisions on a well-founded and responsible basis, that is to say, considering the possible consequences". Individualization is not only a possibility, but also a necessity, a requirement of modern life. Bauman, too, underlines this element of risk and uncertainty in modernity through his concept of ambivalence: "The burden to resolve ambivalence falls, ultimately, on the person cast in the ambivalent condition".[175]

We can see that Fromm's narrative of the emergence of modernity is a profoundly contradictory one, emphasizing simultaneously the potentialities of liberation and the growing sense of alienation. However this is only the *beginning* of Fromm's view of modernity. By depicting modernity simultaneously as a triumph and a tragedy Fromm sets the stage for his prophetic message. This revolutionary vision begins with a resolute critique of the malaises and failures of modernity, which will be discussed thoroughly in the following chapter.

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example, Wagner 1981. What is essential in Giddens' theory, however, is that under modern conditions the mediated nature social relations is particularly evident.

175 Bauman 1995, 75; Beck 1994, 5–8, 13–16.

4 TO SUFFER. The Waste of Modernity

4.1 Escape from Freedom I: Authoritarianism and Destructiveness

The individual, struggling under the burden of freedom, has in principle two possible ways to deal with the existential anxiety arising from insecure conditions. For Fromm, the actualization of the potentialities of emancipation in the search for a spontaneous and creative relationship with the world is the only way the individual can overcome the anxiety of separateness without his or her independence and integrity. In the real world – i.e. in a class society – this has been possible only for a limited number of people. Fromm contends that children and marginal groups like artists have often managed to preserve their sense of spontaneity. However in all modern societies the overwhelming majority of the population has been socialized thoroughly to the existing hierarchies and institutions. This submissiveness comes from a tragic attempt to restore the sense of security and identity by regressing to a compensatory symbiosis with the all-giving, all-securing secular authority. Yet this regressive certainty is, fundamentally, an illusion, since it does not deal with the real causes of anxieties at all – instead it tends to exacerbate anxiety and produce neurotic symptoms.[176]

Eero Ojanen has argued that Fromm's work can be seen first and foremost as a response to the problems raised by fascism.[177] Even though this claim fails

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176 Fromm 1941, 139–140, 258–259; Fromm 1961a, vi; Fromm 1981, 9. Fromm's theory of the escape from freedom has its roots in Freud's writing. Consider, for example, Freud's view that symptoms of psychological disturbances are formed with the regressive clinging, which offers the libido a means of escape from anxiety. Freud, Sigmund, "Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis. Part 3". In Freud, Sigmund, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. 16*. Ed. James Strachey. London, The Hogarth Press 1981f (1916/1917), 359–377 In both Freud's and Fromm's analysis regression is seen as the cause of pathology.

177 See Ojanen, Eero, *Filosofiat ja fasismi. Puheenvuoroja eurooppalaisen kulttuurin tilasta*. Jyväskylä, Atena 1989, 23.

to recognize other important aspects in Fromm's perspective, it nevertheless tells us something crucial about his work. As a Jewish psychoanalyst and a Marxist thinker, who lived and developed his ideas in Germany during the interwar period, it would be absurd to deny the relevance of themes like fascism, authoritarianism and destructiveness for his writing. During the 1930s Fromm under the auspices of the Institut für Sozialforschung was leading research into the subject of the authoritarian character, with the attempt to study the sociopsychological motivations of fascism. Even though this work was published until 1980, Fromm's work on the project left him with an extensive amount of material for his first English book, *Escape from Freedom* (1941). In this book Fromm primarily deals with the problem of Nazism, but transcends this setting by using the analysis of authoritarianism as a prelude to the subsequent analysis of the illusory nature of freedom and individuality in Western societies as a whole.

Fromm later wrote that his 1930s studies on authoritarianism had predicted the rise of National Socialism. Psychologically the key issue was the transformation of the fundamentally passive character of the majority into the *sadomasochist character*. The concept of sadomasochist character, which Wiggershaus sees as the most valuable contribution by Fromm to the Institute's work, formed the basis for Fromm's subsequent analysis of authoritarianism. All these concepts and theories are theoretically based, however, on a more fundamental concept of *social character*. Fromm coined the concept of social character to bridge the distance between Freudian psychoanalysis and Marx's historical materialism. As various Freudo-Marxists theories of that time indicated, there was a vital historical need to find answers to the shortcomings of radical politics. Indeed, one of the fundamental starting-points for Critical Theory's analysis of modernity was the attempt to understand why revolution had failed to materialize in Western Europe. This implied a further question: how had the capitalist system managed to contain the threat of revolt? Fromm's concept of social character should be seen against this background, as a contribution to the larger project of refiguring the possibilities of revolution in Europe. In Fromm's work this crisis of Marxism is part of a broader crisis of modernity.[178]

Fromm writes that the concept of social character "can show in detail that the people's manner of production and life creates quite a definitive character structure and that the consciousness of people, in so far as it is not directly a rational reflex thrown up by social practice, is determined by the special form of people's drives, fears and expectations, especially the unconscious ones."[179] Here Fromm develops Marx's idea of the determining influence of the forms of

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178 Burston, too, sees the crisis of Marxism at the beginning of the 20th Century as one of the starting points for Fromm's Freudo-Marxism. See Burston 1991, 6, 30, 207–208.

179 Fromm, Erich, "A Contribution to the Method and Purpose of an Analytical Social Psychology". In *Gesellschaft und Character / Society and Character. Yearbook of the International Erich Fromm Society*. Vol 5. Lit-Verlag, Münster 1995 (1937). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1992e-e.pdf, 36.

production on people's lives. As Marx and Engel write: "It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness".[180] However, Marx and Engels were not psychologists and they had no psychological theory to explain "how the material basis was reflected in man's head and heart", as Fromm wrote.[181] This is something Fromm's concept helps to explain: " … the social character internalises external necessities and thus harnesses human energy for the task of a given economic and social system."[182]

The concept of social character can be seen as a reinterpretation of the traditional Marxist metaphor of "false consciousness", which points to the mystifying function of bourgeois ideology. Both Marx and Fromm stress here the importance of *disillusion*, of exposing the internalized mechanisms of domination. Instead of attacking particular abuses of the capitalist system, this kind of radical critique goes to the roots and questions it in its entirety. The metaphor of "capitalism as deception" lies at the core of such attempts at disillusion.

Social character acts as a tool of assimilation. In this sense it resembles Freud's concept of the *reality principle*: both function by exercising control over the individual's search for the full actualization of human potentialities (Fromm) or the immediate satisfaction of sexual wishes (Freud). For Freud the question is essentially biological. Fromm, however, uses the concept of social character to emphasize the social and cultural aspects of repression; through its conforming influence people tend to act in accordance with the conventions of their society. Thus, Fromm suggests a metaphor of cement to symbolize the power of social character in keeping the existing social structures and class relations intact. Consciousness always being determined (to a great extent) by the need to fit in with the status quo gives Fromm grounds for attacking Freud's one-sided idealization of consciousness. As he wrote in a letter to Clara Urquhart: "Therefore consciousness is not anything as rational and positive as Freud – who was at heart an enlightenment liberal – thought; and the unconscious is by far not as irrational and frankly contains a great deal of truth which is blocked from awareness precisely by the social order." Thus the concept of social character constitutes a revision of Freud's theories from the standpoint of Marxist historical materialism. While Freud confused the "middle-class character" of his time with "human nature", according to Fromm's criticism, social character rather recognizes the historical determination of all theories. For the same reason, Fromm could not agree with Freud's interpretation that the demands of culture on man's natural drives were the ultimate cause for the *mal du siècle*, but claimed instead that the crisis of

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180 Marx & Engels 1976b, 37. See also Marx's and Engel's statement: "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force." Marx & Engels 1976b, 59.

181 Fromm 1970, 152, 155.

182 Fromm 1941, 282.

modernity was essentially a crisis pertaining to the specific character of bourgeois society.[183]

Frankfurt School's research in the 1930s on family and authoritarianism started with the Marxist premise that family – and especially the bourgeois family – is not an isolated entity, but a social institution. Fromm's role was central in these studies. He argued that social demands are internalized in the family not only through specific education methods, but also through the example set by the personalities of the parents, which reflect the needs and demands of society.[184] For Marx the bourgeois family was an indispensable part of the capitalist system. Class antagonisms between the capitalists and the proletarians were reproduced inside the family between the parents and the children.[185] The Frankfurt School continued Marx's analysis by adding psychological dimension to the theory, mainly through the work of Fromm and his concept of the social character.

These studies on authoritarianism and family during the 1930s undoubtedly influenced Fromm's decision to introduce authoritarianism as the first mechanism of escape in his book *Escape from Freedom*. Fromm sees authoritarianism as an attempt to get rid of the anxiety of individuation by becoming one with the all-giving authority. Authoritarianism implies a sadomasochistic orientation to the world, requiring both submission and domination from its adherents. The individual gains security and strength by submitting to the authority; take the authority away and the individual becomes small and powerless again. Masochistic tendencies are manifested in dependence on external forces – other people, institutions, abstractions like "nature", "destiny" and so on. If the individual manages to get rid of his or her sense of separateness and individuality through masochism, the gnawing contradiction between independence and powerlessness can be avoided. The psychological dynamics of sadism are similar. Since the sense of identity and power gained through sadism is based on domination and since domination requires other people, the sadist is fundamentally dependent on the very people

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183 Fromm 1937; Fromm 1941, 275–296; Fromm 1970, 138–162; Fromm, Erich, Letter to Clara Urquhart, 8.2.1966. On Fromm and social character see also Burston 1991, 109–110; Fromm 1963a, 103–105; Jay 1974, 113–142; Kellner 1989, 40–43; Wiggershaus 1995, 149–156. Wagner gives a similar view of conventions in his book *The Invention of Culture*. Wagner argues that the conventional contexts of meaning are presented as an absolute, even though in reality they are nothing more than fictions. They are necessary illusions and offer a "collective relational basis" without which no culture could exist. Like Fromm in his notion of the social character, Wagner too recognizes the element of control in cultural conventions. For example, people belonging to the mainstream middle-class usually build their identities in concord with the existing conventions, while oppositional groups build their identities in confrontation with those same conventions. See Wagner 1981, 40–41, 79–80. See also Freud's notion on superego's role in guaranteeing the continuity of social practice. See, for example, Freud, Sigmund, "New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis". In Freud, Sigmund, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. 22*. Ed. James Strachey. London, The Hogarth Press 1981g (1932), 178.

184 Fromm 1936; Fromm 1937; Fromm 1970, 144–145; Fromm 1941, 284–285. On Frankfurt school's studies on family see, for example, Jay 1974, 92–96, 124–133.

185 See for example Marx & Engels 1976a, 501.

he or she dominates. As is the case with masochism, in sadism too everything good comes from outside the individual, only the way of acquiring this good is different.[186]

Masochism and sadism are based on an attempt to form a symbiosis with the absolute and all-giving power. However resolving existential contradictions and problems by giving up one's sense of individuality results in a denial of growth. Fromm argues that in politics the escape to authoritarianism was manifested in totalitarian systems like Fascism, National Socialism and Stalinism, which offered the individual a sense of identity and certainty by making him or her a part of the absolute authority and by projecting his or her alienated powers on to abstract entities like the state, leader or fatherland. However the absolute sense of identity acquired through authoritarianism is utterly deceptive. Individuation comes at the price of separateness: the preindividual unity with the world simply cannot be restored.[187] Fromm illuminates the dynamics of this kind of regressive symbiosis by reinterpreting the Freudian notion of incest.

> "*By incestuous symbiosis is meant the tendency to stay tied to the mother and to her equivalents – blood, family, tribe – to fly from the unbearable weight of responsibility, of freedom, of awareness, and to be protected and loved in the state of certainty-dependence that the individual pays for the ceasing of his own human development.*"[188]

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186 Fromm 1941, 140–156; Fromm 1947, 45–47; Fromm 1950, 53–54; Fromm, Erich, *The Art of Loving*. Thorsons, London 1995 (1956a), 15–16; Fromm 1963a, 104–105; Fromm 1964a, 32; Fromm, Erich, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York & Chicago & San Francisco 1973, 288–296. Gerhard P. Knapp notes that Fromm's conception of masochism in his *Escape From Freedom* corresponds with his definition of the *receptive orientation* in *Man for Himself*. Similarly, according to Knapp, his conception of sadism corresponds with his definition of *exploitative orientation*. See Knapp 1989, 75.

187 Fromm 1941, 156–177; Fromm 1947, 79–81, 110; Fromm 1955a, 230–233; Fromm 1956a, 15; Fromm 1963a, 136–137; Fromm 1964a, 104–05; Fromm 1973, 288–296; Fromm 1981, 2–3, 21, 132; Fromm, Erich, *The Erich Fromm Reader*. Humanity Books, New York 1999 (1985), 133.

188 Fromm 1994a, 101. Knapp criticizes Fromm's notion of incest here. Knapp claims that in writing about incest in the context of his own theories Fromm not only confounds his readers, but also loses sight of his own arguments. See Knapp 1989, 132–133. This criticism, however, is evidently misguided if we consider the fact that giving Freud's concepts new meanings constituted the basis of Fromm's revision of Freudian psychoanalysis (which is recognized by Knapp, too). Since Knapp gives no further arguments as to why we should renounce Fromm's use of the concept of incest, his criticism leaves us wondering what is precisely wrong with that particular concept. However, an additional note could be added here regarding Fromm's "desexualized" inventions of Freud's original concepts. Giving old concepts new meanings is, of course, a question of communication. Instead of developing his own psychoanalytic language it was practical for Fromm to continue using Freud's vocabulary. On the other hand concepts related to sexual pathologies carry certain emotional associations, which were successfully used by Fromm for rhetorical purposes. Fromm utilized Freud's literal references to sexual disturbances as desexualized symbols, which nevertheless contained some of their former associations even in the new context of use. Consider, for example, concepts like the sadomasochist character, incest, anal character etc. See also Fromm 1950, 80–83.

Authoritarian morality is based on force. Those above are revered and feared; those below are despised and oppressed. Irrational authority – which Fromm distinguishes from rational authority which is based on competence and is only temporary – makes man an instrument, a mere object in the hands of authorities. In the authoritarian conception of power the relationship between those who rule and those who obey is characterized by inexorable antagonism. The roots of authoritarianism lie in extreme despair and loss of faith. Nihilism and denial of life are its consequences. For Fromm, the desire for power is not a sign of strength, but a sign of fundamental psychological weakness.[189]

Authoritarianism is related to *destructiveness*, another escape mechanism suggested by Fromm in his *Escape from Freedom*. While a person with an authoritarian character strives towards a sadomasochistic symbiosis with the authority, a person with destructive features attempts to destroy the object which produces anxiety. As in the case of authoritarianism, the roots of destructiveness lie in the feelings of powerlessness and isolation. The lack of spontaneity and security result in a thwarting of life, which in turn manifests as a wish to destroy: "Destructiveness is the outcome of unlived life". Thus, war, for example, can be seen as exciting when contrasted with the boredom, inequality and injustice of peacetime. Fromm considered the prevalence of destructive traits in the German lower-middle class as a decisive factor for the rise of National Socialism. For him destructiveness is not an inscrutable form of madness, but something which is manifested in fairly common characteristics such as devotion, humility, rigidity and the automatization of life. Fromm claims that under different conditions, Heinrich Himmler, for example, could have lived a socially acceptable life and could have, perhaps, ended up in a high position. He goes even further by adding that there are thousands of Himmlers living amidst us, who are usually of no particular harm to anyone in their day-to-day activities, but are potential murderers under certain social conditions: "*The ordinary man with extraordinary power* is the chief danger for mankind – not the fiend or the sadist".[190]

Both authoritarianism and destructiveness are attempts to restore the security of primary ties with the security of secondary ties. The obsession with certainty is, however, doomed to failure, since "life is never certain, never predictable, never controllable; in order to make life controllable it must be transformed into death; death indeed is the only certainty in life". This failure to achieve certainty manifests in the clinging to the notion of "law and order" –

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189 Fromm 1941, 163–177; Fromm 1947, 5–8; Fromm 1955a, 93–95; Fromm 1956a, 23, 98; Fromm 1963a, 105–106; Fromm 1976, 36–39; Fromm 1981, 20–21.

190 Fromm 1941, 177–183; Fromm 1964a, 22–23, 28–30; Fromm 1973, 347–386, 383–384; Fromm 1981, 4–5. See also Ojanen 1989, 23–24. In his later work Fromm discussed destructiveness from the perspective of the thwarting of life. In this sense, destructiveness is a secondary potentiality in man, which is actualized if the primary potentiality of growth is suppressed. See also the Fromm's concept of necrofilia in Fromm 1964a, 31–33, 37–61. Fromm's view of destructiveness as a secondary potentiality of man differs considerably from that of Freud, who introduced the notion of the death instinct or Thanatos in his late work *Civilization and Its Discontents* as a biological characteristic of man. See Freud 1981a, 117–122.

an idol for the alienated. Whatever threatens the sanctity of law and order is at the same time an attack against the frail sense of identity of those who have placed their trust in this idol. Behind all this we can find an incestuous dependence on the new "Mother" – i.e. family, race, tribe, nation etc. – which offers to take away the terrible burden of freedom, of decision, of responsibility, of insecurity.[191]

In his short story *In der Strafkolonie* Franz Kafka writes about a sadistic officer's affection for an ingenious execution machine. It is explained both to the reader and to the protagonist of the story how the apparatus works, and how reliable, spotless and clean it is. Its grotesque purpose doesn't seem to worry the enthusiastic officer a bit, who is preoccupied with the importance of absolute control over the machine. The reliability of the device is a guarantee of certainty and the officer certainly feels perverse pride in it. No wonder: even though the world is filled with insecurities, one can always count on the machine.[192] This kind of compulsive search for security constitutes, for Fromm, the essence of the sadistic character.

> "*The sadistic character is afraid of everything that is not certain and predictable, that offers surprises which would force him to spontaneous and original reactions. For this reason, he is afraid of life. Life frightens him precisely because it is by very nature unpredictable and uncertain. It is structured but it is not orderly; there is only one certainty in life: that all men die.*"[193]

As a character in Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* states, quoting Laozi, the hardened search for certainty will inevitably turn against life, which is by nature soft, insecure, ever-changing and frail, but which, on the other hand, has the tendency to grow and expand. For Bauman this incessant search for certainty and the struggle against ambivalence constitutes one of the central features of modernity. The process of order-building is not a controlled one, but instead resembles an obsessive march towards the imagined horizon of perfected order. Reaching this horizon, however, is a mere fantasy, since the world simply doesn't yield to man-made geometrical constructions: "If modernity is about order then ambivalence is *the waste of modernity*".[194] Peter Wagner agrees with

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191 Fromm 1955a, 189–191; Fromm 1964a, 40–42, 97–99; Fromm 1970, 171–175; Fromm 1976, 108–110, 126; Fromm, Erich, "Violence". Unpublished, (2004a). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/2004a%20%5B1970%5D-e%20Violence.pdf, 1.

192 Kafka, Franz, *Gesammelte Schriften. Band I.* Schocken Books, New York 1946, 181–213.

193 Fromm 1973, 291. For this same reason, a person seeking absolute certainty and security can never experience genuine love or faith. See, Fromm 1956a, 98–99 and Fromm 1976, 42.

194 Bauman 1995, 5–17. Bauman sees the dualism of order and chaos as a predominantly modern construction. From a "premodern" perspective the modern obsession with order and chaos is simply absurd. See Bauman 1995, 6. Bauman, however, doesn't consider such cases in which a premodern culture is exposed to the influence of another culture. In this case the legitimacy of the conventional order becomes a tangible problem. Another example points to the consequences of individual violations of certain central conventions. In such cases usually punitive action is needed to restore the order and protect the conventions against relativization.

Bauman's notion of ordering as the fundamental principle of modernity by arguing that the world is ordered and controlled through formalizing. All formalization implies constraints on individuals: the creation of order is a way of exercising discipline.[195]

The idea of order carries within itself intolerance towards those elements which cannot be submitted to the artificially created totality. Elites and philosophers have been assigned the task of safeguarding the order and building the perfectly planned social machinery. From this perspective, the horrors of Nazism and Stalinism were not simply echoes from mankind's archaic and barbaric past, but instead expressions of the modern spirit striving towards certainty, purity and perfection. Bauman claims that we can find the idea of a perfect, harmonious order behind every genocide, which is fundamentally nothing but a highly rationalized form of eradicating ambivalence. The absolute "hard" order turns against "soft" life, with the attempts to get rid of deviations from the norms being seen as surgical operations with the goal of removing a malignant part of the organism and thus preventing the sickness from spreading to other parts of it. In this process the marginalized person is stripped of his or her human qualities and is reduced to a thing. For the builders of the absolute rational order the eradication of the Other is an act of cleansing – and thus there is no need for moral considerations: "Having emancipated purposeful action from moral constraints, modernity rendered genocide possible".[196]

Fromm asserted that it was precisely the rational and impersonal calculations of intellectuals and specialists, devoid of any human or moral considerations, which formed the ultimate threat to humanity. For Fromm, calculations regarding possible fatalities in different scenarios of nuclear war by the well-known military theorist Herman Kahn exemplified this new kind of inhuman rationality, which turned human beings into things. Taking an active part in the action against nuclear armament from the 1950s on, Fromm was a vociferous critic of Kahn's views. He considered such rational calculations as a sign of deep alienation and lack of love in modern societies.[197]

> *"With the beginning of the scientific approach and the corrosion of religious certainty, man was forced into a new search for certainty. At first, science seemed to be capable of giving new basis for certainty. This was so for the rational man of the last centuries. But with the*

However, this criticism is not meant to invalidate Bauman's point that in modern context order becomes a special problem – particularly if we understand modernity as a "negative" process based in incessant questioning of traditional authorities and conventions.

195 Wagner 1994, 26–29.

196 Bauman 1995, 9, 18–52. See also Berman's discussion on "absolute form" as the ideal behind modernity obsessed with planning and creation of order. Berman 1988, 7–8. What comes to the analysis of Fromm's view of authoritarianism, Bauman's theory seems to reflect it almost completely. For both Bauman and Fromm it is the search for a secondary, compensatory certainty, which gives birth to various pathologies. On the function of order-building in Bauman's view of modernity, see also Bauman 1973, 134–135; Bauman 1978, 198–200; Bauman 1999, xiv.

197 Fromm 1963a, 113; Fromm 1968a, 43; Fromm 1981, 106–107; Fromm 1994a, 28–29.

> *increasing complexities of life, which lost all human proportions, with the growing feeling of individual powerlessness and isolation, the science-oriented man ceased to be a rational and independent man. He lost the courage to think for himself and to make decisions on the basis of his full intellectual and emotional commitment to life. He wanted to exchange the 'uncertain certainty' which rational thought can give for an 'absolute certainty': the alleged 'scientific certainty', based on predictability."*[198]

Here we can see again Fromm's narrative of modernity in action. The emergence of modernity and the shattering of the traditional worldview gave birth to a new hope. This initial optimism is then transformed, by Fromm, into a sense of loss, as the desirable potentialities of modernity are left unfulfilled. The above quotation tells us something crucial about Fromm's approach to modernity in general. This is the story he gives us: while the breakdown of the premodern world offered humanity the possibility to create a truly human society, the rise of new kinds of objective forces – capitalism, nationalism, Protestantism, industrialism etc. – undermined the psychological conditions of emancipation and created a highly insecure environment, from which people were forced to flee into a secondary sense of certainty guaranteed by strong authorities. Underlying this conception is the narrative of the "fall from grace" which characterizes Fromm's approach to modernity. Peter Wagner notes aptly that this kind of critique relies on the idea of the "self cancellation of modernity". In this mode of critique the tragedy of modernity is not seen as a result of some external factors, but as an end-result of the process of modernity itself.[199]

Bauman echoes Fromm's theory on the escape from freedom by arguing that under ambivalent modern conditions freedom is often experienced as a curse and not as a blessing: "To the stranger himself, however, freedom appears first of all as acute uncertainty". Search for a secondary security and certainty is a common theme in sociological literature. For example, Finnish psychohistorian Juha Siltala has argued that freedom was turned into a burden, and particularly for those individuals who had a difficult childhood environment and who were thus lacking the basic materials needed to build a secure sense of identity. By assimilating into the totality and by accepting its norms the individual could gain a certain sense of security and thus cope with the underlying anxiety. Siltala sees the Pietist religious revival of 19th Century Finland as a phenomenon answering to the anxieties and insecurities produced by rising modernity. Barbara Hargrove's approach to modernity is quite similar. Hargrove, who is a scholar of the sociology of religion, considers modernity as a source of great anxiety for many people. The collapse of the absolute and "natural" worldview led some to search for a secondary naïveté, a direct tie to a strong authority, which promises a certain sense of meaning and security.[200] John Dewey expressed the same sentiment in his *The Quest for*

198 Fromm 1968a, 50.
199 See Wagner 1994, 65–66.
200 Bauman 1995, 79; Bauman 1999, xii; Hargrove, Barbara, *The Sociology of Religion. Classical and Contemporary Approaches. 2nd ed.* Harlan Davidson, Arlington Heights 1989, 80; Siltala, Juha, *Suomalainen ahdistus. Huoli sielun pelastumisesta*. Otava, Helsinki

Certainty, published in 1929, just a few days before the Wall Street crash: "Man who lives in the world of hazards is compelled to seek for security".[201]

The search for a compensatory sense of certainty and the building of a rational order on the ruins of traditional authorities have been an integral part of the transition to modernity. Bearing this in mind, Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* can be seen as a pioneering study of the dangers of forced modernization. However, Fromm didn't want to limit himself to the analysis of totalitarian systems like Nazi Germany and Soviet Union, but applied the same theoretical frame of reference to the analysis of capitalist democracies. This radical stance led Fromm to argue that psychological pathologies were not marginal issues in modern democratic societies, but instead had a bearing on the majority of the population. Western democracies had fought against Nazism and Fascism during the Second World War and continued the struggle under the Cold War against Soviet Union, but were incapable of seeing how their own institutions, cultural conventions and economic structures produced normality which was fundamentally pathological. In a new preface for his book *Brave New World* Aldous Huxley wrote of this "soft despotism"[202] in a following way: "A really efficient totalitarian state would be one in which the all-powerful executive of political bosses and their army of managers control a population of slaves who do not have to be coerced, because they love their servitude".[203]

Before we can move on to Fromm's critique of "soft despotism", a crucial question must be asked regarding his basic perspective on modernity. National Socialism, Fascism, Stalinism and the political closure of 1950s America are all themes pertaining to a certain phase of modernity. Following Peter Wagner's periodization, I will call this phase *organized modernity*.[204] In Wagner's conception organized modernity emerged in the 1930s during the crisis of liberalism. It was characterized by extensive social planning, restriction of individuality, collective interests and the creation of various social security measures. In Wagner's conception organized modernity was a reaction against

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1992, 11–19, 35. In a new preface to his *All That Is Solid Melts Into The Air* Marshall Berman regrets that he didn't study in greater depth the modern sentiment of the escape from freedom, which he considers as a central issue for the whole theme of modernity. Berman also refers to Fromm's theories in connection with this remark. See Berman 1988, 10. On the dialectics between freedom and uncertainty, see also Wagner, Peter, *Theorizing Modernity. Inescapability and Attainability in Social Theory.* London, SAGE Publications 2001, 38, 68.

201 Quoted from Wagner 2001, 14.

202 The concept of "soft despotism" was coined by Alexis de Tocqueville. He feared that democratization would lead into a society of individual atoms, who would withdrawn from politics and give their political power to external forces. See Taylor 2000, 9–10.

203 Huxley, Aldous, *Brave New World*. Granada, London 1982 (1932), 12.

204 See Wagner 1994, 66–69. In Wagner's periodization modernity can be divided into three phases: liberal modernity, organized modernity and postmodernity. Takis Fotopoulos has made similar periodization: in his view modernity started with liberal modernity, which was followed by statist modernity, and finally by neoliberal modernity. See Fotopoulos, Takis, *The Multidimensional Crisis and Inclusive Democracy*. http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/pdf%20files/Multidimensional%20Crisis%20Book.pdf, 3.1.2010, 27–40.

the ambivalence and insecurity of the liberal form of modernity. The attempt was to reduce ambivalence and set modernity on a predictable path. However organized modernity created its own problems, such as exclusion of unwanted elements from the community and various totalitarian forms of planning and ordering. Following Bauman, Wagner, too, sees the Holocaust as the ultimate end result of organized modernity, not as a deviation from the principles of modernity.

From this perspective Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* and his subsequent analyses of authoritarianism, destructiveness and conformity should be understood as responses to a certain phase of modernity – namely organized modernity – and not as responses to modernity in general. If we accept this argument, it sets considerable limitations to the relevance of Fromm's work on a whole range of issues relating to modernity. This criticism compels us to take a closer look at the contexts of Fromm's ideas. First of all, the aforementioned theories were created during the time when the Nazis took power, conquered half of Europe and murdered millions of Jews in gas chambers; during the time when the socialist revolution in the Soviet Union was transformed into a Stalinist dictatorship with similar consequences; during the Great Depression; and finally during the time when the Western world was recovering from a devastating war and was concentrated on rebuilding the economy. Thus, the metaphorization of modern society as impersonal machinery can be seen as a mirror image of the gruesome realities of its time – as a picture of society characterized by powerful bureaucracies and institutions, strict norms and conventions, diminishing individual freedoms and the emergence of strong centralized governments. The aptness of the metaphor of machinery in highlighting certain fundamental experiences of modernity is further indicated by its prevalent use also by other critics of modernity during the first half of the 20th Century.

In this sense, *Escape from Freedom* can be seen as Fromm's war effort: as an attempt to analyze the psychology of fascism and to warn the reading public about the danger of similar social developments in America. In Fromm's view the conditions created by capitalism in the United States exposed a certain part of the population to the lure of authoritarianism. As a European psychoanalyst, Fromm had the necessary authority to present this critique. Fromm's discussion of modernity doesn't end here, however. His theories on authoritarianism and destructiveness can be seen as a single plotline in a much wider narrative of modernity – just as organized modernity can be seen as a distinct phase in modernity. The horrors of totalitarian systems and the rampant conformity of the 1950s are ultimate reference points in Fromm's analysis of the tragedy of modernity. In this sense, they form a background for all his subsequent analyses of modernity. Thus the discussion below on the problem of democratic conformity offers a possibility to proceed to another phase in Fromm's story of modernity – besides clarifying in which respects his critique is directed

predominantly against organized modernity and in which respects it can be seen as a critique of modernity in general.[205]

The transition in Fromm's theories from the analysis of authoritarianism and destructiveness to the analysis of democratic conformity doesn't constitute any kind of rupture, but merely a change in emphasis. Or as Huxley noted in his letter to George Orwell, history seems to prove that the dystopic vision of *1984* seems to mutate into the *Brave New World*.[206] Fromm argues that Western democracies are ruled by "automaton conformity", which rests on the illusory notion that everyone is free to do whatever he or she pleases – while in reality people are confined by an endless variety of dependencies, created with the eager help of the oppressed. The external limitations of liberty are perhaps easy to distinguish, but how does one liberate oneself from anonymous authorities that are barely recognizable? These internalized demands deprive the individual of his or her autonomy in all the spheres of thinking, feeling and willing. The "organization man" is a loyal servant of the capitalist economy: "How can he think of disobeying when he is not even conscious of being obedient?"[207]

4.2 Escape from Freedom II: Anonymous Authority and Automaton Conformity in Western Democracies

American mass culture didn't evoke particularly positive feelings in German emigrant intellectuals. Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and other theorists of the Frankfurt School shared the same critical stance towards the rising consumer culture. This attitude was reflected in their writings, too. Fermi writes that German intellectual emigrants often had indeed critical views of American culture, perhaps at least partly because they still identified strongly with their

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205 This problem is closely related to the question of contextualization. From the point of view of historiography Fromm's ideas should obviously be understood in their proper temporal contexts. How could an analysis carried out in the mid-20th Century escape its various social and cultural determinations and tell us something about modernity in general? If we would listen to Fromm himself, he would probably try to convince us that certain ideas are *prophetical*, which means that their full meaning can be deciphered only in the future. Marx's and Engels' analysis of the role of bourgeoisie in the process of modernity could be an example of such a prophetical analysis. See Marx & Engels 1976a.

206 Huxley wrote: "My own belief is that the ruling oligarchy will find less arduous and wasteful ways of governing and of satisfying its lust for power, and that these ways will resemble those which I described in *Brave New World*." Later on he continues: "In other words, I feel that the nightmare of *Nineteen Eighty Four* is destined to modulate into the nightmare of a world having more resemblance to that which I imagined in *Brave New World*. Huxley, Aldous, *Letters of Aldous Huxley*. Ed. Grover Smith. Chatto & Windus, London 1969.

207 Fromm 1941, 183–204; Fromm 1963a, 115.

native German culture, now in the hands of the Nazis.[208] There were more fundamental reasons, however, for the aversion of European intellectuals towards America than Fermi presents. From the perspective of the European intellectual tradition, and especially from the perspective of the Marxist criticism of modernity, America was a country of "pure modernity". It was characterized by free markets, developed capitalism, mechanization, standardization and quantification. Its technical and instrumental achievements were recognized as superior, but its moral and philosophical were seen as inferior. Even the culture seemed to lack depth, as it was on sale on the marketplace as mere entertainment. The fear of instrumentalization and materialism, shared by most European intellectuals, was a sentiment applying above all to America.[209]

Even though Fromm didn't direct his criticism against America per se, but against the ills of modern society in general, he certainly shared the usual mistrust of German intellectuals towards American culture. Examples of this mistrust are not hard to find. Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch, known for his massive opus *The Principle of Hope*, lived in the United States from 1938 to 1948, but continued writing in German, learned hardly any English and was extremely critical of American culture. For the Frankfurters' American popular culture was an integral element of the capitalist order, sharing its emphases on standardization, efficiency etc. Consequently, most of these emigrants felt the atmosphere of 1950s conformist culture suffocating. The public reception to their sometimes scathing criticism of the American way life was not always particularly warm. Marcuse, for example, who became a guru of the 1960s student movement, received several death threats. His effigy was hanged by the neck from the flagpole of San Diego city hall. Paul Roazen tells us that Fromm, in turn, was carefully watched by the FBI, as his extensive dossier indicated.[210]

In certain respects, however, conditions in America were also favorable for Fromm. The appreciation of psychoanalysis was on the rise and European specialists were particularly sought after.[211] During the 1930s even the political

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208 Fermi 1968, 99–103. On the Frankfurters' mistrust of American popular culture, see also Buhle, Paul, *Marxism in the United States. Remapping the History of the American Left*. Verso, London 1987, 229.

209 See Wagner 2001, 109–120.

210 Kellner, Douglas, "Ernst Bloch, Utopia and Ideology Critique". http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/ernstblochutopiaideologycritique.pdf, 3.2.2010a; Kellner, Douglas, "Frankfurt School". http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/frankfurtschool.pdf, 3.2.2010b; Roazen, Paul, "Erich Fromm's Courage". In *A Prophetic Analyst: Erich Fromm's Contributions to Psychoanalysis*. Ed. Mauricio Cortina & Michael Maccoby. Jason Aronson, Northvale 1996, 450. On Horkheimer's and Adorno's view of American popular culture, see the chapter on culture industry in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Adorno & Horkheimer 2002, 94–136. On Marcuse's role in the student movement, see for example Paul Alexander Juutilainen's excellent documentary *Herbert's Hippopotamus*. Juutilainen, Paul Alexander, *Herbert's Hippopotamus*. http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-5311625903124176509#. 3.2.2010.

211 See Fermi 1968, 139–173. Knapp also points to the "intense love-hate Fromm felt in regard to American capitalism", which provided him security, professional

atmosphere of the "pink decade" was favorable to a Freudo-Marxist critic of capitalism – this situation, though, changed dramatically after the war. Fromm started his own practice, taking first mainly German emigrant patients, and gave lectures in many American universities. He started to write in English, addressed his works to laymen and professionals alike and commenced a dialogue with American psychologists. Like most of his former colleagues at the Institute of Social Research, he maintained a certain distance from the daily absurdities of American life. This has led David Ingleby to raise the question whether it was Fromm who was alienated from the average American and not the average American from his or her humanity. Or perhaps we can follow Daniel Burston's notion that Americans readily welcomed a specialist from Europe, who had the necessary skills to decipher problems in the art of living.[212] Fromm's position as an emigrant psychoanalyst gave him a unique perspective on American society – which, however, does not mean that all he wrote about America and mass culture should be interpreted as a response to his experiences of being an emigrant, a stranger in a strange land.

The context of Fromm's critique of Western democracy should be underlined. In regard to the state of the economy at that time, American and European societies were quickly recovering from the Second World War. This was a period of unprecedented capacity for both production and consumption. Economic growth was accelerating. In certain countries the rate of this growth was astonishing, and gave rise to notions such as the *Wirtschaftswunder*, as in the case of West Germany. The growing post-war economy was also characterized by advances in technology and the spreading of giant organizations managing the whole system. New prosperity soon gave rise to a new middle-class, which was suited to its role in the growth economy and cherished corresponding values. The return to normalcy after the war was seen as a necessity, and was reflected in the emphasis set on stability and security. This normalcy of the post-war era – which planned to meet the demands and needs of the growing capitalist economy – was however later contested by the young generation, who attacked their parents' generation and their values as hypocritical and narrow-minded. Instead of contenting with the drive to get ahead in a career, the young generation sought meaning elsewhere.[213] This

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recognition and even wealth, but at the same time was a perfect example of a conformist and alienated commercial society. Knapp 1989, 145–146.

212 Burston 1991, 20–22; Ingleby, David, "Introduction to the Second Edition". In Fromm, Erich, *The Sane Society*. Routledge, London & New York 2002, xlv–xlvi; Jay 1974, 293. McLaughlin, too, recognizes the distance between the realities of American culture and Fromm's experience of it: "Fromm himself, however, was tone deaf to the nuances and dynamics of the American middle class and overgeneralized as was typical of the German critical theorists." McLaughlin, Neil, "Critical Theory Meets America: Riesman, Fromm and *The Lonely Crowd*". In *The American Sociologist.* Volume 32, Number 1, Spring 2001a, 13.

213 On a discussion on post-war American society see, for example, Denbo, Sheryl J., *Synthesis of Liberation: Marx – Freud and the New Left, an Examination of the Work of Wilhelm Reich, Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse*. Rutgers University, New Jersey 1975, 203–210.

dissatisfaction and disenchantment with promises of the post-war capitalist societies constituted also the basis for Fromm's critique.

In his *Escape from Freedom* Fromm had already introduced a third mechanism of escape – *automaton conformity* – to explain the rampant conformity and narrowness of life in democratic Western societies. For Fromm, this was no marginal phenomenon: "This particular mechanism is the solution that the majority of normal individuals find in modern society". The psychological dynamics behind this method of escape were similar to authoritarianism and destructiveness: to restore the shattered primary ties with secondary certainty. The burden of separateness and freedom disappears as the individual succumbs to the prevailing cultural forms. In identifying with other human automata the automatized individual is freed from his or her sense of isolation and anxiety. This mechanism of escape is not only approved in Western societies, but people are actively encouraged to adopt it. Deviation from prevailing norms – and the threat of exclusion from the community – forms the greatest threat to the psychological security of those who strive towards conformity. This escape mechanism is also a cause of incessant anxiety, since the repression of individuality can never be complete.[214]

The problem of conformity had puzzled Fromm since his youth. Fromm later recognized that the search for answers to this problem was one of the main reasons for his fascination with Freud's thought in the first place. From this perspective it is evident that fragments like the following from Freud undoubtedly had a bearing on young Fromm: "We are reminded of how many of these phenomena of dependence are part of the normal constitution of human society, of how little originality and personal courage are to be found in it, of how much every individual is ruled by those attitudes of the group mind which exhibit themselves in such forms as racial characteristics, class prejudices, public opinion etc."[215]

Fromm accuses capitalist consumer societies of breeding uniformity based on the dictatorship of the average. Yet, paradoxically, everyone is proud of their individuality and autonomy. Arguing against the widely accepted notion that people are free in democratic Western societies, Fromm claims that genuine individuality and spontaneity are in fact extremely rare. For him the "individuality" created by the capitalist system is nothing more than an illusion.[216]

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214 Fromm 1941, 183–184; Fromm 1947, 166–167; Fromm 1955a, 191; Fromm 1956a, 10–11; Fromm 1962, 136–137; Fromm 1981, 9–10.

215 Freud, Sigmund, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego". In Freud, Sigmund, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. 18*. Ed. James Strachey. London, The Hogarth Press 1981c (1921), 117. The origin of Fromm's concept of automaton conformity can be traced to Freud's influence, too. In his essay *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud cites Gustav Le Bon, an individualist critic of the rule of the masses. In Le Bon's view, the individual forming part of a group is no longer himself, but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will. Freud 1981c, 72–81.

216 See, for example, Fromm 1941, 184.

But what does Fromm mean he says that freedom in capitalist societies is not genuine? How can he justify the reference to the notion of "genuine"? Is it no more than just a moralistic prejudice, a rhetorical tool to evade the painful burden of supporting one's claims with sound evidence? John H. Schaar, for example, criticizes Fromm for advocating a strong normative stance and a sense of life without adequately justifying his harsh accusations against middle-class American life and its institutions.[217] However from a figurative or rhetorical point of view, the notion of "genuine" is perhaps not as unfounded as the critics claim. As Wagner has argued, culture is an endless process of signification, which is based on the incessant dialectics between invention and convention. Culture is invented and controlled symbolically in language through the reworking of linguistic conventions. In this sense, change in conventional meanings and associations of concepts is an everyday phenomenon in all communication. This, of course, implies a struggle for the control of language, but do we have to conclude categorically that this struggle is inevitably based on manipulation? This implausible view would reduce all cultural signification to mere politics of power. Thus Fromm's reference to the notion of "genuine" freedom or individuality can be understood as a linguistic act in the struggle for cultural meanings. It signifies dissatisfaction with the conventional understanding of freedom and individuality. What Fromm means, fundamentally, is that these words fail to describe adequately the experiences of certain people in a certain context. Instead of settling with the conventional use of these words or discarding them altogether, Fromm is engaged in the invention of culture by challenging their former significations and by attaching new meanings to them. In fact all cultural communication has to rely explicitly or implicitly on notions like "genuine" or "true" to avoid complete relativization of meanings, which would invalidate communication altogether.

But then what are Fromm's criteria for denouncing the liberal conception of freedom and individuality? Fromm's claim is based on his conviction that a profound change in the nature of authority has occurred. This change began to take place already during the Reformation as *conscience* gained a central role in religiosity. The authoritarian conscience – in opposition to the humanistic conscience – or superego, as Freud called it, relies on the internalization of social demands. Instead of being responsible to some external force, the individual feels responsible to an internal force: his or her conscience. Through conscience man becomes, as Fromm writes, his own slave driver. The experience of individuality is diminished and replaced by the sense of one's self as the sum of other people's expectations. If a person entangled by this sort of authoritarian relationship fails to find a way out, the attempt to flee is quickly transformed into a sign of guilt. Good conscience can be restored only by submitting to the authority altogether. Fromm's theory of the internalization of authority corresponds with Weber's view, which is succinctly described by

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217 See Schaar, John H., *Escape from Authority. The Perspectives of Erich Fromm*. Basic Books Inc., New York 1961.

Janne Kivivuori: formal domination is replaced by endless and rigorous disciplinization, which tends to control all areas of private and public life.[218]

But this is not the whole story. With the change in social conditions, authorities began to lose even the last remnants of their overtness – they became more and more abstract and indirect. Reflecting the organizational needs of 20th Century capitalism, authority has become anonymous, invisible and alienated. Power is nowhere, and yet it is everywhere. No one tells people to do the things they do, but still they submit to conformity, even with greater enthusiasm than people living under authoritarian rule. There is only "It", whatever form it takes: profits, general opinion, common sense… And people obey. While the overt authority used physical force to persuade people, anonymous authority relies on psychological conditioning. Here Fromm likens modern society to a behavioristic animal experiment: "We obey today by signals". Revolting against this kind of authority is extremely difficult, if not outright impossible. Straight orders and commands have been replaced by vague suggestions and recommendations. Since the notion to revolt is successfully repressed, the possibility to define one's sense of identity in confrontation with prevailing authorities is eliminated as well. Anonymous authority exercises absolute control over 20th Century "organization man" and reduces him to mere cog in the wheel without even giving him the hint that he is being controlled. People serve the system unwittingly, since they live under the illusion that they are working for their own good.[219]

In his conception of the anonymous authority Fromm's seeks to highlight the impersonal nature of authority: power is not represented by anyone and still it permeates society thoroughly. How can one rebel against impersonal structures, against faceless authorities, against massive organizations, which determine the relations of actual human beings without ever being explicitly present? The prevailing forms of relatedness and the rampant conformity guarantee that individual feels himself as comfortable as possible despite being merely a puppet of the system.

Fromm's analysis of the change in the dynamics and forms of power shares certain central features with Foucault's conception of biopower. Foucault writes about the change in the techniques of power in modernity. While traditional modes of power were based on the use or the threat of physical force, modern disciplinization produced normativity through institutions like schools, armies, bureaucracies, prisons etc. However, this disciplinary society was, for Foucault, only the first step in the transformation of the techniques of

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218 Fromm 1941, 98; Fromm 1947, 105–129; Fromm 1963a, 119–120; Fromm 1966, 54–55; Fromm 1981, 19–20; Kivivuori, Janne, *Psykokirkko. Psykokulttuuri, uskonto ja moderni yhteiskunta*. Gaudeamus, Helsinki 1999, 30. The following quotation by Fromm's clarifies further the nature of authoritarian conscience: "Consciously I believe that I am following *my* conscience; in effect, however, I have swallowed the principles of power". Fromm 1981, 20.

219 Fromm 1955a, 148–149; Fromm 1956a, 11–13; Fromm 1962, 151, 179, 180; Fromm 1963a, 115–116; Fromm 1981, 47–48; Fromm 1994a, 22–23; Fromm, Erich, *The Essential Fromm. Life Between Having and Being*. Constable, London 1995, 109.

power, since it was replaced with even more effective techniques. *Society of control* is created through the internalization of power. Foucault uses the concept of biopower to characterize this technique, which is reproduced through customs and habits. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri write: "The behaviors of social integration and exclusion proper to rule are thus increasingly interiorized within the subjects themselves." This kind of power is by nature anonymous, automatic, all-embracing and exceedingly difficult to recognize. Biopower exercises control over the whole of society, but permeates also into the minds and bodies of individuals. Hardt and Negri characterize this aptly: "Power can achieve an effective command over entire life of the population only when it becomes an integral, vital function that every individual embraces and reactivates of his and her own accord". As a symbol for this kind of "panoptic" power, which is everywhere and nowhere at the same time, Foucault uses Jeremy Bentham's design for a prison called *Panopticon*. In this vision the use of discipline is most efficient when the inmates are subjected to incessant surveillance – without having the possibility of knowing when they are observed and when they are not. Negative forms of power, like the threat of the overt use of force by the various external authorities, have been replaced by positive forms: under these conditions the control is exercised by the individuals themselves.[220]

Foucault's theory of biopower and Fromm's theory of anonymous authority can both be understood in terms of Bauman's analysis of *order building* as the founding principle of modernity. The totalitarian structure created by instrumentalized reason recognizes only those aspects of social reality which conform to its logic; everything else is excluded and targeted with various techniques of repression. Adorno and Horkheimer saw this control as an integral part of the totalitarian logic of distorted enlightenment reason: the particularities in culture are liquidated as the abstract logic of modernity transforms the multifaceted reality into its own picture. There is no room for the Other in the monolithic structures of modernity. Culturally, all this implies strict control over linguistic conventions. The near-complete domination of social reality is achieved and justified by determining the symbolical forms and structures through which reality is to be interpreted. From this perspective the critique of modern techniques of power can be understood as an attempt to fight against the closure of social discourse and the subjugation of complex social and cultural realities to the blind rule of the dominant discourse.[221]

In Fromm's analysis anonymous authority and automaton conformity have made authentic thinking, feeling and willing almost nonexistent. They have been replaced by pseudo thinking, pseudo feeling and pseudo willing, which are nothing but internalized demands by anonymous authorities. Fromm

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220 Foucault 1977; Hardt, Michael & Negri, Antonio, *Empire*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge & London 2000, 22–41. On the direct nature of patriarchal hierarchies and authorities in premodern societies, see Taylor 2004, 145.

221 Adorno & Horkheimer 2002, 1–34. See also Marcuse's discussion on the closing of the universe of discourse. Marcuse 2002, 87–123.

insists that instead of clinging to the illusion of individuality and freedom, we should confront our dependencies by admitting that "It thinks in me" or "It feels in me" – "It" being that form of silent power which is nowhere and yet everywhere.[222]

The repression of spontaneity and individuality starts in childhood. The assimilation to the prevailing cultural and social conventions is not executed only through face-to-face relations, but also through the whole "cultural apparatus" of radio, television, newspapers, advertisements etc. The capitalist system produces characters that are able to set aside their personal feelings and concentrate on the task at hand; it produces characters that are efficient and malleable. The distinction between reason and emotions results in eradication of human considerations of thinking, on the one hand, and cheap sentimental entertainment devoid of any creative content, on the other. Under these conditions preoccupations with themes like "good and meaningful life" are useless. The only thing which matters, ultimately, is social utility. The individual is nothing more than an instrument whose task is to further the good of the prevailing order.[223]

Personality is molded according to the demands of the capitalist economy: " … anonymous authority and automaton conformity are the largely result of our mode of production, which requires quick adaptation to the machine, disciplined mass behavior, common taste and obedience without the use of force". Quotations like these seem to support the aforementioned thesis that Fromm's analysis of the transmutation of authority is a phenomenon pertaining principally to "organized modernity", as described by Peter Wagner. Here Fromm's theories seem to reflect clearly the social and cultural contexts under which they were born. Fromm, however adds a totally new dimension to his critique by introducing the concept of the *marketing orientation* in his *Man for Himself* (1947). Through this concept Fromm transcends the context of organized modernity and sheds light on further developments in late modern capitalist societies. Marketing orientation is the psychological equivalent of the commodity form of capitalist economy: personality as a trade item. Here the creation of an enticing personality package is essential – however, this remaking of character is always done in concordance with the prevailing sociocultural norms and trends. It is equally important to adapt a positive, smiling approach and a pleasant personality. Individuals are turned into products in markets whose fluctuations they have no way of controlling. Instead of using their abilities to express themselves spontaneously, marketing orientation encourages people to use their abilities to enhance their saleability.

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222 Fromm 1941, 185–203; Fromm 1963a, 127–128. Here Fromm develops Freud's notion that most of our thinking, feeling and willing is unconscious. See Freud, Sigmund, "Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis. Part 1". In Freud, Sigmund, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. 15.* Ed. James Strachey. London, The Hogarth Press 1981d (1916/1917), 21–22. See also Evans, Richard, *Dialogue with Erich Fromm.* Praeger, New York 1981 (1966), 28–29.

223 Fromm 1941, 240–253; Fromm 1947, 13; Fromm 1955a, 149–159; Fromm 1981, 66.

The ultimate goal is the complete adaptation to the socioeconomic and cultural structure under the maxim "I am as you desire me". Marketing orientation is adopted also in schools and universities: the goal of education is to produce a well-equipped work force for the labor markets.[224]

Under 20th Century capitalism the need to resort to crude and overt techniques of power is minimized. People are accustomed to produce their servitude by themselves, just as they are encouraged to enjoy this servitude, to consider it as freedom. For Touraine this subjugation of the individual to the economy has its roots in the breakdown of the religious worldview. While modernity denies outright the legitimacy of religious morality, social utility replaces it as the source of moral order: "Human beings are no longer created in God's image; they are social actors defined by roles, or in other words by modes of behaviour related to their status, and their behaviour must contribute to the smooth working of the social system". Consequently, reason is increasingly seen in instrumental terms, with the aim being the fullest possible adaptation to the prevailing social order, as Adorno and Horkheimer had argued. The instrumentalization of reason, the obsession with technology and the eradication of ambivalence in the name of order-building contributed to the emergence of a huge social apparatus which proved to be increasingly difficult to control. Touraine's view sums up this development: modernity created conditions for the rise of a new kind of subjectivity, which was, however, confined by the modern view of reason as the instrument of social utility and order.[225]

Fromm's view of the modern subject who is caught in the grip of automaton conformity is revealed in this key quotation from *Escape from Freedom*.

> "*By conforming to the expectations of others, by not being different, these doubts about one's own identity are silenced and a certain security is gained. However, the price paid is high. Giving up spontaneity and individuality results in a thwarting of life. Psychologically, the automaton, while being alive biologically, is dead emotionally and mentally. While he goes through the motions of living, his life runs through his hands like sand. Behind the front of satisfaction and optimism, modern man is deeply unhappy; as a matter of fact, he is on the verge of desperation. He desperately clings to the notion of individuality; he wants to be 'different', and he has no greater recommendation of anything than that 'it is different' … But since, being an automaton, he cannot experience life in the sense of spontaneous activity he takes as surrogate any kind of excitement and thrill: the thrill of drinking, of sports, of vicariously living the excitements of fictitious persons on the screen.*"[226]

Repressed by rampant conformity, organization man seeks consolidation from consumerism. Fromm sees consuming as an integral part of the 20th Century capitalism, which strives for a maximal production *and* maximal consumption.

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224 Fromm 1947, 49–57; Fromm 1955a, 159; Fromm 1961a, 57; Fromm 1963a, 71; Fromm 1976, 147–154.

225 Adorno & Horkheimer 2002; Touraine 1995, 15–19. Bauman agrees with Touraine's view regarding the delegation of authority from the supernatural sources to man-made necessities in modernity. See Bauman 1973, 37, 79, 164.

226 Fromm 1941, 253–254.

Referring to young Marx's distinction between human needs and artificial needs, Fromm claims that modern consumerism is essentially feeding the artificial needs, which are manipulated by the system and its market men. However, for Fromm, the psychological impact of consuming extends beyond the marketplace: the leisure time is thoroughly manipulated and standardized by the entertainment industry. The passive 20th Century consumer, *homo consumens*, wants to see and hear what he or she is taught to expect. In essence, free time activity is transformed into *free-time passivity*. The appeal of consuming is further intensified by suggestive and hypnotic advertising, which produces endless varieties of wishes and fantasies for consumer needs. The actual material items on sale are wholly secondary: consuming has to do essentially with artificially created images. And when the boredom killing industry proves to be insufficient the passive consumer seeks escape via alcohol, drugs and tranquillizers. The consumer is eternally suckling, waiting mouth wide open for the world to fill him with goods. This attitude forms the basis of the *receptive orientation*, as described by Fromm in his *Man for Himself*.[227]

> "*Having fun consists mainly in the satisfaction of consuming and 'taking in'; commodities, sights, food, drinks, cigarettes, people, lectures, books, movies – all are consumed, swallowed. The world is one great object of our appetite, a big apple, a big bottle, a big breast; we are the sucklers, the eternally expectant ones, the hopeful ones – and the eternally disappointed ones. How can we help being disappointed if our birth stops at the breast of mother, if we are never weaned, if we remain overgrown babies, if we never go beyond the receptive orientation?*"[228]

As a brief reference above to the artificiality of the needs satisfied by consumerism hinted, Fromm's critique has its roots in young Marx's theory of needs. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* Marx gave a prophetic characterization of later development in consumerism, whose full extent was not revealed until the mid-20th Century: " … every person speculates on creating a *new* need in another, so as to drive him to fresh sacrifice, to place

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227 Fromm 1941, 127–128; Fromm 1955a, 5, 127–133, 340; Fromm 1956a, 13, 68; Fromm 1963a, 124–125; Fromm 1968a, 38–39, 76–77, 123–125; Fromm 1976, 26–27, 188; Fromm 1981, 32–33, 64, 95–96, 121–122; Fromm 1994a, 91; Fromm 1995, 68–69, 70. Fromm's critique of consumerism anticipates many of the themes which have been emphasized decades later by the anti-consumerist movements. David Ingleby has criticised Fromm's view of consumerism by arguing that he doesn't recognize the resistance to consumerism and because of this depicts consumers as thoroughly passive. Ingleby supports his thesis by referring to various consumer movements, which encourage consumers to adopt a critical attitude towards consumption. See Ingleby 2002, xlvi. Even though one might agree with Ingleby's claim that Fromm gives an excessively passive picture of consumers by understanding the whole phenomenon mainly through his concept of receptive orientation, Ingleby's position is, however, problematic in at least one sense: to respond to Fromm's critique of 1950s consumerism by referring to the supposedly critical stance of the 21st Century consumers is clearly an anachronistic mistake.

228 Fromm 1955a, 161. This quotation is especially important for Fromm, and he has included it in various writings with only small variations. See, for example, Fromm 1956a, 68; Fromm 1963a, 70–71; Fromm 1994a, 32–33. What Fromm seeks to emphasize with this notion is the profound inner passiveness of the consumerist lifestyle, and the psychological disturbances resulting from this passiveness.

him in a new dependence and to seduce him into a new mode of *enjoyment* and therefore economic ruin. Each tries to establish over the other an *alien* power, so as thereby to find satisfaction of his own selfish need." Fromm wholeheartedly agrees with Marx's analysis: "Consuming is essentially the satisfaction of artificially stimulated phantasies, a phantasy performance alienated from our concrete, real selves". However, Fromm goes beyond Marx's frame of reference, since for him what is essential is not the economic ruin of one's fellow man, but continuously reproduced dependencies. Since artificial needs are detached from human needs, the consumer is never able to achieve satisfaction: "We thus develop an ever-increasing need for more things, for more consumption". The simple stimuli given by the entertainment industry – disseminated through standardized television, radio, movies and commodity markets – are worn out quickly and must be replaced by new stimuli.[229]

Roy Wagner has emphasized this view of advertising from the perspective of cultural anthropology. Like Fromm, he sees advertisements as means of producing artificial needs and wishes. By associating an image of what life could to a product, "advertising is constantly remaking the meaning and experience of life for its audience".[230] For Fromm, advertising is a perfect example of anonymous authority: it transforms the artificial needs produced by the entertainment industry into "natural" needs, and thus takes part in the closing of the social horizon.

By referring to dramatic changes that have taken place in psychological and material conditions under modern capitalism, Fromm argues that Marx's thesis that the workers have nothing to lose but their chains is no longer plausible. The sociocultural realities of 20th Century capitalism suggest something completely different. Capitalism had succeeded in containing the discontent in Western societies by sharing some of the fruits of economic progress and by giving the workers a possibility to recover from the strain of work during essentially passive leisure time.[231] The economic ideals of maximal productivity and maximal consumption are matched by contradictory psychological ideals of maximal efficiency and maximal laziness. However, as Fromm writes, the illusory image of activity propounded by the economy covers its fundamentally passive nature. Similarly, laziness is not natural for man, but a product of alienating and inhuman conditions. Advertisement and commodity markets answer to this artificially produced laziness by offering

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229 Fromm 1955a, 130–131, 324; Fromm 1961a, 25–26, 54–56, 62–63; Fromm 1962, 2–53; Fromm 1970, 64–65; 70–71; Fromm 1973, 287–288; Fromm 1976, 72–73; Marx 1875b, 306.

230 Wagner 1981, 63–67.

231 Here we can see that Fromm's argument reflects the social conditions of the mid-20th Century, which were characterized by the New Deal ideology and the rise of welfare states. In the contemporary neoliberal context Fromm's notion regarding the more equal sharing of the benefits of growth seems problematic as the income gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" is growing year by year. When it comes to his notion that workers are left free to recover from work during their leisure time, even that too is questioned by new demands of immaterial production, with its emphasis on the full control of workers' lives and creativity.

people *push button power*, epitomized by the Kodak slogan: ”You press the button, we do the rest”. Fromm claims that the ideals of consumerism are based on the view of man as a system of needs and immediate satisfactions. This ideal is based on the principle of nonfrustration, which is characterized by a line from Huxley's *Brave New World*: ”Never put off till tomorrow the fun you can have today”, or by Fromm's notion: ”No Effort, No Pain”. Like all other methods of escape, the search for immediate pleasure offers a way to deal with the underlying anxiety and boredom without dealing with the cause of these disturbances.[232]

Even though Fromm doesn't use explicitly the concept of “masses” in his critique of consumerism, it seems to share certain fundamental features with, for example, Ortega y Gasset's well-known analysis of the “revolt of the masses”. In Ortega y Gasset's view the masses are unable to decide for themselves, they are characterized by the loss of individuality and the emphasis on uniformity, they employ the notion of average as their moral ideal and usually accept existing social conditions and structures as they are. Bauman argues that in modern societies this elitist view of the masses has been used to “dissolve many and different local identities in a new, supra-local and homogeneous assignment – to unify the heterogeneous aggregate of people through instruction and control, drilling and teaching, and if need be coercion”. Intellectuals, planners and bureaucrats have considered it their duty to lead the masses and struggle against the chaos resulting from irrational mass behavior. Touraine extends this criticism to the Frankfurt School thinkers, who in his analysis resisted mass culture because it “denied them a monopoly on speech and deflated the elitist pretensions behind which they developed their ideas and waged their struggles”.[233]

In a certain sense this critique applies to Fromm too: his view of the irrationality of the masses, his role as a modern prophet warning the public about the dangers of the current situation and the specialist knowledge he possessed as a renowned psychoanalyst all seem to validate the notion of Fromm as an elitist critic of the masses. However there is another side to that. Unlike Ortega y Gasset, Fromm was not an aristocratic or individualist critic of the masses, but a leftist radical who was convinced that democracy was

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232 Fromm 1947, 129–142; Fromm 1955a, 133, 159–162, 177–178, 282–283; Fromm 1963a, 73; Fromm 1968a, 110–111; Fromm 1976, 3–6, 116–117; Fromm 1981, 94–95; Fromm 1994a, 35. On Marx's and Engels' notion that workers have nothing to lose but their chains, see Marx & Engels 1976a, 519.

233 Bauman 1999, xxxii–xxxiii; Ortega y Gasset, José, *The Revolt of the Masses*. Mentor Books, New York 1950 (1930), 7–13, 48–55; Touraine 1995, 150–176. See also Wagner 1994, 104–119, 159–165. The notion of the “masses” can also be understood as a narrative tool, which binds together various divergent phenomena under one abstract idea. Without the necessary counter-narrative, which highlight the particularities which comprise together the idea of a mass, it is undoubtedly an instrument of control, as Bauman and others have argued. As regards to Bauman's view of role of experts in controlling the masses, the issue is more complicated than he assumes. Ortega y Gasset, for example, who is known as one of the foremost critics of the rule of the masses denounces expertise as “barbarism”. See Ortega y Gasset 1950, 78–83.

impaired by the authoritarian structures of modern institutions and had to be guided towards direct democracy. Fromm also insisted that it was precisely intellectuals, experts and planners who secured the smooth functioning of the system which treated human beings like things.

Touraine underlines the birth of the consumer society as a fundamental development in modernity. The protestant work ethic of 19th Century modernity, which had emphasized asceticism and shunned excessive consumption, was replaced by a totally new kind of approach. As Ortega y Gasset noted already in 1930, this corresponds with the change in psychological orientation from the repression of desires (characteristic of the puritan ethic) to their stimulation and cultivation. In Peter Wagner's analysis the emergence of mass consumption entailed both homogenization of social lives and a potential for individualization. Consumerism encourages the creation of identities through the framework of commodification. Thus, Wagner contends that money and markets tend to supersede other social resources in the organization of lives.[234] This same view of consumerism is expressed by economist and retail analyst Victor Lebow in a prophetic quotation from 1955, which bears striking resemblance to Fromm's analysis of the ritualistic or "religious" function of consumption in capitalist societies of the 1950s.

> "*Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfactions, our ego satisfactions, in consumption. The measure of social status, of social acceptance, of prestige, is now to be found in our consumptive patterns. The very meaning and significance of our lives today is expressed in consumptive terms. The greater the pressures upon the individual to conform to safe and accepted social standards, the more does he tend to express his aspirations and his individuality in terms of what he wears, drives, eats- his home, his car, his pattern of food serving, his hobbies. … We need things consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced, and discarded at an ever increasing pace.*"[235]

Fromm's critique of consumerism has its roots in his Freudo-Marxist synthesis. The Freudian side comes from his emphasis on the psychological dynamics of consumerism: the reproduction of the consumerist lifestyle is carried out through ingenious methods of deception and manipulation, with the intention of influencing the consumers' unconscious motives. The Marxist side comes from his conviction that it was principally the changes in the socioeconomic structures which necessitated the transition to the consumer society, as the growing industry needed markets for its products.

Fromm's critique of Western democracies culminates in his analysis of the *pathology of normalcy*. Here Fromm utilizes his psychoanalytical experience in a wholesale rejection of the alienated consumer lifestyle, taking up the challenge which Freud anticipated in 1930: "But in spite of all these difficulties, we may

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234 Ortega y Gasset 1950, 41; Touraine 1995, 142–145; Wagner 1994, 85–88. On the interweaving of modern individuality and market economy, see also Taylor 2004, 101–103.

235 Lebow, Victor, "Price Competition in 1955". In *Journal of Retailing*. Spring 1955. http://hundredgoals.files.wordpress.com/2009/05/journal-of-retailing.pdf, 11.2.2010.

expect that one day someone will venture to embark upon a pathology of cultural communities".[236] Fromm starts by admitting that the conceptions of mental health are always socially determined. A healthy person is a person who is successfully adapted to the prevailing social structure. A sick person, on the other hand, is a person who has failed in this process of adaptation. Fromm, however, refuses to accept the cultural relativist position, but introduces a definition of mental health inspired by Marx, Freud and Spinoza, and further strengthened by his conception of the existential needs of man. On this basis Fromm seeks to avoid the definition of mental health which is dependent on the social consensus. He claims that the definitions of the mental health of a *sick society* are, from a human perspective, definitions of *mental illness*: "Our current psychiatric definitions of mental health stress those qualities which are part of the alienated social character of our time". Since the pathology of normalcy is shared by most people, the whole culture is adapted to the sickness – consequently, the awareness of this sickness is effectively repressed. Fromm even goes on to claim that a perfectly adjusted and thus "healthy" person in a sick society is, in fact, sicker than the neurotic: "While they are healthy from the standpoint of 'adjustment', they are more sick than the neurotic person from the standpoint of the realization of their aims as a human beings".[237] The following quotation captures the essence of the concept of the pathology of normalcy.

> *"What is so deceptive about the state of mind of the members of a society is the consensual validation of their concepts. It is naively assumed that the fact that the majority of people share certain ideas or feelings proves the validity of these ideas and feelings. Nothing is further from the truth. Consensual validation as such has no bearing whatsoever on reason or mental health. Just as there is a folie a deux there is a folie a millions. The fact that millions of people share the same vices does not make them virtuous, the fact that they share so many errors does not make the errors to be truths, and the fact that millions of people share the same forms of mental pathology does not make them sane."*[238]

Fromm relates explicitly the idea of the pathology of normalcy to Marx's conception of false consciousness. In the Freudian frame of reference the

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236 Freud 1981a, 144. In connection to this problem, Freud raises the difficult question of where can one find the criteria for sanity if social consensus is ruled out in the first place.

237 Fromm, Erich, "Individual and Social Origins of Neurosis". In *American Sociological Review*. Vol. IX, no 4, (1944). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1944a-e.pdf, 4–5; Fromm 1950, 83; Fromm, Erich, "The Psychology of Normalcy". In *Dissent*, New York, Vol. 1, (1954). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1954a-e.pdf; Fromm 1955a, 12–20, 185–187; Fromm 1970, 67–68; Fromm 1973, 243–244. In an interview by Gerard Khoury at the end of 1970s Fromm used even more explicit language in connection to his notion of the pathology of normalcy. Fromm states that "whole population can be crazy" and that "if everybody is paranoid, it's common sense". See Fromm, Erich, Interview with Gerard Khoury. Locarno, 1978–1979 (audio).

238 Fromm 1955a, 14–15. See also Fromm 1954, 2. Marcuse expresses the same notion with a reference to the distortion of reason into instrumental rationality under late capitalism: "We can say that the rationality of the society lies in its very insanity, and that the insanity of the society is rational to the degree to which it is efficient, to the degree to which it delivers the goods". Marcuse, Herbert, "Liberation from the Affluent Society". In *The Dialectics of Liberation*. Ed. David Cooper. Penguin, Harmondsworth & Baltimore 1968, 180–181.

pathology of normalcy has a familiar relationship with concepts of rationalization and repression. Fromm writes that both Marx and Freud shared the conviction that most of our conscious thought is thoroughly illusory and that the actual motivating factors of human activity are to a large extent unconscious. This delusive consciousness of the majority can be compared to hypnotic trance: "The herd is so vitally important for the individual that their views, beliefs, feelings, constitute reality for him, more so than what his senses and his reason tell him".[239]

In theoretical terms the pathology of normalcy can be understood as the infiltration of anonymous authority to psychiatric definitions. Social utility becomes the definition of mental health. This recalls Foucault's notion of biopower as a form of power characteristic of modernity. Fromm recognizes the danger inherent for psychology in this dynamics. He warns that psychology can be used as an instrument for controlling the population and adapting it more efficiently to the prevailing alienated system. This would imply the discarding of its original ideals of helping people to understand themselves and others better. In Fromm's analysis, psychologists are truly becoming the "priests of the industrial society".[240]

The notion of mass delusion was not, of course, something Fromm invented by himself. As Burston writes, the suggested association between normalcy and sickness "is as old as philosophy itself". The roots of this metaphor lie in the teachings of Hindu and Buddhist sages and in ancient Greek philosophy. Burston emphasizes the element of elitism in this idea: truth is seen as something only wise men can hope to achieve, while the average individual must be content with "sensual appetites" and "illusions".[241] However here Fromm's concept of the pathology of normalcy contains a curious twist. His critique is targeted not only against the delusions of the masses, but also against the delusions of the elites who hide behind their scientific definitions of normalcy and health. Not unlike Adorno and Horkheimer in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Fromm uncovers the mythic character of science itself in an attempt to demonstrate how science is being used as a tool of social domination. During the 1960s a similar kind of "democratic" critique – a critique starting from the experiences of those how are subjected to the rule of authorities and directed against those authorities – was expressed by various dissenting psychiatrists and theorists from R. D. Laing to Russell Jacoby.[242] The questioning of the prevailing conceptions of a good life

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239 Fromm 1961a, 20–21; Fromm 1962, 115, 136–137; Fromm 1970, 74.

240 Fromm 1962, 151–152; Fromm, Erich, "Interview with Richard Heffner". In *McCalls*. Vol. 92. New York, (1965a). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1965f-e.pdf, 9; Fromm 1970, 145–148.

241 Burston 1991, 135. Pietikäinen sees the tendency "to view culture and society in the medical terms of sickness and health" as one of the definitive features of psychological utopianism. See Pietikäinen 2007, 20.

242 See, for example, Laing, R.D., *The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise*. Penguin Books, New York 1990 (1967) and Jacoby, Russell, *Social Amnesia. A Critique of Contemporary Psychology From Adler to Laing*. Beacon Press, Boston 1975. The perspective of this critique against the prevailing alienated conceptions of mental

and of health is another indication of a crisis in society. It is precisely here that the modern critique of mental health – as carried out by Fromm, Laing and others – differs from its ancient precursors: the emphasis is shifted from an elitist-moralist stance towards reclaiming the autonomy of the patient who faces an authoritative institution of science, which has been turned into an instrument for conformity and profit.

There are several metaphorical assumptions Fromm makes when he claims that modern capitalist societies are by human standards sick and alienated. First of all, he uses experiences gained from analyzing individual patients to understand social problems. This move necessitates an analogy between the mind of the individual and the broad collective which in his writings ranges from American society to modern society. Theoretical justification for this move can be found from his early Freudo-Marxist writings and particularly from his concept of social character. Furthermore, the metaphor of sickness, as any metaphor, is a means of making the realities tangible. Everyone who has lived through a severe illness knows how being sick differs from being in full health. A person who is not ill looks at the world with totally different eyes. Fromm's suggestion is appealing: what if we have all been ill and have seen manifold reality only through our misery, confined and crippled by it?

However, the metaphorical associations of Fromm's conception of the pathology of normalcy require closer examination here. First of all, the notion of sickness implies that the danger is imminent, that the social body is under severe threat, which, if left unchecked, will spread to the whole organism. Even though the illness is potentially fatal, this prognosis can be a first step in the healing process. Secondly, the notion of illness refers to the loss of autonomy. By claiming that Western democratic societies are sick, Fromm is simultaneously undermining the credibility of assessments by the Establishment regarding the state and direction of social realities. In doing this Fromm is simply adhering to the psychoanalytic tradition, which points to phenomena like resistance, dream work, transference etc., with the purpose of showing that the patients' defense mechanisms are essentially means of escaping from pressing realities. Fromm, however, differs from Freud in arguing that the problem is not only about sexuality and its repression by culture, but has deeper roots in the socialization and adaptation processes. He claims that the whole social body is infested with a severe illness. This, undeniably, is a difficult argument to accept. Does Fromm have any other authority to back his claims than the authority of a specialist in unconsciousness

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health is expressed in an anecdote by Jacoby: "Shortly before the apparatus of Law and Order unleashed its bullets on the inmates and guards at Attica State Prison a prisoner was reported as saying: we are the only civilized men here". Jacoby 1975, 151. Fromm and Laing met in 1968. Burston tells us that Fromm was deeply impressed by Laing, even though their correspondence came to an abrubt end after their meeting. See Burston, Daniel, *The Wing of Madness. The Life and Work of R. D. Laing*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge & London 1996b, 110.

– something which he himself explicitly denounces in his critique of psychiatrists as the priests of the industrial society?

Fromm, however, refuses to accept the role of a moralist, free from this general illness which is plaguing modern societies, even though implicitly he certainly assumes that there are persons who have managed to resist the detrimental influences of socialization and assimilation more persistently than others. A notion of a shared illness implies that everyone is suffering from it – at least to some extent. From a Marxist point of view, it would be absurd to claim that one could criticize society from some a-historical, idealist perspective. Fromm in a letter to Martin Jay denied firmly being a moralist or preaching exclusively individualist solution to the problem of alienation.

> "*I have always upheld the same point that man's capacity for freedom, for love, etc., depends almost entirely on the given socio-economic conditions, and that only exceptionally can one find, as I pointed out in* The Art of Loving*, that there is love in a society whose principle is the very opposite. If one calls my position a moralistic one, it would certainly seem to most people that I think that by good-will and preaching this transformation can be achieved, while my position has always remained the socialist one that this is not so.*"[243]

This leads us to the question of how Fromm can support his double claim that 1) Western societies, suffering from the pathology of normalcy, are essentially closed systems of false consciousness, without any genuine criticism, and that 2) we can still hear voices which denounce this alienating system. This question will be discussed at length below. At this point, suffice to say that unlike Adorno and Horkheimer in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Fromm never gave a picture of modernity as a thoroughly closed system, but instead insisted that there are already elements exhibiting signs of profound resistance.

Despite his emphasis on the counterforces struggling against existing forms of modernity, Fromm was convinced that behind all illusory notions regarding freedom and happiness in Western societies there lies a profound sense of alienation. Under such conditions a person could expect full recognition from society and his fellow citizens only by accepting fully prevailing conceptions of normality and mental health – i.e. only by internalizing the alienated conception of human beings and nature as *instruments* for external purposes.

4.3 Alienation: The Commodification of Human Beings

Fromm's critique of modernity is essentially an analysis of alienation: " … the protest against alienation expressed by Marx, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, then muted by the apparent success of capitalist industrialism, raised its voice again after the human failure of the dominant system, and led to a re-interpretation of

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243 Fromm, Erich, Letter to Martin Jay, 14.5.1971.

Marx, based on the *whole* Marx and his humanist philosophy".[244] Alienation, for Fromm, is not just one problem of modernity among many others, but perhaps *the* problem through which all other problems should to be understood. Since the concept of alienation has a fundamental role in Fromm's view of modernity, the emphasis here will be on its full explication, while the extensive metaphorical and contextualizing analysis will be carried out in the next section.

First, a brief clarification regarding the concept of alienation is needed here. Joachim Israel makes a distinction between social and individual uses of the concept of alienation.[245] In Fromm's case this distinction is problematic. As a Freudo-Marxist social psychologist, Fromm sees no radical break between the individual and social spheres. In fact, bridging this gap is a central theme in his work. Fromm is in fact attempting to explicate how the abstract notion of alienation produced by the capitalist system is translated into psychological disturbances in the unconsciousness of individuals. Or to put the same point in Frommian terms: to explicate how the material problem is translated into a psychological or "spiritual" problem. This is Fromm's original contribution to the analysis of alienation as a psychoanalytically oriented Marxist radical.

Fromm starts by giving a concise, though frustratingly broad, definition of alienation: "By alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien". At a first glance it seems that the critique of the concept of alienation, which sees it as belonging to the category of "political theology" because of its function of "lending a distinctive emotive-dramatic metaphor to experiences of social frustration", is indeed justified here.[246] Fromm, however, doesn't use the concept of alienation as a vague slogan, but subjects it to a thorough analysis, as the subsequent discussion will show. His purpose in the broad definition above is to direct attention to the simple experiential fact that alienation denies the subject the possibility of being the originator of his or her actions. In alienated activity the individual doesn't act, in the genuine sense, but instead is acted upon. While Marx translated Feuerbach's analysis of alienation from the theological sphere to the material sphere, Fromm gives the concept back some of its original theological associations by identifying alienation with the Old Testament idea of idolatry. For Fromm, what was essential in the biblical struggle against idolatry was not the stance against polytheism and for monotheism, but the prohibition against building idols itself – i.e. the struggle against transferring human activity into an idol and subjecting it to worship. In worshipping an idol, the idolater gives away his sense of productivity and creativity: "The idol represents his own life-

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244 Fromm 1961a, 72.

245 See Israel, Joachim, *Alienation: From Marx to Modern Sociology*. Humanities Press, New Jersey 1979 (1971), 5–17.

246 This critique of the concept of alienation has been expressed by Lewis Feuer. Quoted from Betz 1974, 261. Schaar has expressed the same critique of alienation as a religious concept in Fromm's work. See Schaar 1961, 220. Pietikäinen, too, sees alienation as an abstract magic word which bears resemblance to Christian theological narratives. Pietikäinen 2007, 180.

forces in an alienated form". The idolater can make contact with himself only through the idol: "It is the fact that man does not experience himself as the active bearer of his own powers and richness, but as an impoverished 'thing', dependent on powers outside himself, unto whom he has projected his living substance".[247]

Instead of carrying on the common struggle against idolatry, monotheistic religions themselves have succumbed to idolatry: "Man projects his own power of love and of reason unto God; he does not feel them any more as his own powers, and then he prays God to give him back some of what he, man, has projected unto God". In alienated religiosity the believer can reach himself only by submitting to the idol – God. Fromm contended that even though the majority of Americans claim to be Christians, religion has no tangible influence in their lives. A mere belief in the existence of God is nothing but an abstract view utterly detached from all daily experiences.[248]

Alienation is reflected in the use of language as well. Alienated symbolizations gain a life of their own and replace the very experiences and realities they are supposed symbolize. For example, the experience of love can be replaced with the idea or thought of love. For Fromm, this is the essence of all ideology and false consciousness: the actual human experience is lost in formalities and symbolizations. Alienation in modern societies is also indicated by the prevalence of indifferent attitude towards dreams. Here Fromm was particularly worried about the one-sided emphasis on the manipulation of external reality, at the price of loss of contact with inner reality.[249]

From a Marxist perspective alienation is a natural consequence of the capitalist system. For young Marx, writing about alienation in his early *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, the problem of alienation rises as the proletariat is forced to give away the fruits of its work to capitalists who

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247 Fromm 1955a, 117–119, 121; Fromm 1961a, 44–45; Fromm 1962, 55, 61–62; Fromm 1963a, 72, 107; Fromm 1966, 43–46; Fromm 1968a, 142; Fromm 1976, 90–91; Fromm 1994a, 23–24, 97; Fromm 1995, 99; "Violence and Its Alternatives. An Interview with Frederick W. Roevekamp". In *Fromm Forum*. No. 9, (2005). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/2005b.pdf, 2–5. Fromm identifies both alienation and idolatry with Freud's concept of transference. Freud had made the observation that patients in psychoanalytic treatment often have feelings of love, hate or fear toward their analysts regardless of the personality or influence of the analyst involved. The concept of transference addresses this issue. Transference is a psychic phenomenon in which a patient identifies the analyst with his or her parent. Fromm continues with this by arguing that transference is not only about repetition of the patient's infantile relation to his or her parents, but also an attempt by the patient to project all his or human forces of love, reason and courage on to the chosen person. In this sense, transference, too, can be understood as a form of alienation. See Fromm 1962, 55–56 and Fromm 1994a, 24-25.

248 Fromm 1955a, 119; Fromm 1962, 168–169; Fromm 1966, 48; Fromm 1985, 135–136; Fromm 1994a, 137; Fromm 1995, 99–100.

249 Fromm 1961a, 45–46; Fromm 1962, 167–168; Fromm 1966, 18. As a psychoanalyst Fromm stressed that dreams can reveal important insights about ourselves and our relations to other people – but only if we are prepared to pay serious attention to them. For Fromm's understanding of dreams, see Fromm, Erich, *The Forgotten Language. An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales and Myths*. Grove Weidenfeld, New York 1957 (1951).

control the means of production. This process turns workers into things: ”The worker has become a commodity, and it is a bit of luck for him if he can find a buyer”. The economy doesn't consider the worker as a concrete human being, who has various human needs and wants, but as a resource, who has a social role to fulfill. Alienation implies that the product of the work turns against the worker: ”This fact expresses merely that the object which labour produces – labour's product – confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer”.[250]

Fromm follows young Marx's in his analysis of alienation: ”The word 'employer' contains the whole story: the owner of capital employs another human being as he 'employs' a machine”. Work becomes a commodity to be bought and sold. By submitting to the demands of the economy, the worker gives away his or her active relation to the world. The sense of alienation is further deepened under 20th Century bureaucratic capitalism, in which huge, abstract and impersonal machineries mediate everything. By becoming a quantity in the economy, the individual ceases to be an end in itself. The fundamental principle of capitalist economy being the pursuit of maximal profit, we arrive at a disturbing conclusion: *for the capitalist system things are more important than men*, since under its rule human beings are treated as things, as according to their instrumental value. This is what Israel means in his characterization of Marx's analysis of alienation: ”Since the ownership of commodities carries with it power, everything is gradually changed into commodities”. While in Marx's analysis alienation was something that concerned mainly the workers, Fromm argues that in 20th Century capitalism, the bosses tend to be as alienated as the workers. In this system of giant bureaucracies and organizations, the task of executives and managers is to organize the work force and invest capital with the purpose of gaining maximal profits. For bureaucrats like these, workers and the concrete results of their work are nothing but abstract notes in the economic charts and plans. The only thing that is essential is the work done to further the causes dictated by the system, never the contents or meanings of these activities. Producing cars, bombing civilians, sending people to gas chambers – it's all the same when it comes to considerations of efficiency and profit. Man, a mere appendix to the machine, is utterly alienated from the objectives of the apparatus. Even world leaders are nothing more but pawns in the game, as Fromm notes in a letter to Tristram Coffin: “One can understand them only in terms of the spirit of the Greek tragedy, that they represent forces which work through them and which leads to a tragic end even though consciously no one wants it”.[251]

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250 Marx 1975b, 235, 272.

251 Fromm 1941, 118–120; Fromm 1947, 49–50; Fromm 1955a, 90–92, 121–127; Fromm 1961a, 47; Fromm 1963a, 72–73, 134; Fromm 1981, 62–63, 68; Fromm 1994a, 34–36; Israel 1979, 42. Fromm, Erich, Letter to Tristram Coffin, 28.6.1974. Wagner agrees with Fromm's analysis on the obsession with things in Western culture by referring to the relation between the workers and the actual commodities they produce: “As we produce 'things', so our concern is with preserving things, products and the techniques of their production. Our culture is a sum of such things: we keep the

Alienation tends to reduce all human interaction into crude economic calculations. Fromm argues that in 20th Century capitalist societies people see themselves primarily through their abstract socioeconomic roles (”I am a clerk”, ”I am a doctor”, ”I am a married man”), not as concrete human beings: ”That is the way he experiences himself, not as a man with love, fear, convictions, doubts, but as that abstraction, alienated from his real nature, which fulfills a certain function in the social system”. As the marketing orientation requires, minds, bodies and personalities are on sale in the marketplace – these assets comprise the human capital of alienated human beings, which they must invest as efficiently as possibly in order to gain profit, to “succeed in life”. This implies that time and human relationships are seen as investments as well. Consequently, social relations become more or less detached and impersonal: a profound indifference hides behind the friendly façade. Bureaucratic organizations strengthen further this spirit of indifference and alienation by considering human beings as “cases” in the files. The deterioration of social relations has led to an atmosphere characterized by atomism and egoism, in which people are drawn together only to further their selfish interests and to make use of one another. Here Fromm follows Marx almost word for word. As Marx wrote in 1844: “The sole bond holding them [individuals] together is natural necessity, need and private interest, the preservation of their property and their egoistic selves”. Feelings of social belonging are projected on to the *state*, an abstract entity and a new idol, which is worshipped and revered, even though concrete social relations are plagued by profound isolation and emptiness.[252]

Alienation is particularly evident in modern consumerism. Customers are not met as concrete human beings in huge department stores, but as faceless and abstract consumers among countless of others. The average consumer has no idea where the commodities come from: ”We do not know how bread is made, how cloth is woven, how a table is manufactured, how glass is made”. Furthermore, consuming has been transformed into an end in itself. In an economy controlled by images, trademarks and brands, actual products are not consumed, but fantasies associated to them through manipulative advertising. Instead of *being*, Western man *has*. By this Fromm doesn’t refer merely to the accumulation of commodities, but to a general alienated approach to oneself,

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ideas, the quotations, the memoirs, the creations, and let the people go.” Wagner 1981, 26.

252 Fromm 1955a, 135–138, 144–145; Fromm 1956a, 2–3, 67; Fromm 1961a, 53, 57; Fromm 1963a, 72, 126; Fromm 1968a, 104–105; Fromm 1994a, 27, 36; Fromm 1995, 21, 24–25; Marx, Karl, “On the Jewish Question”. In Marx, Karl & Engels, Friedrich, *Collected Works. Vol. 3*. Lawrence & Wishart, London 1975c (1843), 164. A similar view of the alienation of American daily life is given by Adorno and Horkheimer in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: ”In this country there is no difference between a person and that person’s economic fate. No one is anything other than his wealth, his income, his job, his prospects. In the consciousness of everyone, including its wearer, the economic mask coincides exactly with what lies beneath it, even in its smallest wrinkles. People judge their own selves by their market value and find out who they are from how they fare in the capitalist economy.” Adorno & Horkheimer 2002, 175.

other human beings and the world. In *having mode* something that is alive and active is transformed into a frozen, dead thing. The extent of alienation corresponds with how thoroughly the person has adopted the having mode: "The less you *are*, the less you express your life, the more you *have*, the greater is your *alienated* life and the greater is the saving of your alienated being".[253]

For Fromm, alienation is almost complete in the context of modern democracies. Man has created tremendous social machinery by his own hands. He has created technical prerequisites for a new industrial society and organized complicated bureaucratic mechanisms to manage this society. But this awe-inspiring machinery has gained a life of its own and turned man into a servant: "He confronts himself with his own forces embodied in things he has created, alienated from himself". The system is plagued by social catastrophes like wars and recessions, which are seen as "natural catastrophes", which men accept as their fate. The "free" economic system is controlled by laws, far beyond the reach of man: "*We* are the producers of our economic and social arrangements, and at the same time we decline responsibility, intentionally and enthusiastically, and await hopefully or anxiously – as the case may be – what 'the future' will bring". Modern man has projected his human powers into a system, which now controls him and forces him to organize his life according to its abstract logic. Here the roots of Fromm's critique lie in Isaiah's dismissal of money as an idol: "They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship" (Isaiah 46:6).[254]

> *"We living people who want to live are becoming powerless, although we are, seemingly, omnipotent humans. We believe that we control, yet we are being controlled – not by a tyrant, but by things, by circumstances. We have become humans without will or aim. We talk of progress and of future, although in reality no one knows where he is going, and no one says where things are going to, and no one has a goal."*[255]

Alienation leads to fragmentation: different spheres of life lose contact with each other, as Fromm states, referring to Marx: "In a state of alienation each sphere of life, the economic and the moral, is independent from each other". The protest against alienation is a protest against the view of man as *thing*, since, in human terms, things have no identity – human identity can exist only if a person experiences himself as the autonomous and active bearer of his actual and potential activities. *But man is not a thing*. And if is he is treated as a thing, he will react by suffering.[256] The terrible cry of Bela Lugosi in the film *Island of Lost Souls* (1933) as the Sayer of the Law of human monsters sums up

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253 Fromm 1941, 126–127; Fromm 1955a, 127–130; Fromm 1961a, 56; Fromm 1963a, 73; Fromm 1994a, 35, 98.

254 Fromm 1955a, 121, 133–135; Fromm 1962, 62; Fromm 1981, 69, 108; Fromm 1994, 25–26, 168. Fromm considered the nuclear arms race as the most concrete threat to the survival of mankind: "The atomic bomb is modern society's worst symptom of disease". Fromm 1994a, 16, 26.

255 Fromm 1994a, 26.

256 Fromm 1961a, 54; Fromm 1962, 52, 150; Fromm 1963a, 135; Fromm 1994a, 36.

the impact of forced modernization and industrial disciplinization on human beings: "You made us in the house of pains! You made us things! Not men! Not beasts! Part man, part beast! Thing!"

Schaar criticizes Fromm's analysis of alienation by highlighting his tendency to use empirical data when it seems to support his thesis and to rely on his specialist knowledge as an analyst when such data is not available. For Schaar, this constitutes an example of Fromm's affinity to manipulative rhetoric.[257] It is questionable, however, whether the use of psychoanalytic insights necessitates the exclusion of empirical data (or vice versa). Schaar's critique is, nonetheless, important in pointing out Fromm's rhetorical tendency to "bounce" from one sphere to another in order to present a holistic view of the alienation of modern life. For a reader, this can be sometimes quite puzzling, and constitutes undoubtedly one of the reasons why Fromm's work was criticized often for its eclectic and grandiose character.

As the above discussion of Fromm's view of alienation indicated, the fundamental problem is the invasion of other spheres of life and society by the economy. Capitalist economy serves as a model according to which societies and personalities are shaped, despite the attempts by the nation states to check the dynamics of free markets and provide certain social measures.[258] Since this economic system is based on the profit motive and on the necessity for growth, society is increasingly determined by the notion of self-preservation and by the incessant antagonism between isolated individuals. If the invasion of life and society by the capitalist economy is to be effective, if its principles and requirements are to be internalized by individuals, it has to be justified culturally through the reworking of conventions and their metaphorical associations.

This is a crucial point for Fromm's critique of alienation, which can be seen as a rhetorical attempt to highlight the socially and culturally conventionalized associations between capitalist economy and life in general. The notion that man is becoming a thing, an abstract entity, a mere instrument, stresses this colonization of the social and subjective spheres by the economy. Metaphorically speaking, the analogy between life and marketplace allows us to understand *life* in terms of the the *trade*, through various associations attached to the activity of trading. The linguistic and cultural justification of the metaphor of *life is a marketplace* is not without consequences: instead, as was noted above, it serves a fundamental role in the internalization of the system's demands. It is a way of manipulating the preconditions of our perceptions and experiences. By highlighting certain aspects of our experiences and hiding others life is "camouflaged" according to the model given by the capitalist economy. Furthermore, this equation between life and capitalist economy is

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257 See Schaar 1961, 205.

258 Betz underlines the rhetorical function of attaching alienation to the capitalist system in Fromm's work. This rhetorical act creates a powerful dualism: one can accept the existing system and alienation that comes with it, or turn against it in order to defy alienation. See Betz 1974, 250.

made natural; conversely, everything which counteracts against this "natural state of affairs" in order to take life back from the economic system is seen as thoroughly artificial. Considering the extensive use of the metaphor of *life is a marketplace* in a contemporary setting – something which doesn't go unnoticed even by the liberal analysts, let alone radicals – Fromm's analysis of alienation is still as relevant as ever, despite significant changes in social, cultural and economic conditions.

4.4 Modernity: An Objective Impasse or a Subjective Dead End?

Albert Speer, Hitler's chief architect and Minister of Armaments, wrote the following lines in 1947 while serving a sentence for crimes against humanity in Spandau prison.

> "*The catastrophe of this war … has proved the sensitivity of the system of modern civilization evolved in the course of centuries. Now we know that we do not live in an earthquake-proof structure. The build-up of negative impulses, each reinforcing the other, can inexorably shake to pieces the complicated apparatus of the modern world. There is no halting this process by will alone. The danger is that the automatism of progress will depersonalize man further and withdraw more and more of his self-responsibility.*"[259]

Speer, being the only Nazi leaders who confessed openly his complicity in the crimes of the Third Reich, saw the Second World War and the Holocaust as integral features of modernity. For Speer the problem was essentially about the *automatism of progress* and its severe consequences. As we have seen, Fromm shared the same concern in his analysis of alienation.[260]

Fromm sees the widespread sentiments of boredom, meaninglessness and spiritual anomie as psychological consequences of alienation in modern societies. Human beings are being transformed into robots, into automata, who follow willingly and passively the demands on them set by their social roles and functions, but who are, in human terms, utterly empty and dead. Fromm claimed that we can already see people around us who act like robots, whose vital needs are satisfied and how they have no needs that the industrial system couldn't satisfy: "Today we can meet a person who acts and feels like an automaton; we find that he never experiences anything which is really his". In these automaton-men highly developed intelligence and the ability to manipulate reality combine with lack of wisdom and experience.[261]

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259 Speer, Albert, *Inside the Third Reich*. Phoenix, London 1998 (1970), 697–698.

260 Speer finished his autobiography with the following words: "Dazzled by the possibilities of technology, I devoted crucial years of my life to serving it. But in the end my feelings about it are highly sceptical". Speer 1998, 698. While working on his *Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* at the beginning of 1970s, Fromm met Speer several times.

261 Fromm 1941, 274; Fromm 1947, 167; Fromm 1955a, 16, 99, 351; Fromm 1968a, 46.

> *"We live in an age in which the logic of the balance sheet, the logic of the production of things, has been extended to the life of human beings. Human beings have become numbers, just as things have become numbers. Things and men have become quantities in the process of production."*[262]

In subjugating the individual to his role as a diligent agent of society, as a cog in the wheel, contemporary industrial society takes away the individual's sense of identity and integrity, silences his or her human abilities of love and reason. Human beings who have been turned into things suffer from severe anxieties: "This alienation has lead to an ever-increasing insanity". People are bored, since they have no meaningful relations to themselves, to other people or the world – even though they might not even be aware of their suffering. This severe sense of meaninglessness and emptiness of social relations are reflected in phenomena like "trivial talk" and "killing time". The alienated person struggles to achieve happiness, without realizing that can be no happiness if inner activity is replaced with passive assimilation to the sociocultural milieu. To repress the feelings of meaninglessness and boredom, the alienated person resorts to compensatory pleasures offered by the industry. His material needs are satisfied, but mentally or spiritually he is empty, or, as Fromm quotes the Bible, he is living without joy in the midst of plenty. Fromm concludes: "This kind of man,[sic] modern industrialism has succeeded in producing; he is automaton, the alienated man".[263]

For Fromm, the chronic sense of boredom, the rotten fruit of alienation and passivity, is one of the most severe psychological problems plaguing modern democratic societies: "If I were to imagine Hell, it would be the place where you were continually bored". People suffering from boredom are alive, but still dead: "People live, but they feel they are not alive; life runs out like sand". There is no joy or love in their lives, since life has become a burden, which they try to evade in every possible way. This results in inner petrifaction and hatred towards life.[264]

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262 Fromm 1963a, 116.

263 Fromm 1955a, 11, 352; Fromm 1956a, 89; Fromm 1962, 132, 150–151; Fromm 1963a, 72; Fromm 1968a, 49, 56; Fromm, Erich, Rakkauden puute kuolettaa. *Suomen kuvalehti* 17/1980b, 30; Fromm 1981, 47, 54, 64, 108, 127–128; Fromm 1993, 20–26; Fromm 1994a, 40; Fromm 1995, 36, 69.

264 Fromm 1955a, 196; Fromm 1962, 190–191; Fromm 1963a, 122, 127; Fromm 1968a, 1-2; Fromm, Erich, "The Erich Fromm Theory of Aggression". In *The New York Times Magazine*. New York, (1972). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1972c-e.pdf, 7–9; Fromm 1973, 242–251.; Fromm 1980b, 29; Fromm 1981, 122; Fromm 1994a, 52, 91; Fromm 1995, 81. Fromm sees the irrational acts of violence committed by young people as an expression of inner emptiness and a severe sense of boredom. In this way, destructive behavior is a desperate attempt to feel at least something. Fromm 1973, 248. See also Fromm, Erich, On Aggression. Interview with Guido Ferrari. Radio-Televisione Svizzera Italiana Lugano, 1974 (video); Fromm, Erich, De mens is stervende… een ontmoeting met Erich Fromm. Television of Netherlands, 1971 (video) and Fromm, Erich, Disobedience as a Moral and Psychological Problem, Lecture given at the College of Marin, 1962 (audio). This phenomenon has been depicted, for example, by Terrence Malick in his *Badlands*. In this movie, two youngsters, stifled by the conservative atmosphere of a small town, escape with a car and commit several irrational acts of violence.

> *"The signs of hopelessness are all here. Look at the bored expression of the average person, the lack of contact between people – even when they desperately try to 'make contact'".*[265]

Alienation creates new form of evil: *indifference*. Majority of population in Western societies has lost their active relationship with the world. What comes to social issues, people are not pessimists or optimists, they have neither hope nor despair, since they don't have seem to have *any* relation to society. The attitude of the majority towards the world is reflected in the attitude of an expert to his field of knowledge. Experts are expected to know and take care of things which are out of reach for the "common man". Instead of trusting their own experiences and sentiments, people give up the control over their lives to such experts: "Everything is supposed to be known – if not to ourselves, then to some specialist whose business it is to know what we do not know".[266]

Bauman discusses in length this fascination with expertise in his *Modernity and Ambivalence*. In his analysis, which bears close resemblance to Fromm's theory of the escape from freedom, experts offer a possibility for individuals to get rid of the terrible burden of ambivalence. The failure to control one's life is a moral problem for modern man, and thus a source of shame. To alleviate this sense of insecurity, people resort to the help of experts, who offer a quick way out of the misery. Thus, paradoxically, the limitations to one's freedoms are perceived as freedoms, since the burdensome problem of responsibility is delegated to authorities. Through this dynamics, expertise further exacerbates the process of atomization in modern societies. Furthermore, as the control over individual lives is slowly transferred to the experts, they begin to produce normativity and set standards for what is good and what is not. Bauman sees the obsession with expertise as a deadly circle: "More expertise means, in its turn, yet more damage and more demand for expert cure". For Fromm, this is an inevitable outcome of alienation produced by modern authorities and institutions. In Giddens' analysis, in turn, one of the main functions of modern education is to persuade the pupils to believe in the value of expertise knowledge. Vast organizations and networks of modern societies require experts, who mediate between the individuals and the systems. Outside the specific area of their expertise, these specialists are turned into helpless laymen.[267]

For Fromm, however, the worst form of indifference is the indifference towards life and human potentialities. Fromm gives an example of such alienation by referring to an incident in the trial of Adolf Eichmann's in Israel in 1962. In this trial Eichmann was sentenced to death for the crimes he had

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265 Fromm 1968a, 23.

266 Fromm 1947, 150, 185; Fromm 1951, 3; Fromm 1955a, 182; Fromm 1964a, 14; Fromm 1976, 149; Fromm 1994a, 27.

267 Bauman 1995, 197–230; Giddens 1995, 88–92; Giddens 1994, 85–91. Beckett gives an example of expertise in action in his novel *Molloy*. Father and son are quarrelling about toothache. Even though the son insists that his tooth is aching, the father ends the conversation by referring to the dentist's statement: "I have dressed the tooth, he said, your son cannot possibly feel any more pain." Beckett, Samuel, *Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*. Calder and Boyars, London 1959 (1951).

committed against Jews during the Second World War. In Fromm's view, Eichmann was not an inhuman monster with an insatiable appetite for destruction, but a diligent bureaucrat, who was simply carrying out the orders given to him: "I believe that there is a bit of Eichmann in us all today". This kind of indifference to life is an indication of severe alienation: "This attitude of the dehumanized human – of the person who does not care, of the person who not only is not his brother's keeper but is not even his *own* keeper – this attitude characterizes modern man".[268]

In clinical psychological terms, alienation is for Fromm fundamentally about *depersonalization*. Alienation leads to the disappearance of meaningful sense of self. Personality is replaced with *pseudopersonality*, which is the amalgamation of social demands, values, ideals and expectations. The genuine sense of self comes from the experience of being an active participant in the world: " … identity is the experience which permits a person to say legitimately 'I' – 'I' as an organizing active center of the structure of all my actual and potential experiences". Things have identities in the sense that we can distinguish their qualities, but no identity in the human sense. This applies to persons who have been transformed into things. Dehumanized persons, robbed of human qualities and transformed into robots, obey unwittingly the commands programmed into them by the apparatus: "But given man's nature, robots cannot live and remain sane; they become 'Golems'; they will destroy their world and themselves because they will be able to stand no longer the boredom of meaningless life". Paradoxically, modernity had created conditions for the emergence of a new sense of self, but within the grip of huge apparatuses of power, this individuality is unreachable for the majority. The emptying of human identity implies the victory of the things, as Fromm declares: "*Man is dead, long live the thing!*"[269]

Fromm's analysis of inner emptiness and existential angst in modern societies was shared also by other critics of modernity. Ortega y Gasset, for example, warned that the disintegration of traditional norms had created conditions for the spreading of senseless hedonism, which seemed to accept the prevailing social conditions as a given. Thus, the expansion of freedom was linked with the growing sense of meaninglessness and emptiness. Jameson, in turn, addresses the strange dialects of freedom by referring to the sense of social isolation that comes with alienation: the monadic ego seeks shelter in the private sphere, a product of modernity as well.[270]

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268 Fromm 1981, 22–23; Fromm 1994a, 27–29, 52.

269 Fromm 1941, 253; Fromm 1955a, 139, 197–198; Fromm 1962, 172; Fromm 1963a, 74–75; Fromm 1968a, 87; Fromm 1976, 148; Fromm 1994a, 27, 39; Fromm 1995, 72. The metaphor of the "death of man" was used by other writers as well. For example, André Malraux noted that the death of God was followed by the death of man. Similarly, in Sartre's play *The Condemned of Altona*, the protagonist, referring to the cruelties of the 20th Century, states: "Man is dead, and I am his witness". See Baumer 1977, 424, 428–429.

270 Jameson 2006, 140; Ortega y Gasset 1950, 91–138. However, this privacy Jameson refers to is invaded by various forms of indirect power characteristic of modern societies. Weighed against the strength of objective forces, the isolated individual

The theme of depersonalization is particularly dominant in Samuel Beckett's prose. The protagonist of his novel *Molloy* is given the assignment of finding a person called Molloy; eventually it becomes clear that the protagonist is Molloy, but he is still unable to find what he's looking for, instead he just wanders around meaninglessly. This sense of the frailty of self is mirrored also in the writings of the existentialists like Albert Camus and Paul Tillich. But an existentialist approach which emphasizes the individual alone was fundamentally alien to Fromm and other members of the Frankfurt School. As Touraine points out, Fromm, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and others saw this sense of inner isolation and emptiness as a natural consequence of a culture "which felt itself to be trapped by technology and instrumental action". This approach was to a great extent inspired by Weber's conception of modern societies as an iron cage.[271]

Freud too wrote about this sense of disappointment, characteristic of the early 20th Century, in his *Civilization and Its Discontents*. For Freud, the problem was about the mismatch between expectations and realities. Technological advances and control over nature, achieved after thousands of years of struggle, had not led to greater happiness. This prompted Freud to ask: "And, finally, what good to us is a long life if it is difficult and barren of joys, and if it is so full of misery that we can only welcome death as a deliverer?[272] Fromm's analysis can be seen as an answer to Freud's thesis that the development of culture necessitates the increase in anxieties resulting from the increasing repression of natural wishes. Fromm, like Marcuse, refused to accept that the development of culture had to go hand in hand with growing repression.

In his analysis of alienation Fromm wanted to show, through his experience as an analyst, how this theoretical problem is translated into concrete psychological problems in the individual's mind. It is the human individual who feels and experiences, not the impersonal, abstract structure. As Bauman writes: "The burden to resolve ambivalence falls, ultimately, on the person cast in the ambivalent condition".[273] The critical point for any theoretical discussion of alienation is to retain contact with concrete experiences and instances of alienation. This holds true also for attempts to understand Fromm's approach to the problem. Here Bauman's concept of *stranger* is of particular value, as the subsequent analysis will show.

In Bauman's view stranger is the archetype of the modern man struggling with a newfound sense of freedom and ambivalence. The stranger rebels and hence forms a threat to the orderly view of the world as a playground for opposites like friends and enemies, insiders and outsiders: "They [strangers]

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stands frail. This is not meant to imply that modern subjects are deprived of all potentials for autonomy. However, without substantial counter-organization, any resistance against the prevailing system will likely deteriorate into harmless private revolts. See also Wagner's analysis of alienation in Western culture. Wagner 1986, 92–95.

271 Beckett 1959; Touraine 1995, 94.

272 Freud 1981a, 88.

273 Bauman 1995, 75.

bring outside into the inside, and poison the comfort of order with suspicion of chaos". However with the advance of modernization, even the figure of the stranger has lost some of its former rebelliousness. Strangerhood has become more and more a universal experience, as Peter Wagner writes: "Exile, 'this precarious state', has become permanent and a feature of an entire civilization".[274]

Bauman stresses that strangers are not simply outsiders, but are characterized by a combination of presence and absence, closeness and distance.[275] Because of his distance to the prevailing conventions, the stranger has a unique standpoint relative to society and culture. And because of his contact with these same conventions, the stranger's relation to them is not that of an indifferent outsider, but of someone who actively takes part in the processes determined by these conventions. Thus the stranger has a unique perspective on society and culture. This perspective, in turn, opens up new vistas for a radical critique. From a conventional perspective, however, the stranger's relation to society and culture is not considered as "natural" but as "artificial". This can be seen as a way of discrediting the criticism voiced by the stranger. Since the stranger by definition is never acknowledged as a "full" member of the community, his or her concerns are often invalid in the eyes of the "natives", who secure their identities by clinging to the consensual social validation of their beliefs.

Since identity is always formed in relation to something, the excluded individuals and groups also have to rely on existing conventions.[276] However the excluded face a difficult situation: the culture in which the formation of identity should take place turns its back on them. Thus exclusion implies that the "natural" or "self-evident" relationship to cultural conventions, which are used in the process of identity building, is lacking. The stranger experiences things as disembedded, and in this sense the stranger's experience is certainly the experience of a constant state of emergency, which according to Benjamin characterizes the experience of modern life.[277]

In psychoanalytic terms the trauma of exclusion can give birth to either passive or active responses: the individual who has suffered the trauma may simply *act out* the traumatizing experiences through repetition, or the same

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274 Bauman 1995, 53–74, 94–96; Wagner 2001, 105. Compare Bauman's figure of the stranger with the protagonist of Camus' novel *The Stranger*. Camus, too, depicts the stranger as a person who casts serious doubts on the conventional norms and social expectations, and because of this he must be eliminated. Mersault, the protagonist, kills an unknown Arab and is sentenced to death – not because of his deed, but for his unwillingness to yield to the pressure of conventional morals. See Camus, Albert, *Stranger*. Vintage, New York 1946 (1942).

275 Bauman 1995, 60.

276 On the forming of identity in relations, see particularly Wagner 1981, 55, 71–102.

277 This experience forms the basis of "cultural shock" which Wagner defines as the loss of self through the loss of conventional supports. See Wagner 1981, 7.

individual might seek to resolve it actively by *working through* the trauma.[278] A deciding factor between these two approaches is whether the excluded individual feels he or she is *unable* to meet the demands of the prevailing cultural conventions (an experience producing shame and guilt) or whether he or she *refuses* accept the authority of the mainstream culture as the norm and ideal of his or her identity. The Frankfurt School's critique of modernity can be seen as a complex and intricate form of working-through the trauma of exclusion.

The notion of *stranger* is pivotal for a proper understanding of Fromm's work in its respective social and cultural contexts. Fromm's perspective on a modernity characterized by multiple forms of strangerhood was highly ambivalent and included elements of both participation and detachment. McLaughlin's view of Fromm's "optimal marginality" is an apt description of his position as a European Jewish Marxist-analyst in the United States.[279]

Even though Bauman's view of strangerhood as the fundamental experience of modernity can be criticized for giving a one-sided view of modernity, it is evident that modern societies can rarely offer the individuals the same profound sense of belonging which was characteristic of traditional societies.[280] This is not a normative argument or a primitivist plea for the return to the supposedly harmonious premodern "unity". The point here is rather to highlight the connection between the sense of ambivalence characteristic of modernity and the prevalence of experiences of alienation and strangerhood in the same era. As a Freudo-Marxist critique of the alienation of modern man, Fromm, too, had his own share of strangerhood. Below I will concentrate on the perspectives of Fromm's critique of modernity as a Jew in 1930s Germany, as a European emigrant in America, as an intellectual in a modern consumer culture and as a revisionist analyst cast outside the orthodox Freudian psychoanalytic movement. It is precisely the experience of being a stranger or an outsider, which offers a unique way to understand Fromm's ideas in their respective sociocultural context.

Fromm's childhood and youth in the Jewish community of Frankfurt was a crucial factor, which determined to a great extent all his subsequent experiences strangerhood. Without this formative experience, Fromm's life would have taken a completely different direction, as he explicitly acknowledged in several writings and interviews. Counterfactual speculations aside, the experience of being a Jew in German society had a tremendous influence on Fromm's view of the relations between the individual and society. If, for Bauman, the stranger is the archetype of the modern man, then the Jew is

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278 For an excellent discussion on applying psychoanalytic concepts such as "acting-out" and "working-through" in the analysis of traumatic experiences, see LaCapra 2004, 72–105.

279 See McLaughlin 2001b.

280 Peter Wagner, for example, criticises Bauman for utilizing misleading dualisms and thus neglecting the ambivalence inherent in modernity itself. Wagner 1994, 43–44. Giddens, too, is highly sceptical of the idea that we are living in a world of strangers devoid of any intimacy or meaningful human relations. Giddens 1995, 141–142.

the archetype of the stranger: "The Jews were the 'strangerhood incarnated', the eternal wanderers, the epitomy of non-territoriality, the very essence of homelessness and absence of roots; an unexorcizable spectre of conventionality in the house of the absolute, of a nomadic past in the era of settlement". A Jewish person basically had the option either to remain as stranger or to attempt to assimilate into German society. Assimilation was, however, a deceptive trap, since the elites and ideologues of mainstream culture, who posed as its gatekeepers and guardians, expected the assimilation candidates to deny their Jewish identity altogether and yet to accept a "stigma" that indicated their Jewish past. Bauman's view regarding the impossibility of a perfect assimilation of Jews in German society is backed by Löwy, too: "Assimilation was successful to a certain degree, but it came up against an insurmountable social barrier". The assimilation process implied that a person who wanted to assimilate was constantly "tested" and was under continuous scrutiny by the majority. Furthermore, the assimilation was never complete. Bauman understands assimilation in the context of the modern obsession with order and the eradication of ambivalence. Thus, "the waste of modernity" had to be eliminated at any price: "Sliminess of the Jew was itself a product of the drive to a world without slime". The ideology of modernity, with its ideal of absolute order, had no tolerance of deviations. Thus the prevailing form of modernity discriminated against those who did not fit into the picture. For those trying to assimilate, the Jewish heritage was an embarrassing stigma.[281]

Young Fromm, however, lived in an Orthodox Jewish community, which didn't encourage assimilation, but instead cherished its own age-old traditions. Personally Fromm experienced only "small episodes of anti-Semitism", as he later recalled.[282] Despite leaving the active practice of faith behind at the end of the 1920s, Fromm never denied his Jewish background nor accepted the conventional norms of the mainstream culture he was living in. However, as Löwy points out, Fromm and other religious-atheist libertarian Jews like him (Ernst Bloch, Gustav Landauer, Gyorgy Lukács and others) were all assimilated in the sense that they were recognized professionally or otherwise by the society in which they lived.[283] In Fromm's case his standing in American society, whose norms and institutions he profoundly disagreed with, was guaranteed by his role as a respected European specialist of psychoanalysis.

Bauman claims that most German Jews didn't recognize that complete assimilation was impossible. Those who tried to assimilate into German society had to continue showing their loyalty day after day. At the same time they were expected to denounce their stigmatized background. However, Wiggershaus

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281 Bauman 1995, 85, 107–159; Löwy 1992, 30. A similar analysis regarding the futility of the assimilation offer given to Jews was expressed by Sartre in 1946: "How sharply he must feel the vanity of honors and of fortune, when the greatest success will never gain him entrance into that society which considers itself the 'real' one." Quoted from Wiggershaus 1995, 4.

282 See Fromm 1962, 5.

283 Löwy 1992, 25.

notes that among the Frankfurt School scholars (who were all Jews) there was a consensus that the assimilation offer was utterly deceptive: "Their basic common experience was that no degree of conformism was enough to make one's position as a member of society secure".[284] The intellectual critique of Fromm and his colleagues constituted a third way beyond the conventional choice between assimilation or isolation: the radical revision of the potentialities of modernity.

The assimilation offer had tremendous psychological impact for German Jews, and its consequences were further intensified in those who recognized its deceptive nature. Fromm, undoubtedly, belonged to the latter group. The problem regarding the assimilation of German Jews, was, however, only a particular case of a more universal problem of modernity. As Bauman argues, modernity and order building went hand in hand. The modernization ideology cherished a dream of substituting the lost certainties of the old world for a completely ordered and organized totality, which had no trace of impurity or imperfection.

Yet, as Bauman continues, it was precisely the role of Jews as the waste of modernity, as its oppressed strangers, that enabled some of them to see clearly the dark side of the modern project obsessed with uniformity: " … in its fight against ambivalence modernity cast the Jews (as it goes on casting other strangers) in a situation of ambivalence so profound and acute as to strip the human condition of its particularistic disguises; and to lay bare the result that ambivalence that constitutes the universality of the modern human condition: the achievement and the bankruptcy of the modern project". This idea is echoed also by Johan Fornäs, who argues that the experiences of the Diaspora helped Jews to see the transient nature of modernity more clearly than others. The radical critique of modernity gained its momentum, to a large extent, from the experiences of those who were cast into "strange" situations. As Bauman writes, the stranger "knows more purely and simply, because he … confronts the object as an object, from the outside, as a strange phenomenon". However, Bauman's claim that Jews' unique experience of exclusion enabled them to see the dark side of modernity should be accepted only with reservations. As Löwy points out, Jews living in Western Europe were usually assimilated into and identified with the prevailing bourgeois liberal societies, while elsewhere Jews still experienced discrimination: "If the revolutionary Jew appeared in Central and Eastern Europe, this was principally due to the delay or failure of bourgeois revolutions – and the lagging development of capitalism – in that

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284 Bauman 1995, 143–144; Jay 1974, 290; Wiggershaus 1995, 4, 266. See also Zarr, Zoltan & Marcus, Judith, "Erich Fromm und das Judentum". In *Erich Fromm und die Frankfurter Schule.* Ed. Michael Kessler & Rainer Funk. Francke Verlag, Tübingen 1992, 213–124. Fromm differed from his colleagues at the *Institut für Sozialforschung* in the sense that while others usually dismissed their Jewish background he remained interested in it throughout his life. See Jay's discussion on the Frankfurt School theorists' relationship to Judaism in Jay 1974, 31–35.

part of the continent, which restricted the emancipation/assimilation of Jews and maintained their pariah condition".[285]

Here we are reminded of young Marx's notion that general emancipation becomes possible only when it is perceived as a material necessity. It is precisely the *suffering* of the oppressed class which drives it towards revolution.[286] Jews certainly had their share of suffering, but they also had the means to transform this suffering into philosophy, into art, into radical politics etc. In this sense McLaughlin's notion of Fromm's "optimal marginality" could be applied to Jewish intellectuals in general. Löwy's thoughts on the libertarian Jewish radicals of the early 20th Century point into the same direction: "Their condition was eminently contradictory: deeply assimilated yet largely marginalized; linked to German culture yet cosmopolitan; uprooted and at odds with their business and bourgeois milieu of origin; rejected by the traditional rural aristocracy yet excluded in career terms within their natural sphere of acceptance (the university)."[287] Understanding Fromm as a representative of this divergent group of Jewish intellectuals and outsiders helps us to distinguish the particularities involved in his critique of modernity and 20th Century capitalism.

The sociological basis for the flourishing of this immensely creative movement of Jewish radicalism also seems to validate McLaughlin's notion of optimal marginality: it was precisely the access to university education (made possible by the affluence of Jewish families) coupled with the relative freedom from social responsibilities which made this movement possible. Together the students formed a new intellectual class which was in radical opposition to the prevailing social and cultural conditions.

> "*These students subsequently rejected their fathers' business careers, revolted against their bourgeois family milieu and aspired intensely to an 'intellectual life style'. This generational break, which many Jewish intellectuals speak of in their autobiographies, opposed the anti-*

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285 Bauman 1978, 31; Bauman 1995, 156–159; Fornäs, Johan, *Cultural Theory and Late Modernity*. SAGE Publishers, London 1995, 62; Löwy 1992, 40. This idea is reflected in Fromm's conviction that it was precisely the lack of power, which encouraged both Jews and Germans to unforeseen results in the fields of the arts and sciences during the 19th Century. After Germany was industrialized and gained more power, the situation changed drastically, with spiritual pursuits being replaced by imperialistic politics of power and its corresponding ideals. See Fromm 1994a, 105–110. Touraine, too, acknowledges the unique perspective Jews had to modernity. However, in contrast to Bauman's argument that Jews had to make a decision between strangerhood and assimilation – Touraine claims that majority of them "were remarkably successful at reconciling the universality of thought, science and art with a very strong sense of identity and historical memory". Touraine 1995, 301–302.

286 See Marx 1975a. In this paper Marx is referring particularly to the situation in Germany in 1843.

287 Löwy 1992, 32. Here, however, a distinction must be made between relatively affluent German Jews, for example, and Eastern European Jews, who were not as fortunate when it comes to material conditions. And naturally we shouldn't disregard differences within these groups as well. The merit of Löwy's analysis in comparison with Bauman's analysis is that he doesn't try to give us a picture of Jewish identity in general, but rather concentrates on a certain group of German-Jewish intellectuals at the beginning of the 20th Century.

> *bourgeois youth – passionately interested in Kultur, spirituality, religion and art – to their entrepreneurial parents – merchants or bankers, moderate liberals and good German patriots, indifferent to religious matters."*[288]

Elements of the generational break and revolt against the lifestyle of the parents are noticeable also in Fromm's case. His father was a reluctant wine merchant, who had always wanted to continue the religious traditions of his family. The sense of double-standards was undoubtedly experienced by Fromm, too. His prophetic Freudo-Marxism was born out of a revolt against the illusory promise of assimilation. Paradoxically, in the end it was precisely this particular form of revolt which provided him with a certain respectability and a relatively high standing in a society he always opposed.

The multiple experiences of strangerhood – together with the traumas such painful experiences of exclusion always involve – constituted the basis for Fromm's role as a prophet. Here a relatively clear distinction between the figures of moralist and prophet can be made: while the moralist assumes an elitist stance and carries his or her criticism hierarchically from above to below, the prophet's call for alarm is born out of a suffering which he or she shares with the audience. Thus, prophecy can be seen as a form of self-critique as well. The element of intimacy between the prophet and the audience is pivotal here: instead of scolding people for inadequacies in following certain predetermined ideals and standards, the prophet speaks of the alienation and suffering which is shared by all, including the prophet.[289]

Another important aspect in Fromm's Jewish background has to do with the relation between the spiritual tradition of the Orthodox Jewish culture and the materialist atmosphere of Weimar Republic. The rising mass culture, with its growing fascination with entertainment and consumption, offered a totally different set of values and ideals from those preached by the Orthodox Jewish rabbis in Frankfurt who were interested first and foremost in the spiritual perfection of mankind. Marxist analysts were already voicing their concern about the standardization and conformity of these new cultural developments. Siegfried Kracauer, for example, wrote in his *Das Ornament der Masse* (1927) that the individual was disappearing into the faceless masses of the huge shows and events. For Kracauer, this reflected broader social processes, as the capitalist mode of production tended to invade all aspects of life.[290] Fromm was simply continuing the humanist tradition of his teachers, and refused to take part in the rising mass culture.

Naturally the impact of the Holocaust is something which cannot be overlooked in the Jewish experience of exclusion. Perhaps surprisingly Fromm never wrote extensively about the Holocaust. He discussed it in his analyses of authoritarianism and destructiveness, but it never became a guiding theme in

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288 Löwy 1992, 33.

289 On the idea of suffering as the precondition of prophesy, see Betz 1974, 189.

290 Kracauer, Siegfried, "The Mass Ornament". In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Ed. Martin Jay & Anton Kaes & Edward Dimendberg. University of California Press, Berkeley 1995, 404–407.

his writings. However, the shocking demonstration of the irrationality of the masses, illustrated painstakingly by Nazism, undeniably further strengthened both Fromm's sense of estrangement and his conviction that a radical change was needed. The Nazi experience undoubtedly encouraged Fromm to such extreme conceptualizations like the pathology of normalcy. There had to be something awfully wrong with society in which people were willing to transform themselves into mere instruments in the hands of all-powerful authorities. From the perspective of a Jewish radical social critic, no amount of wishful thinking could make that society which had produced Auschwitz, Belzec and Treblinka a sane one.

The very fact that the Frankfurt School was fundamentally a project of Jewish scholars was naturally a deciding factor behind the decision to move its operations overseas. Besides, psychoanalytically oriented Marxists would have been obvious targets for Nazi oppression and terror, regardless of whether they were Jews or not. The exile didn't just intensify their experience of estrangement, but created a wholly new dimension to it. This dimension had to do with the culture shock experienced by German Jewish intellectuals thrust in the midst of the rise of American mass consumer culture. David Ingleby has argued that this form of estrangement prevented Fromm from seeing the positive aspects of American culture, and conversely led him to exaggerate its troublesome aspects. Because of the culture shock, Fromm perceived certain completely healthy aspects of American culture as pathological.[291]

Undoubtedly Ingleby's argument holds true to a certain extent. As Peter Wagner has noted, it can be difficult for immigrants to create such dense meanings and social relations in their new country as they used to have in their native land. This can lead into an experience of fragmentation and dislocation of social relations – something which we can find in both Bauman's and Fromm's analysis of alienation. However, it was precisely because the conventional meanings and relations were missing that the immigrant strangers could formulate their critique from a unique perspective, which was not accessible to natives. Thus, Peter Wagner writes that emigration and exile can be seen as "forms of distancing". The stranger rebels and in rebelling shows that the conventions of society are not self-evident, but fictions that maintain their authority as long as they are believed in. The threat posed by a stranger is essentially the threat of relativization of social and cultural conventions. The stranger shows that both social and individual life can be organized in a different way.[292]

This calls for a closer look at the images of "America" and "Europe" utilized by European intellectuals in the first half of the 20th Century. Even

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291 Ingleby 2002, xlv–xlvi. Fromm's comments such as "consumers are empty people" seem to lend Ingleby's claims some credibility. Fromm, Erich, Obstacles to Love. Lecture, 1966 (audio). Here Fromm, however, refers to the idea of consumerism and to the stereotype of the *homo consumens* and not to certain people who might embody this idea.

292 Bauman 1995, 55; Wagner 2001, 104–105.

though Fromm's critique was directed against modernity in general and not against America, he too depicts the disturbing aspects of modernity often through the American example. Here Fromm's approach is not particularly original, as Peter Wagner's notion regarding the critique of European intellectuals shows: "The affirmation or rejection of modernity in Europe has been channelled through observation in America". The popular image of America as "pure modernity", characterized by instrumental rationality, atomism and conformism, was echoed in Fromm's writings too. The threat implied by American developments was largely based on the idea "that the North American social configuration basically precedes other ones in the world". Here anti-Americanism shows way to a more general critique of modernity.[293] Considering the recent neoliberal developments, it is difficult to denounce this notion outright. Fromm, however, had no "Europe" to defend: his critique of the American way of life is not meant as an apology for Europe, since his experience of strangerhood as a Jew in Germany had already severed his relationship with the German mainstream culture. In fact in some of his later writings Fromm makes certain somewhat suspicious remarks regarding the state of affairs in Europe. Furthermore, in his analysis the malaises of modernity are shared equally not only by the capitalist nations, but also by the Soviet bloc.

There was yet another form of strangerhood experienced by Fromm and other Marxist Jewish intellectuals in America: their encounter with standardized American popular and mass culture. As a starting point for this discussion we can take Bauman's notion of the intellectual as a perpetual wanderer and a universal stranger: "No one truly likes him for this very reason; in every place he is out of place". Despite the fact that Bauman's conception of the intellectual as a rebel-seer can be seen as an overtly romantic and valorizing depiction, it nevertheless tells us something essential about the experience of Jewish intellectual emigrants in America. A useful context from which to understand this somewhat frustrating dualism between the "intellectuals" and the "masses" is the process of democratization. Here the notion of democratization doesn't necessarily refer to the realization of democratic ideals in politics, but to the gradual eroding of the traditional authority of the intellectual elite in modern societies. This has been discussed of course by Ortega y Gasset and others under the narrative of "the rise of masses".[294]

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293 Wagner 1994, 180–181; Wagner 2001, 103–124. An example of the idea that American modernity is modernity in its pure form is given by Baudrillard: "America is the original version of modernity". Quoted from Wagner 2001, 82. In his view it is precisely the absence of traditions and origins, which enables America to escape from history and live in a "perpetual present".

294 Bauman 1995, 22, 83. Furthermore, America lacked the tradition of "intellectual aristocracy" which undoubtedly was an intensifying element in the culture shock experience by European intellectual immigrants. On the questioning of the intellectual elites' traditional authority and the corresponding "rise of the masses", see also Mikkeli, Heikki, "Massayhteiskunnan nousu ja eliitin tehtävät". In *Uusi uljas ihminen eli modernin pimeä puoli*. Ed. Marja Härmänmaa & Markku Mattila. Atena, Jyväskylä 1998.

Some intellectuals reacted to the loss of their traditional role as the guardians of knowledge and social order by clinging to their haute-culture ideals and by denouncing the rising mass culture altogether. For Touraine this was predominantly a response to the desecration of the intellectuals' "pure world of reason" in the hands of irrational masses who had led modernity astray: "They [intellectuals] resisted the mass production, mass consumption and mass culture that denied them monopoly on speech and deflated the elitist pretentions behind which they developed their arguments and waged their struggle". Touraine sees Frankfurt School thinkers as emblematic figures in this respect: their negative critique, which recognizes no positive theory of emancipation, amounts to nothing more than a nostalgic longing and abstract moralism: "Critical theory is of limited value in that it contributes nothing to our understanding of modern societies and their forms of power, or of what is at stake in democracy". Touraine claims that the disappointment with the collapse of the world to which the emancipated Jews were finally given free and full access to society made them mere witnesses and not analysts of modernity.[295] Touraine's critique loses some of its power simply because he seems to have no problems in accepting Foucault's view of modernity, despite the fact that it shares many central features with the Frankfurters' critique and can be submitted to the same criticism, namely that it, too, tends to give an equally totalizing representation of modern forms of power. The fundamental problem in his critique, however, is his absurd claim that since Horkheimer's and Adorno's idea of totally administrated society is implausible, Critical Theory *as a whole* contributes *nothing* to our understanding of modernity. This strange notion seems to imply that when it comes to our understanding of social theories we have only two options: to accept them without any reservations or else to denounce them altogether.

Although Fromm's critique differs in many respects from Adorno's and Horkheimer's "nihilist" critique – as Touraine labels it – Ingleby, for example, links it with the same disillusioned line of thought. In Ingleby's view, Fromm approved only the culture of his own class and denounced the rest as an "opiate". It is because Fromm doesn't even bother to understand "modern man" that he considers him a robot, devoid of any human qualities.[296] This claim would reduce Fromm's critique of modernity to a mere culture shock, experienced by a puzzled immigrant stranger struggling with the loss of identity and community in the midst of an alien culture. Undoubtedly, the element of culture shock is present in Fromm's critique and he admits this explicitly when contrasting "the medieval world" of the Frankfurt Jewish community of his youth with modern societies based on totally different set of values and priorities.

Ingleby's argument misses the important point, however, that Fromm's critique of modern societies is not pointed only against the "average man" or

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295 Touraine 1995, 150–175.
296 Ingleby 2002, xlvi.

"modern man", but is also a form of self-critique. As the above discussion implies, the stranger is not an outsider, but a participant in the culture from which he or she is excluded. Even though the mysterious and somewhat contemptible figure of the "average man" often occupies the centre of the stage, the fundamental mode of critique utilized by Fromm is based on the idea of *relatedness*. Since identity is formed always in relation to something, a person living in a sick society is forced to act within its alienated realities, regardless of whether this person is fully assimilated or a rebelling stranger. Thus, in addressing the malaises of the modern world, Fromm speaks of "we" or "us", as in his critique of automatism through a reference to Nazi bureaucrat Adolf Eichmann: "We can see ourselves in Eichmann". Perhaps here a vague line can be drawn between moralism and social critique.[297]

From this perspective social critique is always also self-critique. This is why Fromm placed great value on "techniques" like self-analysis and Zen-Buddhist meditation: derepression and expansion of awareness were necessary if the individual wanted to get rid of the desires, needs and aspirations of the sick society. In an interview with Richard Evans Fromm stressed this as a personal concern of his: "I analyze myself for forty to fifty minutes every morning. I am trying to be aware; I am trying to be very critical; but I am not claiming that I don't make errors".[298] The starting point for social critique is highly dubious if the individual presumes narcissistically that he or she is perfect (or conversely incurable) and insists that the problem lies solely with the social structures and institutions, which alienate and cripple man.

The above reference regarding the role of relatedness in Fromm's critique of modernity matches with Collini's observation, that public moralists rarely attempt to separate themselves from society, but instead conduct their critique from an insider position. As Collini stresses, the public moralist is convinced that his message is of utmost importance to the reading public and that the interests of the moralist and the public converge. The difference between Fromm's position and Collini's view of the public moralist is that the experience of strangerhood doesn't play a central role for Collini, who is primarily interested in the British public moralists of the 19th Century. However, the idea that Fromm's work exhibited certain characteristics of public moralism highlights the notion that his critique of modernity wasn't carried out from some mysterious position outside society, but instead it implied a certain intimacy between the writer and his audience. This interpretation is supported by the popular and straightforward style deliberately adopted by Fromm.[299]

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297 Fromm 1981, 23.
298 Evans 1981, 81.
299 Collini 1991, 2–4, 58. Fromm's remark to the preface of his *Sane Society* is a telling one: "To avoid unnecessary complications I have tried to deal with the problem in a language which is non-technical as far as this is possible." Fromm 1956a, vii.

4.5 Megamachine

The picture of modernity as a Golem, as a man-made monster, which has turned against its creators is not Fromm's original invention, but has been utilized by various analysts of modernity and its crisis. The metaphor has several forms: modernity is depicted as "the automatism of progress" (Speer), a "juggernaut" (Charles A. Reich and Giddens), a "compulsive march" (Bauman), "machinery" (Severino), a "megamachine" (Lewis Mumford) etc. However, the content is fundamentally always the same: things have gotten out of control. Or as Fromm's favourite quotation from Emerson goes: "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind".[300] The metaphor asserts that we are unable to control the huge administrative, technological and economic apparatus which determines the conditions of our lives. Modernity is increasingly seen as a process with unforeseen consequences. Even though all this is hopelessly abstract in the sense that modernity as such is merely an umbrella-term for various (and sometimes) conflicting processes and developments, the prevalence of metaphorizations about "the loss of control" point to the idea that there is a growing perception among sociologists and other analysts that our lives are determined to a large extent by objective forces outside of our control. *This*, is the tragedy of modernity. As Giddens writes: "The juggernaut crushes those who resist it, and while it sometimes seems to have a steady path, there are times when it veers away erratically in directions we cannot foresee".[301]

Severino agrees with the idea that the loss of control over man-made realities is a problem of instrumentalization: the sole purpose of the machinery is the endless improvement of its own power to achieve ends.[302] What is even worse, for Severino, is that the forces which attempt to control the process for their own purposes (democractic liberalism, Christianity, socialism etc.) are in fact paradoxically strengthening the apparatus and thus drifting increasingly away from the realization of their original ideals.[303]

All this recalls Marx's view of historical process as a process of alienation. Marx depicts modern capitalist society as an alien force bringing individuals into forced co-operation in accordance with its aims. These individuals are not aware of the domination they are subjected to (analyzed by Marx through concepts like "false consciousness", "mystification" etc.) and are thus unable to

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300 Fromm 1955a, v.
301 Giddens 1995, 139.
302 Severino 1997, 60.
303 This picture of modernity as a huge out-of-control-machinery, utilized by Fromm, Giddens, Severino and others, has been ingeniously expressed by John Adams in his orchestral work *El Dorado*. The first movement, "Dream of Gold", is a huge process of colliding dissonant tones characterized by repetition, machine-like rhythms and the cancerous growth of the musical material. As a counterbalance to the brutal and machine-like first movement, Adams gives in the second part, "Soladades", an alternative depiction of growth, this time in harmony with nature and without the destructive element of greed which characterized the first movement.

control their social conditions ("alienation"). Berman interprets Marx's and Engel's narrative on the revolutionary historical role of the bourgeoisie in *The Communist Manifesto* by identifying modernity with Frankenstein: the bourgeoisie is a class which has initiated a process with consequences out of its reach and understanding.[304]

The metaphorization of modernity as machinery out of control can be seen as an elaboration of Marx's famous "The Fragment on Machines" from *Grundrisse*, which contains this pivotal quotation: "The worker's activity, reduced to a mere abstraction of activity, is determined and regulated on all sides by the movement of the machinery, and not the opposite. The science which compels the inanimate limbs of the machinery, by their construction, to act purposefully, as an automaton, does not exist in the worker's consciousness, but rather acts upon him through the machine as an alien power, as the power of the machine itself."[305] In such theories which depict modernity as alienation, science, technology and modern forms of organization are not represented as tools in the service of man (as techno-idealism proposes), but as alien instruments, which tend to instrumentalize man. In this sense, the metaphor of "cog in the wheel", utilized frequently also by Fromm, is an emblematic figuration of the loss of control in the modern megamachine. This machinery has become a "technical mother", which feeds man and takes care of him. Man can have "complete faith in the machine" – which implies complete dependency on it and its techniques.[306]

Fromm suggests a view of modern technology (and the administrative society, which is based on this technology), as a "trap", which promises all things to all men, but rarely lives up to these promises. As an example from the critique of advertising shows, by associating certain images with the advertised product the advertisement industry attempts to lure the consumer to the pleasures of prefabricated happiness, but since the association between the product and its image is rarely concrete and tangible, the promised pleasure remains nothing but an unfulfilled expectation in the mind of the passivized consumer. Through this mass deception the consumer is turned into an instrument, a living advertisement, strengthening further the appeal of bought pleasures.[307]

Narratives centered on the threat of objective forces such as "unconsciousness", "capitalism", "instrumental reason" etc. highlight the fragile nature of the autonomy and authenticity of modern subjects, born out of

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304 Berman 1988, 101. See also Marx & Engels 1976a.

305 Marx, Karl, *Grundrisse*. Penguin Books, London 1973 (1939), 693. See also Bauman 1973, 75.

306 See Fromm, Erich, The Myth of the Paradise. Lecture given at New York 1968 (audio). Fromm's response to the Moon flight illustrates his stance: "To me it symbolizes the self-abdication of man and the almost official institution of the new religion, in which the machine has become God, and all that pertains to it, sacred." Fromm, Erich, Letter to Lewis Mumford, 2.8.1969. In the aforementioned lecture, Fromm sees the astronaut as the "priest of the new idol".

307 For this kind of critique of advertising, see for example Reich, Charles A., *The Greening of America*. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1971 (1970), 161– 183.

the legacy of the Enlightenment and Romanticism. The out of control system turns against its creators and re-makes them according to its abstract needs. Subjectivity is marginalized, made unreal and irrelevant, and retains its significance only in the aesthetic sphere. As the loss of control over man-made realities is normalized and accepted as "natural" and "self-evident", the circle of domination closes: subjectivity is hopelessly saturated with power and given only the task of helping the individual to assimilate to the existing hierarchies, conventions and institutions. This is Fromm's message as an analyst – and a storyteller – of alienation.[308]

Here we can see Fromm's mode of critique, as discussed above, in action: he recognizes the achievements of liberal society, but then turns the liberal critique and idealism against itself by pointing at the mismatch between *ideals* and *realities*. This is the basis for his calls for a radical change and thorough rethinking and reorganization of existing social and cultural conditions. Betz writes: "His persuasion cannot appeal to extrinsic values, but must advocate a course of conduct that has intrinsic validity and efficacy for his audience".[309] Fromm's conviction was that exposing the mismatch between words and realities has the potential to evoke a critical mood in the audience, which can be turned against the prevailing conventions, as his characterization of young Freud shows: "The discrepancy between the official ideology and the *facts* of the political reality was apt to weaken anyone's confidence in the reality of words, slogans, authoritative statements, and was prone to foster the development of a critical mind". In a letter to Governor Adlai Stevenson, Fromm appeals to the American values of individualism, decentralization, free initiative and independence – despite the fact that precisely these values have been used to justify the functioning of the capitalist system. However it is precisely Fromm's attempt to show that all these "good things" can never be attained under capitalism. This same stance is evident when Fromm opens his article "Love in America" (1959) by acknowledging the immense significance of love for American society and culture, but soon counters this notion by voicing his doubts regarding the "reality" behind this illusory self-image. This is the dynamics alienation in its overt form: language and reality or consciousness and reality have become almost completely detached from one other. Words fail to describe the experiential reality they are supposed to represent. In short: we are engaged in building an elaborate pseudoreality, which clouds our consciousness and blocks us from seeing the realities as they are.[310]

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308 Peter Wagner lumps together various critics of modernity (Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Foucault) under the notion of "the self-cancellation of modernity". Although Fromm never advocated the idea of a "totally administrated society", he certainly agreed with the analysis regarding new techniques of power which made social control more pervasive than ever. What is shared by all theorist of this scheme is the notion that liberal ideas were not realized in society and that, in fact, the development of liberal capitalist society made human self-realization impossible. See Wagner 1994, 6–7.

309 Betz 1974, 210.

310 Fromm, Erich, *Sigmund Freud's Mission. An Analysis of His Personality and Influence*. Grove Press, New York 1963 (1959a), 10; Fromm, Erich, "Love in America". In *The*

This is not merely some transcendental or idealist critique with lofty dreams about what human beings should be etc., but instead a mode of critique, which starts with the recognition of existing social and cultural processes. This method, characteristic of the Frankfurt School and Marxism in general, relies on the idea of immanent critique, which takes it material from the existing social forms and contradictions, but holds that to overcome the crisis we must go beyond them and transcend their limitations.[311] Fromm's philosophy is simultaneously an attempt at a communication with and an alarm call for the liberal modernity, which has created conditions for the emancipation of man, but has lost itself and corrupted its outspoken ideals by giving in to the capitalist system. The recognition of modernity's achievements together with the idea that things have sprung out of control and turned against their creators forms the backbone of Fromm's narrative of modernity and gives his style its familiar characteristics. The adaptation of this twofold approach to modernity and its woes was undoubtedly an important factor behind the immense popular success of his works.

Theories about the closure or self-cancellation of modernity form a stark contrast with the expectations of early modern ideologues of "the great promise". Undoubtedly the horizon of expectation had changed dramatically, and this change was naturally reflected in the figurative representations of modernity. The early 20th Century critics of modernity eventually questioned altogether the idea of progress, which depicted the process of modernization as a triumph or ascent and presumed that only the archaic past of man with its primitive temptations could pose a serious threat to civilization. The critics replaced this idyllic view of modernity – burdened only by the strain of self-discipline and will needed in the elevation of mankind from the primeval mud of Nature to the heights of Culture – with Benjamin's notion of modernity as a constant state of emergency. Thus, the themes of "disappointment", "loss", "nostalgia", "crisis", "degeneration", "loss of control", "bureaucratization", "instrumentalization", "meaninglessness", "standardization" etc. were increasingly popular among the more critical analysts of modernity. Unlike some have claimed, they rarely yearned for a return to the imagined past of paradisiacal premodern unity or "world of being". For these figures, the

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Search for America. Ed. H. Smith. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs (1959b). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1959d-e.pdf, 1; Fromm, Erich, *The Art of Listening*. Constable, London 1994b, 103; Fromm, Erich, Letter to Adlai E. Stevenson, 24.3.1954. Fromm, Erich, Mental Health. Lecture given at HUCSTR, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1953 (audio).

311 Schaar, however, claims the opposite: since Fromm gives such a bleak view of alienation in modern societies, the initial power to change the system must come from a source outside the social system. It must be an outsider prophet, hero or a leader, who puts the change in motion. See Schaar 1961, 259. Omitting here the fact that Fromm has no room for charismatic leadership in his social theory (his fascination with prophets and the figure of Messiah is based on the symbolic value of such figures), even personalities such as these are influenced by the existing mechanisms of socialization. All in all, the whole idea of an external impetus for change in Fromm's thought is completely unfounded, as the analysis on Fromm's dialectic approach on modernity in the next chapter will show.

tragedy of modernity consisted ultimately of the understanding that there was simply no past to return to.

Weber, for example, envisages a future of increasing rationalization. His theories regarding the inner-worldly asceticism and the spirit of capitalism were immensely influential among the Frankfurt School scholars. Even though Fromm found Weber's conservative worldview objectionable, his theories had an impact on his thought too. In his famous reference to the "iron-cage" Weber paints an uninviting picture of modern society.

> *"Tied to the technical and economic conditions at the foundation of mechanical and machine production, this cosmos today determines the style of life of all individuals born into it, only those directly engaged in earning a living. This pulsating mechanism does so with overwhelming force. Perhaps it will continue to do so until the last ton of fossil fuel has burnt to ashes. According to Baxter, the concern for material goods should lie upon the shoulders of his saints like 'a lightweight coat that could be thrown off at any time'. Yet fate allowed a steel-hard casing to be forged from this coat. … No one any longer knows who will live in this steel-hard casing and whether entirely new prophets or mighty rebirth of ancient ideas and ideals will stand at the end of this prodigious development. Or, however, if neither, whether a mechanized ossification, embellished with a sort of rigidly compelled sense of self-importance, will arise. Then, indeed, if ossification appears, the saying might be true for the 'last humans' in this long civilizational development: narrow specialists without mind, pleasure-seekers without heart; in its conceit, this nothingness imagines it has climbed to a level of humanity never before attained."*[312]

Freud, disillusioned by the First World War, gave a similar depiction of modern civilization by arguing that the development of civilization necessitated the increasing repression of natural drives, which created conditions for the growth of various psychological disturbances: "… the price we pay for our advance in civilization is a loss of happiness through the heightening of the sense of guilt."[313] To put all this together, Touraine notes that while 19th Century intellectuals were generally inspired by the dreams of a better future, many 20th Century intellectuals were struggling with a profound sense of meaninglessness and the disappearance of social actors. In Touraine's analysis, some of these intellectuals turned into "clerics against the age" and abandoned altogether the idea that the crisis could be overcome, while others ignored the criticism of the "pessimists" and embraced the ideology of modernization wholeheartedly.[314]

In Fromm's analysis the disintegration of the great promise had plunged the modern world to the edge of the precipice. The internalization of authorities through new techniques of power created possibilities for almost total control of identities and social relations. Individuals live under the illusion that they are free, but in reality their dreams, wishes, fantasies and needs are manipulated

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312 Weber 2002, 123–124. Denbo gives a succinct characterization of Weber's view: "Man freed from traditional culture is now wed to the mechanics of technology and bureaucracy". Denbo 1975, 202.

313 Freud 1981a, 134. Fromm's view of Freud's pessimism in his later works is revealed in the following quotation: "The skeptical enlightenment philosopher, overwhelmed by the collapse of his world, became the total sceptic who looked at the fate of man in history as unmitigated tragedy". Fromm 1970, 60.

314 Touraine 1995, 151, 163, 172–176.

and conditioned by the prevailing social system. Reduced to a mere cog in the wheel in a capitalist society, the alienated modern man has lost his human relations with other people. Despite his achievements in manipulating and controlling nature, he feels himself empty and isolated. The megamachine of modern technology exercises rigorous control over its subjects and leaves no room for radical dissent. This impasse prompted Fromm to ask the crucial question: "Have we to resign ourselves to the fact that we can master nature and produce goods in an ever-increasing degree, but that we must give up the hope for a new world of solidarity and justice; that this ideal will be lost in an empty technological concept of 'progress'?".[315]

[315] Fromm 1981, 59.

5 TO AWAKE. Critique and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity

5.1 "This is the Fork of the Road". Crisis as a Moment of Decision

Increasingly disappearing certainties, the instrumentalization of social relations, the eroding of traditions and the rise of mass culture evoked nostalgic sentiments among many intellectuals towards the bygone premodern world. As Peter Wagner writes: "Nostalgia is about loss". The phenomenon of disenchantment, seen by Weber as the crucial element in the process of rationalization, sparked an attempt to restore the aura of enchantment to the disillusioned world. This project of re-enchantment, as advocated by "anti-capitalist romanticism" or "revolutionary romanticism", was shared by thinkers representing various diverging interpretations of the crisis of modernity. Löwy writes: "In this tendency, restoration and utopia, nostalgia for the pre-capitalist past (real or imagined, near or remote) and revolutionary hope in a new future, are intimately and inseparably bound up with each other". Touraine mocks this "antimodernist" critique as a nostalgia for "Being". In Touraine's view the nostalgic stance towards the imagined past distorted the intellectuals' understanding of modernity and led them to perceive it as a monster trampling freedom and liberty under its feet: "It is understandable that intellectuals who wallow in nostalgia for Being should elaborate a negative image of modern society". The same observation has led Peter Wagner to note that nostalgia goes together with a sense of tragedy. In this scheme the lost world of the past is characterized by primeval harmony ("being-one-with-the-world"), which guarantees meaningful social relations and a harmonious relation between man and nature.[316]

316 Löwy 1992, 23, 28–29; Touraine 1995, 72–73, 130, 158–160; Wagner 2001, 80–102. See also similar critique in Latour, Bruno, *We Have Never Been Modern*. Transl. Catherine Porter. Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1997 (1991), 65–67, directed against

As the ending of the last chapter showed Fromm's critique of modernity ends with dark undertones. Modern societies are sick and alienated. Detailed conditioning of needs and careful psychological manipulation of identities is carried out under the illusion of freedom. Capitalism breeds discontent, but is able to contain it by repressing unwanted needs and desires, and by directing the psychic energy of people for its own purposes. This prompts the question of whether Fromm's critique was also encouraged by nostalgic longings – especially given his affection for the "medieval" traditions of the Jewish Orthodoxy of his youth. Ingleby points to this aspect in Fromm's thought.

> *"Fromm's critique loses power because even for his own time, it was not accurate; moreover, it seems to stem mainly from a nostalgic yearning for a world gone by. How 'humane' this world was, is a highly debatable matter. What is clear, at any rate, is that the enjoyment of 'unalienated' existence in the premodern societies was confined to a very tiny minority. (Strangely enough, those who hanker for a return to the past always seem to assume that this minority would have included them.)"*[317]

It is evident that Fromm felt certain nostalgia towards those elements of premodern culture which were swept under the rising tide of capitalism and materialism. However, to understand Fromm's critique of modernity merely as a reaction to the disintegration of the spiritual world of the Orthodox Jewish community would amount to a simplistic interpretation of his thought. Excluding Ingleby's highly dubious psychological assumption that the nostalgic critics of modernity were motivated by egoistic considerations regarding their status in a "return to the past", his argument is, in fact, simply based on an inadequate understanding of Fromm's thought. Accepting Ingleby's view would mean that nothing should be added to the last chapter's devastating critique. Fromm's narrative would end in a wholesale destruction of modernity's hopes: the tragic ending of the story would be characterized by sensations of loss, nostalgia and the wish to return to the womb, to the primeval unity of the premodern world. In this interpretation Fromm's thought could be identified with Luther's theology. Man is burdened by original sin and can attain harmony and salvation only by giving up his own will to the hands of the omnipotent Absolute. The problem is that Fromm never clung to a notion of return.

In fact one of the most fundamental elements of Fromm's thought is the conviction that *return* to anything is inevitably pathological. This constitutes the central theme of his work and becomes more and more important in his later

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Heidegger. However, Touraine's criticism against the "antimodernists" suffers from his distorted view regarding their dislike of modern societies. The primitivist nostalgia Touraine links with the "antimodernists" was certainly not shared by most thinkers Touraine attacks. In the cases of Adorno and Horkheimer, for example, whom he sees as emblematic figures in this respect, the notion of return to "premodern" harmony would amount to a blatant misunderstanding of their dialectical philosophy. Nevertheless, this critique doesn't invalidate Touraine's general observation regarding the appeal of nostalgia among the early 20th Century intellectuals. This problem is also discussed by Mikkeli 1998 and Löwy 1992, 201.

317 Ingleby 2002, xlvi.

writings. Fromm never sought or propagated any sort of return or escape – on the contrary, he maintained that such an attempt could lead only to suffering. Fromm's position leaves no room for doubt: "One of these deceptive alternatives is the suggestion of returning to the pre-industrial age or of accepting the society of the megamachine".[318]

This stance is based on Fromm's commitment to dialectics.[319] A brief detour to his specific understanding of the dialectical method will help to grasp the full extent of his narrative of modernity. Ironically, Fromm confronts this theoretical issue in his most popular book *The Art of Loving*. He introduces the notion of *paradoxical logic* as a counterpole to Western Aristotelian logic. Aristotelian logic is based on the law of identity (A is A), the law of contradiction (A is not non-A) and the law of the excluded middle (A cannot be A and non-A, neither A nor non-A), whereas paradoxical logic "assumes that A and non-A do not exclude each other as predicates of X". Fromm writes that paradoxical logic was predominant in Chinese and Indian philosophy. In the West it was adopted by Heraclitus and later by Hegel and Marx under the name of dialectics. Its basic idea is revealed by Heraclitus' notion of conflicting harmony or Laozi's notion regarding the paradoxical nature of true words. From this perspective "opposition is a category of man's mind" and not an attribute of reality. Thus, reality can be apprehended only through contradictions. Acknowledging the limitations of cognition implies the emphasis on acting, on concrete life processes.[320]

An examination of his discussion on disobedience illustrates Fromm's conception of dialectics. For him disobedience implied disobedience to certain principles and obedience to other principles: "The question is not really one of disobedience or obedience, but one of disobedience or obedience to what and to whom". Fromm admits that accepting paradoxical or dialectical forms of thought can be difficult, since we have a tendency to perceive things in opposite relation to each other, through dualisms.[321] Fromm gives another example of dialectics in action by referring to Freud's concept of *ambivalence*, which helps to explain how a person can be under the influence of two mutually exclusive feelings such as love and hate, desire and disgust. Accepting ambivalence like this would be impossible from the standpoint of Aristotelian logic, whereas dialectical forms of thought are open to such contradictions and are thus able give a richer and more multifaceted view of reality.[322] Applying ambivalence and dialectics to the understanding of modernity implies that it can no longer

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318 Fromm 1994a, 55.

319 Rainer Funk writes about this commitment: "Yet dialectics as a form of thought plays an eminent role in his work". Funk 1982, 235.

320 Fromm 1956a, 57–62. Fromm discusses paradoxical logic also in his biographical *Beyond the Chains of Illusion.* See Fromm 1962, 129–130. See also Funk 1982, 231–232.

321 Fromm 1963a, 114–115; Fromm 1966, 154; Fromm 1981, 18–19.

322 Fromm 1962, 130. See also Freud, Sigmund, "Totem and Taboo". In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. 13.* Ed. James Strachey. London, The Hogarth Press 1981h, 29. Freud in turn gives the credit for the concept of ambivalence to Eugen Bleuler, a Swiss psychiatrist.

be understood as an unambiguous catastrophe, but as a process consisting of dynamic friction between contradictory elements.

Fromm's approach to dialectics is of course strongly influenced by Marxist dialectics. Understanding the Marxist roots of Fromm's dialectics brings the discussion to the heart of the problem of modernity and shows even more clearly why the notion of Fromm as a prophet of nostalgia or "return" is clearly a misunderstanding. Marx sees history as a dialectical process which proceeds through negations. Current social and economic structures are the result of a constant friction between contradictory elements in society. This led Marcuse to note that Marx's conception of reality underlines its negative character. Hegel's dialectics followed the metaphysical process of being, whereas in Marx's work "negativity of reality becomes a *historical* condition" associated with a particular historical form of society. From this perspective it is evident that the malaises of capitalism cannot be reversed by a return to a past. As Marcuse writes: "The given state of affairs is negative and can be rendered positive only by liberating the possibilities immanent in it."[323]

We can see that the specific form of dialectics which Fromm utilizes, explicitly denies the possibility of return. Fromm did not see modernity as a monolithic monster that should be destroyed outright, but a as totality comprised of contradictory elements. It contained the seeds of ruin and hope alike and was characterized by contradiction between possibilities and realities. This dual nature of modernity was acknowledged also by Ortega y Gasset in his *Revolt of the Masses*.[324] Berman has succinctly pointed out that Marx's idea was not to overpower his readers with the sense of tragedy, but to help them to grasp the contradictions of capitalism and use this understanding to challenge the alienating conditions.[325] The best example of Marx's and Engel's dialectical approach to modernity is their formulation of the revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie in history. The bourgeoisie has eradicated superstition, state and church authorities and replaced them with abstract money relationships. Through rapid industrial development it has freed man from the blind rule of nature. And by burdening the individual with the responsibility of his or her economic fate it has created the material basis for the development of modern individuality. The irony is, however, that the bourgeois world has trapped itself in its own creations.[326]

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323 Marcuse, Herbert, *Reason and Revolution*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1977 (1941), 315. See also Marx & Engels 1976b. On dialectics as liberation, see also Marcuse 1968, 175.

324 Ortega y Gasset 1950, 31. Fromm's dialectical view of modernity is stressed also by Wilde. See Wilde 2004, 3.

325 Berman 1988, 19–23. This view Marxist dialectics helps us to understand Marx's notion of society as both liberating and oppressive structure, as White has pointed out. See White 1973, 282.

326 Marx & Engels 1976a. On the irony of bourgeoisie in Marx's thought as a revolutionary class that has chained itself in its own creations see also White 1973, 312.

As Berman has written, both "negative" and "affirmative" approaches to modernity miss the fundamentally contradictory nature of modernity.[327]

> "*To be modern is to live a life of paradox and contradiction. It is to be overpowered by the immense bureaucratic organizations that have the power to control and often destroy all communities, values, lives; and yet to be undeterred in our determination to face these forces, to fight to change their world and make it our own.*"[328]

For Jameson this question of recognizing the contradictory elements in modernity is crucial in constructing a plausible theory of modernity. Representing modernity as a mere catastrophe or triumph would be nothing but a poor attempt to mediate the multifaceted social reality through narrow narrative framework. Thus, Jameson emphasizes that theoretical understanding should be based on the recognition of both differences and similarities in the phenomena under scrutiny. When it comes to understanding modernity, James suggests that we should not see it merely as a reflection of reification, but also as a protest against existing realities which "involves a whole Utopian compensation for increasing dehumanization ".[329]

This gives us the possibility to see cultural phenomena, like Fromm's work, as answers to the inner contradictions of modernity. The question is not merely about how Fromm's work reflects the social and cultural conditions under which it was created, but also how Fromm invents and challenges the realities of his time. This approach follows Berman's definition of modernism as an attempt to make ourselves at home in modernity. Recognition of the contradictions of modernity is thus taken as a starting point for subsequent analysis. As Jameson and Wagner have both emphasized, symbolic acts like narratives constitute their own reality. They create an illusion of the real and represent the world through the text. They are always acts of invention, built upon already existing conventions.[330] This point prompts a shift from the discussion of Fromm's devastating critique of modernity and his reaction against increasing dehumanization, to his vision regarding the radical reinvention of modernity.

To explicate how it is possible for Fromm to represent history as a simultaneous process of alienation *and* emancipation we must first take a look at Marx's view of history. White writes that for Marx human history is essentially about simultaneous processes of ascent (man's increasing control over nature) and descent (his increasing alienation). However, these two plotlines are not exclusive, but in a dialectical relation to each other. The friction between the two is pushing history towards a decisive crisis, which could mean

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327 Berman 1988, 29–32. A similar position has been advocated by Fornäs and Peter Wagner, who both insist that we should recognize both power and resistance against it in modernity and not reduce it to a reflection of either one of these. Fornäs 1995, 118–127; Wagner 1994, 117. The Critical Theorists' approach to modernity was similarly characterized by ambivalence, as Kellner points out. See Kellner 1989, 4.

328 Berman 1988, 13.

329 Jameson 2006, 24–28.

330 Jameson 2006, 65–67; Wagner 1981.

either the salvation or destruction of mankind.[331] Fromm shared this conception of history. The reason why his critique of modernity is painted in such dark undertones is essentially his conviction that we are facing this crisis at this very moment, as he writes in a letter to Governor Adlai E. Stevenson in 1954: "We, in the Western world, are undergoing a moral and human crisis which can only be compared with the great periods of crisis as they happen every five hundred or thousand years."[332] The contradictions of modernity have driven mankind to a point of no return. Koselleck, too, underlines the same rhetorical function of the concept of crisis: "to interpret the entire course of history from a particular point in time" – this particular point being, naturally, the present moment.[333] Fromm's sometimes hyperbolic assertions of the crisis of modern societies and the need for a radical change should be read against this background. Hyperbole is a means of highlighting. Fromm's alarmist stance is based on his conviction that the proportions of the looming disaster are of such magnitude and coming closer every day that he who yells and waves is not the lunatic, but he who minds his business as usual despite the dark clouds gathering in the horizon.

For Fromm the potentialities of destruction and hope were not some metaphysical or abstract attributes of modernity, but immanent realities that had tangible consequences. In the Frommian perspective the crisis of modernity is not merely a crisis pertaining to the institutions, structures etc. of modernity, but also a crisis of consciousness, of individual salvation, of life itself. There is thus a double sense of urgency involved in this crisis, with double possibilities of loss: alienation on the personal level thwarts life and takes away the power from individuals to realize their desirable human potentialities, whereas alienation on the social level is threatening the physical survival of mankind. If the decision is not made immediately, soon there will be no possibility to decide at all.

> *"We are confronted with the probability that within fifty years – and perhaps much sooner – life on this earth have ceased to exist; not only because of nuclear, chemical and biological warfare (and every year technological progress makes weapons that are more devastating), but also because technological 'progress' makes the soil, the water and the air unfit for the sustenance of life."*[334]

The threat of the Cold War and particularly of nuclear holocaust is a central theme in Fromm's writings from the 1950s onwards. Fromm notes that the total destruction of mankind seems more probable than the actualization of its productive potentialities: "Man is likely to destroy all life on earth, or to destroy all civilized life and the values among those that remain, and to build a barbaric, totalitarian organization which will rule what is left of mankind". In

331 White 1973, 285–287.
332 Fromm, Erich, Letter to Adlai E. Stevenson, 24.3.1954.
333 Koselleck, Reinhart, "Some Questions Concerning the Conceptual History of 'Crisis'". In *Culture and Crisis. The Case of Germany and Sweden*. Ed. Nina Witoszek & Lars Trägårdh. Berghahn Books, New York 2002, 15.
334 Fromm 1970, 190.

the aftermath of the Cuban crisis, Fromm gave a bleaker prediction: "This situation, which will be repeated many times in the coming years, will make it a miracle if civilization is not destroyed within the next ten years". In his last interview, given in 1980, he still warned about the possibility of a full-scale nuclear war. In Fromm's analysis the threat was not only about the consequences of technological progress, but also about the psychological processes of alienation, automatization and instrumentalization. He insisted that if the nuclear holocaust materialized it would not be on account of man's evil nature, but owing to the consensus of stupidity and the internalization of the ideals of a sick society.[335]

> *"If man becomes indifferent to life there is no longer any hope that he can choose the good. Then, indeed, his heart will have so hardened that his 'life' will be ended. If this should happen to the entire human race or to its most powerful members, then the life of mankind may be extinguished at the very moment of its greatest promise."*[336]

The crisis implies that the present moment is a moment of ultimate decision, "the fork of the road". Fromm stresses repeatedly the urgency of the decision: "We do not have too much time left" and "If we do not begin now, it will probably be too late".[337] The crisis of modernity is simultaneously a historical watershed and an eschatological event. As an illustration of the sense of the "nowness" of the crisis, Fromm claimed in an interview with Dutch television in 1971 that the next ten years would decide man's fate. This bold eschatological assumption should be understood not only in the context of Fromm's experience of the conformity and narrowness of life in American society, but also in the context of the Cold War and particularly the abovementioned Cuban crisis of 1962, which demonstrated the hazardous nature of power politics between the United States and the Soviet Union.[338]

The importance of making the right decision is further strengthened by Fromm's tendency to represent the difference between right and false decisions with extreme contrasts: we can choose life, hope, socialism, humanism, peace, spiritual renewal, redemption and full realization of man's potentialities *or* death, destruction, robotism, war, boredom, barbarism and servitude. Fromm writes: "Without wanting to prophecy anything, I believe that today there is essentially only one choice for modern man and for people of the earth *in toto*: the choice between barbarism and a new renaissance of humanism". The same message is repeated his *The Revolution of Hope*: " … one road leads to a

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335 Fromm 1955a, 349–351; Fromm 1962, 197–198; Fromm 1964a, 142; Fromm, Erich, "Foreign Policy After the Test Ban". In *The Correspondent*. No. 30, (1964c). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1964h-e.pdf, 2; Fromm 1966, 229; Fromm 1976, 56; Fromm 1981, 73–74, 107; Fromm 1994a, 15–16, 29–30.

336 Fromm 1964a, 150.

337 Fromm, Erich, "Interview with Richard Heffner". In *McCalls*. Vol. 92. New York, (1965a). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1965f-e.pdf 1; Fromm 1968a, 1, 198. This sort of rhetoric is increasingly utilized by Fromm in his later works.

338 Fromm, Erich, De mens is stervende… een ontmoeting met Erich Fromm. Television of Netherlands, 1971 (video). On the rhetorical function of Fromm's emphasis on the "nowness" of the crisis, see Betz 1974, 215–216.

completely mechanized society with man as a helpless cog in the machine … the other to a renaissance of humanism and hope ... ". The crisis of modernity is, in the end, as Fromm expressed in a biblical quotation, a crisis of life: "I put before you today Life and Death, Blessing and Curse – and you chose Life".[339]

The metaphor of crisis has been conventionally used to underline the possibility of the looming disaster and to encourage people to start acting in order to prevent the disaster from happening.[340] As Benjamin's characterization of modernization as a constant state of emergency suggests, awareness of crisis has continued to be a central aspect of modern consciousness at least from the beginning of the 20th Century. The drama been given several forms: the death of God or man, the crisis of Europe, anomie, the collapse of civilization… Latour sees this endless wallowing in the sense of crisis frustrating; it has prompted him to ask why indeed modernity seems be fixated on its crises. It is precisely this pathos, Latour argues, which distinguishes modern culture from other cultures. Have we not had enough of the sense of crisis, he asks.[341] But is it not obvious for modern consciousness, struggling with profound changes and challenges one after another, to cling to a notion of crisis? If we understand modernity as a flux, in the same sense as Marx and Engels understood it in 1848, there is indeed no need to wonder why the notion of crisis has occupied the centre of the stage in various analyses of modernity. When it comes to Fromm's prophetic mission, the idea of a crisis is a rhetorical necessity, as Betz shows.

> "*For prophecy to be effective, there must first and foremost be an awareness in the audience of a* crisis *situation, for crisis adds to the prophetic message a dynamic sense of urgency, and* urgency *is imperative if the prophet is to succeed in social reformation. Both crisis and urgency point to the* nowness *of the situation: "now" becomes the focus for awareness and subsequently for action. In the prophetic scene the "now" which is projected by the prophet is unique and pivotal, for, as the prophet describes it, the present moment possesses and unusually great potential for achievement, if the prophet's message is heeded. Conversely, of course, if this moment, so pregnant with possibility, were neglected through a rejection of the prophetic message, then the loss would be commensurate with the possible gain. The prophet's*

339 Fromm 1955a, 349, 354–355; Fromm 1961a, 263; Fromm 1961b, 6; Fromm 1962, 187, 197–198; Fromm 1964a, 14; Fromm, Erich, "Are We Still Sane?". In *Readings in Abnormal Psychology: Human Values and Abnormal Behavior*. Ed. W. D. Nunokawa. Scott and Foresman, Chicago, (1965b). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1965j-e.pdf, 3; Fromm 1968a, vii; Fromm 1970, 190; Fromm 1981, 89; Fromm 1994a, 29, 79, 96. In a speech to Eugene McCarthy's election campaign in 1968 Fromm stresses the idea the United States in particular has a great potential for renewal. See Fromm 1994a, 96. Given the audience of this speech, it is evident that this notion should be read as a rhetorical decision with the attempt to persuade the public. However, at the end of the 1960s Fromm was also genuinely impressed by the young generation's revolt against the repressive Establishment of their parents, despite remaining critical of certain aspects of this revolt.

340 See Wagner 1994, 30–31.

341 Latour 1997, 114–116.

> *reference to a crisis is essentially a fear appeal, yet it opens up to the audience the alternative of a positive plan for social reform."*[342]

It must be noted, however, that this "fear appeal" of prophecy is not a mere rhetorical strategy, but the attempt to communicate to the audience the full experience and awareness of the crisis situation. The metaphor of "sleep" underlines the current passive state, from which the people must awake before it is too late. The hyperbolic contrast between being awake and being at sleep is used here to emphasize the sincerity of the alarmist message.[343] Pietikäinen illuminates the function of clear cut contrasts between the current state of affairs and utopias: "Life is indeed hard, and only a few people can sail through without damage, but it is precisely the sorry state of modern man and modern culture that fuelled the psychoutopian visions of a better life with so much hope".[344] Furthermore, by resorting to the fear appeal of the crisis awareness, it is evident that Fromm's goal is not to stultify his readers' intellect so that he can feed them whatever he wants them to think, but instead to encourage them to look at the realities which surround them with suspicion and doubt – and to instill in them awareness and sensitivity towards the processes which take place in themselves, in other people and in society. A reference to Fromm's distinction between catastrophic and anticipatory change illustrates this. He contends that if societies are "incapable of adapting themselves voluntarily and peacefully to fundamentally new conditions *by anticipating the necessary changes*", catastrophes will follow.[345] From this standpoint, the prophet's wake up call is not necessarily an appeal to fear, but an appeal which attempts to counter a situation where fear is the only appropriate response.

It is undeniable, however, that if the prophet's mission is successful, the audience's understanding of the situation is necessarily colored to some extent by the prophet's metaphorically laden representation. Betz calls this aspect of prophesy "word-magic": "Thus, the prophet's words themselves take on for the audience the beginning of the wish-fulfillment." The idea is not to command the audience, but to make the prophetic message "as attractive in itself as possible".[346] It is evident that the prophet acts as a mediator in the new understanding of the situation. But there is nothing extraordinary or authoritarian in this, since it is evident that all cultural signification necessitates mediation. The crucial question is whether this mediation enables people to "work through" what they have just received from the prophet, and not just "act it out".

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342 Betz 1974, 185. In another context Betz stresses again the fear appeal of the prophetic message: "The traditional prophetic prediction of ruin if the prophet's words are not heeded is in evidence here". Betz 1974, 225.

343 See Betz 1974, 192, 216.

344 Pietikäinen 2007, 212.

345 See Fromm 1961b, 4. In his lecture "Western Man and His Choices" from 1962 Fromm repeats this prediction by warning that the possibility to choose freedom might be gone in a few years time. See Fromm, Erich, Western Man and His Choices. Lecture given at the University of California, Berkeley, 1962 (audio).

346 Betz 1974, 196, 210.

The magnitude of the crisis implies that no minor reforms can make it go away – and here Betz's reference to Fromm's mission as a project of "social reform" is somewhat misleading. It evokes a vision of liberal or social-democratic solution to the crisis of modernity, while Fromm advocated instead a more radical and systematic change. Fromm claims that most revolutions and revolutionary movements have made the mistake that they have propagated change only in a certain sphere of society. In Fromm's analysis this turns the revolutionary struggle into empty ideology and tends to encourage violence. Christianity preached the spiritual renewal of mankind, but neglected the need for a social revolution. The Enlightenment was obsessed with changes in the political sphere and left the socioeconomic oppression largely intact. Socialism, in turn, emphasized socioeconomic change, but neglected the spiritual renewal without which no revolution could succeed. The Gospel was distorted by the authoritarian Catholic Church, the age of Enlightenment ended with Robespierre and Napoleon and vulgar socialism led to Stalin's regime. Fromm insisted that revolution can succeed only if there is a simultaneous and systematic change in the political, economic and cultural spheres – and only if the material revolution is accompanied by a more utopian and wholesale spiritual revolution: "The system can be changed only if, instead of changing only one single factor, real changes are made within the whole system so that a new integration of *all its parts* can take place".[347] Fromm's idea of revolution as a total transformation is, of course, in line with his conviction regarding the pathological character of modern society.

By calling for a full-scale socialist and humanist revolution Fromm's approach differed radically from the liberal reformism of intellectual figures like Isaiah Berlin and Karl Popper. Perhaps Fromm didn't have the sense of detached patience which Popper as a rational man (with all the possible associations of the word) maintained in his writings. Popper saw utopias and grand visions of transformation as disaster waiting to happen. It was precisely the idea of a complete rupture which the existing social and psychological conditions which could be abused by demagogues and ideologues as a tool of repression and totalitarian control. Furthermore, Popper contended that utopian engineering was unable to cope with the unintended consequences of social changes. For these reasons Popper advocated the "piecemeal engineering" approach as a general method of social change.[348] For Fromm, however, the reformist approach missed the whole point by tackling only the

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347 Fromm 1955a, 264–266; Fromm 1962, 62–63; Fromm 1963a, 75; Fromm 1966, 157; Fromm 1968a, 144–145; Fromm 1976, 134; Fromm 1994a, 42–43, 55.

348 On Popper's critique of utopianism see Popper, Karl, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Routledge, London & New York 2002 (1945) and Popper, Karl, "Piecemeal Vs. Utopian Engineering". In *Philosophy Now. An Introductory Reader*, Ed. Paula Rothenberg & Karsten J. Struhl. Random House, New York 1975 (1972). It is interesting to note that Bauman's conception of order building as the fundamental element in oppressive modernization ideology shares certain important features with Popper's analysis, despite the fact that Bauman's radical social thought could hardly be identified with Popper's liberal stance.

consequences of suffering but not going to its roots: "Any piecemeal reform according to Fromm, can never be effective, for the system at large carries the virus which will thwart or undo any healing that may have taken place".[349] Inspired by messianic ideals and struggling with the human suffering caused by both Western capitalism and Soviet "socialism", Fromm urged his audience to confront the crisis as living and sensitive human beings, not as automata calculating losses and gains with inhuman clarity and precision: "Who can be silent as long as there are billions of human beings living, breathing, laughing, crying and hoping?"[350] This question posed by Fromm can be seen as a reformulation of the question posed by the prophet Amos in the Bible: "Who can refuse to prophesy?" (Amos 3:8) Fromm's mission of prophesy tolerated no doubt in the face of needless suffering. In this respect, he certainly shared the fundamental characteristic of all utopists: the call for an immediate radical change and the desire "to pull heaven down to earth", as Richard Gerber put it.[351]

Fromm's attempt to find more and more convincing metaphors for his basic understand of the crisis of modernity, which he established already during the 1930s, can be seen psychoanalytically as an attempt to break the *resistance* of his readers. Fromm admits this implicitly when he notes that certain psychoanalytical concepts can used in a non-clinical setting: "Most problems in fact which are discussed in analysis, like resistance or transference, are much more important as general human problems".[352] From the analysts' point of view it is evident that their patients will try to evade the full understanding of their situation. They will engage in all sorts of rationalizations to escape the facts that are determining their lives for the worse. As an analyst of the illnesses of modernity, Fromm utilized various metaphors to break the resistance of his readers. By creating new metaphorical representations Fromm tried to unearth such meanings and associations in modernity which had been so far neglected. The idea behind this was to encourage his readers to perceive similarities between their experiences (as insignificant as they might have seemed at the moment) and his representations of social or cultural reality. This, of course, could be seen as an authoritarian method, with the analyst-prophet telling the reader-patients what to think of themselves and their situation. A critique like this would imply that the whole practice of psychoanalysis would, in general, amount to nothing more than a theatre of deception.

However, Fromm maintained that the authority of the analyst – or that of the prophet – should always be temporary, that no force or manipulation should be used in leading the patient to confront his or her neuroses. Furthermore, a crucial part of the method of self-analysis Fromm advocated was the exposing of various internalized authority relations. For Fromm

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349 Betz 1974, 211.
350 Fromm 1970, 191.
351 Quoted from Bauman 1976, 22.
352 Fromm 1994b, 115.

psychoanalysis was a tool for eradicating dependencies and increasing the awareness of social manipulation. This unsolved friction between the content and the form of his work makes his "presence" or "voice" profoundly paradoxical, as Betz points out: "He preaches the doctrine of intense anti-authoritarianism, yet presents his message in a most apodictic tone".[353] In this sense, Fromm's "presence" resembles that of Nietzsche, who similarly preached a doctrine of total individual emancipation through the Biblical bombast of Zarathustra. Fromm certainly had the charisma to fill university auditoriums with eager listeners, as his immensely popular lecture tour across the campuses in America in 1968 indicated. Betz even writes of the existence of a Fromm cult among university students. Fromm was supposedly ousted from the William Alanson White Institute, because his popularity threatened the position of Karen Horney, another prominent neo-Freudian at the Institute. In Mexico, as Millán writes, Fromm provoked a cultural euphoria and a group of ardent followers soon gathered around him.[354]

All these accounts seem to point towards a picture of Fromm as a narcissistic cult leader. The reality, however, was much more ambivalent: despite his charisma and immense popularity, Fromm never started a school of his own, not even in Mexico where his influence and standing at the university was considerable. And unlike Freud, he never gathered an avant-garde of loyalists around himself, nor attempted to form a movement with its dogmas and ceremonies around his ideas.[355] Here his stance of optimal marginality, as pointed out by McLaughlin, proved essential, since it provided him at the same time with resources for collaboration and publishing, but also secured him a position outside petty rivalries and the dogmatism of any movement or school.

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353 Betz 1974, 205. This friction was recognized at least partially by Fromm, too. A small detail from a video interview by Richard Evans illustrates this. Fromm and Evans are discussing the problem of transference, when Fromm is about to say to Evans in a very didactic way that he shouldn't forget certain aspect of the problem, but instantly notices this and corrects it by saying that he must remind himself not to forget it. This could be dismissed as an insignificant detail, but in the context of Fromm's full work and his statements on moralism make it clear that the troublesome ambivalence between the didactic tone of the prophet and the critical tone of the analyst was indeed recognized by Fromm, too. See Fromm, Erich, Dialogue with Erich Fromm. Interview by Richard Evans, 1966 (video).

354 See Betz 1974, 208 and Millán, Salvador, "Mexican Time. Erich Fromm in Mexico: A Point of View". In *Gesellschaft und Character. Wissenschaft vom Menschen. Jahrbuch der International Erich-Fromm Gesellschaft. Band 6*. Ed. Helmut Johach. Münster (Lit. Verlag) 1996, 73. Millán recalls an incident in Mexico in which a large group of students tried to get into a same elevator with Fromm after his lecture, because everyone wanted to be near him: "Fromm uttered a cry – of fright, protest or alarm? – because they were all squeezed in an elevator that carried a sign stating clearly 'capacity 8 persons'." For a balanced discussion on Fromm's role as an analytic guru, see Thomson 2009, 88. Thomson recognizes both elements of narcissism and modesty in Fromm's image and presence.

355 In his *Sigmund Freud's Mission* Fromm explicitly attacks the authoritarian aspects of Freud's personality and his attempt to make the psychoanalytic movement a new religion. See Fromm 1959a, 67–72, 89–100. For this same reason, he never formed a school around his ideas, as he states in an interview by Gerard Khoury. See Fromm, Erich, Interview with Gerard Khoury. Locarno, 1978–1979 (audio).

Even though critics of Fromm like Schaar saw him essentially as a moralist, the issue of moralism in Fromm's work is, in fact, a complex one.[356] First of all, there is the question of what precisely we mean by moralism. Fromm has nothing to do with the kind of overt moralism, in which the moralist takes a supreme position above the vulgar crowd and then scolds the audience for their inadequacies in not following certain moral norms and standards. However, Fromm referred to the question of moralism when he noted that psychoanalysis has helped him to overcome his judgmental attitude, which he believed came from his "biblical background". And in a letter to Tristram Coffin he underlined that the appeal for a spiritual revolution – "a drastic change in man's whole attitude" – had to be presented without moralism: "If that could be shown more concretely so that it does not sound like preaching but like appealing to the best interests of everybody – which it is – much could be gained". This, nevertheless, didn't prevent him from voicing certain aristocratic and romantic notions regarding the moral leadership of the wise: " ... a Jewish legend says that the world rests on 36 just men: only thirty six, but their moral strength is immense".[357]

The specific form of moralism which bears particular relevance in Fromm's case is public moralism, discussed already in the last chapter. For him, certain aspects of public moralism in his work had the function of eliminating the distance between his writings and his audience. A quotation from the preface of *The Revolution of Hope* illustrates Fromm's standpoint succintly: "It is addressed to a broad spectrum of readers with a different political and religious concepts but sharing this concern for life and respect for reason and reality." As Collini writes, the public moralist is "confident of having the ear of the important audience, confident of addressing concerns and invoking values which were largely shared with that audience, confident of an easy, intimate, even conversable, relationship with both Reason and History". Betz, too, underlines this aspect in Fromm's prophetic message. Offering "all things to all men" and appealing to "a broad spectrum of audience values" was essential for his "maverick role" as a modern prophet. In addition, "the hidden knowledge" of psychoanalysis provided him with an aura of respectability and confidence, even though at the same time Fromm explicitly repudiated the demi-god like status of the analyst.[358]

Another resemblance between Fromm and Collini's depiction of the public moralist which needs a further clarification here is the Manichean stance of perceiving reality through stark contrasts. There are certain similarities between Fromm and John Stuart Mill, discussed by Collini in connection with the public

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356 On Schaar's characterization of Fromm as a moralist, see Schaar 1961, 8.

357 Fromm, Erich, "To Have Or to Be? – That's the Question. Interview with Giovanna Maria Pace". In *La Repubblica.* La Repubblica Libri, Roma, (1977). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1977e-e.pdf, 2; Fromm, Erich, Letter to Tristram Coffin, 28.6.1974; Lundgren 1998, 33. Lundgren too addresses the question of moralism in Fromm's work. Unlike Fromm's critics, he sees no elements of moralism in his writings, but characterizes his stance instead as "ethical". See Lundgren 1998, 81.

358 Betz 1974, 206–207; Collini 1991, 58; Fromm 1968a, vii.

moralist scheme: ” ... magnifying the strength of the Forces of Darkness in his typically Manichean vision of the world was essential to his polemical strategy”.[359] From this perspective a strong dualist stance is of course a rhetorical strategy, which helps to highlight simultaneously the horrors of false decisions and the redemptive power of right decisions. However, Collini’s concept of “strategy” is slightly misleading here, since what Fromm writes is not merely something he does in order to persuade his audience, but it is something he profoundly believes in too. In other words, Fromm’s figurative and narrative choices amount not just to manipulative juggling with words, but are instead based on something the concepts of “voice” or “presence” attempt to capture: his sense of identity, values, associations, presumptions etc.[360]

Prophecies of doom and of possibilities of liberation constituted opposite poles in Fromm’s open-ended salvation story. Mankind can realize its human potentialities if it chooses the right path, but if the choice is wrong, no redemption can be hoped for. As Rainer Funk has written, Fromm’s thought was largely based on a mode of though Ernst Topitsch has called the Ecstatic-Cathartic -mode. The roots of this influential mode of thought lie in the Gnostic myths, which, in turn, were moulded after the example of shamanist magic. In Topitsch’s analysis, the basic theme of Gnosticism was the tension rising from the understanding of the nature of reality and the subsequent need for salvation. This salvation is shaped according to the ideal relationship between man and the world. In Gnostic myths, humanity has fallen from divine grace. After the fall, humanity has fundamentally two choices: to become alienated completely from this divine origin or to become conscious of it again. Choosing the latter path implies attaining transformation and redemption through Gnostic knowledge. This basic Gnostic scheme was utilized later on in various philosophies of history. What is essential in both Gnosticism and Judeo-Christian eschatology is the idea of a present evil as the necessary step towards ultimate salvation. Funk writes that Marx makes the old Gnostic idea this-wordly in his dialectics, leaving its kernel, however, untouched: in the beginning there is a unity, which is shattered because of alienation, but in the end there opens up a possibility for new harmony and unity. Thus, the present is seen as an era of “sin”, a time between creation and salvation. This is also the basic idea of Jewish messianism, which considered suffering as a necessary precondition of the coming of the Messiah.[361]

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359 Collini 1991, 129.

360 This is recognized by Betz, too, in his dissertation on Fromm’s prophetic rhetoric. See Betz 1974, 5. The atmosphere of the Cold War was a decisive factor behind Fromm’s messianistic prophecies. The threat of the nuclear war was something very tangible, just as the example of the Cuban crisis had showed.

361 Funk 1982, 223–228. See also Brumlik, Micha, ”Messianic Thinking in the Jewish Intelligentia of the Twenties”. In *Wissenschaft vom Menschen/Science of Man, Jahrbuch der Internationalen Erich Fromm-Gesellschaft. Vol. 2: Erich Fromm und die Kritische Theorie*, Münster (Lit Verlag) 1991.
http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/Brumlik,%20M.,%201991.pdf. 13.2.2010.
Marx’s stance in relation to the Ecstatic-Cathartic scheme of unity-alienation-unity becomes clear in the following quotation: “ … [proletariat] cannot emancipate itself

Fromm's, too, asserted that mankind must necessarily experience and live through evil in order to attain salvation. Here the concept of salvation is to be understood in the context of Fromm's thought and not as a Judeo-Christian theological concept per se. The Gnostic Ecstatic-Cathartic -mode is clearly evident in Fromm's *You Shall Be As Gods*, a radical interpretation of the Old Testament, which follows explicitly the Gnostic idea of mankind fallen from grace and proceeding towards new awareness of its divine nature and salvation. The difference between Fromm and Hegel or Marx is that while Hegel and Marx maintained that the current evil is a stage that will eventually be overcome,[362] the ending of Fromm's salvation story was completely open in the sense that no promise of salvation could be given.

The Ecstatic-Cathartic element in Fromm's work can be illustrated by taking a look at his view of the resurrection and the psalms. Fromm denied the traditional Christian idea of resurrection as ascension to heaven after the death of the body. Instead, he insisted that resurrection refers, symbolically, to the reinvigoration of this-wordly reality. Here Fromm is engaged in the invention of culture: by changing the metaphorical associations of this conventional theological concept and using this transformed concept in a new context, Fromm captured the rhetorical appeal of resurrection for his own purposes. Mankind stands at the brink of ultimate destruction and has surrendered itself to service the alienating Machine, but, just as the old Christian myth suggests, it still has the possibility to be born again: "Man and society are resurrected every moment in the act of hope and of faith in the here and now".[363]

In his discussion of the psalms Fromm stresses the idea that awareness of suffering is the first step towards emancipation. The Psalms show that only a person who has gone through despair can find true hope and regain the sense of oneness. For Fromm, there was no liberation without the experience of suffering caused by existing conditions: "The cure of despair is not achieved by encouraging thoughts, not even by feeling *part* of the despair; it is achieved by the seeming paradox that despair *can be overcome only if it has been fully experienced*".[364] Encouraging depressed or existentially bored people simply to live more happily contributes only to covering up of the causes of the illness.

Thus, Fromm argues that the first step of emancipation is *the awareness of suffering*. In his *To Have or To Be?* Fromm gives four conditions that must be met if a radical (subjective or social) change is to be successful. In his view, these

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without emancipating itself from all other spheres of society and thereby emancipating all other spheres of society, which, in a word, is the *complete loss* of man and hence can win itself only through the *complete re-winning of man*." Marx 1975a, 186.

362 See, for example, Funk 1982, 228.

363 Fromm 1968a, 17. Undoubtedly Fromm's inventions of theological concepts like the resurrection alienated some of his younger readers, who were particularly eager to get rid of the Christian heritage of their parents. This rhetorically unwise choice is yet another indication that Fromm's figurations and narratives shouldn't be understood only as strategies with the intent of persuading the audience, but as something resulting from his convictions and his sense of identity.

364 Fromm 1966, 201–223.

four conditions constituted also the kernel of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism. First two of these conditions have to do directly with suffering: 1) A person must be *aware* of his or her suffering, and 2) he or she must be aware of the *causes* of this suffering. Fromm argues that Freud's method was based on the same presuppositions: symptoms of disease can be eradicated only when the patient understands their cause and stops repressing his or her awareness of the situation. Marx's stance on to the emancipatory potential of suffering is similar: "The people must be taught to be *terrified* at itself in order to give it *courage*." Fromm's view is a synthesis of Freud and Marx: "*The beginning of liberty lies in man's capacity to suffer*, and he suffers if he is oppressed, physically and spiritually." Fromm's stance is reflected also in his clinical psychoanalytical approach: "If a person wants to change, wants to get well, he needs to mobilize all his vital energies, and he can mobilize them *only* if he sees how serious the situation is." Conversely, this means that when a person loses his capacity to suffer, he also loses his capacity to fight against those who are oppressing him. This intensifies further the sense of urgency of the radical change. Fromm emphasizes that suffering eventually hardens the heart, breaks the spirit and suppresses the wish to be free – and at this point everything is lost. As Wiggershaus notes, a similar idea of the significance of suffering for emancipation was shared also by Adorno who, however, considered Fromm too friendly and emphasized that only the experience of extreme anxiety could drive people to radical change.[365]

The sick society encourages individuals to repress their awareness of suffering: the pathology of normalcy and consumerism keep people content and relatively satisfied. Becoming aware of suffering and lies on which the whole culture is based is naturally a difficult and painful process, and can be compared to the often disturbing expansion of awareness gained from successful psychoanalytic treatment. This is another illustration of Fromm's view that all emancipation implies an increase in insecurities. Emancipation is always a possibility and a threat.

It comes as no surprise that German–Jewish thinkers living through the horrors of the Nazi era have emphasized the emancipatory significance of suffering. Marx's remark regarding the historical conditions of all understanding and experience – "The tradition of all generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living" – certainly had a special meaning for Jews living under the constant influence of anti-Semitism and the endless discrimination that came along with it. For Bauman it was precisely the experience of suffering which pushed some Jews to question in a radical way the plausibility of the whole project of modernization and the form of rationality it espoused. Despair is manifested as a wish to escape, to get out, but

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365 Fromm 1955a, 266–267; Fromm, Erich, "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism". In Suzuki, D.T., Fromm, Erich, De Martino, Ricardo, *Zen Buddhism & Psychoanalysis*. Souvenir Press, London 1974 (1960a), 126; Fromm 1965a, 1; Fromm 1966, 92, 100, 106–107; Fromm 1968a, 21–22; Fromm 1976, 168–170; Fromm 1985, 118–119; Marx 1975a, 178; Wiggershaus 1995, 267.

despair also implies that there seems to be no way out of the impasse. Therefore a way must be cut through the walls.

> *"Let us note: it is the urge to get out that defines the state of despair; and in order to articulate itself as despair, this must be an urge with no obvious outlet, no marked exit. The way out has yet to be found or cut through the walls. And the search for the exit, or its construction, has to be conducted 'by everyone' – that is, individually. Presumably the community does not know of such a way, or would not say if it had, or it would not help if it said. This is why despair is what it is. It always points away from itself. Some would say: it points forward. But we call 'forward' that direction which the road that leads us out of the state of despair has taken. Progress, one may say, is a memory of past despair and a determination to escape from the present one."*[366]

From a Frommian perspective the paradox of hope is that only despair seems to give birth to true hope. In the novel *Life with a Star* by Czech-Jewish author Jiří Weil Jewish prisoners waiting to be transported to a concentration camp are wondering why people refuse to fight. The protagonist of the novel, bank clerk Josef Roubíček answers: "'If there were no hope,' I said, 'we would probably fight'". Paradoxically, the despair of Jews was a decisive factor behind the unforeseen political and aesthetic imagination of early 20th Century Jewish culture. Since conventional methods of escape were increasingly seen as illusory and deceptive, the emphasis was on new inventions showing the way out of the impasse: "As the search for new roads grew in vigour, trust in the old ones continued to dissipate".[367] Löwy stresses that Jewish messianism in general cherished the idea of a catastrophic eruption of messianic redemption at the time of the utmost crisis: "There is an abyss between the present and the future, between current decline and redemption: moreover, in many Talmudic texts there appears the idea that the Messiah will come only in an era of total corruption and guilt".[368] This idea was shared by Fromm too.

> *"The first condition is that people become aware, and that is something different from simply agreeing with the ideas they hear. To be aware means to wake up to something that one has felt or sensed without thinking it, and yet that on feels one has always known. It is a process that has a vitalizing and energizing effect because it is an active inner process and not the passive process of listening, agreeing, or contradicting."*[369]

Another quotation from Fromm shows the connection between the awareness of suffering and the possibility of liberation even more clearly.

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366 Bauman 1995, 166. A similar idea of despair as a source of profound creativity and hope, is found in Ortega y Gasset: "These are the only genuine ideas; the ideas of the shipwrecked. All the rest is rhetoric, posturing, farce. He who does not really feel himself lost, is lost without remission; that is to say, he never finds himself, never comes up against his own reality." Ortega y Gasset 1950, 116.

367 Bauman 1995, 166–167; Weil, Jiří, *Life With a Star.* Collins, London 1989 (1949), 161. See also Brumlik 1991, 3 and Betz 1974, 319.

368 Löwy 1992, 18.

369 Fromm 1994a, 54.

> *"But man's suffering does not mean that he knows where to go and what to do. It creates only the wish that the suffering may stop. And this wish is the first and the necessary impulse for liberation."*[370]

The awareness of suffering is also the precondition for genuine hope. For Fromm hope is "a decisive element in any attempt to bring about social change in the direction of greater aliveness, awareness and reason". Following Ernst Bloch's conception of "the principle of hope", Fromm writes that the promise of a better world has been an integral part of Western thought for over two thousand years. This kind of "active hope" has nothing to do with "passive hope", which, in essence, is nothing but resignation and the wish for external salvation from the miseries of life. Hope in its active form implies an attempt to change the world instead of just passively adapting in it. Thus genuine hope is always paradoxical: "To hope means to be ready at every moment for that which is not yet born, and yet not become desperate if there is no birth in our lifetime." Like Benjamin, Fromm, too, undoubtedly belonged to the tradition of the "accelerators of the end", who, in Löwy's words "wanted to force the advent of the Kingdom".[371]

If the first step of liberation is the awareness of suffering and the second step the awareness of the causes of suffering, the third step constitutes in finding a way out of it: 3) "We recognize that there is a way of overcoming our ill-being".[372]

5.2 Liberation as a Healing Process

If "things are in the saddle and ride mankind", as Emerson claims in Fromm's favourite quotation, the shift from mere awareness of suffering towards an active struggle to overcome it calls for a radical decision: "Put man back into the saddle". Despite the dark undertones of Fromm's critique, he was no fatalist: "We have only one choice, and that is mastering the machine again, making production into means and not an end, using it for the unfolding of man – or else the suppressed life energies will manifest themselves in chaotic and

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370 Fromm 1966, 107.

371 Fromm 1962, 176–177, 195; Fromm 1966, 153–156; Fromm 1968a, 6–25; Fromm 1970, 190; Löwy 1992, 207. Fromm gave the theme of hope an important role in his writings from the 1960s on. This was at least partly due to the profound change in cultural atmosphere as the counterculture was gaining more and more ground and radical social critique in America was becoming more and more mainstream. On hope and despair in Fromm's work, see also Horney Eckardt, Marianne, "The Theme of Hope in Erich Fromm's Writing". In *Wissenschaft vom Menschen / Science of Man. Jahrbuch der Internationalen Erich Fromm-Gesellschaft*, Münster (Lit-Verlag) 1992 http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/Eckardt,%20M.%20Horney,%201992.pdf. 15.2.2010.

372 Fromm 1976, 168.

destructive forms". The economy and the administrative machinery must be geared to the service of man's needs and not vice versa.[373]

Being a practicing psychoanalyst, Fromm saw the shift from *social critique* to a theory of *liberation* as a natural step which corresponded to the clinical shift from *diagnosis* of the symptoms of illness to the process of *healing*. Fromm spelled this out explicitly in a preface to his *Escape from Freedom*: "Although this book is a diagnosis rather than a prognosis – an analysis rather than a solution – its results have a bearing on our course of action". From this "socio-psychoanalytical" standpoint it was evident that untreated symptoms of illness would lead only to a deeper crisis. There could be no healing if the obstacles of human growth were not dealt with. Fromm insisted that just as the human mind can suffer from various disturbances, social relations and structures can also become pathological and contaminate the individuals living under these conditions.[374]

Here Fromm utilizes the widespread analogy between the human body and society. A society in crisis is seen as an organism which is struck by a disease. Koselleck writes: "The medical usage of 'crisis' stands above all the others as godfather to further applications".[375] The metaphor of "social body" has several intricate implications. First of all, it has the function of ordering and abstracting the endless particularities for analytical purposes. On the other hand, paradoxically the analogy is an attempt to eradicate the feel of abstraction: the abstract and experientially remote concept of society is presented as a concrete person. Here the storyteller has a tool to highlight the causal relationships of illness to the audience. The analogy is an illusion, since obviously there is no such thing as "social body", only bodies and minds connected to each other through a complex web of relations. Ricouer has put this aptly by pointing out that society, the "ultimate reference of history", can be seen as a quasi character, whose actions are narrated in the analysis.[376] Thus the proper protagonists of Fromm's narrative are figures like "mankind" and "modern man", which are always seen in relation to their figurative source, the individual psyche. In metaphoric terms this means simply that Fromm's perspective on modern societies is filtered through the associations of the individual psyche and its disturbances.

The importance of this rhetorical move shouldn't be underestimated: in fact, the "social body" -analogy constitutes the basis for all Fromm's attempts to apply his understanding of individual pathologies to the analysis of social problems. But how does Fromm justify this analogy? How does he convince us that it is not merely an arbitrary construction or perhaps even a manipulative rhetorical tool without any real substance? This is a crucial issue for Fromm's narrative of modernity: if he is not able to convince us that psychoanalytical

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373 Fromm 1941, 274; Fromm 1955a, 226–227, 353; Fromm 1956a, 104; Fromm 1962, 188, 195; Fromm 1963a, 75, 131; Fromm 1981, 67, 108; Fromm 1994a, 30–31.
374 Fromm 1941, x; Fromm 1947, xv; Fromm 1955a, 65–75; Fromm 1970, 138–162.
375 Koselleck 2002, 14.
376 Ricoeur 1990a, 195–197.

insights of the individual psyche can be utilized in the social sphere, there isn't much left of his authority as an analyst or prophet of the social mind. Needless to say, this question is of pivotal importance also for all other Freudo-Marxist critics of modernity and capitalism.

So, what is the rationale behind the Freudo-Marxist social body –scheme? For Fromm the liberal idea of a Robinson Crusoe type of atomized individual was a misleading ideological illusion. Human existence is always existence in relation to something. In utilizing the individual psyche as a metaphor in the analysis of social problems, Fromm was following Freud's lead. In his *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921) Freud had written: "The contrast between individual psychology and social or group psychology, which at a first glance may seem to be full of significance, loses a great deal of its sharpness when it is examined more closely".[377] This stance was evident in all of Fromm's writings, starting from his 1929 essay "Psychoanalysis and Sociology". Here the young Fromm contends that "[T]o understand the dynamics of the social process we must understand the dynamics of the psychological processes operating within the individual, just as to understand the individual we must see him in the context of the culture which molds him". This conviction corresponded with the Marxist notion that individual freedom is possible only in community. Thus freedom is essentially a question of relatedness.[378]

Despite the fact that Freud refused to take up the difficult task of analyzing the neuroses of the social psyche, the young Fromm became soon determined to build a theory of "socio-psychoanalysis" and "socio psychopathology". For Freud, phylogenesis and ontogenesis (the development of mankind and that of the individual) formed a close pairing, so that for example through regressive dreams we could access not only our childhood, but also the early stages of mankind. Similarly, the analysis Freud carried out in his *Totem und Tabu* was explicitly based on the analogy between the "savages" and the "neurotics", without which Freud would have had no authority on the field of anthropology.[379]

The notion that the individual psyche and the social psyche were closely related to each other had important implications for both the style and content of Fromm's work. Through this linkage his experience as an analyst gave him a strong sense of certainty, which sometimes manifested in a moralistic attitude towards the shortcomings of modern societies. The analyst's task is to heal the patient. If he is unable to distinguish illness from health, what use is he to the patient? This psychoanalytic starting point constituted also the basis for Fromm's view of the crisis of modernity. Fromm's approach to psychoanalysis

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377 Freud 1981c, 69.

378 Fromm, Erich, "Psychoanalysis and Sociology". In *Zeitschrift für Psychoanalytische Pädagogik*. Band 3. Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, Wien 1929. http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1929a-e.pdf.

379 Freud, Sigmund, "Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis. Part 2". In Freud, Sigmund, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. 15*. Ed. James Strachey. London, The Hogarth Press 1981e (1916/1917), 199, Freud 1981f, 370–371 and Freud 1981h.

was marked by social interests from the outset. Bewildered by the rampant conformity and brutality of the First World War, the young Fromm turned to psychoanalysis in an effort to understand the relations between social irrationality and individual psyches. During the early 1930s this motivation was reflected also in the "lively discussions about psychoanalysis" between Fromm and his first wife Frieda regarding the "potential role of therapy in social change movements".[380]

Applying psychoanalysis for the purposes of radical social critique implies more than just utilizing psychoanalytical concepts and perspectives. It implies the adaptation of psychoanalytical methods utilized in the treatment of neuroses. This is the fundamental rationale behind Fromm's social body metaphor. If for Adorno psychoanalysis was a question of cultural criticism,[381] Fromm conversely approached cultural criticism from the perspective of psychoanalysis. In this method the task of the analyst is to lead the patient – i.e. society – to face the causes of neuroses and, thus, to initiate a process of healing and liberation. As Betz points out, Fromm was "society's doctor" with a cure of his own.[382] The psychoanalytic method of healing led Fromm to proclaim that despite all their illnesses, modern societies were not in need of more iconoclasm, but needed *regeneration* more than anything else. His patient – modern Western society – had to be shaken out of its sleep in order to make it act, as a clinical quotation from Fromm implies: "The mobilization of the latent energies of a person is actually the central issue of all analytic work".[383]

Fromm's willingness to go beyond the "negative" critique of modernity distinguished him from his former colleagues at the Institute of Social Research. As Kellner writes: ""But Critical Theory has rarely – with the exception of Fromm and to some extent Adorno and Marcuse – spelled out in much detail the values, normative standards and conception of the good life by virtue of which it condemns capitalism".[384] Particularly in his later works Fromm denounced forcefully those forms of culture and critique which he considered essentially negative and deconstructive. As the discussion above showed, for Fromm critique was only the first step in the process of healing and had to be complemented with the attempt to formulate alternative forms of social and cultural organization. In this sense, he fits well into Schaar's picture of the utopian who is "at once a critic and a dreamer".[385]

Fromm's critique against "negativity" had a decisive role in his view of the counterculture of the 1960s – the first instance of serious rebellion against the existing capitalist social order of his lifetime. His relationship with the revolt of the young generation was highly ambivalent. In this respect he didn't differ very much from his former colleagues at the Institute for Social Research.

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380 Hornstein 2000, 62.
381 See, for example, Wiggershaus 1995, 266–267.
382 Betz 1974, 226.
383 Fromm 1994b, 108.
384 Kellner 1989, 162.
385 See Schaar 1961, 240.

On the one hand, Fromm was delighted that finally there was a generation which started to question the alienated and inhuman nature of capitalist societies. He saw new hope and energy in the younger generation's refusal to play the game. On the other hand, Fromm was increasingly critical about the fact that this refusal didn't contain any systematic or positive alternatives for the building a new society to replace the old. In his view this was primarily due to the younger generation's dislike of any kind of structures and order.

By the mid-1960s Fromm had gained a wide audience. Many of his books were bestsellers and he was giving lectures to full audiences around America. He saw new hope in the young generation's revolt and shared many of its ideas, but unlike Herbert Marcuse, he never became the guru of the movement. During the 1960s Fromm made numerous references to the young generation's revolt in his books, lectures and interviews. He noted that their indignation is genuine and justified; it is a protest against the deadening of life and against authoritarian morality: "We see a great deal of spontaneity, of searching, of freedom, of lack of intimidation; we see a young generation searching for things, being anxious to have answers that are not traditional answers". Fromm also felt affinity with many of the important political issues stressed by the younger generation, for example, the issues of the Vietnam war, the cold war, the nuclear arms race and so on.[386]

However he also had his doubts about the motives and realities of counterculture. At times this scepticism was manifested in a scathing critique of the young generation's revolt, as in the text "Political Radicalism in the United States and Its Critique", which was originally written for Fromm's important book of 1968 *The Revolution of Hope*, but was omitted from the final version.[387] First of all, Fromm didn't believe that the radical youth had distanced themselves as much from their parents' way of life as they wanted to suggest. An important aspect in this was their psychological stance towards consumption. Fromm thought that the younger generation was largely repeating their parents' pattern of consumption, even though the objects of consumption had changed. While their parents were escaping from their true realities and compensating for their anxieties by buying things, drinking, smoking, watching movies and so on, the younger generation consumed drugs and was always eager to escape boredom into crowds, into rock concerts, into sex. Fromm's point was not to moralize against this kind of behaviour, but to emphasize the fundamental passivity of mind which merely takes in what is given and rarely participates actively or creatively in the process.

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386 Fromm 1965a, 3; Fromm, Erich, "The Condition of the American Spirit. Are We Fully Alive?" In *Newsday*. Garden City, (1968b). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1968f-e.pdf, 5; Fromm, Erich, "In the Name of Life". In *Natural Enemies? Youth and the Clash of Generations*. J. B. Lippincott Company, New York (1969). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1969a-e.pdf, 1; Fromm, Erich, "Political Radicalism in the United States and Its Critique". Unpublished, (1990a). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1990i-e.pdf, 3; Fromm, Erich, "About the Young Generation". Selected by Rainer Funk. In *Fromm Forum*. No. 8, (2004b).

387 See Fromm 1990a.

Fromm's comment on the "the hysterical war against marijuana", as he labels it, shows his approach to the problem of consumption. The main problem is not the substance itself, which Fromm sees as a relatively harmless drug, but a much wider issue of consumption. From this perspective marijuana has been made a scapegoat for the general consumption addiction, which Fromm sees psychologically more harmful than this one drug.[388]

Finally, for Fromm the young generation's mistrust of any kind of tradition was alarming. Its struggle against oppressive patriarchal traditions was more than justified, but constant indignation and protest had led it, in his view, into an impasse: "That is what we see in many of the young generation, in many of our beatniks, in many of our delinquents. They are frankly cynical."[389] This is where Fromm's orthodox Jewish background comes into play. He never tried to hide it, not even in the 1960s when he was speaking to radical students in campuses around United States. A telling example of this is a title of a lecture he gave to a full audience of students in 1968 in California. The title was "The Myth of Paradise", and even though the lecture touched many contemporary themes, it dealt mainly with biblical themes of idol worship and the messianic time. This lecture, which is available as an audio recording, includes an interesting interruption during its final minutes. Fromm is speaking about the compulsive need for physical closeness and communal living among the youth when a group of people from the audience starts yelling objections and eventually occupies the stage. They apparently start hugging or touching Fromm and keep on asking what's wrong with physical closeness. Fromm is obviously quite startled, but insists on continuing the lecture. With the help of the audience the lecture continues to its end.[390]

However this incident tells us much more about Fromm's relationship with the young generation than any of his writings. Despite all the similarities, Fromm was a child of another culture and time. He grew up to appreciate the spiritual tradition of Judaism, and in a medieval setting, he used to say. As a student he went through the rigid German university system; his whole adult life was filled with psychoanalytic discussions and tons of books. How could this learned old man identify completely with the spontaneous, arrogant, sexually open, drug-taking youth bent on bodily pleasures and instant

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388 Fromm 1968b, 2. Here the point is not to argue that cannabis use is completely harmless, but instead to see it 1) in relation to other drugs (legal or illegal) and 2) in relation to its sociocultural context. Fromm's advice to the endless debate regarding the harms and classification of various drugs would be to shift the attention from the overtly clinical approach to an approach which would recognize the social contexts and causes of drug use. His argument is simple: it is precisely the sociocultural patterns of capitalist consumerism which turn "relatively harmless" drugs such as cannabis into public health problems. To add, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett have recently shown that the prevalence of drug use is clearly connected to socioeconomic factors: "The use of illegal drugs is more common in more unequal countries." See Wilkinson, Richard & Pickett, Kate, *The Spirit Level. Why Equality is Better for Everyone.* Penguin Books, London 2010 (2009), 71.

389 Fromm 1965a, 4. On Fromm's appraisal of the value of traditions in revolutionary activity, see also Fromm 1968b, 6; Fromm 1969, 2; Fromm 1990a, 5.

390 Fromm, Erich, The Myth of the Paradise. Lecture given at New York 1968 (audio).

enlightenment? This aspect of the relationship between Fromm and the New Left radicals is recognized by McLaughlin, as well.

> *" ... despite Fromm's socialist politics, he was a relatively old-fashioned individual whose cultural style did not fit the post-1968 New Left or the image of such radical or postmodern intellectuals as Sartre, Marcuse, or Foucault. Sartre, for example, challenged many of the cultural ideals of modern bourgeois culture while Fromm, in contrast, was a politically radical but culturally traditional European scholar who sang Hasidic songs until the end of his life. ... Numerous cultural radicals in the 1980s were instead understandably drawn to Michel Foucault, who shared much of Fromm's critique of modernity but had charisma, a radical image, and frequented west coast gay bars."*[391]

All in all, Fromm claimed that the unorganized and spontaneous nature of the 1960s counterculture stifled its emancipatory and transformative power.[392] Rebellion without concrete and elaborate ideas for a transition to an alternative social reality will ultimately betray the revolution and lead to inner meaninglessness. Here Fromm directs his critique to Herbert Marcuse: "In these days, the pseudo-radical disguise of hopelessness and nihilism is not rare among some of the most dedicated members of the young generation." He continues by stating that "revolution was never based on hopelessness, nor can it ever be". Fromm claims that Marcuse is a spokesman for infantile regression and merely tries to make it more attractive by using revolutionary rhetoric. This critique has its roots in the debate between Fromm and Marcuse in the *Dissent* magazine during the 1950s, which had ended with Fromm accusing Marcuse of being a nihilist and Marcuse accusing Fromm of being a conformist, whose writings only help the prevailing order.[393]

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391 McLaughlin 1998a, 223–224. Fromm gives us another example of the distance between him and the young generation in a letter to Lewis Mumford where he laments the experience he had visiting a girls' college in Cleveland: " … I spent almost four weeks at a girls' college and find myself in a rather exhausted state as the result of the attempt to reach the girls, 90% of whom are lifeless, dull, insecure, unadventurous and of the naiveté of 12-year olds." Fromm, Erich, Letter to Lewis Mumford, 30.4.1969.

392 This mistrust among the young radicals towards theories and organization, which were considered as bureaucratic and authoritarian, was recognized also by Denbo. See Denbo 1975, 222–224.

393 Fromm 1968a, 8–9; Fromm 1976, 74–75; Jay 1974, 111–112; Fromm, Erich, Letter to Lewis Mumford, 30.4.1969. On Fromm/Marcuse debate, see also McLaughlin 1999, 123–124 and Rickert, John, "The Fromm-Marcuse Debate Revisited". In *The Frankfurt School. Critical Assessments*. Ed. Jay Bernstein. Routledge, London 1994. The debate was sparked of by Fromm's reply to Marcuse's addendum to his *Eros and Civilization* (1955), in which Marcuse claimed that Neo-Freudian revisionists like Fromm and Karen Horney accepted the values and standards of alienated capitalist societies and saw psychoanalysis as a tool in helping the patients to adapt more completely to the prevailing system. See Marcuse 1974, 238–274. On the debate itself, see Fromm, Erich, "The Human Implications of Instinctivistic 'Radicalism'. A Reply to Herbert Marcuse". In *Dissent*, New York, 1955b. http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1955b-e.pdf, and Fromm, Erich, "A Counter-Rebuttal to Herbert Marcuse". In *Dissent*, New York, (1956b). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1956b-e.pdf. The latter text includes Marcuse's reply to Fromm. See also Fromm's letter to Tristram Coffin where he laments the fact that his position is misinterpreted in an interview for New York Times as being a conformist and not a radical critic of capitalism. Fromm, Erich, Letter to Tristram Coffin, 1.2.1974.

While Freud's stance towards the question of whether psychoanalysis should to be employed to adapt the individuals more completely to the prevailing social order or to provoke critique against it is somewhat ambivalent, Fromm's position leaves no doubts. In his *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* Freud stated that the task of psychoanalysis is the adaptation of the individual to the existing order and that the analyst should not become a judge or a moralist who attacks social conditions. He continued by emphasizing that psychoanalysis shouldn't be made a tool for political revolution. This notion was at least partly motivated by Freud's attempt to protect the credibility and scientific standing of psychoanalysis in the face of severe critique and prejudice against it during its early years. Freud's stance was more complicated than this, however: in another context, when questioned by his students about how they should behave in a repressive society, he advised diplomatically to "adjust, but under protest".[394] Fromm, in turn, firmly denied Marcuse's claims that he was an advocate of capitalism in the guise of a radical. Even a brief reading of Fromm's work shows that Marcuse's claim is completely unwarranted.[395]

To return to Fromm's view regarding the shortcomings of the counterculture, Fromm commented that the lack of alternative propositions for a better social organization constituted a major flaw in the young generation's critique against the Establishment. Social critique which doesn't engage in the formulation of alternative goals and ideals leads to cynicism, unrealistic optimism and, at worst, to destructiveness. Fromm admits that the state of the world makes pessimism a tempting alternative, since it protects the individual from the impulse to change – which is always troublesome and painstaking – by assuming that nothing can be done (optimism, in turn, does the same by assuming that nothing is wrong and no change is needed).[396]

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394 Freud, Sigmund, "New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis". In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. 22.* Ed. James Strachey. London, The Hogarth Press 1981g, 150–151; Weisskopf, Walter A., "The Americanization of Psychoanalysis". *Manas Journal, Volume XVII, No. 5, January 29. 1964.* http://www.manasjournal.org/pdf_library/VolumeXVII_1964/XVII-05.pdf, 7.6.2009, 4.

395 Touraine agrees on this and makes the important point that in his attack against Neo-Freudians Marcuse fails to note that lumping together various writers under a general notion of Neo-Freudianism cannot do justice to them. This is particularly evident in the case of Fromm, since in his work the critique of capitalism and alienation is a central theme. Touraine 1995, 125. What comes to psychoanalysis in this respect, Fromm vehemently denies that it should be used as a tool of assimilation, as a quotation from his *Psychoanalysis and Religion* shows: "Therapy aiming at nothing but social adjustment can only reduce the excessive suffering of the neurotic to the average level of suffering inherent in conformity to these patterns". Fromm 1950, 74. Fromm also notes: "The 'adjusted' person in the sense in which I have used the term here is one who has made himself into a commodity, with nothing stable or definite except his need to please and his readiness to change roles". Fromm 1950, 75.

396 Fromm 1968a, 20–25; Fromm 1976, 11; Fromm 1990a, 4–5. In his last interview, Fromm stressed the deadening influence of the atmosphere of joylessness and indifference. See Fromm 1980b, 29. Taylor shares Fromm's mistrust of cultural pessimism. Taylor claims that both cultural pessimism and blind optimism result in a

Taking a look at Giddens' formulation of various adaptive reactions to the challenges and developments of modernity helps us understand better Fromm's original stance on modernity. *Pragmatic acceptance* is about self-preservation and survival: since modernity cannot be controlled, we should concentrate on temporary and limited successes. *Sustained optimism* is adopted by those who still adhere to the project of Enlightenment and technological progress, despite the criticism voiced against them. *Cynical pessimism* is essentially about controlling anxiety, and is usually characterized by nostalgia towards a bygone world coupled with the attempt to isolate from the world. By *radical engagement* Giddens means the kind of adaptive reaction adopted by Fromm and other similar critics of modernity. A radical stance implies locating the underlying causes of problems and points forward to the struggle for social change: "Those taking a stance of radical engagement hold that, although we are beset my major problems, we can and should mobilise either to reduce their impact or to transcend them".[397] Fromm's view becomes apparent if we compare Giddens' characterization of radical engagement with the following quotation from Fromm's *Man for Himself*.

> *"Prophecies of doom are heard today with increasing frequency. While they have an important function of drawing attention to the dangerous possibilities in our present situation they fail to take into account the promise which is implied in man's achievement in the natural sciences, in psychology, in medicine and in art. Indeed, these achievements portray the presence of strong productive forces which are not compatible with the picture of a decaying culture. Our period is a period of transition. ... Our period is an end and a beginning, pregnant with possibilities."*[398]

Thus, the crisis of modernity – the birth pangs of humanity – can be transformed into a moment of ultimate rebirth. Here again we can see Fromm's dialectic approach to the meaning of crisis, which adheres to the conventional twofold rhetorical meaning of all crises. The disillusioning critique of modernity Fromm presents is not meant as a pessimist or nihilist commentary of humanity's decay, but as a preparation for a transition to a new awareness regarding the possibilities of coming revolutionary developments.

5.3 Prophetic Dreams of a Better World

The debate with Marcuse led Fromm to discuss another important dimension in his critique of modernity: the theme of revolutionary consciousness in an

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thwarting of the possibilities of change. If the discourse on modernity gets stuck with this dualism, nothing productive will come out of it. Taylor 2000, 78–80. Touraine, in turn, agrees with Taylor's critique of pessimism. His critique is directed against the Frankfurt School philosophers, and among them particularly Horkheimer and Adorno. See Touraine 1995, 150–176.

397 Giddens 1995, 135–137.

398 Fromm 1947, 186–187.

alienated society. Marcuse and Fromm were, of course, both highly critical of the use of words like "liberation", "freedom" and "revolution". Fromm, however, seemed to be more eager to sketch out the possibilities of liberation, while Marcuse preferred to write in the conditional, telling us what *would* happen *if* certain developments *would* take place. In their debate the differences between Marcuse and Fromm became exaggerated and overshadowed those aspects both agreed on, as Jay has pointed out. Fromm's expresses his "transitionary" view of modernity clearly in a reply to Marcuse: "It is amazing that Marcuse should neglect his own dialectical position to the extent of drawing a black and white picture, and forget that the alienated society already develops in itself the elements which contradict it". [399]

Through his concept of the *revolutionary character* Fromm attempts to provide an answer to the difficult question of how is it possible that an almost completely controlled and manipulated society still produces revolutionary consciousness. Fromm starts by stating that there have always been individuals who do not seem to fit into the prevailing social character. During times of social and cultural upheaval these persons have usually had an important role in revolutionary struggles. By revolutionary characters Fromm doesn't refer merely to political revolutionaries, but to all those who share certain a character structure and also a similar relationship to power. Fromm gives a detailed description of the revolutionary character: they are fiercely independent and free in the sense of positive freedom (not only in the negative sense, which refers to the absence of external limitations, free in the sense that the strive towards the actualization of their individuality); they are cosmopolitan and thus identify with the whole of mankind and not only with particular nations, races or groups; they are characterized by their love of life; they try to balance reason and faith; and they utterly oppose power as the standard of morality. Despite alienating circumstances under which they are forced to live, they have sustained their integrity and sanity: "My assertion is that the sane person in an insane world, the fully developed human being in a crippled world, the fully awake person in a half asleep world – is precisely the revolutionary character". The significance of revolutionary characters is usually recognized after they are dead and safely buried: "Indeed, he who has a conviction strong enough to withstand the opposition of the crowd is the exception rather than the rule, an exception often admired centuries later, mostly laughed at by his contemporaries". For this very reason revolutionaries often end up being excluded, exiled, branded as insane or driven into insanity. But, as Fromm claims, without their effort and vision, mankind would still live in the caves. Fromm adds that revolutionary characters should be distinguished from rebels, who share their struggle against authorities, but cannot offer any alternative vision of social transformation – which leads to renewed hierarchies.

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399 Fromm 1955b, 4–5; Jay 1974, 111. Schaar, in turn, accuses Fromm of neglecting the "beauties and nobilities" of modern life and positing them to his utopian vision of the sane society. Schaar 1961, 323–324.

Furthermore, Fromm rules out violence and hatred from his depiction of the revolutionaries, as he states in a letter to Gerard Khoury: "I am against terror tactics".[400]

Fromm maintains that the emergence of revolutionary characters in an alienated society can be due to personal factors alone, but it is usually fostered by social factors such as exclusion from society, foreign influences, creative reinterpretations of traditions and family circumstances. The concept of revolutionary character illustrates clearly Fromm's conviction that revolution in the social sphere must go along with a revolution in "the heart of man". Fromm insists that revolutionaries have a *prophetic role* in this change. With prophets and prophesies we arrive at the decisive point where Fromm's critique of modernity stretches towards the utopian.

Fromm's idea of prophecy has its roots in his Orthodox Jewish childhood and his fascination with Jewish prophetic literature. However in his interpretation the theological concept becomes a secular one. Prophets have a fourfold task to fulfil: 1) to proclaim that man has to actualize his humanity and thus become like God, 2) to show the existing alternatives and the consequences of these alternatives, 3) to protest against wrong choices and act as a conscience of his fellow men and 4) to stress that the salvation of the individual is connected with the salvation of society. Fundamentally the prophet's task is to propagate *crisis awareness*, to make his audience see and hear again, as Isaiah teaches in the Bible: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped" (Isaiah 36:5). The prophet is a teller of truth, and his truth is always thisworldly, which means that he cannot separate spirituality from politics and vice versa: "Because God is revealed in history, the prophet cannot help being a political leader; as long as man takes the wrong way in his political action, the prophet cannot help being a dissenter and a revolutionary". Here Fromm follows Marx's view regarding the role of revolutionary intellectuals as interpreters of the laws of history. For Fromm prophecy is not a form of divination, but a thorough analysis of forces that are already present. He insists that prophets never use force or attempt to manipulate people, but instead advocate the idea that every person must make the decisions for themselves. This definition of the prophet was aptly put by William Blake, another prophetic revolutionary, at the beginning of the 19th Century: "Every honest man is a Prophet he utters his opinion both of private & public matters/Thus/If you go on So/the result is So/He never says such a

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400 Fromm 1941, 167–168; Fromm 1955a, 332; Fromm 1963a, 103–117; Fromm 1964a, 17; Fromm 1976, 76; Fromm 1995, 111–112; Fromm, Erich, Letter to Gerard D. Khoury, 4.4.1970. On Fromm's concept of revolutionary character, see especially his article "The Revolutionary Character" in *The Dogma of Christ* published in 1963. Fromm 1963a, 103–117. As Wiggershaus notes, Fromm uses the concept already during his research in the 1930s on authority and family, although his formulation is still vague and indeterminate. Wiggershaus 1995, 149–150, 170.

thing shall happen let you do what you will. a Prophet is a Seer not an Arbitrary Dictator".[401]

Fromm stresses the difference between *prophets* and *priests*. According to his "radical interpretation" of the Old Testament, priests are God's concession to man's ignorance. Priests translate the prophets' message to their followers, and by doing this they distort the prophets' original message into dogma and ideology. Just like prophets, priests too are not only religious figures, but can be found also in politics, economics, philosophy etc. But while the prophets' influence is based on their ability to see, priests rule by manipulation and the use of force. In his mistrust of clerical authority Fromm concurs with the long modern tradition of the critique of religion. Blake praised prophets and ancient poets, who animated everything with Gods and Geniuses, but attacked priests who ruined their work: "Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood". Marx, in turn, compared priests to capitalists in their tendency to create more and more cunning dependencies: "General exploitation of communal human nature, just as every imperfection in man, is a bond with heaven – an avenue giving the priest access to his heart; every need is an opportunity to approach one's neighbour under the guise of the utmost amiability and to say to him: Dear friend, I give the ink in which you have to sign yourself over to me; in providing for your pleasure, I fleece you". Nietzsche's critique in his *Antichrist* was similar: "Viewed psychologically, 'sins' are indispensable in every society organized by priests. They are the real levers of power, the priest *lives* on sin, he needs 'sinning' to happen… Highest proposition: 'God forgives those who do penance' – in plain language: *those who subordinate themselves to the priest*."[402]

The decisive difference between prophets and priests comes from their approach to authority. While prophets appeal to the free will of their audience, priests try to rule by force, by irrational authority. It is interesting to note that in this context Fromm never writes of his Jewish rabbis, whose influence he never

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401 Blake 1988, 617; Fromm, Erich, "Religious Humanism and Politics. To the Editors of *Judaism*". In *Judaism. A Quarterly Journal*. Vol. XII, (1963c). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1963i-e.pdf , 2; Fromm 1966, 115–121; Fromm 1968a, 18–20; Fromm 1976, 52–53; Fromm 1981, 41–57; Touraine 1995, 104. See also Lundgren 1998, 132–135. In another context Blake prophesied: "England! awake! awake! awake! / Jerusalem thy Sister calls! / Why wilt thou sleep the sleep of death? And close her from thy ancient walls." Blake 1988, 233. Blake's prophetic call is repeated by Fromm:"If people knew the likely course American society will take, many if not most of them would be so horrified that they might take adequate measures to permit changing the course. If people are not aware of the direction in which they are going, they will awaken when it is too late and when their fate has been irrevocably sealed." Fromm 1968a, 28. As Betz writes, the prophet's task is to act as a *social conscience* of his audience. See Betz 1974, 187.

402 Blake 1988, 38; Fromm 1966, 96–97; Fromm 1981, 41–57; Marx 1975b, 307; Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of Idols*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005, 24. See also Lundgren 1998, 133 on Fromm's view regarding the differences between prophets and priests.

considered detrimental. He saw his religious teachers as prophetic figures, who embodied the idea of rational authority.

The theme of prophecy in Fromm's writing strengthens further the interpretation of him as a sort of a public moralist. The prophet interprets society and its future through stark dualisms: damnation or salvation, barbarism or socialism, robotism or creativity. These dualisms constitute the rhetorical starting point for all prophecy (and public moralism alike), since someone who merely lists different alternatives without any normative stance could hardly be called a prophet. Similarly, the idea of prophet as the interpreter of God's will who has the ability to mediate between people, on the one hand, and History and Reason, on the other, points to the affinity between prophets and public moralists. But, Fromm made some critical remarks regarding the traditional role of religious or political leaders as the decipherers of God or laws of history, as his critique of priests and their authority shows.

Fromm asserts that the emergence of prophets during the crisis of modernity is no accident: "No historical situation could be more conducive to the emergence of prophets than ours". Here again we can see Fromm's conception of modernity as *Kairos* – a time of possibilities and threats, liberation and insecurity. During the 1960s and 1970s the idea of prophecy became more and more important for Fromm. He even stated: "I often think in terms of sentences you find in the Prophets". Despite the fact that Fromm moulded his works – and particularly his later, more popular works – according to the example set by prophetic literature, he denied being a prophet himself. On the other hand, he noted that a false prophet can be distinguished by his narcissistic proclamation that he is a prophet.[403] The intensity of Fromm's prophetic style undoubtedly owes a great deal to the painful realization that even though he has the ear – and sometimes also the heart – of his audience, the impersonal machinery of the past and present is so all-powerful, that even he, the prophet, has little power to change it. Hyperbolic assertions can be expected under such conditions. This realization together with the conviction that mankind is faced with a decisive choice between life or death, humanism or barbarism, made it extremely difficult for Fromm to give up his prophetic role. Here we can see parallels to the Gospel and to the story of Christ as the chosen martyr.

The prophet's message is essentially one of liberation. The theme of liberation constitutes the kernel of Fromm's writing, and in this sense he continues the long modern tradition of a struggle against the shortcomings of prevailing social institutions and forms of power. Consistent with this is the idea that the radical conception of freedom implies the critique of the liberal conception of freedom, which Fromm characterises as the absence of external limitations, as "negative freedom". Like Marx and Engels, he admits that the achievements of bourgeois revolutions have been considerable, but under the

403 Fromm 1965a, 9; Fromm 1981, 44. Horney Eckardt also sees Fromm's tendency to use stark contrasts and to engage personally in his subject matter as characteristic of his prophetic style. See Horney Eckardt 1996, 151–164.

detrimental sociopsychological conditions of capitalist systems, the fate of these freedoms is highly susceptible. The whole process of emancipation, with all the insecurities and threats it includes, can lead to a massive escape from freedom: "Thus freedom – as freedom from – leads into new bondage". Human emancipation is a promise of modernity yet to be fulfilled. Positive freedom is possible only if the social conditions genuinely support the actualization of individual potentialities: "In other words, *positive freedom consists in the spontaneous activity of the total, integrated personality*". This is not possible unless man is able to control the social and economic machinery which shapes his character and being. Thus emancipation is an endless process, not a static state: "But since there is no miraculous change of heart, each generation can take only one step".[404]

Bauman characterizes the processual nature of the socialist project of liberation by seeing it as "a continuation of the liberal-capitalist culture as well as its rejection". The process of democratization, initiated by the bourgeois revolutions, was naturally something socialists too advocated. However, while bourgeois liberalism tended to consider political equality as a necessary precondition for democracy, socialists argued that non-political inequalities, such as differences in the socio-economic standing, should be considered as well: "It [the socialist utopia] accepted in full the bourgeois ideals of the reign of justice and law, supposedly safeguarded by the institution of political equality; but it emphatically denied the possibility of squaring this postulate with a free-trade economy, abandonment of the individual to his own solitude and a state which was indifferent to the anxieties of the abandoned individual."[405]

Indeed, Fromm's conception of emancipation can be understood fully only in the context of Marxist dialectics of history. Since identity is created always in relation to something, freedom is essentially social in the sense that it is the socio-cultural structure which simultaneously sets limits to what we can think, feel, image, desire etc., but also makes all emancipation possible. And, to go on, since society and culture are never static, but always in a state of transition – particularly under the context of modernity – the horizons of emancipation must be created anew every moment in history. For Fromm, negative freedom as the absence of external limitations is an insufficient guideline for emancipation, since it does not address at all the psychological problem of coping with the insecurities resulting from the expansion of horizons and responsibilities. In the positive conception of freedom, the task of society is not only to guarantee the absence of external limitations of freedom, but also to support individuals to actualize their human potentialities. Positive freedom implies the eradication of infantile dependencies and repetition; it also implies

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404 Fromm 1941, x-xi, 1–4, 20–21, 34, 255–257; Fromm 1947, 185–186; Fromm 1955a, 347; Fromm 1962, 196; Fromm 1963a, 109–110; Fromm 1964a, 52, 127; Fromm 1966, 75, 113; Fromm 1976, 75, 80; Fromm 1981, 76–77; Fromm 1993, 7–8; Fromm 1994a, 102.

405 See Bauman, Zygmunt, *Socialism. The Active Utopia.* George Allen & Unwin, London 1976, 42–43, 47.

emancipation from alienating social relations and institutions and their radical remaking.

From this perspective Fromm argues that emancipation is an endless a process which takes place in history. Here Fromm concurs with a fundamental humanistic ideal regarding the spiritual perfection of mankind. Alienation means dehumanization, the reduction of endless human potentialities by the demands of the existing social order and cultural conventions. This results in a thwarting of human growth, which gives birth to various pathologies, since crippled individuals have been stripped of their ability to answer productively and spontaneously to the challenges posed by human growth. The problem of the internalization of authorities gains its full meaning only in this context: through institutions like family, school, workplace, media etc. individuals are encouraged to reduce their endless potentialities to the abstract and standardizing models perpetuated by the capitalist economy and the administrative bureaucracies of the technocratic states.

In Fromm's reading human emancipation constituted the core of both Freud's and Marx's work. The aim of Freudian psychoanalysis was "the control of irrational passions by reason: the liberation of man from passion, within human possibilities." This would free man, at least to a certain extent, from the determining influence of unconsciousness. Thus, psychoanalysis is a tool of liberation, as Fromm writes: "The main value of psychoanalysis is really to provide a spiritual change of personality, and not to cure symptoms". For Marx, in turn, emancipation was fundamentally a question pertaining to social relations: "Marx's aim was that of a spiritual emancipation of man, of his liberation from the chains of economic determination, of restituting him in his human wholeness, of enabling him to find unity and harmony with his fellow man and with nature". The driving force of Marx's philosophy was the protest against the alienation and against the social reality which caused this alienation. From a libertarian perspective, advocated by Fromm too, Soviet communism constituted a blatant distortion of the basic idea of Marx's writing, the free development of individual personality.[406]

Fromm rarely speaks of virtues, but here he suggests a reinterpretation of *disobedience* as a virtue. Radical social change always necessitates disobedience. Fromm starts his narrative of the history of mankind with a reference to the "first act of disobedience". In Greek mythology Prometheus steals fire from the gods and brings it to mankind. The same theme is repeated in the Bible as Eve disobeys God's prohibition against eating from the tree of the knowledge of

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406 Fromm 1961a, vi, viii, 3, 38, 50; Fromm 1962, 15–28, 118; Fromm 1963a, 101–102; Fromm 1964a, 144–147; Fromm 1981, 24–25, 33, 70; Fromm 1994a, 133; Fromm 1994b, 46. Taylor, too, considers the emancipation of man as the fundamental starting point of Freud's thought: "Freud's is a magnificent attempt to regain our freedom and self-possession, the dignity of the disengaged subject, in face of the inner depths". Taylor 2002, 446. Israel, in turn, agrees with Fromm's view of Marx as a philosopher of human liberation: "This humanistic aspects – the emancipation of man, his self-realization – remains in the writings of Marx, although the emphasis shifts." Israel 1979, 5.

good and evil. This leads to banishment of Adam and Eve from the preindividual, prehuman state of harmony of the paradise to the world of insecurities. Eve and Prometheus are subversive figures, whose crimes have advanced the emancipation of mankind. Disobedience implies the abandoning of hierarchical principles of power. Fromm warns that its gradual disappearance from capitalist societies through various new methods of control (anonymous authority, consensus of conformity etc.) can lead to the total annihilation of mankind in a nuclear war. Here we see Fromm again as a critic of Cold War hysteria, pointing to "the obedience of men who push the button to the men who give the orders, and the obedience to ideas which make it possible to think in terms of such madness". However, the ability to say no is of little use if it is not accompanied by the ability to say yes.[407]

Fromm emphasizes the significance of humanism in the long Western tradition of emancipation. In his view the humanist tradition is unbroken: Jesus, Renaissance thinkers, Goethe, Spinoza, Marx and Freud all took part in this subversive tradition: "There is an unbroken tradition of humanism which reaches back some 2500 years and which is now growing in the most divergent fields of thought, mostly in those of Christianity and Marxism, but also among thinkers who belong to neither camp such as Bertrand Russell, Camus, and Einstein".[408]

The humanist emphasis on the spiritual perfection of mankind and the growth of human potentialities in history shines through Fromm's work. This kind of sublimation has been traditionally accompanied by a strong moral stance. Its appeal has been further strengthened by the dualism between nature and culture – nature being something that must be lifted from its archaic and vulgar state through the influence of culture. Fromm certainly shared this humanist conception. This is indicated for example by the main plot line of his grand narrative: the growth of mankind from primeval harmony with nature to social alienation and towards a new unity and oneness through the full development of human potentialities. Some recent critics of humanism have noted that emphasis on sublimation and culture has often led to disastrous consequences with "nature" being subjected to various efforts to order and control it. The aforementioned picture of a crooked tree supported by a pole in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* can be interpreted also as a more radical critique of modernity: in this sense the humanist aspirations to perfect the mankind constitute a coercive attempt at ordering in which the "natural" is forced to fit in with the repressive and levelling structure of the cultural conventions. Nature must be disciplined and the particular must be remade

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407 Fromm 1962, 195–196; Fromm 1963a, 113–116; Fromm 1966, 23; Fromm 1981, 16–23, 46. See also Fromm's article "Disobedience as a Psychological and Moral Problem", in Fromm 1981, 16–23.

408 Fromm 1955a, 246; Fromm 1961, 262; Fromm 1962, 27; Fromm 1966, 6–7, 9, 225; Fromm 1981, 63. Fromm's lecture"A New Humanism as a Condition for the One World" from 1962 is the most comprehensive presentation given by him on humanism and its influence on Western civilization. See Fromm 1994a, 61–79.

according to the perfect ideal of the universal. Pietikäinen has directed a similar critique against Fromm's utopianism.[409] In utilizing the dualism between growth and regression, and associating the former with the flowering of human potentialities and the latter with suffering, Fromm concurred with a long Western tradition.

Another important aspect of humanist tradition, emphasized by Fromm too, is the insistence on the shedding of illusions and the search for *truth*: "Eventually, only to the extent to which he [man] grasps reality, can he make this world *his*; if he lives in illusions, he never changes the conditions which necessitate these illusions". In Fromm's interpretation the idea of a liberating power of truth has its historical roots in figures such as Buddha and Socrates. The same emphasis on the dispersing of illusions and the striving towards truth in Marx's and Freud's thought gave Fromm the reason to consider them as Enlightenment philosophers. The name of his book *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* refers to this aspect in their thought. Marx's stance becomes evident from his early critique of religion: "To abolish religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is to demand their *real* happiness." The whole work of Freud, in turn, constituted an attempt to free his patients of neuroses, which forced them to live their lives in illusions and fantasies.[410]

From a psychoanalytic point of view, the shedding of illusions is essentially a negative task in the sense that it enables us to confront our rationalizations, which prevent us from being aware of the unconscious processes controlling our lives: "The legitimate aim of psychology thus is the *negative*, the removal of distortions and illusions, *not the positive*, the full and complete knowledge of a human being". Fromm insists that a person who has freed himself from his illusions sees the world in a totally new way: "His eyes are opened, he awakens, he sees the world as it is and, correspondingly, he learns how to use and develop his own intellectual and affectual powers in order to cope with reality". Following Marx Fromm maintains that this task of unmasking is essentially about turning away from the illusory reality of fantasies, mystifications, rationalizations etc. in order to bring about a radical change in both society and consciousness. Pietikäinen, too, stresses the "family resemblance" between psychoanalysis and Marxism by referring to Ricoeur's

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409 See Pietikäinen, Petteri, "'The Sage Knows You Better Than You Know Yourself': Psychological Utopianism in Erich Fromm's Work". *History of Political Thought*, Volume 25, Number 1, 2004. Compare this critique with Isaiah Berlin's description of the work of utopians as the attempt to straighten what Kant called the crooked timber of mankind. See, for example, Berlin, Isaiah, *The Proper Study of Mankind. An Anthology of Essays*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 2000, 16. See also Martha Nussbaum's analysis of the theme of "ascent", which she links with the strong emphasis in Western thought on perfection and sublimation. Nussbaum, Martha, *The Upheavals of Thought. The Intelligence of Emotions.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003 (2001), 457–714.

410 Fromm 1955a, 67; Marx 1975a, 176. Fromm, however, rejects the hopelessly abstract and irrelevant objectivist conception of truth with its metaphysical assumption regarding the absolute foundation for rationality, and instead advocates the epistemological principle of "increasing approximation". For a concise discussion of truth and objectivity by Fromm, see Fromm 1968a, 67–68.

notion that both traditions belong essentially to the "School of Suspicion" in the dismissal of normal consciousness as "false consciousness".[411]

Fromm's interest in Zen Buddhism was motivated by its emphasis on dispelling illusions and increasing the awareness of psychic processes. Fromm even hosted a conference at his house at Cuernavaca, Mexico, for analysts interested in Zen and its possible applications in psychoanalytic treatment. The key person at this conference was the aged Zen scholar D. T. Suzuki, whom Fromm considered as his spiritual master. In his depiction of the experience of the shedding of illusions Fromm echoed Suzuki's depiction of *satori*, or enlightenment: "When the cloud of ignorance disappears, the infinity of heavens is manifested, where we see for the first time into the nature of our own being". In psychoanalytic language this experience is be called derepression: the uncovering of hitherto repressed wishes, feelings, thoughts, fantasies etc. Fromm would have agreed with Slavoj Žižek's recent critique of the commercialized Western New-Age movement as otherwordly escapism, but he refused to accept that this distorted form is the only thing Zen has to offer for Westerners. Since repression is always social in the sense that society encourages individuals to mould their identity in conformity with the prevailing forms of social character, both Zen Buddhism and psychoanalysis can be used as revolutionary tools in a radical critique of society.[412]

Since the metaphor of illusions occupies such a central role in Fromm's writing, a closer look at its various associations and functions is needed here. The roots of Fromm's usage of this trope lie in the abovementioned quotes from Marx, whose materialism was fundamentally an attack against the German idealism of his time. Marx accused idealism, and particularly Hegelian idealism, of dabbling with abstract "scholastic" questions, which led to a view of the world reflecting this illusory pure world of reason. These illusory constructions prevented philosophers from dealing with real, material issues, as Marx states in his *Theses on Feuerbach*: "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question. Man must prove the truth — i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question."[413] Thus the metaphor of illusion, as utilized by Marx, implies a radical critique of

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411 See, for example, Fromm 1941, 262; Fromm 1947, 25–26; Fromm 1962, 119–121, 173, 197; Fromm 1963a, 13, 135–136; Fromm 1970, 191; Fromm 1976, 40–41, 44, 97–100; Fromm 1993, 55–66; Fromm 1994a, 166–167; Fromm 1995, 112–113. Pietikäinen 2007, 14. Compare Fromm's stance to Guy Debord's critique of the society of spectacle, which is essentially an attack against the illusions of consumer societies. See Debord 1994.

412 Suzuki, D.T., *Zen Buddhism. Selected Writings of D. T. Suzuki*. Ed. William Barrett. Doubleday, New York 1996 (1956), 3; Žižek, Slavoj, "The Prospects of Radical Politics Today". In *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies. Volume 5, Number 1, January* 2008, 81–85. On Fromm's discussion of Zen Buddhism, see particularly Fromm 1960a and Fromm 1985, 143–148.

413 Marx, Karl, "Theses on Feuerbach". In Marx, Karl & Engels, Friedrich, *Collected Works. Vol. 5*. Lawrence & Wishart, London 1976c (1888), 3.

reason: the whole idealist philosophy is ungrounded, since it deals with nonexisting entities, with pure abstractions, comparable to fairytales or religious dogmas. It is *false consciousness*, just like the "reality" of rationalizations and repressions which Freud exposed in his writings. Instead of realities, we have "pseudorealities", which divert our attention from real issues. Fromm adds to this metaphor the image of chains ("*Beyond the Chains of Illusions*"), which further strengthens the association between illusions and unfreedom. In fact, utilizing different variations of the metaphor of illusions constituted one of the guiding themes of Fromm's work, as exemplified by his idea of pseudothinking, pseudofeeling and pseudowilling, his conception of the internalization of authorities and so on. All this corresponds with his role as a "modern prophet", whose task is to expose the hidden realities behind the veil of social manipulation.

The shattering of illusions and the radical critique of all existing forms of thinking, feeling and willing are impossible without a *critical mood*, a systematic attitude of doubt towards all authorities. Reason, for Fromm, differs from mere intelligence, since it implies radical reflexivity and goes to the roots of the problems. When it comes to his view of the project of Enlightenment, Fromm insists that the human catastrophes of the 20th were not due to the inadequacy or impotence of reason, but to the narrow and one-sided conception of rationality: "Revival of the spirit of enlightenment – ruthlessly critical, realistic, and cleansed from its overoptimistic, rationalistic prejudices, together with a revival of humanist values, not preached but realized in personal and social life – are the conditions for mental health and the survival of civilization". Following Marx, Fromm links the use of reason with emancipatory interests: "An interpretation without the wish to change is useless; a change without preliminary interpretation is blind".[414] Thus, what Eagleton writes of Marx's "emancipatory knowledge" can be understood also as a depiction of Fromm's view.

> "*It is the kind of understanding of one's situation that a group or individual needs in order to change that situation; and it is thus among other things a new* self-*understanding. But to know yourself in a new way is to alter yourself in that very act; so we have here a peculiar form of cognition in which the act of knowing alters what it contemplates. In trying to understand myself and my condition, I can never remain quite identical with myself, since the self which is doing the understanding, as well as the self understood, are now different from what they were before.*"[415]

This idea of "emancipatory knowledge" was shared by also Freud, as Fromm points out. Freud argued that the one-dimensional schema, according to which human beings are motivated primarily by their rationality, hindered the understanding of those real factors, which have an unwitting influence on all

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414 Fromm 1941, 247; Fromm 1947, xiv–xv, 75–78; Fromm 1955a, 275; Fromm 1956a, 94; Fromm 1962, 14–15, 194–195; Fromm 1963a, 111–113; Fromm 1964a, 73–77, 83–84, 92; Fromm 1976, 28–30, 62, 150; Fromm 1981, 22, 79; Fromm 1994a, 37–38, 104; Fromm 1995, 26–32.

415 Eagleton, Terry, *Marx and Freedom*. Routledge, New York 1999 (1997), 3.

decisions of our lives: "Freud recognized that *most of what is real within ourselves is not conscious, and that most of what is conscious is not real*". Even though Fromm did not see Freud as a radical critic of the existing forms of authority, he claimed that his work contained the seed for such criticism, but only if – and this is the decisive point – the conflict between the needs and desires of individuals, on the one hand, and the cultural demands of repression on the other, is not perceived as biological fact, but as a historically and socially grounded phenomenon. The anger and hostility towards Freudian psychoanalysis was, in Fromm's analysis, largely due to its implicit potential for a radical critique of society. Freud was disturbing the world in its sleep, as he once noted.[416]

Since modern capitalist societies are hopelessly enmeshed in illusions, the idea of the *real* is equally distorted. Fromm writes that "realism" in its current form is nothing but an apology for the existing social structures and power relations, which are seen as "natural" and "self-evident". This helps in dismissing the radical social critique as mere daydreams and utopias. For Fromm, this kind of "realism" in the context of the Cold War constituted a severe threat to the survival of mankind: "What realists, who are playing with weapons which may lead to the destruction of all modern civilization, if not our earth itself!" While neurotic persons see the world as the reflection of their inner world, realists see only the surface of the outer world – both are unable to deal with reality.[417]

However, Fromm sees no contradiction between true realism and utopianism: "The most fundamental of the erroneous alternatives is perhaps that between so-called 'realism' – understood as automation uncontrolled by decisions based on human values – and utopianism, understood as unreal and unreliable goals, merely because they have not yet been realized". For this reason, Fromm distinguishes *awake utopianism* from *dreaming utopianism* – the latter being the kind of illusory fantasizing criticized by both radicals and liberals, and the former being the attempt to change the world by seeing things as they are. Fromm advocates strongly the stance of awake utopianism and claims that, for example, democratic ideals existed in the minds of men long before they were realized politically. Thus, Fromm claims, prophecy and utopianism are closely related: both can be seen as attempts to perceive something in the present which has not yet been actualized, but has a potential for being actualized – if the right decisions are made. This kind of utopianism is not an abstract daydream, but a concrete revision of existing realities.[418]

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416 Fromm 1962, 96; Fromm 1976, 98–99; Fromm 1994a, 120–123. See also Fromm's article on Freud's concept of man in Fromm 1970, 44–60.

417 Fromm 1947, 65–66; Fromm 1951, 4; Fromm 1955a, 165–166; Fromm 1962, 174; Fromm 1963a, 106; Fromm 1995, 116.

418 Fromm 1947, 21; Fromm 1955a, 275; Fromm 1976, 173–175; Fromm 1994a, 56, 19–20, 145–146. As an interesting side note, Giddens proposed a similar approach in his 1990 book *The Consequences of Modernity* under the title of "utopian realism". While Giddens holds that social change is not possible unless it is grounded in the analysis of the institutionally immanent possibilities in society, he equally underlines the

Fromm's conviction that utopias should be grounded in existing social realities is illustrated in his attempts to formulate a transition strategy with concrete steps from the alienated capitalist societies to humanistic socialism. In the sphere of the economy he proposes a radical implementation of direct workplace democracy, humanization of working conditions, minimizing of centralized bureaucracy, a ban on manipulative advertising, emphasis on consumer activism and strikes, massive development aid to Third World countries, and the introduction of basic income and so on. Fromm proposed similar demands in the sphere of politics: unilateral discontinuation of the Cold War armament race, immediate withdrawal of troops from Vietnam, the founding of local parliaments and political discussion groups, the adaptation of various forms of direct democracy, effective dissemination of information for all people, free education for everyone at all levels and the founding of a cultural council consisting of prominent intellectuals, artists, scientists and religious figures. In formulating concrete proposals for a transitions strategy from "here" to "there", Fromm was following Marx's idea regarding the interdependence of theory and practice: "*Insight separated from practice remains ineffective*."[419]

All in all, Fromm contends that modernity needs utopias to transform itself, to find new meaning and to act as a counterforce against the negative character of modernity as a destroyer of old traditions. Here Fromm repeats Bloch's idea of utopias manifesting "the principle of hope" in the social realm. Fromm's view of utopias is revealed concisely in the following quotation.

> "*Many will say that people do not want ideals, that they do not want to go beyond the frame of reference in which they live. ... On the contrary, people have a deep longing for something they can work for and have faith in. Man's whole vitality depends on the fact that he transcends the routine part of his existence, that he strives for the fulfillment of a vision which is not impossible to realize – even though it has not yet been achieved. If he has no chance to strive for a rational, humanistic vision, he will eventually, worn out and depressed by the boredom of his life, fall prey to the irrational satanic visions of dictators and demagogues. It is exactly the weakness of contemporary society that it offers no ideals, that it demands no faith, that it has no vision – except that of more of the same.*"[420]

Fromm has not been alone in highlighting the difficult mismatch between "negative" and "positive" forms of modernity. As Touraine writes, in its negative form, as a destroyer of traditions and hierarchies, modernity has proven itself invincible. However, in its positive form, as a source of new certainties and stability, it hasn't been able to fulfil its promises – despite the catastrophic attempts at building a rationally ordered world. The crisis of

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need for visionary politics: "We must balance utopian ideals with realism in much more stringent fashion than was needed in Marx's day". Giddens 1995, 154–158.

419 On concrete proposals by Fromm for a transition to humanist socialism, see for example Fromm 1955a, 263–344; Fromm, Erich, "Freedom in the Work Situation". In *Labor in a Free Society*. Ed. Michael Harrington & Paul Jacobs. University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles (1959c). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1959f-e.pdf; Fromm 1963a, 75–76; Fromm 1968a, 98–146, 147–165; Fromm 1981, 75–90; Fromm 1976, 170, 176–196; Fromm, Erich, "The United States' Global Responsibility". Unpublished, (1990b).

420 Fromm 1981, 90.

modernity can be seen, existentially, as a crisis of self reflection. The need to find an answer to this crisis was even more pivotal for emigrants and outsiders like Fromm, who experienced fully the condition of rootlessness and cosmopolitanism. These same figures were often fascinated by the lure of the "Great Negation", as Wagner notes: "The immigrants of all origins, having lost those origins, become 'the spent people in whom the god impulse had collapsed, so they crossed to the great continent of the negation, where the human will declares itself 'free', to pull down the soul of the world'".[421] However, Fromm could not accept the nihilist notion of the tragic end of history in modernity, which Touraine characterizes with the following words.

> *"What remains of the modernist ideology? Criticism, destruction and disenchantment. Not so much the construction of a new world as the will to destroy and the joyful destruction of everything that stands in the way of reason. The idea of modernity does not derive its strength from its positive utopia – the construction of a rational world – but from its critical function. And it retains its strength only so long as the past continues to exist."*[422]

The starting point for Fromm's analysis of modernity is precisely this crisis. Paradoxically, the colossal changes brought by modernity have eradicated the sense of history. Modernity has discredited the past and consequently it has ceased to exist. Touraine calls for a re-evaluation of the value of historical memory as a solution to the crisis of modernity: "We are no longer in danger of losing belief in an illusory continuity, but we are in danger of refusing to believe in the existence of mountains we cannot see, and therefore of assuming that we have reached the end of our journey". Furthermore, Touraine proposes that instead of dropping altogether the concept and idea of modernity, we should strive to revive it.[423] For Fromm, all these existential considerations are only part of the solution, since the immense socioeconomical and cultural problems inherent in modernity cannot be solved with mere intellectual contemplation. Ideas must be turned into action.

Fromm refused to accept that mankind had arrived at the end of its history, as he wrote in a letter to Father Thomas Merton: "I am sorry to end on such a sad note, but still I do not give up my faith that we shall get over this darkest of historical periods".[424] He insisted that there was more than just The Waste Land depicted by T. S. Eliot waiting in the horizon. But the vision of the regeneration of modernity could be realized only if people were able to choose Life instead of Death and to revitalize the emancipatory tradition of radical humanism. Knapp emphasizes the theme of hope in Fromm's writing.

> *"Characteristically, this diagnosis, even at its most dismal, is never without hope. For Fromm, there is always light at the end of the tunnel. When Horkheimer and Adorno had long relinquished their expectations for drastic societal changes – even Herbert Marcuse became disillusioned at a later time – Erich Fromm clung tenaciously to his unflagging faith in*

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421 Touraine 1995, 18–19, 28–32, 177-178; Wagner 2001, 105.
422 Touraine 1995, 31.
423 Touraine 1995, 197–198.
424 Fromm, Erich: Letter to Thomas Merton, 11.3.1961.

> *humanity's potential for self-regeneration. This unbroken hope is the spiritual center of his life and his works.*"[425]

Thus, the last step of liberation calls for a radical reorganization of life: 4) "We accept that in order to overcome our ill-being we must follow certain norms for living and change our present practice of life". For Fromm, overcoming suffering – *and modernity itself* – is possible only through this final condition of emancipation. To know what these norms are and what kind of change is needed, Fromm proposes a thorough analysis of the nature of man, following Marx's conviction: "*To be radical is to go to the roots; and the root is Man*". Fromm's humanist conception of emancipation can be fully understood only though a thorough analysis of his view of man and his possibilities.[426]

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425 Knapp 1989, 38. Some critics have voiced doubts whether any hope can be left after Fromm's depiction of alienation which permeates through modern societies. Schaar, for example, sees Fromm's devastating social critique and his utopian hopes as fundamentally irreconcilable. Schaar 1961, 258. Fromm confronted this problem when he admitted that if we look at the probabilities, hopes for mankind's survival are certainly slim, but countered the pessimism by stating that when it comes to matters of human salvation or destruction, one cannot think in probabilities, but only hope for the actualization of whatever human potential there is left.

426 Fromm 1976, 168; Fromm 1981, 90.

6 TO AFFIRM – Fromm's Radical Humanism

6.1 Human Nature and Human Culture: Life between Growth and Decay

If we put Fromm's humanism in its proper historical and cultural context, the most evident fact to emerge is the anachronistic nature of his undertaking. Fromm wanted to give a comprehensive and universal view of human nature at the very moment of history when all universalist projects were being submitted to scathing critique. But this is not the whole story. There is an interesting twist in Fromm's humanism: he is simultaneously advocating a humanist-existentialist notion of the "essence" of man *and* the historical materialist (Marxist) notion of man as a product of history. How can Fromm claim that man's nature is constantly changing and still argue that there is an unchanging element which cannot be ignored? How can he manage to reconcile these seemingly contradictory notions? This question, which will be submitted to extensive discussion during this chapter, is of utmost importance for a broader discussion on Fromm's view of the crisis of modernity, since it constitutes, in essence, the basis for his narrative of modernity and that of the of whole civilization.

Fromm's starting point is his idea of *contradiction* as the determining characteristic of man. This peculiar notion is best explained through Fromm's interpretation of the biblical myth of the Fall of Man – which he, however, dubs "The Awakening of Man". Before man was banished from paradise he lived in a harmonious unity with both nature and God. He was not conscious of his existence as a separate being and wasn't ashamed of his nakedness. In the first act of disobedience, when Eve eats from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, she realizes her separateness from other people and the world. The preconscious and preindividual harmony is lost and replaced by struggle, insecurity and challenge to grow. Here again we can see Fromm's idea of the twofold or dialectic nature of liberation. This is the beginning of man's history: "As we have seen, this is not the story of the 'fall' of man but of his awakening,

and thus, of the beginning of his rise". However liberation gives birth to anxiety resulting from the shattering of the all-giving symbiosis with God: "Being deprived of the original harmony with nature, characteristic of the animal whose life is determined by built-in instincts, being endowed with reason and self-awareness, we cannot help experiencing our utter separateness from every other human being". This is also the beginning of man's alienation in Judeo-Christian mythology.[427]

Here Fromm makes an analogy between the biblical myth and existential condition of the infant. Just as the Fall of Man led to Adam's and Eve's expulsion from paradise, an infant is also expelled from the state of perfect harmony and security to a world of insecurities. Birth signals the ending of certainties in life; the only thing that is certain is that we will all eventually die. The fundamental contradiction is born out of the observation that man is simultaneously part of nature and still above it. Fromm's depiction of man as a freak of nature has strong existentialist tones: man is thrown to the world; his consciousness and individuality are not only a gift, but also a burden he has to bear. Fromm claims that this existential contradiction is universal and shared by all people in all cultures. However what is important here is the negative "answer" Fromm gives to the question of man's essence: questions, and not answers, are man's "essence".[428] The same idea was expressed by another Jewish writer, Gustav Meyrink, in his novel *Golem* (1915): "Das ganze Leben ist *nichts* anderes als Form gewordene Fragen, die den Keim der Antwort in sich tragen – und Anworten, die schwanger gehen mit Fragen.[429]

Once man has left the state of prehuman harmony with nature and gained self-consciousness, there is no possibility to turn back: "Because once his awareness of himself has been awakened, once he is aware of himself as being separate from man, from nature, man cannot return again to the primordial harmony which existed before his awareness ever began".[430] Since Fromm rules out categorically the possibility of return, the only meaningful answer to man's existential predicament is to realize his humanity, to fulfil all his human potentialities and to create a new harmony with the world.

> *"The problem of man's existence, then, is unique in the whole of nature; he has fallen out of nature, as it were, and is still in it; he is partly divine, partly animal; partly infinite, partly finite. The necessity to find ever-new solutions for the contradictions in his existence, to find ever-higher forms of unity with nature, his fellow men and himself, is the source of all psychic forces which motivate man, of all his passions, affects and anxieties."*[431]

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427 Fromm 1941, 32–34; Fromm 1962, 189; Fromm 1966, 23, 61, 70–71, 159; Fromm 1976, 122–125; Fromm 1981, 1, 16–17; Fromm 1995, 49. Fromm's view that consciousness takes the place of instincts in man comes from Marx and Engels. See Marx & Engels 1976b, 44.

428 See, for example, Fromm 1964a, 116–117, 120. See also Funk 1982, 55–60 .

429 Meyrink, Gustav, *Golem*. Vitalis Verlag, Prague 1998 (1915), 110.

430 See Fromm 1955a, 24; Fromm 1963a, 114; Fromm 1966, 88.

431 Fromm 1955a, 24.

This fundamental contradiction gives birth to certain existential needs of man. These needs are also universal: Fromm claims that every person in every culture has to satisfy them in one way or another. As Päivi Moisio notes, despite his universalist leanings Fromm avoided explicitly all metaphysical arguments in his view of man, and instead stressed that all our knowledge of man must be empirical and must come from experience: ”Human nature can never be observed as such, but only in its specific manifestations in specific situations”. Furthermore, as Fromm stressed, the conception of existential needs he proposes should not be taken as a full and final account of the human situation, but as an example of a particular approach to the problem.[432]

Funk has pointed that Fromm distinguishes between three kinds of needs. First, man has to satisfy his basic physiological needs such as the need for nutrition and water, the need for sleep and rest etc. Secondly, there are artificial needs like the needs created, for example, by modern advertising. Thirdly, there are existential needs, which spring from man's nature.[433] Fromm's discussion of human nature proceeds mainly through the analysis of existential needs.

First of these existential needs proposed by Fromm is the *need for relatedness*. As Fromm explains: ”The experience of separatedness arouses anxiety; it is, indeed, the source of all anxiety”. This anxiety would be overpowering if we were not able to create meaningful relations with other living beings. The need for relatedness can be satisfied in various ways. A person can attempt to restore the lost unity by submitting to a symbiotic union with an all-giving authority. Narcissism is another example of the attempt to get rid of the experience of separateness. For a narcissistic person the only reality which matters is his or her own inner reality – the world which produces anxiety is shut away. Fromm claims that only love can fulfil the human need for a meaningful relation with the world without the loss of individuality, independence and sanity.[434]

The idea of relatedness as man's foremost existential need forms the backbone of Fromm's understanding of psychoanalysis and society. This metaphorization – the understanding of “the human predicament” through the idea of “relations” – is an idea whose importance deserves to be underlined here. This idea is essentially historical, since, as is obvious, social relations are never fixed or static, but created through an endless friction between conventions and inventions – to borrow Wagner's terminology. It is through the understanding of the need for relatedness that both the appeal and the poverty of social determinism is revealed: since men create their identities through various historically formed social relations they cannot help being influenced

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432 Fromm 1947, 17; Fromm, Erich, ”Man's needs. Interview with Huston Smith”. In *Science and Human Responsibility*. Washington University Press, St. Louis, (1960c). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1960g-e.pdf, 5; Moisio, Päivi, *Kasvattamisen vaikea taito. Erich Fromm, ihminen ja kasvatus*. Master Thesis, University of Jyväskylä, Department of Education, Jyväskylä 1999, 40–41, 44–50. On existential needs in Fromm, see also Funk 1982, 60–66 and Moisio, P. 1999a, 46–53.

433 Funk 1982, 60–61

434 Fromm 1955a, 28–35; Fromm 1956a, 7–29; Fromm 1981, 2–3.

by them or incorporating some aspects of them to their identity. To use a topographical metaphor of horizon, utilized by Taylor, Gadamer and others, these relations constitute the horizon of what is considered possible and real in a given sociocultural context. The individual is thrown into this terrain. Even though the context is fixed, and its influence is considerable, the individual can still react in several ways. The process of radically changing existing social relations can be a painstakingly arduous and slow one, and precisely because of this various determinist models seem appealing. However, the need for relatedness, as defined by Fromm, can help us realize that socialization is never automatic and that individuals are not made out of the same clay. By focusing our attention on the idea that we live most of our lives *in between* – i.e. in relations – it can also help us understand why our lives are filled with conflicts and friction.

To continue with Fromm's scheme of existential needs, *the need for transcendence* springs from man's dissatisfaction with the role of passive creature in the world. Through his reason and imagination man can transform himself into an active creator. This can mean giving birth to a child, caring for plants, building something with one's hands, artistic pursuits, philosophical meditation and so on. Creativity is a means to replace passivity and randomness with meaningfulness and freedom. Without love there is no creativity, only an attempt to transcend the passive role of a creature through destructiveness, which Fromm considers as man's secondary potentiality, as a sign of the thwarting of creativity and love.[435]

The need for rootedness bears close resemblance to the need for relatedness: being expelled from nature, man has lost his "home" and roots. This rootlessness causes anxiety, and must be compensated for in one way or another. Here the relationship between the child and the mother is crucial. When a child grows up, he loses the security given by mother and has to take care of his own actions by himself. However, even an "independent" adult cannot live without some sense of rootedness: "Every adult is in need of help, of warmth, of protection, in many ways differing and yet in many ways similar to the needs of the child". Fromm claims that the universality of the taboo for

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435 Fromm 1955a, 35–36; Fromm 1973, 235–237; Fromm 1981, 3–5. Fromm's idea of the need for transcendence can be contrasted with J. R. R. Tolkien's idea of man as a "sub-creator": "The mental power of image-making is one thing, or aspect; and it should appropriately be called Imagination. The perception of the image, the grasp of its implications, and the control, which are necessary to a successful expression, may vary in vividness and strength: but this is a difference of degree in Imagination, not a difference in kind. The achievement of the expression, which gives (or seems to give) 'the inner consistency of reality', is indeed another thing, or aspect, needing another name: Art, the operative link between Imagination and the final result, Sub-creation." Tolkien writes that this kind of secondary creativity can also become "primarily true":"It is not difficult to imagine the peculiar excitement and joy that one would feel, if any specially beautiful fairy-story were found to be 'primarily' true, its narrative to be history, without thereby necessarily losing the mythical or allegorical significance that it had possessed." Tolkien saw the Gospel as the best example of a myth which has become a reality. Tolkien, J. R. R., *Tree and Leaf*. Hyman, London 1998, 44–45, 65.

incest comes from man's necessity to grow, to sever his umbilical cord, which gives him security but prevents his development. The need for rootedness is satisfied productively only when man has achieved universal brotherhood and peace.[436]

The need for a sense of identity comes also from man's awareness of himself as a separate, individual being. It refers to the process of individuation and emancipation from external authorities. A person can answer to the challenge of individuation by becoming a genuinely independent individual or by clinging to a herd identity and conformism, which can be used to repress the experience of separatedness: "Instead of the pre-individualistic clan identity, a new herd identity develops, in which the sense of identity rests on the sense of an unquestionable belonging to the crowd". A person cannot simply maintain his sanity without a sense of identity.[437]

Finally Fromm introduces *the need for a frame of orientation and devotion*. As a child grows, he eventually has to create a coherent picture of the world, which at first look seems miraculous and strange: "Man finds himself surrounded by many puzzling phenomena and, having reason, he has to make sense of them, has to put them in some context which he can understand and which permits him to deal with them in his thoughts". Fromm distinguishes two levels of this need. First there is a need to form any kind of picture of the world, which will prevent him from losing his sanity – in Fromm's view this is the root of rationalizations, seeing the world as a reflection of one's wishes and fantasies. To live a meaningful life, however, man must strive at a true picture of the world. Since man is not only a cerebral being, but also a bodily being, a mere intellectual view of the world is not enough: "Hence any satisfying system of orientation contains not only intellectual elements but elements of feeling and sensing which are expressed in the relationship to an object of devotion".[438]

Setting aside the question of whether Fromm's theory of existential needs is plausible or not, we can attempt to contextualize it in its proper social and cultural setting. The transition from traditional societies to modern societies and the idea of the "crisis of modernity", as analyzed by Fromm and others, are particularly relevant here. Fromm paints us a picture of the predicament of "modern man" (or, rather, picture of his experience of the imaginary figure of "modern man") and elevates this protagonist to the status of "Man".[439] Here his

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436 Fromm 1955a, 37–59; Fromm 1973, 232–233; Fromm 1981, 5–7. For Fromm the incest taboo is not essentially a question of sexuality, but indicates an antagonism between the father and the child in a patriarchal bourgeoisie society. See, for example, Fromm 1951, 196–231.

437 Fromm 1955a, 59–61; Fromm 1981, 7–10.

438 Fromm 1955a, 61–64; Fromm 1973, 230–232; Fromm 1976, 137–139; Fromm 1981, 10–12.

439 A similar notion has been made regarding the title of the pioneering sexologist Alfred Kinsley's famous book *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*. This critique is not meant to indicate that Fromm's view of the universal existential needs of man would be of no value whatsoever. However it gives a clear illustration that humanist ideas regarding the universal "nature of man" are always embedded in particular social and cultural situations and are consequently coloured by them.

rhetoric betrays the universalist character of humanism and the potential for domination inherent in every conception of the nature of man. The danger in proposing certain timeless characteristic of man's existence lies in the tendency of universalist schemes to neglect the significance of those particularities which does not seem to fit in to the big picture. Thus Fromm describes homosexuality, for example, as a "sexual disturbance" and as a "deviation", and attempts to justify his view with a reference to a biological idea regarding the normality of heterosexuality. Lawrence Wilde highlights the relevance of this problem for considerations regarding human nature: "The error is important because it reveals the possibility of importing particular prejudices into apparently benign universal categories".[440]

This shows that it is evident that Fromm's view of man should be understood in its proper historical and cultural context. A few attempts at this contextualization will suffice here. In the light of the immense changes in the social and cultural spheres during the transition to modernity, it is no surprise that Fromm considered relatedness as the decisive existential need of man. The crisis of modernity was, to a large extent, a crisis resulting from the disintegration of traditional hierarchies: conventional mores eroded and the justification of existing societal order became questioned. Under these conditions, questions of relatedness (in the family life, at the workplace, at schools etc.) gained a new relevance. Furthermore, the eradication of traditional hierarchies paved the way for the rise of modern subjectivity, which Fromm dealt with not only by considering the sense of identity as one of the central existential needs of man, but also by giving the problem of individuation a central role in his theory on human growth. Also the linkage between insecurity and growth (or liberation) stressed by Fromm can be seen to mirror the idea of modernity as a flux, as a process fuelled by incessant change. And, to add another example, the whole idea of self-consciousness as the starting point for a depiction of existential needs is a specifically modern one, as modernity has been generally seen as a process of increasing (social and subjective) reflectivity.[441]

As the above discussion on the existential needs of man already perhaps indicated, Fromm's view of man is based on his theory of human growth. The distinction is clear: positive or productive answers to the questions posed by existential needs further the process of human growth, while negative or unproductive answers thwart it. Fromm writes explicitly on this dichotomy: "If the individual will not choose life and does not grow, he will by necessity

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440 Wilde, Lawrence, *Erich Fromm and the Quest for Solidarity*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2004, 53. On Fromm's view of homosexuality, see, for example his article "Changing Concepts of Homosexuality" in Fromm 1997, 148–160 and Fromm 1994b, 22–24. For a discussion on Fromm's view on homosexuality, see also Thomson 2009, 61–62.

441 Giddens' idea of the need for "ontological security" and Taylor's ideas regarding the "horizons of significance" and "inescapable frameworks" also bear resemblance to Fromm's view of the nature of man. See Giddens 1995, 92–100; Taylor 2000, 31–53; Taylor 2002, 3–52.

become destructive, a living corpse".[442] Several similar quotations on life and death can be found in his writings.

> *"Life and death, as spoken of here, are not the biological states, but states of being, of relating to the world. Life means constant change, constant birth. Death means cessation of growth, ossification, repetition."*[443]

> *"Good is all that serves life; evil is all that serves death. Good is reverence for life, all that enhances life, growth, unfolding. Evil is all that stifles life, narrows it down, cuts it into pieces. Joy is virtuous and sadness is sinful."*[444]

To understand fully the meaning of these quotations we need to take a closer look at Fromm's idea of human growth. This idea has an important bearing on Fromm's view of modernity essentially because of the analogy he draws between individual growth and that of the human race. Thus, the discussion below will also serve as an introduction to the discussion on Fromm's grand narrative of mankind's history, which will take place in the Chapter 7.1.

Fromm considers *individuation* the fundamental challenge in human life. Individuation begins with the severing of the primary ties, which guaranteed a certain basic security for the child, but at the same time prevented him from becoming an adult responsible for his own life. The process of individuation is dialectical in nature: as the process goes on the strength and integrity of the young person grows, but this is accompanied with the growing feeling of separatedness and loneliness. The experience of separatedness gives birth to feelings of anxiety and helplessness. It is not only children who suffer from this, since adults, too, need the recognition and trust of other people. Here lies the temptation of various escape mechanisms Fromm analyzed in his *Escape from Freedom*: they offer a way for the individual to escape from anxiety – at the price of the repression of individuality. But there is an alternative to this kind of loss of self, although an arduous one: creating a spontaneous and productive relation to the world, which alone can give bring about the feeling of belonging without the loss of self and its integrity. Fromm refers to Marx's notion of alienation as a necessary condition of growth: only after the world has been experienced as an alien object it is possible to grasp it again and to feel at home in it. For Fromm, growth means the continuation of the process of birth: "The whole life of the individual is nothing but the process of giving birth to himself; indeed, we should be fully born, when we die – although it is the tragic fate of most individuals to die before they are born". Growth is never effortless or without conflicts, since the expanding of life's horizons implies also an increase in insecurities. For most people, growth ends with the adaptation of the prevailing sociocultural norms and standards. Fromm sees this as a tragic end of the process of birth: "Unless a person is able to transcend his society and see

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442 Fromm 1962, 192.
443 Fromm 1962, 190.
444 Fromm 1964a, 47. The dichotomy between life and death gains an increasing significance in Fromm's later writings.

how it furthers or hinders the development of human potentialities, he cannot be fully in touch with his own humanity".[445] This rhetoric comes as no surprise from Fromm, who was an ever-wandering, cosmopolitan Jewish outsider.

Mother and father naturally play a significant role in the child's individuation process. An infant is very much dependent of his mother, since she provides him with nourishment, warmth and security. However, as the child grows, father becomes increasingly important. The child moves from the security of motherly love towards fatherly love. In Fromm's schema mother represents security, home and nature to the child, while the father represents language, culture, law and order. If a person can balance these elements, he will most probably grow up to be a healthy and sane adult, who is able to reconcile love and reason in a productive way. However if either of the two becomes dominant this will result in a thwarting of the personal development. Clinging on to the matriarchy can lead into symbiotic relationships in which the self is lost, while excessive emphasis on the patriarchy can lead to an adaptation of authoritarian ideals of discipline and order.[446]

The distance between Fromm's world and ours is particularly apparent here, as Fromm gives us a picture of the roles of mother and father reflecting the patriarchal values of early 20th Century bourgeois society. Fromm accepts this setting despite his relentless critique of patriarchy. Fromm's critique is directed against the domination of women and children under patriarchal rule. The problem, for him, is essentially the disequilibrium between the two principles – matriarchal and patriarchal – and not the whole conception of sex based dualist gender politics. Thus he reinterprets the existing conventions to create a radical critique of patriarchy, while still being unable to transcend the sexist setting fully. During the 1970s Fromm expressed regret, however, regarding his earlier use of the sexist stereotypes. If we still want to utilize Fromm's insights regarding the significance of matriarchal and patriarchal principles in the growth process without resorting to sexist stereotypes of his time, we can detach these ideals from mother and father, and see how this scheme could help understand the challenges confronted by the growing child.[447]

To continue with Fromm's conception of human growth – and to link it with his critique of modernity and capitalism – we can now see that, in his view, alienation means man's estrangement from his nature. By reducing man into a thing, the capitalist economy denies him the possibility to actualize his human potentialities and, thus, obstructs his growth: "For Marx, as for Hegel, the concept of alienation is based on the distinction between existence and essence, on the fact that man's existence is alienated from his essence, that in

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445 Fromm 1941, 23–30; Fromm 1955a, 24–26; Fromm 1962, 60, 142, 185–186, 194; Fromm 1963a, 109–110, 138–139; Fromm 1966, 76; Fromm 1976, 158; Fromm 1981, 131–132; Fromm 1994a, 76, 100.

446 Fromm 1956a, 30–36.

447 See also Pietikäinen 2007, 182–184 for a further discussion on Fromm's critique of the family.

reality he is not what he potentially is, or, to put it differently, that *he is not what he ought to be, and that he ought to be that which he could be*".[448] Overcoming alienation therefore means that the individual regains the possibility to become what he could be. The Nietzschean theme of self transcendence is repeated by Fromm, too. Funk writes: "Becoming conscious is the experience of man's liberation *from* himself, insofar as he has become alienated from his nature through idolatry and irrational passions, *to* himself, insofar as the negation of alienation permits a new identity". Genuine growth is possible if the person is willing to give up his possessive attitude towards his identity and selfhood: "Being bound to our egos, we stand in our own way and are blocked from bearing fruit, from realizing ourselves fully".[449]

Fromm's definition of mental health is based on the idea of an unhindered psychological growth. Only free and spontaneous development can give the individual a possibility to live a relatively free and meaningful life. Stifled growth, in turn, results in dependencies, weakness, irrationality and depression.[450]

> "*Let us also remember that these goals of mental health are not ideals which have to be forced upon the person, or which man can attain only if he overcomes his 'nature', and sacrifices his 'innate selfishness'. On the contrary, the striving for mental health, for happiness, harmony, love, productiveness, is inherent in every human being who is not born as a mental or moral idiot. Given a chance, these strivings assert themselves forcefully, as can be seen in countless situations. It takes a powerful constellations and circumstances to pervert and stifle this innate striving for sanity; and indeed, throughout the greater part of known history, the use of man by man has produced such perversion. To believe that this perversion is inherent in man is like throwing seed in the soil of the desert and claiming that they were not meant to grow.*"[451]

If the conditions are benign, man's *primary potentials* for growth, happiness, creativity, spontaneity, reason, love etc. can be actualized. Destructiveness is a *secondary potential* of man. Man is not good or evil by nature, but becomes distorted if he is deprived of his potentialities for growth and development. Fromm's concepts of *biophilia* and *necrophilia* are based on this idea. Necrophilia signifies attraction for the dead, lifeless and mechanical, while biophilia is a manifestation of love towards everything that is alive. Fromm was convinced that benign social conditions direct the individual towards growth and biophilia, while necrophilia is a result of detrimental conditions: "Evil is man's loss of himself in the tragic attempt to escape the burden of his humanity." Necrophilia, however, is not usually manifested as an overt destructive behaviour, but as the unconscious presence of the "basic hatred" rooted deep in

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448 Fromm 1961a, 47; Fromm 1970, 66–67. Resorting on the 19th Century essentialist notions by Marx and others has been the target of various criticisms of Fromm's view of man. Leladakis, for example, agrees with his critique of capitalism, but considers his ontological assumptions unwarranted. See Leladakis, Kanakis, *Society and Psyche: Social Theory and the Unconscious Dimension of the Social*, Berg, Oxford 1995, 177.

449 Fromm 1976, 25, 63; Fromm 1994a, 169, 83–84; Funk 1982, 119.

450 Fromm 1955a, 268; Fromm 1976, 95.

451 Fromm 1955a, 268.

the daily practices and even amusements of alienated societies. The general atmosphere of hatred and violence encourages people to destructive behaviour.[452]

Fromm's conception of mental health could be criticized from a Foucauldian perspective by pointing that all universal definitions of health imply the creation of a norm to which the individuals are supposed to submit. This argument, however, neglects the fact that Fromm's conception was initially created first and foremost as an attack against the repressive norms of mental health of his time. It is the anxious-ridden individual with all his neuroses and traumas regarding assimilation to and acceptance of others that Fromm, a perpetual outsider, sided with, and not the social collective demanding sacrifices and compromises for the sake of law and order. Or, to rephrase the whole idea behind Fromm's conception of mental health, we can define it as a relatively successful struggle against the repressive socioeconomic order and its various authorities. The healthy person is a person who has managed to resist the lure of social assimilation *and* has also stayed relatively free of the endless neuroses and anxieties that usually trouble individuals who have dared to question the status quo and have still retained their sensitivity.

All in all, Fromm's humanism does not imply faith in the innate benevolence of man, but instead faith in the good potentialities of man. In Fromm's view, the existing socioeconomic and cultural relations decide to a large extent (but not completely) whether man's creative, loving and rational potentialities are actualized or his competitive, aggressive and destructive ones. In insisting that "we are all saints and sinners" Fromm was taking a stand against the general perception that leftist radicals tend to cherish a belief in man's benevolent nature (expressed by Freud, too). Fromm, however, agreed with the opinion assigned by Freud to "communists", that the elimination of the capitalist system would certainly contribute to the pacification of relations between both man and man *and* man and nature.[453]

To make this point Fromm utilizes organic metaphors which associate the life of man with that of plants. The potentialities inherent in an infant are associated with the potentialities contained in a seed. What makes the critical difference is whether there will be the fertile soil, nutrients and light of humanist societies, or whether growth must struggle to take place in the "soil of the desert" of alienated capitalist societies.[454]

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452 Fromm 1939b, 10–12; Fromm, Erich, "Should We Hate Hitler?" In *Journal of Home Economics*. Vol. 34. Washington (1942). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1942a-e.pdf, 2; Fromm 1947, 158–169; Fromm 1963b, 5–6; Fromm 1964a, 37–61, 148–150; Fromm, Erich, "The Assassin". In *The Correspondent*. No. 30, (1964b). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1964g-e.pdf; Fromm 1966, 159 –178.

453 Fromm 1962, 193. Freud's comment is from his *Civilization and Discontents:* "The communists believe that they have found the path to deliverance from our evils. According to them, man is wholly good and is well-disposed to his neighbor; but the institution of private property has corrupted his nature." Freud 1981a, 112–113.

454 Another use of the organic metaphor can be found in Fromm's *The Art of Being*: "The aim of the life of a rosebush is to be all that is inherent as potentiality in a rosebush.

But what are these human potentialities that an alienated society of "things" prevents from being actualized? This is a question which is rarely asked even in the radical literature, undoubtedly partly because of the conviction that espousing ideals could be interpreted as another attempt to be too prescriptive for individuals who are perfectly capable of deciding for their own good – at least so the rhetoric goes. Fromm, however, never had any qualms about giving detailed accounts of what kind of change in the character of men a radical social change could usher in. Nonetheless he admitted somewhat paradoxically that all attempts to define utopian possibilities already constituted a form of alienation (since, as Marx contended, all vision of "the realm of freedom" are always seen through the distorting mirror of the present). Here Fromm diverged from the general mistrust of utopianism among his colleagues at the *Institut für Sozialforschung*, as characterized by Jay: " ... Frankfurt School's unwillingness to outline a utopian vision reflected its members' conviction that true reconciliation could never be achieved by philosophy alone".[455] Fromm's utopian longings regarding the actualization of human potentialities are submitted to extensive analysis in the following chapter on his radical humanist ideals. Bearing in mind Berlin's claim that any conception of liberty entails a corresponding view of the nature of man, and, moreover, that by manipulating our understanding of man's nature we can also manipulate our understanding of liberty, we can attempt to see whether or not Fromm's lofty humanist ideals merely repeat this old pattern of rhetorical trickery.[456]

6.2 "Man qua man". Liberatory Consciousness and Revolution of the Self

Fromm asserted that messianic myths and social utopias have played an important historical role in keeping alive the collective longing for the "totally other". The same vision of perfectibility and harmony has been expressed in various religious and philosophic traditions emphasizing subjective liberation. Often these ideals have been molded according to the demands of social assimilation and control. For example, from a strict Marxist perspective social ideals (being part of the social superstructure) are to a large extent determined by the socioeconomic "base" of a given society. This is also what Fromm's concept of social character suggests: class societies can be sustained only by

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… The rosebush needs a specific kind of soil, of moisture, of temperature, of sun and shade. … It can do nothing about moisture and soil, but it can do something about the sun and temperature, by growing 'crooked,' in the direction of the sun, provided there is such an opportunity. Why would not the same hold true for the human species?" Fromm 1993, 4.

455 Jay 1974, 262.

456 On Berlin's claim, see, for example, Berlin 2000, 204.

manipulating the lower classes to want their own oppression and to make them confuse their servitude with freedom. The role of ideals in creating submissive uniformity was recognized also by Nietzsche in his scathing cultural critique:"I go among this people and keep my eyes open: they have become *smaller* and are becoming even smaller: *and their doctrine of happiness and virtue is the cause*.[457] Despite the element of control inherent at least as a potentiality in all ideals of the good life, Fromm was more than willing to espouse his humanist ethic for his readers. This was undoubtedly partly due to his Jewish background and the example set by the rabbis of his youth, but it also constituted an integral element in his conviction regarding the "four steps of liberation". As became clear at the end of the Chapter 5, Fromm saw critique and iconoclasm as necessary steps in the process towards human emancipation, but he also maintained that any project of liberation would inevitably fail unless this negative stance was accompanied by a determined attempt to create new kinds of life forms out of the ruins of the old world.

> *"If we should not succeed in keeping alive a vision of mature life, then indeed we are confronted with the probability that our whole cultural tradition will break down. This tradition is not primarily based on the transmission of certain kinds of knowledge, but of certain kinds of human traits. If the coming generations will not see these traits any more, a five-thousand-year-old culture will break down, even if its knowledge is transmitted and further developed."*[458]

By explicitly advocating his radical humanist ideal Fromm took a stand against Freud's remark that "advice and guidance in the affairs of life do not play an integral part in analytic influence".[459] However, one can doubt whether Freud's psychoanalysis – with its maxim "where there is Id there shall be Ego" and the corresponding ideal of a rational control over unconscious wishes – was free of all moral commitments. In a sense, the whole psychoanalytic movement advocated a certain kind of ideal and sense of life, drawing heavily from the Enlightenment tradition and its ideals of rationality and autonomy, even though clinically speaking it was of course interested only in helping the patients deal with their neuroses and anxieties.

The roots of Fromm's radical humanist ideal lie in his idea that human growth revolves essentially around the problem of individualization: "The genuine growth of the self is always a growth on this particular basis; it is an organic growth, the unfolding of a nucleus that is peculiar for this one person and only for him".[460] Needless to say, this individualization has nothing to do with the "individualism" propagated, used and abused by contemporary consumer culture, which Fromm denounced as a mere illusion of individuality.

Despite the distortion of the idea of individuality by the capitalist economy and consumerism, Fromm claimed that the "respect for and

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457 Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* Penguin Books, London 2003 (1885), 189.
458 Fromm 1956a, 92.
459 Freud 1981f, 433.
460 Fromm 1941, 262.

cultivation of the uniqueness of the self is the most valuable achievement of human culture", but also added that "it is this very achievement that is in danger today". Writing in the aftermath of the Second World War and the fall of fascism, Fromm voiced strong concerns regarding the fate of individuality in the vast bureaucratic systems of modern administrated industrial societies. Notions like these in books such as *Escape from Freedom* (1941) and *Man for Himself* (1947) should be read as responses to the abovementioned threats to individual freedoms. Abused and distorted by the capitalist economy, the idea of individuality is becoming a mere shell devoid of any meaningful content or experiential basis. Liberation is possible only if the growth and happiness of each individual is considered as the fundamental goal and purpose of society. Here we arrive again at Fromm's idea of positive freedom: "Positive freedom also implies the principle that there is no higher power than this unique individual self, that man is the center and purpose of his life; that the growth and realization of man's individuality is an end that can never be subordinated to purposes which are supposed to have greater dignity".[461] One of Fromm's favourite quotations is from the young Marx, which is, in essence, a strong plea on behalf of individual autonomy.

> "*A* being *only considers himself independent when he stands on his own feet; and he only stands on his own feet when he owes his* existence *to himself. A man who lives by the grace of another regards himself as a dependent being. But I live completely by the grace of another if I owe him not only the maintenance of my life, but if he has, moreover,* created *my life – if he is the* source *of my life. When it is not of my own creation, my life has necessarily a source of this kind outside of it.*"[462]

The relative absence of obstacles to growth under beneficial social conditions allows the emergence of biophilic orientation. For Fromm, the search for individuality, independence and autonomy did not imply a narcissistic

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461 Fromm 1941, ix, 262–263, 269; Fromm 1947, 14, 185–187; Fromm 1963a, 80–81, 108–111; Fromm 1976, 71; Fromm 1981, 8–9. Betraying the hopelessly confused character of his criticism of Fromm's thought, Schaar accuses Fromm of wanting to topple all irrational forms of authority in a situation where people are not at all prepared for such freedom: "But if you liberate men in this way, that is, without helping them toward a conception of what liberty is for, you only lead them into deeper slavery, the slavery of the social". Schaar 1961, 295. There are several misunderstandings in this accusation, but what is essential here is the fact that Schaar's method of criticism is highly suspect: at one instance he is accusing Fromm of moralism, but then he claims that he goes too far in his anti-authoritarianism by not giving a detailed description of "what liberty is for" and leaving people to decide for themselves what is good for them. This kind of contradictory critique makes one surely wonder about Schaar's motives. Indeed, later on Schaar admits implicitly what this critique of Fromm's view of alienation in democratic modern societies is all about: "So this is a question of self-defense". Schaar 1961, 323.

462 Marx 1975b, 304. This quotation appears numerous times in Fromm's writings. See, for example, Fromm 1961a, 37–38, Fromm 1963a, 110 and Fromm 1994a, 73. Fromm emphasized Marx's role as a defender of the value of the human individual, partly because of the distortion of his ideas by the Soviet interpretations: "For Marx, freedom and independence were not merely political or economic freedom in the sense of liberalism, but *the positive realization of individuality*". See also Fromm 1961a, 2–3, 37–38, 61–62; Fromm 1962, 70; Fromm 1981, 69–70.

detachment from social relations, but was rather a precondition for a new kind of "concern" for all that is alive. A biophilic character is unable to live an indifferent and hostile life. Fromm considered the Cold War arms race the most obvious indication of the absence of biophilia in modern societies. Seeing how science was used and abused equally by the capitalist and socialist blocs, Fromm claimed that the survival of mankind doesn't depend on the increase in intelligence, but on the possible flourishing of biophilic character traits: "In order to reduce the general level on stupidity, we need not more 'intellect' but a different kind of character: men who are independent, adventurous, and who are in love with life".[463] The following quotation sums up Fromm's idea of biophilic character.

> "*The person who fully loves life is attracted by the process of life and growth in all spheres. He prefers to construct rather than to retain. He is capable of wondering, and he prefers to see something new to the security of finding confirmation of the old. He loves the adventure of living more than he does certainty. His approach to life is functional rather than mechanical. He sees the whole rather than only the parts, structures rather than summations. He wants to mold and to influence by love, reason, by his example; not by force, by cutting things apart, by the bureaucratic manner of administering people as if they were things. He enjoys life and all its manifestations rather than mere excitement.*"[464]

This formulation of the biophilic ideal by Fromm's is a straightforward critique of bureaucratic capitalism and its ideals, but also a metaphorical reworking of the image of the good life. The demands of organized modernity – diligence, uniformity, concentration, obedience to the hierarchies of family, school and workplace – were antithetical to Fromm's view of the good life. Even though such rigidities have hardly disappeared from late or postmodern societies, from the contemporary perspective the above quotation by Fromm could be seen as a textbook example of *recuperation* carried out by the Establishment. The concept of recuperation, coined by Guy Debord, reveals how radical and subversive ideas are distorted and commodified by the existing hierarchies and institutions and subsequently used to serve the ends of the Establishment.[465] Ironically, the new postmodern work ethic needs workers who are creative, innovative and enthusiastic, who are eager to immerse themselves in their tasks. What remains hidden, however, is that the autonomy such work ethic promises is to a large extent illusory, since workers are still required to do their work in given time limits and under carefully defined projects, and the surplus created through the labour still goes to the shareholders of the company. The fate of Fromm's ideal of the good life differs little from the fate of various ideas advocated by 1960s counterculture. What Schaar considered in Fromm the expression of carefree

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463 Fromm 1947, 168–169; Fromm 1962, 167; Fromm 1964a, 46–47; Fromm 1968a, 93–94; Fromm 1970, 192; Fromm 1973, 365; Fromm 1981, 50.

464 Fromm 1964a, 47.

465 On the situationist analysis of recuperation (or "cooption") see, for example, Khayati, Mustapha, "Captive Words. Preface to a Situationist Dictionary". In *Situationist International Anthology*. Ed. & Trans. Ken Knabb. Bureau of Public Secrets, Berkeley 2006.

(and rather questionable) Beatnik-values in 1961, is now the new standard and ideal in discussions about how to fuel the economy through innovative work.[466]

This brief excursion shows that by highlighting and hiding the chosen metaphorical associations of the good life – namely: by recuperating subversive ideas – society can "domesticate" them and turn them into tools of repression and control. However, this doesn't mean that such ideals have lost their value – especially if their original subversive potential is unearthed and highlighted through reinterpretations. A mere repetition of already existing ideals without the necessary attempt at a recontextualization and reinterpretation results in the loss of the creative potential of these symbolizations.

To continue with Fromm's humanistic ideal, biophilic orientation requires a genuine interest in the world outside one's ego: "If I am concerned with man – and how can concern with the individual man be separated from concern with the society which he is a part? – I am struck with the suffering that society causes, and I am prompted by the wish to reduce the suffering so as to help man to become fully human". The biophilic personality is awake to the surrounding social realities and is capable of responding to it spontaneously and without pretence or hiding behind roles.[467] Here Fromm stresses again the productive use of one's human potentialities. He claims that productive mental or spiritual activity creates energy instead of wearing it out. The burning bush of the Bible symbolizes this: "The bush symbolizes the paradox of all spiritual existence, that in contrast to material existence its energy does not diminish while it is being used". Passivity, in turn, deepens the sense of alienation, as anyone suffering from depression can tell.[468]

Active relationship to the world is the basis of *productive* life. The concept of productivity, which comes from Marx, refers to the active use of human powers. Here we can see Fromm as a proponent of the Romantic ideal of authenticity and self-realization, which Pietikäinen considers as one of the main features of psychological utopianism.[469] This image is further strengthened by the emphasis Fromm sets on living intensively. Productivity is also markedly social, since the sincere expression of productive powers creates productivity in other people too: "He gives of himself, of the most precious he has, he gives of his life". All in all, Fromm identifies productivity as a character trait with mental health: "The mentally healthy person is the productive and unalienated person … ".[470] Fromm's ideal bears striking resemblance to Nietzsche's depiction of "bestowing virtue".

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466 See Schaar 1961, 109–110.

467 Fromm 1962, 161–166; Fromm 1981, 48, 125–126, 135; Fromm 1994a, 156; Fromm 1995, 65–66.

468 Fromm 1941, 260; Fromm 1956a, 16–17; Fromm 1961a, 22; Fromm 1966, 93; Fromm 1970, 68–69; Fromm 1976, 65, 88–97, 110; Fromm 1981, 125–126; Fromm 1994a, 73–74, 155–156.

469 See Pietikäinen 2007, 25–30. See also Taylor's analysis of authenticity in Taylor 2000 and Taylor 2002.

470 Fromm 1947, 60–79, 143, 172; Fromm 1955a, 31–33, 197, 268; Fromm 1956a, 17–20; Fromm 1961a, 34; Fromm 1962, 48, 74; Fromm 1976, 34, 91–92, 100–107; Fromm 1995, 63–66, 96, 128. Fromm links his concept of productive character with Freud's concept

> *"The highest virtue is uncommon and useless, it is shining and mellow in lustre: the highest virtue is a bestowing virtue. Truly, I divine you well, my disciples, you aspire to the bestowing virtue, as I do. What could you have in common with cats and wolves? You thirst to become sacrifices and gifts yourselves; and that is why you thirst to heap up all riches in your soul. Your soul aspires insatiably after treasures and jewels, because your virtue is insatiable in wanting to give. You compel all things to come to you and into you, that they may flow back from your fountain as gifts of your love."*[471]

The concept of the "New Man", introduced by Fromm in his late work *To Have Or To Be?*, can be seen as an amalgamation of all his previous characterizations and conceptualizations of the good life. The "didactic" tone of this 1976 work is evident, and Fromm even admits it in a letter to Clara Urquhart: "It is essentially addressed to the young generation and meant to be a kind of orientation for those who want to be awake rather than under the spell of falsehoods and hypnotic suggestions".[472] Fromm gives a detailed characterization of the New Man, the protagonist of his utopia: he is fiercely independent and understands that he is the only person who can give meaning to his life; he is completely present in whatever he does; he rejoices in giving and sharing; he has adopted a loving attitude towards the world and given up his narcissism; he is able to live without idols, greed or illusions and considers the spiritual growth of himself and others as the most important concern of his life; he strives to develop his imagination alongside with his reason, not to escape from reality, but to understand and sense its potentialities better; he acknowledges his limitations and lives joyfully by striving towards aliveness in all his actions and experiences.[473]

Fromm's vision of the New Man was not without parallels. During the 1960s various projects of human and social transformation shared the same mistrust towards the alienating nature of technocratic societies. What these projects shared was the conviction that a change in social structures and institutions had to be complemented with a radical change in consciousness. As Sheryl Denbo has noted, the rhetoric of the New Left was essentially about

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of genital character. See Fromm 1947, 60–61. In his *Escape from Freedom* Fromm used the concept of *spontaneity* instead of productivity. In his late work *To Have or To Be?* Fromm remarked that he had used both concepts to refer to the same basic experience or orientation: "I used the terms 'spontaneous activity' in *Escape from Freedom* and 'productive activity' in my later writings". See Fromm 1941, 255–274 and Fromm 1976, 91. On a more or less complete distortion of Fromm's concept of the productive character, see Schaar 1961, 108–109. Here Schaar is using the common straw man argument by rephrasing and misrepresenting Fromm's concept in order to make it particularly vulnerable to criticism. What is more, Schaar attempts to discredit the concept of productivity by referring to a Beatnik description on the experience of being high on marijuana and associating this experience with the sense of life of the productive man. See Schaar 1961, 109 –110. This can be seen as another example of the highlighting and hiding function of metaphor, which is gained through manipulative reorganization of its associations.

471 Nietzsche 2003, 100. See also Fromm 1939b for a discussion on Nietzsche's ethic.

472 Fromm, Erich, Letter to Clara Urquhart, 12.6.1973.

473 Fromm 1976, 170–172.

wedding authenticity to a wider project of social emancipation.[474] Fromm, however, was not keen at all on recognizing this connection and insisted firmly (though privately) that his thought should not be confused "with the larger part of the New Left and their pseudo-revolutionary and often destructive and unrealistic policies".[475]

The metaphor of the New Man implies a decisive break with the past. A quotation from Marcuse – a fitting representative of a "pseudo-revolutionary New-Leftist" in Fromm's view – illustrates this characteristic call by the counterculture of the 1960s for a radical rupture from the socialization process: "This situation presupposes the emergence of new needs, qualitatively different and even opposed to the prevailing aggressive and repressive needs: the emergence of a new type of man, with a vital, biological drive for liberation, and with a consciousness capable of breaking through the material as well as ideological veil of the affluent society". [476] Fromm underlines the stark contrast between the "old" and the "new" by calling for a resolute transition from one mode of life to another: from *having orientation* to *being orientation*. This fundamental dualism of Fromm's later work has its roots in the writings of the young Marx, who argued that under capitalism everything tends to be commodified, made into things and subordinated to the crude logic of having. To elucidate this, Fromm referred to another of his favorite quotations from Marx: "The less you *are*, the less you express your life, the more you *have*, the greater is your *alienated* life and the greater is the saving of your alienated being". Turned into a commodity, life ceases to be an open process, and is judged according to its exchange value. In subjective terms this means that concrete life processes lose their value and turn into calculable and frozen abstractions. It is through this analysis of this distortion of the *senses* in capitalism that Fromm creates the unlikely synthesis of Marxism and Zen. Marx's notion that "*established* society produces man in this entire richness of his being – produces the *rich* man *profoundly endowed with all the senses* – as its enduring reality", was, in Fromm's interpretation, completely in line with the Zen Buddhist emphasis on mindfulness and conscious awareness.[477]

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474 Denbo 1975, 226. On New Left and its emphasis on cultural revolution see also Buhle 1987, 221–257.

475 See, for example, Fromm, Erich, Letter to Tristram Coffin, 1.2.1974.

476 Marcuse, Herbert, "Liberation from the Affluent Society". In *The Dialectics of Liberation*. Ed. David Cooper, Penguin Harmondsworth & Baltimore 1968, 182–183.

477 Fromm 1961a, 36; Fromm 1976, 25, 126; Fromm 1993, 117–120; Fromm 1994a, 123–127, 150, 154–155; Marx 1975b, 302. As the title tells, Fromm's *To Have Or To Be?* is essentially an analysis of the social and subjective aspects of the having and being modes. See Fromm 1976. In his posthumously published work *The Art of Being* Fromm gives his readers detailed descriptions of "steps towards being" by discussing themes like concentration, raising awareness, resolute willing, meditation etc. In this book Fromm is seen as the teacher of the art of living par excellence. Surprisingly, because of his extensive experience as an analyst, the book is one of Fromm's most original ones, and can be seen as a testament to his "spiritual" ideals. See Fromm 1993. Fromm originally planned it to be published as part of his *To Have Or To Be?*, but decided to leave it out of the final version, because of the fear that people might misunderstand him as an individualist prophet of self-realization.

Fromm's critique against the abstraction of concrete life processes in capitalism and his emphasis on transcending the subjective forms of alienation deserve a closer look here. Fromm acknowledges the limits of his own characterization of unalienated life: like all other symbolic representations it is only an abstraction, and as such cannot do justice to the manifold richness of original experiences. There is no abstract life, only concrete processes: "But the total me, my whole personality, my suchness that is as unique as my fingerprints are, can never be fully understood, not even by empathy, for no two human beings are identical". Conceptualizations and abstractions can only point to the experiences, like a finger pointing at the moon, as a Zen proverb puts it. Art may perhaps help us come closer to these experiences, but since it is also a form of symbolization, it cannot grasp the living processes in their entirety. Thus an integrated productive orientation towards the world cannot be merely cerebral, but must be rooted also in the bodily being of man: "He must act out with his body what he thinks out with his brain". This statement by Fromm can be seen as a parallel to Marx's notion in his *Theses on Feuerbach*, that "Man must prove the truth – i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice", even though Fromm doesn't spell it out explicitly.[478] The problem with intellectuals, for Fromm, is that they "talk about things they do not feel". What is essential from the standpoint of being orientation, then, is the cultivation of sensitivity to one's experiences and feelings, since it is only through this awareness that genuine introspection and the dispelling of rationalizations is possible: "One is aware, for instance, of a sense of tiredness or depression, and instead of giving in to it and supporting it by depressive thoughts which are always at hand, one asks oneself 'what happened?"[479]

Awareness of one's bodily being includes also awareness of one's sexuality. For Fromm, productive sexuality is an expression of man's inner potentialities – not a protest against taboos and social conventions or the kind of greed created by living in the having mode. Sexuality, however, never gains a central role in Fromm's philosophy. Part of this is due to his critique of Freud

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Rainer Funk, his assistant at that time, writes: "Fromm withdrew the chapter on 'Steps toward Being' from the typescript shortly before the typesetting of *To Have Or to Be?* because he believed that his book could be misunderstood to mean that each individual has *only* to search for spiritual well-being in the awareness, development, and analysis of himself without changing the economic realities that produce the having mode". Funk, Rainer, "Editor's Foreword". In Erich Fromm, *The Art of Being*. Constable, London 2001 (1993), vii.

478 Marx 1976c, 3.

479 Fromm 1955a, 338 –339; Fromm 1956a, 90–91; Fromm 1962, 126–127, 167–168; Fromm 1964a, 57; Fromm 1966, 19; Fromm 1968a, 11; Fromm 1976, 79–80, 87–88; Fromm 1981, 126–127; Fromm 1995, 30–32, 90–92. See also Fromm, Erich, Interview with Gerard Khoury. Locarno, 1978–1979 (audio). The basic points of Fromm's critique against the mind-body dichotomy can be found in the following quotation: "We must restore the person to his totality or, as I would rather say, to his reality. I am not a mind and a body. I am I, and you are you, and my heart and my feelings can be just as rational as my thought, and my thought can be just as irrational as my heart. But, I cannot even speak of my heart and my thought because they are one, they are only two aspects of the same phenomenon." Fromm 1995, 27.

sexual theories.[480] On the other hand, the Jewish spiritual tradition of his youth or the lofty German idealism, with their emphasis on the edification and perfection of mankind, rarely discussed sexuality in detail. In this respect their influence is undoubtedly reflected in Fromm's writing, too. Furthermore, in Fromm's view the sexual liberation of the 20th Century was not as unequivocal as it seemed, as indicated, for example, by the abuse of sexuality in consumerism: "While sex is certainly a part of human relationships, it is in our culture so overburdened with all sorts of other functions that I am afraid that what appears as great sexual freedom is by no means exclusively a matter of sex".[481] For these reasons, sexuality never became a pivotal theme in Fromm's work, but was instead discussed through the analysis of non-productive orientations (sexual perversions) or through the analysis of productive orientation (sexual well-being), for example.

Fromm, however, saw the cultivation of sensitivity as a revolutionary process, with the objective of "living more abundantly" (as Wilson characterized William Blake's mission).[482] The emphasis on the revolutionary potential of sensuality is not without parallels in other Frankfurt School theorists. Jameson notes that radical politics has generally alternated between the ideas of libidinal transfiguration and that of the perfected community.[483] The modern history of the emancipation of sensuality begins with Fourier's utopian vision of erotic fulfillment. Benjamin hailed the surrealist movement for its attempt to "win the energies of intoxication for the revolution." Surrealism showed, at least for a brief moment in history, how everyday consciousness

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480 When he was still an Orthodox Freudian analyst during the 1930s Fromm advocated the Freudian emphasis on sexuality: "Sexuality offers one of the most elementary and powerful opportunities for satisfaction and happiness. If it were permitted to the full extent required for the productive development of human personality, rather than limited by the need to maintain control over the masses, the fulfillment of this important opportunity for happiness would necessarily lead to intensified demands for satisfaction and happiness in other areas of life." Fromm 1997, 35. Later Fromm changed his mind and argued that Freud overestimated the role of sexuality in his understanding of the genesis of neuroses. This, Fromm explained, was due to the highly problematic approach to sexuality during the Victorian era, which undoubtedly contributed greatly to the spread of various mental disturbances. For Fromm, sexuality reflected the forms of relatedness characteristic of a particular social and cultural context. On Fromm's critique regarding Freud theories on sexuality see, for example, Fromm 1937 and Fromm 1959.

481 Fromm 1997, 127. In a letter to Martin Jay Fromm distances himself from Wilhelm Reich's theories, while still recognizing the emancipatory potential of sexuality: "I never doubted that sexuality itself can have a liberating function. I only thought that Reich's conclusion that the sexual revolution would lead to the political revolution was wrong, based on his confusion between Nazi and conservative morality". Fromm, Erich, Letter to Martin Jay,14.5.1971.

482 See Wilson, Colin, *The Outsider*. Victor Collancz, London 1956, 240.

483 "Indeed, radical politics has traditionally alternated between the two classical options or 'levels,' between the image of the triumph of the collectivity and that of the liberation of the 'soul' or 'spiritual body'; between a Saint-Simonian vision of social and collective engineering and a Fourieresque Utopia of libidinal gratification; between a 1920s Leninist formulation of communism as 'the soviets plus electrification' and some more properly Marcusean 1960s celebration of an instinctual 'body politic'." Jameson 2006, 58–59.

could be made revolutionary.[484] Situationist writers continued the theme of "The Revolution of Everyday Life" (the title of Raoul Vaneigem's 1967 book) from the 1950s on, even though, in true French iconoclastic manner, they had no particular sympathies for their surrealist predecessors.[485] Marcuse, in turn, recognized in the 1960s counterculture and hippie movements the birth of a "new sensibility, which expresses the ascent of the life instincts over aggressiveness and guilt", not to speak of Wilhelm Reich's musings on orgone energies and the liberating potential of the orgasm.[486]

Despite the apparent differences between these various perspectives utilizing the humanist Marxist theme of the revolutionary potential of sensuality, a certain concurrence can be easily recognized. In Fromm's work, however, this theme was manifested in the attempt to formulate new ethical ideals, while many other radicals usually tended to mistrust the whole sphere of morals – which offered a deceptive way to transform social problems into problems of "individual life management". Thus, Lawrence Wilde sees Fromm's "quest", i.e. his whole work, as an "ethical confrontation with modernity", while, for Schaar, Fromm's ethical approach mutates into aesthetics. In the light of the above discussion on awareness, cultivation of sensitivity, life as an art and so on, Schaar's interpretation is not completely out of place here. This is spelled out explicitly by Fromm in an article "Science, art and peace", where he maintains that "If it is the function of science to make man's thought more *critical*, it is the function of art to make man more *sensitive* to all phenomena of life."[487] Touraine dismisses this kind of aesthetic critique as mere nostalgia towards Being, but it is highly questionable whether a whole current of Western thought can be ignored with a presumption that all these radical and often vehemently anti-traditionalist thinkers were simply lamenting the loss of The Great Chain of Being (an idea most of them certainly felt no particular sympathies for).[488]

We have already seen that Fromm's ethical ideal comes with various metaphoric expressions: spontaneity, productivity, mental health, biophilia, being… This progression of metaphors takes place within his whole work from the 1930s to the 1970s – so that one could say, with a pinch of salt, that what is spontaneity in 1941, is productivity in 1947, biophilia in 1964 and being in 1976. However, Fromm's humanistic ideal remains relatively unchanged, despite the

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484 Benjamin, Walter, *Reflections. Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. Edited by Peter Demetz. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Schocken Books, New York 1986, 177–192.

485 See particularly Vaneigem, Raoul, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. Rebel Press 2006 (1967).

486 See Marcuse, Herbert, *An Essay on Liberation*. Beacon Press, Boston 1969 (2000), 23 and Reich, Wilhelm, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. Transl. Vincent R. Carfagno. Souvenir Press & Academic, London, 1972 (1933).

487 Fromm, Erich, "Science, Art and Peace". In *Co-Existence. A Journal for the Comparative Study of Economics, Sociology and Politics*. Ontario, (1965c). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1965m-e.pdf, 2; Schaar 1961, 111–115; Wilde 2004, 5. On Fromm's moral stance, see also Thomson 2009, 42–43.

488 On Touraine's critique of this kind of critique of modernity, see Touraine 1995, 130.

changes in metaphorizations. But why all the effort in reconfiguring the message? The answer can be found in the highlighting and hiding function of metaphors. In order to overcome the resistance of his audience – a necessary condition for any serious analysis which attempts to break through the socially conditioned repressions and rationalizations of the "patient" – Fromm assumes the role of a rhetorician whose task is to reorganize the definitions of good life. Fromm acknowledges the immense significance of inventive symbolizations in a letter to Clara Urquhart where he reveals the origin of his concept of biophilia.

> "*The other night I wrote a kind of appeal which is centered around the love of life. It was born out of a mood of despair which made me feel that there is hardly any chance that atomic war will be avoided, and sudden insight in which I felt that the reason why people are so passive towards the dangers of war lies in the fact that the majority just do not love life. I thought that to appeal to their love of life rather than to their love of peace or their fear of war might have more impact.*"[489]

What this quotation also shows is that rhetorical acts shouldn't be seen as mere linguistic "strategies" with the function of persuading the audience through appealing rhetorical figures etc. – as Skinner sometimes seems to suggest – but instead as utterances springing (at least potentially) from the very identity of the rhetorician. All in all, without this work of symbolic invention, conventions are nothing but the dead weight of the past. By grasping the discourse through inventive symbolizations, Fromm can unearth some of its hidden and perhaps hitherto unused semantic potentialities. This rhetorical act constitutes an example of immanent critique on the level of cultural symbolizations. Since language cannot exist without conventions, the struggle over meanings of culture implies essentially the struggle over the reinvention of already existing cultural symbolizations.

Moreover, various metaphorizations of Fromm's relatively unchanged ideal facilitate in reaching a wide audience and creating a synthesis between the various diverging traditions (such as the religious Jewish tradition and atheistic Marxism, for example). Betz writes: "By selective perception Fromm can ignore differences and stress similarities and thus knit an integral doctrine from an otherwise very unlikely and certainly not commonly accepted sources."[490] To take an example from Fromm's *To Have Or To Be?*, the mode of *being* is contrasted with the mode of *having*, which explicitly illustrates the complete incompatibility of the requirements of mental health and happiness, and the requirements of the capitalist economy. This dualism indicates a strong shift in Fromm's work towards a more pronounced prophetic or even moralist tones; during the 1960s and 1970s this aspect of his voice or presence becomes stronger year by year. But there is more: after elucidating these two fundamental modes of living – having and being – Fromm goes on to give the

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489 Fromm, Erich, Letter to Clara Urquhart, 29.9.1962.

490 Betz 1974, 207. Thomson also pays attention to this detail in Fromm's rhetoric: "He often repeats or rewords his main message in order to persuade us of the importance of individual and social choices in favour of life, love and productive relating". See Thomson 2009, 140.

reader a detailed analysis of the industrial megamachine and of the immense human cost of "progress" and "affluence" through the metaphor of having. The associations of having, explained and opened to us by Fromm at the beginning of his book, guide our understanding through this narrative. Thus, various metaphorizations are applied, since a single metaphor can open up only a limited number of associations in the subject matter.

To go on, Fromm sees happiness as a consequence of productivity, biophilia and successful growth: "Happiness is a state of intense inner activity and the experience of the increasing vital energy which occurs in productive relatedness to the world and to ourselves". This is a reference to Spinoza, who saw both joy and mental health as manifestations of the good life. Fromm's concept of happiness differs fundamentally from a more conventional modern understanding of happiness as a subjective (and often only fleeting) sensation of pleasure. Fromm claims that this kind of illusory euphoria is something consumer culture wants people to live in. Similarly, Fromm's conception differs from Freud's understanding of happiness as a mere relief from painful tension. However, happiness in the sense described by Fromm and Spinoza, is possible only if one manages to give a productive answer to the problem of human existence. In this sense, the opposite of happiness is not joy or suffering, but a sense of depression and boredom resulting from an unproductive and alienated life.[491]

Fromm's willingness to discuss his humanist ethical ideal through various metaphorizations could also be seen as answer to the threat of moral fragmentation brought by modernization. Here, however, Fromm's stance is not simply that of a moralist lamenting the downfall of morals, but that of a modern prophet whose mission is to warn the people about the illusory promises of the prevailing moral order, which is geared according to the demands of the capitalist system. His work can be seen as an alarm call against the petrification and alienation of life perpetuated in the name of "freedom", "justice" and "order" – coupled with the attempt to imagine what kind of life would be possible if the repressive features of the current system were abolished. Betz contends that Fromm's moralism seems out of date by today's standards: "The audience who rejects the moralist tends to picture itself as free, skeptical, iconoclastic, and liberated from the institutions which it associates with moralizing".[492] But it was precisely the idea that people are already free under existing condition that Fromm wanted to challenge. If he is a indeed a moralist, it is because he refuses to believe that anyone can be free under conditions which permit the affluence and luxury of some at the price of the poverty and suffering of others. The pivotal point behind this kind of approach

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491 Fromm, Erich, "The Social Philosophy of 'Will Therapy'" In *Psychiatry. Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Process*. Vol. 2. The William Alanson Psychiatric Foundation, Washington (1939a). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1939a-e.pdf, 3; Fromm 1939b, 14; Fromm 1947, 139–143; Fromm 1955a, 194–196; Fromm 1962, 167; Fromm 1968a, 126–127; Fromm 1976, 95, 116–119; Fromm 1995, 66, 74, 80.

492 Betz 1974, 209.

to "moralism" is expressed by Goethe, the central figure of German Idealism: "None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free".

Influenced by the vibrant Jewish tradition and its emphasis on the spiritual growth of man, Fromm refused to leave the sphere of morals untouched in his wholesale critique of capitalism. A mere shattering of the illusory promises of the prevailing moral order would leave the situation as it is: in a state of chaos. To eradicate this sense of chaos, Fromm introduced the narrative of growth as the fundamental element of his radical humanist ideal. Thus ambivalent reality could be coloured with stark contrasts of growth and decay. Similarities can be found to another prophetic figure of modern thought, J. S. Mill, as Collini writes: "Behind the particular issues to which the topical pieces of this last period were addressed there runs a common theme: the moral health of society is the highest good, calling, as the metaphor suggests, for constant care and sustenance if decay is not to set in".[493]

At this point the question may arise of how Fromm manages to justify his strong ethical stance, while still holding firmly to the belief that no authority should ever decide for the individual? Fromm's answer to this question can be found from the distinction he makes between rational and irrational authority. The rational authority of the prophet is always conditional and never coercive. The prophet's task is to show the alternatives clearly and explicitly, but without the use of force or indoctrination. However, as was noted before, the element of hiding and highlighting always present in all metaphorizations and narrativizations, implies that even the most neutral depiction of reality contains "persuasive" elements (as something is always "missing" from the story, as something is favoured instead of something else, as the narrative is fixed around certain perspective etc.). Since this argument can be used against any representation, we can see that the problem is not necessarily in Fromm's tendency to espouse his ideals in detail and with such fervour, but perhaps instead in our approach to certain kinds of narrativizations and metaphorizations. Instead of accusing writers like Fromm of building coercive narratives and ideals which may lead us astray, perhaps we should adopt a more "literary" approach and let go of the illusory and restricting notion that it is precisely ethically and politically explicit texts that might include an element of power (since this element is present in every single cultural representation). The abstract accusation against "moralizing" or "radicalism" leads to nothing if it is not backed up with a detailed analysis of the concrete mechanisms of persuasion and manipulation inherent in the particular representation.

This kind of approach puts the emphasis on our ability to read the subtle and often fleeting details of texts. If we pay no attention to the figurative aspects of philosophical works, we are indeed in danger of being led astray. In the case of Fromm, Skinner's concept of *innovating ideologists* can be particularly useful. The task of such ideologists, as Skinner writes, is to "legitimise

493 Collini 1991, 132.

questionable forms of social behaviour". Since any opposition to cultural conventions will encounter resistance, the innovating ideologist must rework existing conventions and make them point towards new kinds of meanings and associations. First of all, this kind of ideologist can create new concepts and thus contribute to the expansion of the limits of language. Existing concepts can be tailored as well, however: the ideologist can make a concept laden with negative associations neutral or a concept laden with neutral associations positive. A more radical act is to invert the speech-act potential of a concept: to make a positive concept a negative one or vice versa. The criteria for positive concepts can be tailored as well.[494]

Examples of such rhetorical inventions from Fromm's work aren't particularly hard to find. As the above discussion showed, in Fromm's vocabulary neutral concepts of *growth* and *life* are filled with positive associations – even though his approach here is somewhat dialectical and ambivalent. In fact, growth and life are normative concepts for Fromm: life is love and growth is perfection. The same analysis applies to his use of the concept of *man*, which is, of course, the foundation of his whole humanist philosophy. References Fromm makes to the Aristotelian (and Marxist) notion of man as man – *man qua man* – illustrate explicitly the positive associations attached to this central concept.[495] Man is an ethical ideal, something worth aspiring for, not necessarily something which already exists. Or, to put it in another way, man's true essence can (and *ought* to) be distinguished from its alienated and crippled manifestations under "sick" contemporary societies.

Fromm also turns negative concepts into positive ones. An example is his approach to the idea of self love, which he distinguishes from narcissism. By appealing to Jesus' maxim "love thy neighbor as thyself" Fromm showed that he was simply giving the concept back its original meaning. And, to go on, his concept of productivity shows how the positive criteria of a concept can be radically reworked, so that in Fromm's use "productivity" no longer refers to the idea of producing a measurable amount of goods or commodities, but to the active and spontaneous use of man's inner powers. The same notion holds true in relation to his concepts of happiness, activity, giving and so on.

The concept of sadomasochism, utilized by Fromm in his early studies on authority, also deserves a closer look here. By sadomasochism, as the discussion in Chapter 4.1 illustrated, Fromm doesn't refer to sexual perversions – the primary association of the concept in the conventional usage – but instead to a specific form of relatedness in which the psychic security and certainty of the individual is gained by striving towards symbiosis with the authorities. Considered from the perspective of rhetorics and invention of language, this concept is ingenious, since old associations relating to sexual deviations are so

494 Skinner 2002, 148–155.

495 On Aristotle's view of man's nature, see Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. Trans. Joe Sachs. Green Lion Press, Santa Fe 1999. On Aristotelian influences in Marx's philosophy, see *Marx and Aristotle. Nineteenth Century German Social Theory and Classical Antiquity*. Ed. George E. McCarthy. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Savage 1992.

strong that they will most likely retain some of their strength even in the new context of meanings given to the concept by Fromm. The same kind of reworking can be found in the concept of necrophilia. In the conventional usage, necrophilia, too, refers to a sexual perversion, but in Fromm's reinterpretation the sexual associations are downplayed. Fromm describes in detail the new etymology of this concept, which goes back to Miguel de Unamuno's speech at the eve of the Spanish Civil War against the Falangist general Millán Astray and his slogan "Viva la muerte!": "Just now I heard a *necrophilous* and senseless cry: 'Long live death!'"[496] Using Unamuno's utterance as a starting point, Fromm associated the concept with a particular non-sexual orientation rooted in the character structure of a person and contrasted it with his concept of biophilia.

Fromm's humanist confidence in lofty concepts like truth, freedom, hope, identity, spiritual perfection, man's inner potentialities and essence may seem a bit dated by today's standards, but it is important to note that it was precisely this emphasis that made his writings highly accessible to a diverse array of readers. Unwillingness to go into intricate details and emphasis on building a grand narrative of the ills and promises of modern civilization drew heavy criticism from the academic community but at the same time also paved the way for the popular success of his works.[497] Paradoxically, reliance on such concepts contributed to the abstract and vague quality of some of his texts, which was of course something Fromm was explicitly trying to avoid in his insistence on the supreme value of unalienated, concrete life processes. This problem was counterbalanced by detailed accounts of various cases of mental disturbances (drawn from Fromm's extensive experience as an analyst), discussions regarding the relevance of ancient and modern literature classics to contemporary issues, debates on current political events and attempts to elaborate concrete proposals for a strategy for transition from "here" to "there", from capitalism to socialist humanism. At the historical moment when almost every major current in Western thought was delving deeper and deeper into questions of subjectivity, deconstruction, relativity, otherness, difference etc., Fromm held firm to his prophetic ideal of humanist universalism and strove towards a synthesis of various emancipatory traditions.

A final note regarding Fromm's ideal is apposite here. Despite the lofty and idealist standards he set for mental health and productivity, Fromm never advocated the ideal of a self-sufficient Nietzschean *Übermensch*, who would live high above the everyday banalities of consumer societies and feel only contempt for alienated masses. This is a central point in Fromm's cultural critique and radical humanistic ideal: in his view the emancipation of the individual – and the full flowering of human potentialities – is interdependent with social emancipation. The disdain of leftist radicals regarding Fromm's talk of morals misses the point if it presupposes that he is advocating an exclusively

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496 Fromm 1973, 331. See also Evans 1981, 11.
497 See, for example, Thomson 2009, 46.

individualist idea of emancipation, where the happiness, well-being and freedom depend solely on the efforts of every particular individual. This recipe for "The American Dream" is not what Fromm meant when he coined the phrase "Man for Himself". Fromm was convinced that social emancipation is not possible without change in the character structure of individuals – and vice versa. The revolution in socioeconomic conditions must go together with the revolution in consciousness. Or as Marcuse put it: " … the need for a radical change must be rooted in the subjectivity of individuals themselves, in their intelligence and their passions, their drives and their goals".[498] Denbo has noted that it was the Freudian element which introduced the strong subjective element to a wider Marxist project of social emancipation among the New Left.[499] As a Freudo-Marxist critic of capitalism, Fromm's stance reflects a wider approach towards the prospects for liberation during the 1960s. However, both Fromm and Marcuse could note that the synthesis of the subjective and social aspects of human emancipation had been expressed already by the young Marx.

> "*Above all we must avoid postulating 'society' again as an abstraction* vis-à-vis *the individual. The individual* is the social being. *His manifestations of life – even if they may not appear in the direct form of* communal *manifestations of life carried out in association with others* – are *therefore an expression and confirmation of* social life. *Man's individual and species-life are not* different*, however much – and this is inevitable – the mode of existence of the individual is a more* particular *or more* general *mode of the life of the species, or the life of the species is a more* particular *or more* general *individual life.*"[500]

This interrelatedness between the individual and society, the particular and the universal, the part and the whole, is a central theme in Fromm's work and should be underlined. Even though every human being is unique, we all carry within ourselves the whole of humanity (as a potentiality). Dreams point towards this universal experience stripped naked of its particular historical manifestations. In what might seem as paradoxical statement, Fromm claimed that universality can be attained only through full particularity: "I believe that man can visualize the experience of the whole universal man only by realizing his individuality and never by trying to reduce himself to an abstract, common

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498 Marcuse, Herbert, *The Aesthetic Dimension. Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*. The Macmillan Press, London 1979 (1977), 3–4. Bauman repeats this same message in stressing the importance of subjective emancipation for a radical social change: "Transformed consciousness is both the necessary condition and the essence of the passage to socialism". Bauman 1976, 127. Pietikäinen, in turn, sees this convergence between the transformation of personality and the transformation of society. Pietikäinen 2007, 18.

499 Denbo 1975, 217–220. Wilde, in turn, praises the importance of Fromm's work in introducing the subjective element of consciousness to the Marxist socioeconomic analysis of capitalism: "His message is clear: for the world to change for the better people have to change their 'selves' by developing an awareness of the divisiveness of a social system driven by the competitive struggle for the maximization of profit and power". Wilde 2004, 145–146.

500 Marx 1975b, 299.

denominator".[501] In his view the fundamental conflict of human existence – the awareness of separatedness and the consequent experience of alienation – can be solved productively only if the individual strives to create a new relation with the world through the full development of his or her particularity. The universal (nature of man) is manifested in the particular (individuals), and vice versa. This metaphorical play between subjective and social is not only characteristic of Fromm's work, but also to Marxist humanism in general, as another quotation from Marx shows: "Man, much as he may therefore be a *particular* individual (and it is precisely his particularity which makes him an individual, and a real *individual* social being), is just as much the *totality* – the ideal totality – the subjective existence of imagined and experienced society for itself; just as he exists also in the real world both as awareness and real enjoyment of social existence, and as a totality of human manifestation of life."[502] As the next chapter will show, this figurative act constitutes also the basis of Fromm's narrative of modernity – through the equation of the growth of the individual (ontogenesis) and that of humanity (phylogenesis).

501 Fromm 1962, 193.
502 Marx 1975b, 299.

7 TO REDEEM. Utopian Visions of the Coming "New Society"

7.1 Phylogenesis as Ontogenesis and Vice Versa: The Birth of Man in History

The starting point for Fromm's 1930s Freudo-Marxist synthesis was the idea that insights gained from the psychoanalytic understanding of individual patients could be utilized in the analysis of social problems. Fromm's grand narrative on the history of mankind is based on this same equation between the subjective and the social. Instead of analyzing the historical validity of Fromm's ambitious narrative, the discussion here is centred on his narrative and rhetorical choices, with an attempt to show how he manages to give the "naked past" certain density of meanings and formal coherence.

Fromm gives us a story of growth of humanity in history from infancy to maturity. His preference for this particular figuration was influenced by Freud's notion that phylogenesis (the development of species) and ontogenesis (the development of the individual) should be seen in an analogous relation to each other, that clinically ontogenesis and phylogenesis are the same. Fromm also drew heavily from Freudian emphasis on themes of growth and regression in the analysis of neurotics.[503] Marxist idea of world history as the process of the birth of mankind is repeated by Fromm, too: "From all we know about the evolution of the human race, the birth of man is to be understood in the same sense as the birth of the individual".[504] Ontogenetically the objective of growth is the full actualization of the human potentialities of the individual.

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503 See, for example, Freud, Sigmund, "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning". In Freud, Sigmund, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. 12*. Ed. James Strachey. London, The Hogarth Press 1981b (1911), 218–226; Freud 1981e, 199 and Freud 1981f, 339–357, 370–371. Here we can see also a linkage to the popular 19th Century recapitulation theory, which also claimed that phylogeny and ontogeny were closely related.

504 Fromm 1955a, 25.

Phylogenetically the goal is analogical: the full birth of man in history. Man must give birth to himself, he must come out of the womb, sever his primary ties with Mother Nature, recognize his separateness and alienation and create a new human relation with the world.

> "*The birth of man began with the first members of the species homo sapiens, and human history is nothing but the whole process of this birth. It has taken man hundreds of thousands of years to take the first steps into human life; he went through a narcissistic phase of magic omnipotent orientation, through totemism, nature worship, until he arrived at the beginnings of the formation of conscience, objectivity, brotherly love. In the last four thousand years of history, he has developed visions of the fully born and fully awakened man, visions expressed in not too different ways by the great teachers if man in Egypt, China, India, Palestine, Greece and Mexico.*"[505]

Fromm starts from prehistory. The birth of man begins with the gradual and long-lasting liberation from the rule of animal instincts: "Man emerges from the prehuman stage by the first steps in the direction of becoming free from coercive instincts". This weakening of the instinctual capabilities implies the beginning of human culture, which advances primarily through cultural evolution. Man is no longer confined to the limitations of his instincts; he gains the ability to make long range choices among several alternatives. Simultaneously, his awareness of separation from nature grows. Animistic religions consider man as a part of nature: "Animate and inanimate nature are part of his human world or, as one may also put it, he is still part of the natural world". These primary ties give man certainty and security, but at the same time they prevent his growth towards full humanity. The dialectic friction between security and freedom characterizes both the growth of mankind and the growth of the individual. Thus every step towards emancipation, towards the realization of human potentialities, is a cause for insecurity. Return to primeval harmony is, however, impossible, and leads to severe consequences. Fromm argues that regressive fixation on earlier stages of development is not only a phenomenon pertaining to individual psychology, but a social phenomenon as well. When it comes to man's growth in history, such regressive tendencies are manifested in attempts to return to earlier stages of development. In linking pathologies with regression Fromm refers explicitly to Freud and Marx: "Both Marx's and Freud's concepts of pathology can be understood fully only in terms of their evolutionary concept of individual and human history".[506]

The rejection of nostalgic longings towards the "golden age" of the past was part of Fromm's universalist and monolithic narrative. Fromm rules alternative paths of development discreetly out of consideration. His model of growth – which is built on the basis of the analogy between psychoanalytic

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505 Fromm 1955a, 25.

506 Fromm 1941, 30–35; Fromm 1955a, 39–40, 68–70, 345; Fromm 1962, 66; Fromm 1968a, 68–70. Fromm also refers to Marx's theory according to which early animistic religions are manifestation of man's attempt to return back to nature. See Fromm 1961a, 15–16 and Fromm 1962, 38–39.

understanding of the individual and that of whole civilization – is exclusive in the sense that it presumes that all societies follow the same sequence of growth. This universalism is backed by Fromm's appeal to human nature, which sets the course for his model of sociocultural evolution. While variations on the general pattern abound, all societies and cultures progress from nature towards culture.

Needless to say, this narrative was in concord with the influential modernization theories of the post-Second World War era, and its roots lie in the great "historicist" narratives of the 19th Century. Touraine explains the appeal of historicism by referring to its function of reconstructing the totality of order after the downfall of traditional religious authorities.[507] The strength of universalist schemes is at the same time their weakness: by giving an articulate story of the course of history, particularities and differences in the various "mutations" of social and cultural life are lost in the grand narrative, which is shaped according to the western example. Jameson stresses this reductive character of all master narratives: the creation of historical totalities "necessarily involves the isolation and privileging of one of the elements *within* that totality … such that the element in question becomes a master code or 'inner essence' capable of explicating the other elements or features of the 'whole' in question."[508] Fromm's grand narrative can be considered as an apt example of that tendency. No wonder Funk notes that here Fromm deviates from his adherence to the dialectical method: the narrative he gives is not a story of negations in friction with each other, but instead a story about the growth of man and his reason. Fromm never questions this biomorphic assumption in his model of civilization.[509]

Fromm's narrative, with its references to themes of growth and regression, relies strongly on the metaphor of *infantility*, even though he doesn't make any explicit references to it in his writings. As was shown earlier, Fromm's use of this metaphor has its roots in Freud's theory of regression. The pathological features of infantility are not the only meanings Fromm attaches to childhood – as indicated, for example, by his notion that children usually more spontaneous and productive that adults since they have not yet been socialized to the alienated institutions and hierarchies of modern societies. The particular aspect of infantility Fromm wants to highlight in his narrative of growth is the repetition and acting out of infantile patterns of thought and feeling. In this sense, infantility means that a person who confronts the challenges of growth by regressing to earlier patterns of problem solving, learned during childhood, will encounter serious difficulties, since his or her infantile understanding of the situation doesn't match the actual realities at hand. This doesn't mean that Fromm sees no value in abilities learned during childhood, but instead that these abilities must be constantly developed and adapted with realities. Here

507 Touraine 1995, 61–87.
508 Jameson 2006, 12. On the function of historicist narratives in conferring meaning on history, see also White 1973, 276.
509 Funk 1982, 240–241.

Fromm is seen as a descendant of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on the autonomy of the individual (cf. the definition of enlightenment by Kant as "man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity"). It is through the synthesis of radical politics and psychoanalytic self-awareness, that man's immaturity and repetition of infantile modes of living can be made conscious – and the process of healing or emancipation can start.

Fromm argues that for centuries mankind was characterized by this attempt to return back to nature (here the use of the metaphor of infantility is particularly evident). Early human societies sought to restore the unbroken relation with nature and to repress the awareness of separatedness through rituals in which men were transformed into animals, for example. It was only a few thousand years ago that man started to move away gradually from primeval harmony with nature: "He recognized that he could solve his problem only by moving forward, by developing fully his reason and his love, by becoming fully human and thus finding new harmony with man and nature, feeling again at home in the world". The invention of agriculture was a decisive step in the sociocultural development of mankind: "At this period the greed for property, exploitation, hierarchy and war as an institution begins".[510] Here Fromm follows Marx and Engels in positioning the beginning of class society at the Neolithic era. In religion this was reflected in the abandoning of idolatry and the growth of belief in human-like Gods (as illustrated by the Greek and Roman mythology). Later on this development continued. The message of the teachings of Buddha, Laozi, Jesus, Socrates, Mohammad and Quetzalcoatl was, in Fromm's view, essentially uniform: the exaltation of the ideals of reason, love and justice.[511]

The rise of modern European culture was ushered in by the ancient philosophical and religious ideals which emphasized the value of human growth. Fromm contends that the history of Western societies from the late medieval period on is, essentially, a story of the emergence of the individual. Subversive religious ideals continued to live in the form of secular traditions like the Renaissance utopias and in writings of socialists like Marx. However, as Fromm's dialectical method implies, the achievements of modern culture were accompanied by growing psychological insecurities and attempts to return to the security guaranteed by omnipotent authorities. The rise of European culture also implied the domination of other cultures. Eventually, the modern industrial and political system was transformed into a Golem, which subjugated its creators to completely new kinds of dependencies. This means that dreams and utopias regarding the building of a human society and the creation of a harmonious relation with the world are to a large extent repressed.

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510 Fromm, Erich, Letter to Dr. Ivan Illich, 6.6.1971.

511 Fromm 1955a, 345–346; Fromm 1956a, 50–51; Fromm 1962, 170–171; Fromm 1968a, 69–70; Fromm 1994a, 17–19, 75–76.

The possibility of creative self-expression is limited to a tiny minority, while the majority suffers under the alienating idolatric practices of modern capitalism.[512]

Fromm's narrative acquires its structure from Gnostic myths, which see the current state of humanity as a period of inevitable alienation on the way towards ultimate salvation. Funk notes such Gnostic elements found their way into Fromm's work principally through the influence of Jewish religiosity.[513] Marx's cathartic prophecies about future communist society went together with Fromm's fascination with messianic myths. Here he clearly belongs to a larger group of libertarian Jewish messianists, who were united in their attempt to reinterpret Jewish religious traditions through a new kind of philosophy of history, which formed a link between the past and the future.[514]

The plotline of Fromm's story is fairly straightforward. At the beginning there is a fall from grace (man becomes aware of his separatedness from nature), which is followed by intense feeling of alienation and the attempt to create a new harmonious relation with the world. Thus, Fromm represents the whole world history through the pattern of *unity – alienation – unity*. The story begins from paradise, which is then lost, but this loss is compensated for in the end by a new paradisiacal, yet distinct, messianic age. In an interview given in 1977, Fromm expresses this explicitly.

> "*Once man has eaten of the Tree of Knowledge in paradise, he can no longer return to primeval unity. Being-in-the-world without breach, without the feeling of strangeness – this unity can no longer be regained. But there is the possibility that man, if he develops his reason and his capacity for love, can come to an entirely new unity with the world that isdifferent from the primeval unity. He can come to a unity that has passed through the entire process of individualization and alienation that, for that reason, is experienced on a new level. This new unity never allows difference to be entirely forgotten and it must be regained ever anew.*"[515]

Fromm gives a similar narrative on the growth of the individual. Similarities between the two poles of the analogy – ontogenesis and phylogenesis – are easily observable. While a child with a soft heart (whose psychological state is equivalent to *paradise*) lacks the realism of an adult who has hardened his heart (and succumbed to *alienation*), there is a possibility that he manages to avoid both unrealistic dreaming and unresponsive judging, and adopts a third stance, a synthesis between the characteristics of a child and those of an adult (equivalent of social *utopia*): "The persons who take this road retain the softness of a child's heart, and yet they see reality in all clarity and without illusions".[516] Fromm stresses that this kind of synthesis is highly uncommon in alienated

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512 Fromm 1941, 36–38; Fromm 1955a, 346–349; Fromm 1962, 171–172; Fromm 1994a, 19–23.

513 Funk 1982, 229.

514 On the concurrence of Jewish messianism and romantic conception of history, see Löwy 1992, 201.

515 Fromm 1995, 129.

516 Fromm refers here especially to D.T. Suzuki. See Fromm, Erich, "Memories of Dr. D. T. Suzuki". In *The Eastern Buddhist*. Vol. II. Kawakita Printing, Kyoto (1967). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1967a-e.pdf, 2. See also Fromm 1960a, 135, where Fromm gives a similar scheme: childhood – alienation – enlightenment.

societies. However, the important point is that the dialectical form of the argument is the same in both Fromm's narrative on the growth of man and that of the individual.

Despite the fact that Fromm represents man's "fall from grace" through religious imagery, this process is utterly devoid of any theological trappings. The beginning of Fromm's story has its roots in the changing material conditions of man and in the existential contradiction of man as a being who is simultaneously part of nature and yet above it. Funk writes: "In transcending nature through the consciousness of what he is, and through his reason and imagination, man expresses the ecstatic as well as his need for salvation".[517] Here, too, Fromm's relies on a strong dualist distinction between increasing alienation and productive actualization of human potentialities.

> "*Being born, we are all asked a question and we have to give an answer – not one with our mind and out brain, but, every moment, one with our whole person. There are only really two answers. One answer is to regress and one answer is to develop our humanity.*"[518]

In the Gnostic tradition, the state of alienation is a necessary step before a new unity can be attained. The same notion is echoed by Hegel and Marx. To overcome alienation, we must live through it. And to learn what salvation means, we must first experience the suffering which is the precondition of all emancipation. Without this concrete experiential basis, the idea of liberation is a mere abstraction – a phantom without a body. As Fromm writes: "Man has to experience himself as a stranger in the world, as estranged from himself and from nature, in order to be able to become one again with himself, with his fellow man, and with nature".[519]

However, while Hegel and Marx thought that history was inevitably progressing towards the end of alienation, Fromm denied all teleological elements in his narrative. The ending of his "story of salvation" was open, yet limited to two alternative endings. The messianic prophesies and promises could indeed become true, but, on the other hand, there was no guarantee that this would happen: "This perfectibility means that man *can* reach his goal, but it does not mean that he *must* reach it".[520] Whether man's history would culminate in his triumph or utter defeat, was a question of choices. Emancipation from the miseries of modern societies could be attained only through the productive activity of people struggling for a better life. This salvation story has certain similarities to J. R. R. Tolkien's concept of *eucatastrophe*. A story, fairy tale or a fantasy is not merely an escapist echo of a "real world", but can change reality. Tolkien sees the gospel as an example of the concrete power of myth in thisworldly reality. As a literary device, eucatastrophe relies on the shock of a sudden surprise: the very moment of final

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517 Funk 1982, 229.
518 Fromm 1994a, 76.
519 Fromm 1963a, 142. On Gnosticism, see also Funk 1982, 224, 228, 233.
520 Fromm 1962, 192. On Fromm's narrative of mankind's history as a story of salvation, see also Betz 1974, 213–214.

defeat is turned into a moment of redemption (as in the story of the crucifixion of Christ).

> "*But this story has entered History and the primary world; the desire and aspiration of sub-creation has been raised to the fulfilment of Creation. The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy. It has pre-eminently the 'inner consistency of creation'.*"[521]

Fromm's approach to history was markedly different from Tolkien's theistic view, but certain formal similarities can be recognized between the two. Fromm's narrative, too, starts with joy and ends with joy – at least potentially. Strong mythic elements, which are present in both gospel and Fromm's thiswordly story of salvation, also contain certain risks, since the power of a myth to harness energies for a given purpose can be considerable. There is always the possibility, pinpointed by Popper in his critique of utopianism, that something goes terribly wrong and the story is used and abused on the basis of a belief that the end justifies the means. This intense and hyperbolic contrast between salvation and destruction constitutes the kernel of the literary genre of *romance*, as Northrop Fry explains.

> "*The hero of romance is analogous to the mythical Messiah or deliverer who comes from an upper world, and his enemy is analogous to the demonic powers of a lower world. The conflict however takes place in, or at any rate primarily concerns, our world, which is in the middle … The enemy is associated with winter, darkness, confusion, sterility, moribund life, and old age, and the hero with spring, dawn, order, fertility, vigor, and youth.*"[522]

In Fromm's narrative the forces of the "upper" and "lower" world are personified by radical humanism (hero) and by class-ruled, hierarchical societies like the capitalist ones (enemy). For Fromm, however, the use of mythic elements never constituted an excuse to refrain from the painstakingly critical practice of dispersing the social and cultural illusions which condition people's lives. Nevertheless the romantic prophetic ethos, as explicated above by Frye, shines through in Fromm's notion that mankind would be doomed without savior-like figures: "They were the ones to whom the Jewish legend refers as the thirty-six just men in each generation, whose existence guarantees the survival of mankind".[523]

The metaphor of growth underlying Fromm's narrative corresponds with the metaphor of *progress*. Here again we can see similarities between Fromm and J. S. Mill. Collini claims that Mill's fascination with the metaphor of progress was motivated by his attempt to seek compensation for the depressive influence of a hopelessly conservative society. Mill projected his own thought in the vanguard of mankind's caravan across history. While the masses dragged lazily on the sands of time, Mill saw himself as a wayfarer, whose task was to

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521 Tolkien 1998, 65.

522 Quoted from Jameson 2006, 97. Same qualities in romance are emphasized also by White. See White 1973, 9.

523 Fromm 1973, 265.

enlighten others about the looming mountains in the horizon.[524] There are undeniable similarities in Fromm's and Mill's self image. However, one important reservation must be made here. As a child of the 20th Century and as a witness of its colossal technological horrors, Fromm could not share Mill's emphasis on the idea of moral progress. In his dialectical view of modernity, the road to progress was plagued by alienation and moral backwardness.[525] Nonetheless, if progress is defined as a movement towards a better future and growth as the maturing of human potentialities, then Fromm's grand narrative exhibits obvious associations between the metaphors of growth and progress – even to the point of comprising a simile (i.e.: growth = progress). This is a good illustration of the "conventionalizing" or even "manipulative" function of metaphor: by associating implicitly the idea of human growth with progressive politics, Fromm is able to present an *artificial* historical ideal as a *natural* human necessity. For Wagner, this constitutes the essence of the invention of culture: conventions are reproduced and created by masking the artificial as natural. Thus, the struggle for the figurative possibilities and limitations of language is, essentially, a struggle for the control of culture. Fromm's narrative can be considered as an instance of this struggle.[526]

Another important aspect worth paying attention here is the temporalizing function of Fromm's narrative. This form of critique is characteristically a Marxist one. By representing the current social and cultural reality as a single phase in a huge historical process, Fromm strips away its ageless character. In a wider temporal context the present state of affairs is not an end of history, but a mere transition phase, something that will be eventually overcome – unless everything goes terribly wrong. What Fromm's narrative implies, however, is that the emergence of socialist humanism, which represents the maturing of man, is seen as a momentous event, even though Fromm explicitly denies that the overthrow of capitalism would lead to an eschatological end of history. This vagueness and ambivalence is the price he has to pay when he enters the figurative game: if the narrative is to be prophetic, is has to be full and ultimate. The myth of revolution requires a climactic ending, a definite rupture with the past. All subversive energy would be lost if we had to be content with just a temporary and fleeting relief of suffering instead of a full-scale liberation.

Going back to the traditional humanist dualism between nature and culture – characteristic of Fromm's narrative, too – at first glance it seems that

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524 See Collini 1991, 129–130.

525 Fromm discusses his ambivalent stance to progress in a letter to Lewis Mumford. See Fromm, Erich, Letter to Lewis Mumford, 29.4.1975.

526 Wagner 1981, 86–88. Bauman, too, emphasizes the function of culture in masking the socially accepted reality as "nature" and thus stabilizing the existing social structures and hierarchies. See Bauman 1978, 197–198. Collini offers another illustration of the struggle over meanings in culture when he writes of Mill's goals and motives as a writer and a public intellectual: "What Mill was trying to do, beyond keeping his conception of morality in good repair, was to mobilize and make active its power in areas too easily given over to complacency and self-interest". Collini 1991, 133.

he is also taking a stand for culture and against nature. In the humanist interpretation of history, modernity has a unique role, symbolizing either the birth or the death man, as Latour notes. Fromm seems to adopt the former stance as he narrates the whole process of cultural evolution as the maturing of man, as the end of man's childhood. In this "culturalist" scheme nature is seen as wild, chaotic, animal-like, spontaneous, unpredictable, immediate, feminine, subject to bodily uncertainties, finite, unsophisticated and cruel, while culture, on the other hand, is seen as rational, masculine, orderly, humane, sublime, calculable and so on. The task of culture is to discipline and control nature, to make it obey human will and to submit the natural senses to the rule of reason. Wagner sees this stance as a characteristic feature of Western culture.[527] Foucault, in particular, has emphasized this kind of repressive function of culture.

It somewhat difficult to link Fromm's thought with this kind of approach, however. Even though Fromm undeniably sees the history of civilization as the triumph of culture over nature and as the maturing of man – he even depicts the essential historical developments in terms of human emancipation – there is also an indisputable element of distress in his image of culture. In his view the influence of culture is not only beneficial, but sometimes also extremely detrimental. Culture represses and controls our senses and satisfactions; it encourages individuals to conform to the existing conventions and hierarchies; it creates illusions to help people escape from the realities surrounding them; it engages in all sorts of mystifications and subjects men to the rule of endless dependencies in order to sustain a class society where the few enjoys the fruits of the labor of others etc.[528]

Therefore one of Fromm's main arguments against capitalism is that it is essentially against the *nature* of man – that man's *nature* suffers under its rule. To be precise, instead of advocating a traditional humanist ideal of submitting nature to the rule of culture, Fromm argues that both society and culture must be made to serve the natural (existential and material) needs of man. All in all, he seems to rely on a paradoxical – or dialectical – conception of culture as a tool of both emancipation and disciplinization. In this respect Fromm's work represents a synthesis of two contradictory discourses on culture in Western societies, as characterized by Bauman: the conception of culture as liberation and transcendence and the conception of culture as a controlling tool of the social order.[529] This corresponds with Marx's view of history as a simultaneous

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527 Latour 1997, 13; Wagner 1981, 87–88. On modern conceptions regarding the relations between nature and culture, see Bauman 1973, 7–8, 37; Bauman 1978, 195–196; Latour 1997, 29–32; Taylor 2004, 38–48 and Wagner 1994, 40–41. Taylor writes: "Civility was not a natural condition of human beings, nor was it easily attained. It required great efforts of discipline, the taming of raw nature. The child embodies the 'natural' condition of lawlessness and has to be made over." Taylor 2004, 39. Wagner emphasizes the same characteristics in this particular idea of culture when he defines it as "man's general control, refinement and improvement of himself". Wagner 1981, 21.

528 For this kind of view of culture by Fromm, see, for example Fromm 1951.

529 See Bauman 1999, xvi.

process of "ascent" (man's increasing control over nature) and "descent" (man's increasing alienation), heading towards a decisive crisis and ending either in salvation or ultimate destruction.[530]

As a subnarrative to this universal story about the growth of man in history, Fromm presents another narrative of the struggle between patriarchal and matriarchal forms of society. Metaphors of fatherly and motherly rule serve as additional figurations of the grand narrative, introducing new meanings and associations to the main plotline. Fromm's use of the concepts was inspired by a controversial Swiss anthropologist J. J. Bachofen (1815–1887), who argued in his *Mutterrecht* (1861) that early human societies were organized according to the matriarchal principle, which implied the rule of women in society: "Bachofen came to the conclusion that the supremacy of women had found its expression not only in the sphere of social and family organization but also in religion". Gradually matriarchy was replaced by patriarchal forms of power, and the significance of women in society was downplayed. In religion the shift from matriarchy to patriarchy was reflected in the adaptation of male gods as the object of worship, while the worship of fertility goddesses declined. However for Bachofen matriarchy and patriarchy also represented more fundamental social and moral principles. In Bachofen's theory matriarchal cultures are characterized by blood bonds, close connection with nature, compassion, mercy, love, equality and the acceptance of everything that is natural. Patriarchal cultures, in turn, are characterized by emphasis on law and order, rationality and the manipulation of nature according to human needs. In matriarchal cultures love is never earned, but belongs as a birth right to everyone since all human beings are children of Mother Nature. The purpose of matriarchal cultures is the happiness and wellbeing of every individual. Patriarchal cultures consider obedience towards man-made rules as a primary virtue and love is earned only by following carefully certain social rules and norms. Even though the shift from matriarchy to patriarchy can be seen as a step forward in the broader narrative of man's growth, at the same time it also necessitated the repression of certain invaluable features of matriarchy.[531]

Just as an infant is "attached" to its mother, mankind's infancy too is characterized by close unity with nature. This is a reflection of the economic forms of early human societies: for hunter gatherer societies close connection with nature was a material necessity. Later on, idols and statues of goddesses are not only manifestation of improved artisan skills, but indicated also man's

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530 This interpretation of Marx's narrative of mankind's history is made by White. See White 1973, 286–287.

531 Fromm 1951, 205–210; Fromm 1955a, 42–47; Fromm 1970, 110–135; Fromm 1976, 145; Fromm 1995, 42. On Fromm's discussion of matriarchy and patriarchy, see especially the section "Mother Right and Male Creation" in Fromm 1997, 3–90. Fromm acknowledges the critique towards the historical validity of Bachofen's thesis. Fromm, however, notes that this critique doesn't invalidate the fact that Bachofen was first to discover the existence of matriarchally ruled cultures and to succeeded in showing how such cultures differed from cultures in which the patriarchal principle was dominant.

growing awareness of his own powers. As the adaptation of agriculture and the emergence of city development gives rise to social specialization and division of labour, ideas like reason, order and planning are gradually given a decisive role in society. Patriarchal rule ushered in the development of rationality, individuality and conscience, but this was simultaneously accompanied by the rule of laws and hierarchies over the individual. The one-sided emphasis on the patriarchal principle in society and culture corresponded with both Protestantism in religion and the rising capitalist ethic in the economy: "The patriarchic complex – in which fulfillment of duty and success are major driving forces of life, while pleasure and happiness play a secondary role – represents one of the most powerful productive forces behind the enormous economic and cultural efforts of capitalism". Under patriarchal rule movements like socialism kept the matriarchal traditions alive and formed a counterbalance to the one-sided emphasis on patriarchy. Fromm wasn't, however, suggesting that a return to matriarchy would solve the crisis created by the patricentric complex. For example, he considered the incestuous fixation with blood and soil as a manifestation of matriarchal wish to escape from the unbearable burden of freedom in the hope of regaining the lost certainty. Likewise, negative aspects of both matriarchy and patriarchy coincided in movements like Nazism and Stalinism: passive submission and authoritarian discipline formed a dangerous synthesis with notorious consequences. Progressive political movements, however, aimed at a balanced synthesis between the positive elements of both principles.[532]

The ideas of matriarchy and patriarchy have played a pivotal role in the relation of Western cultures to the "exotic" non-European cultures. Stereotypes attached to the images of fatherly and motherly rule, as represented above, were carried out and materialized in the struggle between "Western Civilization" and "wild natives". This implied the utilization of sexual metaphors in the understanding of the relation between the "cultured" and the "exotic". Thus colonialists for example, were seen to embody the patriarchal virtues of power, reason and domination, while the natives were often seen through the conventional image of natural and submissive femininity. In a famous 17th Century engraving, by Jan van Straet, Americo Vespucci is depicted as standing next to a naked native woman, brandishing a cross and a banner of Spanish Catholic majesty in his left hand and a navigation tool (a symbol of European knowledge) in his right. Vespucci is seen as representative of ultimate power. In patriarchally dominated European cultures, femininity was often considered as an allegory of the New World; this figuration helped in justifying the domination of the natives – by force if necessary. The analogy was clear: in

532 Fromm 1955a, 42–56; Fromm 1956a, 51–55; Fromm 1970, 110–135; Fromm 1976, 145–146; Fromm 1995, 39–42; Fromm 1997, 34, 38–41.

their colonization politics European conquerors were merely carrying out the family privileges of the male ruler.[533]

Touraine sees similar elements in de Sade's depiction of modernity as sexual domination: "Sade's *Juliette* provides the model of modern society: woman-nature is dominated by a man-reason who has forsaken love for *jouissance*, and whose goals are purely instrumental".[534] In Fromm a similar critique is carried out through the concepts of patriarchy and matriarchy. Fromm argues that modern societies have forsaken the matriarchal principles of love, equality and reverence of life in their worship of patriarchal reason, instrumentality and hierarchy. From this perspective, too, Protestantism and (early) capitalism form a matching pair in their equal emphasis on law, discipline and order. Thus Fromm's critique of patriarchalism is not limited to authoritarian movements like Fascism but extends to the critique of the whole idea of reason and civilization. This critique against the modern patriarchal conception of reason is illuminated aptly by Bauman.

> "*The raw existence, the existence free of intervention, the unordered existence, or the fringe of ordered existence, become now nature: something singularly unfit for human habitat – something not to be trusted and not to be left to its own devices, something to be mastered, subordinated, remade so as to be readjusted to human needs. Something to be held in check, restrained and contained, lifted from the state of shapelessness and given form – by effort and by force.*"[535]

In this scheme, patriarchal reason and civilization is justified metaphorically with a reference to its function of perfecting the potentialities inherent in the feminine nature. This idea is given full and explicit illustration by Catherine Breillat in her film *Anatomie de l'enfer* (2004), which presents several references to symbols of patriarchal domination: the masculine desire to see, examine and control, the jealousy of the male against women who are able to bleed without inflicting a wound, the unconscious and overt antagonism between men and women, violence, sexuality as an arena of domination, the ocean-like qualities of femininity and female genitalia etc.

George Lakoff's discussion of the political significance of sexual metaphors offers a further demonstration of the continuing sociocultural relevance of the images of patriarchy and matriarchy. In his *Moral Politics* Lakoff refers to two basic modes of politics, which he dubs "the strict father model" and "the nurturant parent model". In Lakoff's analysis of the American

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533 See Hall, Stuart, "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power". In *Formations of Modernity*. Ed. Stuart Hall & Bram Gieben. Polity Press & Open University, Cambridge 1992, 302–303.

534 Touraine 1995, 154. Hakim Bey refers to the same element in de Sade's work in his critique of surrealism: "The surrealists disgraced themselves by selling amour fou to the ghost-machine of Abstraction – they sought in their unconsciousness only power over others, & in this they followed de Sade (who wanted 'freedom' only for grown-up whitemen to eviscerate women & children)." Hakim Bey, *TAZ. The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism.* Autonomedia, Brooklyn 2003, 7.

535 Bauman 1995, 7.

politics both conservatives and liberals utilize family metaphors, although from a different angle. The conservative strict father model, on the one hand, assumes that citizens (i.e. children) need to be disciplined so that they will grow up to be individuals who are capable of taking care of themselves. When citizens have matured, government should stay out of their lives. The liberal nurturant parent model, on the other hand, sees the role of government (parents) differently: its role is to keep the essentially good citizens away from corrupting influences (social injustice, poverty, pollution etc.).[536] What Lakoff attempts to show is that sexual metaphors have retained their appeal in politics. Even though times have changed from Fromm's time and references to sexuality in politics have become more implicit and discreet, the figurative power of dualist sex politics is still evident.

I now propose to consider the significance of metaphors of patriarchy and matriarchy for Fromm's understanding of modernity by examining a painting, *Die Hoffnung* (1903) by Gustav Klimt. The painting displays a fully naked pregnant woman surrounded by grotesque male figures. Her hair is decorated by small flowers; but above her head looms a human skull. Despite the images of death around her, the woman keeps her hands confidently on her chest and looks straight at the spectator. Klimt's painting caused a major stir in the rigid Victorian high society of Vienna and the authorities banned it from being exhibited. When it was finally exhibited in a gallery, it had to be closed behind double doors. The painting reflects its *fin-de-siècle* context with its reference to a dual image of disappointment and hope, and life and decadence, but the complex nature of Klimt's work begs for a more daring interpretation, in which the painting is seen as emblematic of a much wider dialectic of modernity. First of all, what is evident in the painting is the explicit dualism between masculinity and femininity: the pregnant woman embodies hope, the grimacing male faces decay and death. This antagonism between life and death corresponds with Fromm's formulation of conflicting principles of biophilia and necrophilia. The tragedy of modernity lies in the notion that regeneration must occur in a sociocultural context of alienation and the worship of death. Positive aspects of the patriarchal principle can be unearthed only if it is tempered with matriarchal influences. Only the full awareness of suffering can bring about a radical change. Paradoxically, the deepest despair contains the seed of true hope. In this line of interpretation, despite the undeniable presence of suffering all around us, modern culture is not sterile and frigid, but "pregnant with possibilities", as Fromm insisted. No wonder that the woman of the painting was characterized as "a priestess of modern man" and "a creator of new humanity" by the critic Arthur Roessler, when the painting was finally exhibited at Vienna in 1909.[537]

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536 See Lakoff, George, *Moral Politics. How Liberals and Conservatives Think.* The Chicago University Press, Chicago 2002, 65–140.

537 Dobai, Johannes, "Gustav Klimt's 'Hope I'". The National Gallery of Canada Bulletin 17, 1971. http://www.gallery.ca/bulletin/num17/dobai1.html. 25.2.2010; Fromm

To be clear, Fromm never advocated a return to matriarchy, a view which is indicated by, for example, his critique of certain "neo-matriarchal features" he recognized in the emerging counterculture of the 1960s. For him the close-knit group takes the place of mother in giving security and comfort. The passive-receptive attitude which corresponds with the matriarchal principle is indicated, according to Fromm, in the obsession with drugs. Spontaneity, physical closeness, sex, immediate satisfaction and the constant need for company also point to this direction. Fromm sees this new matriarchalism as a mere negation of patriarchalism and as a regression to an infantile pattern.[538] All in all, Fromm was discontented that the struggle against oppressive patriarchal authority had taken the form of regressive matriarchy: "A viable and progressive solution lies only in a new synthesis of the opposites, one in which the opposition between mercy and justice is replaced by union of the two on a higher level." This was Bachofen's stance as well. For Fromm, the failure of the counterculture to achieve this synthesis was perhaps one of the main reasons why it couldn't stand against the pressure of mainstream culture and was eventually overpowered by it.[539]

Fromm's conviction regarding the impossibility of return to an earlier stage of development implied also that he had to deal with one of the central features of modern culture, namely the idea of *individuality*. Fromm argued that the rise of modernity opened up a possibility for mankind to reach a new kind of universalism through the full development of individuality and particularity. Here Fromm concurs with the general approach among the New Left regarding the significance of both community *and* individuality. As Denbo writes, characterizing this radical stance of the 1960s, community is not "maintained at the sacrifice of individuality but rather is a community that would allow true individuality; that is to say, an individuality that can be expressed because of the security of community and that is not based on material possessions". Fromm asserts that neglecting the value and importance of this new kind of subjectivity results inevitably in various social pathologies: "Any regression today from freedom into artificial rootedness in state or race is a sign of mental illness, since such regression does not correspond to the state of evolution

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1947, 186–187. On *fin-de-siècle* fascination with the images of life and decadence, see especially Burrow 2000, 181–190.

538 See, for example Fromm 1997, 88–89 and Fromm, Erich, Letter to Lewis Mumford, 8.12.1968; Fromm, Erich, The Myth of the Paradise. Lecture given at New York, 1968 (audio). Here Fromm directs his criticism to Herbert Marcuse. He claims that Marcuse is a spokesman for this infantile regression and merely tries to make it more attractive by using revolutionary rhetoric. Furthermore, Fromm points out that as sex itself has become an article of consumption, Marcuse's notions about liberating sexuality amount virtually to nothing. It is open to question how accurate this criticism is. As a side note it can be said that Fromm seemed to have no idea that Marcuse referred to the same obsession with consumption with his concept of "repressive desublimation", for example. See, Marcuse 2002, 59–86.

539 Fromm 1970, 102–107; Fromm 1995, 42; Fromm 1997, 5, 13–14. See also Fromm's letter to Lewis Mumford from 1970, where he refers to a "saddening experience" of meeting some young radicals and hippies. Fromm, Erich, Letter to Lewis Mumford, 5.2.1970.

already reached and results in unquestionably pathological phenomena". There is simply no way to avoid the developments of modernity. Here Fromm follows the 19th Century tradition of German Idealism, as becomes evident from his characterization of Goethe's thought: "The goal of life, to Goethe, was to develop through individuality to universality".[540] In his last interview from 1980, Fromm gave even more explicit characterization of this same idea by noting that the challenge of human life is essentially about avoiding both extremes of narcissistic isolation and mass conformity.[541]

The same potential of subjectivity is underlined also by Touraine, who opposes the idea of modernity as an iron cage of instrumental rationality. To replace this image, Touraine proposes another conception of modernity, in which reason and the subject are seen in a dialectical relationship with each other.[542] The rise of modern subjectivity and its potential to reorganize social life is recognized by Taylor, as well. In general, the argument shared by all these theorists is that modernity cannot afford to neglect the emergence of radical subjectivity. Any attempt to resolve the various crises plaguing modernity must deal with it in one way or another. This idea, shared by Fromm too, regarding the dialectic relationship between particularity and universality, is given a poetic representation by Wallace Stevens: "The world about us would be desolate except for the world within us".[543] The Freudo-Marxist and Frommian analogy linking ontogenesis (individual growth) with phylogenesis (development of man) comes full circle with the recognition that the need for a radical social change must be articulated through the perspective opened up by the emergence of radical subjectivity. Taylor gives this idea a lucid expression.

> "*If authenticity is being true to ourselves, is recovering our 'sentiment de l'existence', then perhaps we can only achieve it integrally if we recognize that this sentiment connects us to a wider whole. It was perhaps not an accident that in the Romantic period the self-feeling and the feeling of belonging to nature were linked. Perhaps the loss of a sense of belonging through publicly defined order needs to be compensated by a stronger, more inner sense of linkage. Perhaps this is what a great deal of modern poetry has been trying to articulate; and perhaps we need few things more today than such articulation.*"[544]

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540 Denbo 1975, 217; Fromm 1955a, 70; Fromm 1994a, 68. Funk, too, notes Fromm's attempt at a synthesis of individuality and universalism: "The experience of the ONE is possible only when man renounces all heteronomous influences, negates his dependencies, and thereby becomes aware of his own true, inner self". Funk 1982, 234. On German Idealism and its emphasis on the idea of the free development of human potentialities, see Jameson 2006, 55.

541 See Fromm 1980b, 30. Habermas underlines the same ideal in Schiller, who considered aesthetics as a "mediator" in creating a society which harmonizes man's relation to himself and to others. For Schiller, individualist isolation and conformist mass society were both distortions of intersubjectivity, as Habermas writes. See Habermas 1987, 49–50. This point serves as another illustration of the importance of German Idealism on Fromm's thought.

542 Touraine 1995, 1–6, 371–375.

543 Taylor 2002, 447–455, 480–482, 490–493. Stevens quoted from Taylor 2002, 493.

544 Taylor 2000, 91.

7.2 The City of Being. Fromm's Judeo-Marxist Messianism

After man is estranged from nature he is confronted with the choice of either regressing to a secondary unity with nature or seeking a new unity through the development of human culture. In Fromm's view, culture is characterized by endless struggle, with downward forces pushing mankind back to infantility and upward forces trying to lift it towards a messianistic utopia as envisioned by religious and social revolutionaries. The failure in growth results in repressive and destructive social forms and leads inevitably to suffering. However, if man succeeds in overcoming the material manifestations of decay and necrophilia – such as the modern capitalist society of having – there will be a moment of great decision, of *Kairos*, which will open a path towards a radically different social and cultural reality. What Fromm stresses throughout his work is that we are facing this crisis right now – it is an imminent reality. We must wake up and deal with it. As Schaar notes, this crisis awareness constitutes the basis of all utopianism: "The starting point of utopian thought is the conviction that man has reached a point in the historical journey where the ascending trail, once so broad and smooth, has abruptly narrowed to a thin ledge and come to a dead end above an abyss". Because of the magnitude of the crisis a leap to a new mode of life – to utopia – is needed.[545] Fromm, as a utopian realist, was certainly advocating such a leap, as the subsequent analysis will show.

In a crisis situation utopian rhetorical acts have various important functions. To begin with, an appeal to utopianism introduces a visible contrast between the present crisis and the utopian vision by positioning the suffering to the present and fulfilment into the future. "A leap to a new mode of life" presupposes a rupture, a definitive break with the past and its repressive features. However, as Bauman points out, utopias have more than this to offer. First, by relativizing the present and by exposing its fundamentally artificial nature, utopias constitute a break with historical continuity. In his formulation of "awake utopianism" Fromm specifically tried to undermine the kind of realism which takes the current state of affairs as granted. Utopias provoke a critical assessment of the status quo. Secondly, utopias explore "the possible extrapolations of the present". This notion is important from the standpoint of Fromm's work which can be seen, essentially, as an attempt at a reinvigoration of modernity through a critical re-evaluation of its subversive potentialities. Thirdly, utopias constitute a counter-narrative to conventional narratives on the prospects of change. Fromm's utopian vision constitutes a potential continuation of his grand narrative of the growth of man in history. The prophetic element is evident here: if the audience heeds the prophetic message, the tragedy of modernity can be transfigured into a story of salvation. The order-building function of all utopias is recognizable also in Fromm's

545 Schaar 1961, 239–240.

utopianism. It is hard to deny that the vision of the sane society formed a striking contrast to Fromm's depiction of the sick society of his time. Unlike in the writings of various other utopians, the notion of order, however, never became an obsession in Fromm's work. In fact, the libertarian aspect of his thought implied that the particular kind of utopianism advocated by Fromm constituted a definitive dismissal of the hierarchical and authoritarian rhetoric of law and order – cherished in America not by utopian leftist radicals, but by Republicans and free-market ideologues such as Richard Nixon.[546]

This more or less abstract discussion of utopianism in general must be complemented with the analysis of the unique and particular features of Fromm's utopia. Indeed it is impossible to understand fully the utopian aspects of Fromm's thought without an adequate analysis of his fascination with the myth of *messianic time*. When Fromm was asked in an interview in 1977 how does his "faith" differ from that of the prophet Isaiah, he answered that no difference exists. Fromm stressed the importance of the idea of messianic time for his thinking and even added that the awaiting of the Messiah had a deeply personal significance for him.[547] This prophetic vision of the "totally other" constituted the core of his social utopia. At first glance it seems difficult to understand why a Freudo-Marxist radical would espouse a mystifying vision of salvation – even if we consider Fromm's "medieval" upbringing in the Orthodox-Jewish community of Frankfurt. Wiggershaus, for example, sees Fromm's later fascination with messianism as a form of escape from his rigorous view of the intensity and pervasiveness of social determination: "With views such as these, it was only a matter of time before someone like Fromm, who was convinced that fulfilment in life was possible for everyone, turned resolutely towards a messianic humanism which offered an ever-present escape from the endless chain of being and consciousness".[548] Since this seemingly puzzling synthesis of religious tradition and radical social thought forms the basis for Fromm's social utopia, it deserves a full discussion here.

In Fromm's secular reinterpretation the idea of messianic time loses its otherworldly characteristics and becomes a completely thisworldly narrative about salvation of man in history. For Fromm, too, messianic time is about newfound harmony between man and world. The peace which characterizes it doesn't imply merely the absence of war, but the overcoming of alienation and separatedness. Fromm stresses that this vision of converting "swords to ploughshares" constituted the essence of the teachings of the Old Testament prophets like Isaiah, Micah and Amos.

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546 See Bauman 1976, 12–17 and Pietikäinen 2007, 7–12 for a discussion on the central features of utopianism. On the obsession with order building in utopianism, see Bauman 1976, 28–33. Bauman also contends that utopias exert enormous influence on the actual course of historical events. In the case of Fromm's utopianism, it is of course hard to determine whether this holds true or not, since his vision of libertarian or radical-humanist socialism remains unfulfilled.

547 From an interview by Alfred A. Häsler. Quoted from Lundgren 1998, 143. See also Fromm, Erich, The Myth of the Paradise. Lecture given at New York, 1968 (audio).

548 Wiggershaus 1995, 60.

> *"To sum up, the prophetic idea of peace is part of the prophets' whole historical and religious concept which culminates in their idea of the Messianic time; peace between man and man and between man and nature is more than absence of strife; it is the accomplishment of true harmony and union; it is the experience of 'at-onement' with the world and within oneself; it is the end of alienation, the return of man to himself."*[549]

Fromm sees the Jewish tradition of the Sabbath in the light of the idea of messianic time. For Fromm, the Sabbath symbolizes perfect harmony not only between man and man but also between man and nature. The Sabbath is essentially about the anticipation of messianic time; and for this reason messianic time is sometimes called a continuous Sabbath. However, in addition to this, it is also an actually existing predecessor of messianic time, a day of joy and pleasure: "Eating, drinking, singing, sexual intercourse, in addition to studying the Scriptures and later religious writings, have characterized the Jewish celebration of Sabbath throughout the last two thousand years". The significance given to Sabbath in the Jewish tradition reflects the Jewish attitude towards work. Even though Judaism has conventionally seen work "as something good that no-one should withdraw from without good reason", as Lundgren writes, it has also considered work not as "an end in itself but a means to earn one's living." All in all, for Fromm, Sabbath is an indication that a radical change in man's orientation and consciousness is possible: "On the Shabbat one lives as if one *has* nothing, pursuing no aim except *being* … ".[550]

Since the idea of a messianic time posits a paradisiacal state of salvation to the near or not-so-near future, it can also be seen as response or compensation to the existence of man-made suffering in the world. Fromm, however, is careful in pointing out that even though the idea of messianic time shares certain features with the Judeo-Christian vision of paradise, the two cannot be identified with each other. Fromm emphasizes the difference between the two and states that a misunderstanding on this issue would have serious consequences. The coming of a messianic time doesn't mean a return to a previous stage of development.[551]

> *"There is a dialectic relationship between Paradise and the messianic time. Paradise is the golden age of the past, as many legends in other cultures also see it. The messianic time is the golden age of the future. The two ages are the same, inasmuch as they are a state of harmony. They are different, inasmuch as the first state of harmony existed only by virtue of man's not yet having been born, while the new state of harmony exists as a result of man's having been fully born. The messianic time is the return to innocence, and at the same time it is no return at all, because it is the goal toward which man strives after having lost his innocence."*[552]

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549 Fromm 1963a, 148. See, for example, a line from Exodus: "You shall not oppress a stranger; you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 23:9).

550 Fromm 1951, 241–249; Fromm 1966, 193–199; Fromm 1976, 50–51; Lundgren 1998, 83, 146–147.

551 Fromm 1966, 121–133; Fromm 1981, 17.

552 Fromm 1966, 123–124.

Here Fromm echoes the paradoxical idea – characteristic of modern Jewish messianism in general – regarding the synthesis between the past-oriented idea of restoration and the future-oriented idea of utopia. Löwy quotes Gershom Scholem: "The completely new order has elements of the completely old, but even this old order does not consist of the actual past; rather, it is a past transformed and transfigured in a dream brightened by the rays of utopianism".[553] As a mythic narrative messianic time essentially claims that the present suffering is not useless and absurd, but, in fact, a necessity that must be lived through so that new harmony and peace with the world can be attained. Given the long and painful history of anti-Semitism, we can understand it as myth with the function of giving the unnecessary miseries and discrimination transformative and emancipatory meaning. Suffering is not in vain if it is considered in its narrative context – as a single plot element in a wider story of salvation. The logic of antagonism, hierarchy and violence is undone through the figurative reconciliation of the messianic time.[554] For libertarian Jewish intellectuals like Fromm, the synthesis of the Jewish messianic tradition and the radical leftist or anarchist emancipatory tradition offered a way out of the discriminative and exclusive society characterized by market values and oppressive hierarchies.

In addition to this "spiritual" or "imaginary" reconciliation of suffering, Fromm believed that the prophetic vision of messianic time can usher a struggle also for a "material" or "thiswordly" reconciliation. Fromm distinguished between two historical conceptions regarding the genesis of messianic time. According to the first belief, messianic time is a human achievement, while the other belief holds that messianic time results after God's intervention in the world. Fromm's sympathies lie with the former interpretation, which emphasizes man's active role in the myth. While the latter belief was limited mainly to theological circles, the secular interpretation, on the other hand, found its expression in the French Enlightenment and also in German romanticism and socialism. Fromm argued that the idea of secular messianism had a substantial role in the emergence of modernity: "Modern society has started out with the vision of creating a culture which would fulfill man's needs; it has as its ideal the harmony between the individual and social needs, the end of the conflict between human nature and the social order".[555]

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553 See Löwy 1992, 16.

554 On the understanding of myth as an imaginary resolution of a real contradiction see Jameson 2006, 246, with special reference to Claude Lévi-Strauss' theories on myths.

555 Fromm 1955a, 227–229, 348–349; Fromm 1961a, 64–67; Fromm 1966, 133–152; Fromm 1968a, 18–20; Fromm 1976, 155–157; Fromm 1994a, 19–20, 139–148. On the thiswordly character of Fromm's messianism, see also Lundgren 1998, 143–144. Messianic elements in modern thought have been recognized by scholars too. Baumer, for example, stresses the influence of messianic ideas on 19th Century romanticism and radical thought. Figures like Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Victor Hugo and Percy Bysshe Shelley all shared the same conviction that man-made suffering could be overcome and that full human emancipation was possible. Shelley noted that to eradicate evil from the world nothing else would be needed than mankind's united wish to do so. See Baumer 1977, 292–294.

The emergence of the messianic time necessitated also a revolution in consciousness. This project of spiritual renewal had to proceed simultaneously on both the cultural and subjective level. In Fromm's interpretation the idea of *human revolution* constituted the essence of Marx's philosophy. Therefore overthrowing the alienating structures of capitalism on the socioeconomic sphere was a mere prerequisite for a more ambitious project: "But what constitutes the truly revolutionary character of Marx's ideas was the *human* revolution, the new phase in human life, a phase that would end prehistory and be the beginning of *human* history".[556] What distinguished Fromm from most Marxists is that he never attempted to downplay the theological aspects of Marx's philosophy of history, but instead discussed them explicitly and saw them as its "humanistic core".[557]

In his secular reinterpretation of the idea of messianic time Fromm developed further Freud's remark regarding the connection between the Marxist vision of socialism and the Jewish messianic tradition.[558] Marx's vision of a communist society implied the transformation of labour into self-activity, as Marx and Engels write in their *German Ideology*. In this context work is not merely a necessity, but has become a human need.[559] Instead of having to *toil* to maintain his livelihood, the worker would be able to express all his human powers in the work process. Thus, by referring to the idea of human revolution as the core of Marx's philosophy, Fromm was emphasizing the notion that such a revolution would answer to the existential needs of man, to his existence as a *species-being*. This becomes evident from a quotation from Marx's early work *On The Jewish Question*.

> "*Only when the real, individual man re-absorbs in himself the abstract citizen, and as an individual human being has become a* species-being *in his everyday life, in his particular work, and in his particular situation, only when man has recognized and organized his '*forces propres*' as* social *powers, and consequently no longer separates social power from himself in the shape of* political *power, only then will human emancipation have been accomplished.*"[560]

Fromm's Judeo-messianic vision was, however, not without parallels, as a careful contextualization shows. His utopianism should be seen as a part of the exceptional flourishing of the Judeo-Germanic culture at the beginning of the 20th Century. Löwy writes of these Jewish radicals and mystics: "Theirs was a generation of dreamers and utopians: they aspired to a radically other world, to

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556 Fromm 1955a, 335–344; Fromm 1962, 182; Fromm 1964a, 93; Fromm 1968a, 139–146; Fromm 1976, 133; Fromm 1994a, 144.

557 On the theological framework of Marx's philosophy of history, see Koselleck 2002, 20.

558 See Freud 1981g, 180.

559 Marx & Engels 1976b, 52.

560 Marx 1975a, 168. On Marx's messianism, see also Israel 1979, 66–67. Israel writes: "Two aspects can be differentiated in Marx's theory. One is the sociological-economical analysis of capitalist society. The other side is the development of a messianic vision concerning a future society which is characterized by man's mastery of nature, his own included."

the kingdom of God on earth, to a kingdom of the spirit, a kingdom of freedom, a kingdom of peace. An egalitarian community, libertarian socialism, anti-authoritarian rebellion and a permanent revolution of the spirit were their ideals." As Löwy points out, the "elective affinity" between Jewish messianism and revolutionary utopia emerged in a particular historical and cultural setting, during the first half of the 20th Century in a community of Central European Jewish intellectuals.[561]

Löwy stresses the idea of restoration as the core motive of the movement: the intense experience of exclusion, shared literally by all radical Jewish intellectuals and poets, gave birth to a shared attempt to envisage another kind of society, devoid of the discrimination and antagonism which characterized early 20th Century Central European societies. What Löwy's study reminds us is that it would be a gross mistake to accept Fromm fundamentally as a spokesman of the crisis of "modern man", which he claimed he was. Instead, we should see his work in relation to a more specific cultural context shared by various Jewish radicals and intellectuals at the beginning of the 20th Century in Central Europe. However this attempt at a contextualization is not meant as an invalidation of his view on modernity, but rather as a reminder of the limitations of its supposedly universal character.

Fromm also shared with other Jewish radicals of his time the conviction that if the repressive socioeconomic features of society would cease to obstruct the actualization of human potentialities, society would undergo a fundamental transformation. The opening of society to endless particularities implied the overcoming of atomistic separatedness, the creation of new collective rituals and art and the founding of new kind a sociability in which pseudoidentities and social roles are dispersed and individuals are finally free to interact with one another without fear of being abused or dominated by others. This paradoxical vision of new unity which doesn't necessitate the eradication of individual particularities in the rule of abstract totality, but is instead seen as their affirmation, forms the essence of the idea of *humanistic experience*. As Joachim Israel and others have noted, this synthesis of social and subjective emancipation was also at the heart of Marx's utopia. Bauman puts this idea aptly: "The 'I am responsible for the Other' and 'I am responsible for myself', come to mean the same thing". Similarly for Fromm, messianic time was essentially about the paradoxical idea of finding a unity through particularities.[562] This idea is reinforced by Fromm's humanist conviction that every person carries within himself all humanity.

> " *… the experience of humanism is that – as Terence expressed it – 'Nothing human is alien to me'; that I carry within myself all of humanity; that, in spite of the fact that there are no two individuals who are the same, the paradox exists that we all share in the same substance, in the same quality; that nothing which exists in any human being does not exist in myself. I*

561 Löwy 1992, 2, 21.

562 Bauman 1995, 236; Fromm 1955a, 335–344; Fromm 1962, 182; Fromm 1964a, 93; Fromm 1976, 133; Fromm 1994a, 144; Israel 1979, 67.

am the criminal and I am the saint. I am the child and I am the adult. I am the man who, provided we don't destroy the human race, will live a hundred thousand years from now."[563]

The overcoming of alienation and separatedness implies the creation of new unity based on the humanist ideal of *One Man* – as Fromm phrased it. However this unity necessitates a holistic view of the newfound harmony between man and world. Fromm claims that this idea was expressed by all major religions in their attempt to find an answer to the universal existential need of relatedness. The Christian concept of sin, for example, can be understood as the absence of a meaningful human relation with the world. Separation and alienation always call for a response – the vision of new harmony and peace is one of the possible answers to the human predicament. Here the fight against *social exclusion* plays a crucial role. Exclusion implies the dehumanization of the exiled person. A sane society doesn't force the individuals to choose between social and human isolation. However a person living in a sick society must choose between alienation resulting from an *inadequate* adaptation to the social status quo or alienation resulting from an *adequate* adaptation to the same status quo. Either way, the individual lives a precarious life, full of insecurities and frustrations. Thus if he is not able to overcome (or at least experiment with) the limitations of his social and cultural context, he is obstructed from achieving full humanity. The role of "techniques" like psychoanalysis and Zen here is in their function to induce derepression: the growing awareness of those universal human needs that a given society has repressed, because it sees no "utility" in them. This becomes evident in Fromm's characterization of the differences between rational and irrational rituals: "The rational differs from the irrational ritual primarily in its function; it does not *ward off* repressed impulses but *expresses* strivings which are recognized as valuable by the individual". As the fundamental dictum of Freudian psychoanalysis claims, these repressed wishes continue their existence regardless of rationalizations we use to hide or deny their existence.[564] A society which obstructs the spreading of universal love – a humanistic ideal of social inclusion and solidarity – must be overcome before a new unity of the messianic age can be attained.[565]

Fromm's vision of messianic time and universal constitutes a definitive refusal of the social reality which is plagued by discrimination and isolation. Keeping in mind Fromm's experience of multiple forms of strangerhood, a Freudian interpretation would depict his fascination with reconciliatory

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563 Fromm 1994a, s. 77. On the idea of a fundamental unity of mankind in Fromm's writing, see also Fromm 1964a, 193; Fromm 1966, 175–176; Fromm 1995, 86, 123.

564 Fromm 1947, 33–34, 110; Fromm 1950, 108; Fromm 1951, 24–47; Fromm 1955a, 336; Fromm 1961a, 19; Fromm 1962, 182–183; Fromm 1963a, 138–145, 193; Fromm 1964a, 117; Fromm 1966, 49; Fromm 1976, 105, 123–124; Fromm 1994a, 77–78; Fromm 1995, 122. Themes of repression and derepression are discussed by Fromm in full detail in Fromm 1960a, 95–113.

565 On Fromm's thoughts on the (both subjective and social) significance of love, see particularly Fromm 1941, 114–116; Fromm 1947, 71–75; 89–105; Fromm 1955a, 30–35; Fromm 1956a, 6–8, 14, 21–30, 36–49; Fromm 1959b; Fromm 1963a, 136; Fromm 1964a, 88; Fromm 1966, 22, 182–187; Fromm 1976, 44–47; Fromm 1981, 3; Fromm 1995, 112.

eschatological utopias as a fantasy, a compensatory fulfilment for the trauma of exclusion. Perhaps there is an element of truth in this. It is hard to deny that the experiences of growing up as a Jew in Germany and the later exile to America had a considerable influence on Fromm's work. Fromm recognized explicitly the element of consolidation in the ideas of messianic time and Sabbath by claiming that Jews could not have endured two millenniums of persecution and suffering without a vision of dignity and universal peace.[566] However it is another question whether we should jump to the conclusion that Fromm's utopia was nothing but an illustration of the process of acting out the trauma of exclusion by clinging to the nostalgic and reconciliatory notion of Being.

Overcoming alienation and isolation is an integral part of Fromm's messianic utopia. As long as man sees himself as separate from other people, he remains a stranger to himself too. Since identity is always created in relations, withdrawing from meaningful human relation with other people results in the loss of a meaningful human relation to myself. However Fromm's utopian vision of reconciliation requires that not only subjective narcissism but also *social narcissism* is overcome. The concept of social narcissism is another illustration of Fromm's method of utilizing the psychoanalytic understanding of the individual psyche in the understanding of social problems. A narcissistic person sees the world through an illusory and inflated idea of himself. Social narcissism, on the other hand, deifies the community and turns it into an idol, while the "evil" of the world is projected to strangers and outsiders. This kind of narcissism is much more difficult to perceive since it is often shared by the majority of the population. Here we see Fromm as a critic of the nationalist fervor of the Cold War. Indeed Fromm considers *nationalism* to be the most blatant form of social narcissism. He admits that while initially the idea of a unique character of every nation was a progressive one and went together with the affirmation of cosmopolitan universalism – each nation representing a variation of universal human possibilities – it was soon turned into an ideology of nationalism. This perversion of the original idea constitutes another example of modern idol worship and incestuous fixation with the blood and the soil. The alienated *citizen* who worships institutions and symbols is prepared to sacrifice himself for these abstract entities, but as an *individual* he is interested only in furthering his own cause. Thus, for Fromm, conscious adaptation of cosmopolitanism is the only solution that can end the misery of social narcissism: "The ability to act according to one's conscience depends on the degree to which one has transcended the limits of one's society and has become a citizen of the world".[567]

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566 Fromm 1966, 194.

567 Fromm 1955a, 56–59; Fromm, Erich, "Sane Thinking in Foreign Policy". In *Sane Comment*. Ed. Erich Fromm et al. National Committee for a Sane Policy, New York, (1961c). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1961e-e.pdf, 1; Fromm 1962, 138, 185–188; Fromm 1963a, 72; Fromm 1964a, 78–94; Fromm 1966, 184; Fromm 1981, 49, 76; Fromm 1994a, 62–64, 71–72, 78. Fromm stresses the cosmopolitanism of the Jewish tradition. In his interpretation its roots lie in the Old Testament itself. The first covenant is not made between Hebrews and God, but between mankind and God.

In praising the virtues of internationalism and warning his readers of the dangers of nationalism Fromm was espousing one of the basic ideas of Marxist socialism. In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels prophesied the birth of global world culture in the wake of colossal social changes implemented by the emerging bourgeoisie. From Marxist perspective nationalism is just another mystification to hide the motives and realities of power, as Bauman notes: "State-promoted national culture proved to be a weak protection against the commercialization of cultural goods and the erosion of all values except those of seductive power, profitability and competitiveness."[568]

The Jewish perspective – born out of the experience of living in the Diaspora – fits in this picture perfectly. As Touraine writes, anti-Semitic French and German nationalism saw a growing threat in the cosmopolitan culture of the "emancipated Jew who was identified with the universalism of science, trade and art". Bauman links the exclusion and discrimination suffered by the Jews to the order-building practices of modern nation states. Nationalism relies on the idea of a perfect imaginary community and the eradication of ambivalence at any price: "The state-enforced homogeneity is the *practice* of nationalist *ideology*". Modern nation state German Jews constituted a serious challenge to this ideology by threatening the spotless order of national unity and racial purity.[569]

What is interesting in Bauman's interpretation regarding Fromm's universalism is that Bauman sees the inclination of Jews towards universal values and goals like such as truth, science, rationality etc. as springing from their existential predicament as the waste of modernity. By clinging to the emerging modern universalism, Jews could cast off their own particularity which had been the cause of their oppression. Many radical Jewish thinkers embraced the universalist ideals of Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Kant and Herder with the same fervor which characterized their approach to Jewish religious authorities. Löwy contends that this groups of radicals and outsiders rediscovered the Jewish heritage through the mediation of German neo-romanticism: "Consequently, the Jewish religious heritage was seen through a grid of romantic interpretation which favoured its non-rational and non-

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568 The strong emphasis on the value and uniqueness of Jewish tradition is counterbalanced by strong universalist leanings, expressed for the first time in prophetic writings and again during the 19th Century. See Fromm 1966, 25–26, 81–85. Bauman 1999, xxxix; Berman 1988, 123–124; Marx & Engels 1976a, 488. Peter Wagner notes that nationalism and cosmopolitanism are both imaginary cultural artifacts, which encourage collective action by persuading people to "act together" (the perspective of solidarity) or "be acted upon" (the perspective of power). See Wagner 1994, 50. To add this notion by Wagner, the difference between nationalist and cosmopolitan representations lies in the fact that they narrativize social and cultural reality from a fundamentally different perspective. The nationalist narrative relies principally on exclusion, while the cosmopolitan narrative strives towards inclusive figurations.

569 Bauman 1995, 63–65, 104–107; Touraine 1995, 138. Burrow agrees on Bauman's interpretation of nationalism as an attempt to revitalize the lost sense of community by resorting to a holistic, organic and hierarchical conception of society. See Burrow 2000, 137.

institutional dimension, its mystical, explosive, apocalyptic, 'anti-bourgeois' aspects … ". All in all, there was a curious tension between Jewish particularism and cosmopolitan universalism among the writings of these young Jewish radicals. This aspect is evident in Fromm's work too. In Germany the newborn universalism was countered by the rising nationalist movement, which emphasized German collective identity instead of cosmopolitan ideals of solidarity and equality. Some Jews, including young Fromm, sought refuge in Zionism. Fromm, however, soon gave up of his belief in Jewish nationalism and turned towards cosmopolitanism.[570]

Bauman's interpretation regarding the motives and appeal of cosmopolitanism for German Jews seems to be supported also by Fromm's case. The universalist German thinkers Bauman associated with this view are often quoted also by Fromm. Goethe, "the great lover of life", as Fromm called him, had a special significance for his thought. For Fromm, the relation between the Germans and the Jews was characterized by unusual productivity and creativeness for almost two centuries, as the example of three Jewish "geniuses", Marx, Freud and Einstein, indicated. On the one hand, the absence of power was an incentive to scientific and artistic pursuits, but on the other hand, it laid the foundations for the rise of National Socialism, which severed the relation of the Germans and the Jews decisively. However, for this brief period of time Jewish particularity led the way towards universalism, as Bauman's words on Franz Kafka suggest: "Once again, Jewish particularity turned into modern universality".[571]

Fromm's idea of new universalism – or his vision of *One Man* – can be seen as an attempt at a figurative solution to the modern crisis of meaning. In this line of interpretation the uncertainty and ambivalence of modernity – mediated in Fromm's case through his particular experience of alienation and exclusion as a Jewish intellectual – was countered in Fromm's work by an appeal to the humanist core of Jewish tradition and to the cohesive power of the metaphor of unity. In the midst of exclusive social practices and the relativization of meanings Fromm gives his audience this message of Oneness and unity, which seems to bring everything back together. In this sense we can understand Fromm's universalist and cosmopolitan vision of peace as an effort to highlight certain potentialities in modernity and to support their actualization. After all, modern liberal society had, despite all its discriminatory and exclusive practices, provided the basis for the flourishing of a new radical Jewish intellectual culture. Löwy quotes Walter Laqueur's notion on Jewish radicals: "They gravitate towards the left because it was the party of reason, progress and freedom which had helped them to attain equal rights".[572]

Fromm's attempt at a utopian revitalization of the sense of community can be understood better perhaps by contrasting it with Ferdinand Tönnies' widely

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570 Bauman 1995, 124–126, 140, 143, 146–148; Löwy 1992, 26, 35. Young Fromm's brief episode of Zionism is discussed by Lundgren in Lundgren 1998, 106–115.

571 Bauman 1995, 184; Fromm 1976, 19; Fromm 1994a, 66–74; 105–110.

572 Löwy 1992, 37.

known and widely criticized distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. By *Gemeinschaft* Tönnies referred to close-knit and well integrated communities of the premodern era. These communities were characterized by emphasis on face-to-face relationships, religiosity, shared conventions and deep sense of community. By *Gesellschaft*, on the other hand, Tönnies referred to modern societies which are characterized by abstract contracts between individuals seeking their own good under institutions like the state, the company etc. Modern societies tend to emphasize individuality, but this comes at the price of instrumentalization. For Tönnies the city was a community of strangers, a place for people who were connected to each other only through their private interests.[573]

Similarities between Tönnies' dualism and Fromm's understanding of both premodern and modern are evident. The alienation and instrumentalization of human relations is at the heart of Fromm's critique of modernity, while the utopia he envisages shares many central features with Tönnies' understanding of *Gemeinschaft*, as becomes evident from Burrow's characterization of the concept.

> "*All these communal forms of life are characterized by lived, unselfconscious social experience, cherished for its own sake and regulated by custom and fellow-feeling; such experience absorbs the individual's whole existence. The community stands for use and enjoyment of things, not exchange and acquisition; everyday life is suffused by religious feeling in all its aspects, social and material, so that much love and attention is devoted to their beautification.*"[574]

However, there are also problems in associating Fromm's utopia with Tönnies' nostalgic yearnings of the *Gemeinschaft*.[575] First of all, as has already become evident, Fromm had no illusions of a return to the lost Golden Age of the past. The coming of the messianic time implied, paradoxically, a return to harmony and peace, and yet no return at all. Löwy succinctly expresses this ambivalent attitude of radical Jewish thinkers to the romantic notion of return to *Gemeinschaft*.

> " *… their romantic critique of industrial civilization does not seek the restoration pure and simple of pre-capitalist past – which, in their eyes, is impossible and undesirable – but rather, the advent of a new world (seen by most of the as a classless and stateless society), yet one which would contain certain social, cultural and human qualities of the former* Gemeinschaft."[576]

The new utopian sense of community could be attained only by "going through" modernity, not by denouncing it altogether. Thus, there is no New Society without New Man, without the radical affirmation of individuality.

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573 See, for example, Burrow 2000, 118–120; Stromberg 1986, 210. Here the point is not to advocate Tönnies' dualist conception of premodernity vs. modernity, but to use this dualism in opening a new perspective to the understanding of Fromm's utopianism.

574 Burrow 2000, 120.

575 On Tönnies' nostalgic view, see Burrow 2000, 119.

576 Löwy 1992, 203.

Fromm gives a metaphorically strong expression of this at the end of his *To Have or To Be?* where the poetical and mythical aspects of his narrative on modernity are explicitly present. In the hope of being saved from the Earthly City of Progress – a modern equivalent to the Tower of Babel – many resorted to deceptive temptations of nostalgia and return. However for Fromm this kind of regression can lead only to suffering. The only productive solution lies in the synthesis between the "lost paradise" of the imagined past and the emancipatory elements of modern culture.

> "*Later Medieval culture flourished because people followed the vision of the* City of God. *Modern society flourished because people were energized by the vision of the growth of the* Earthly City of Progress. *In our century, however, this vision has deteriorated to that of the* Tower of Babel, *which is now beginning to collapse and will ultimately bury everybody in its ruins. If the City of God and the Earthly City were* thesis, *and* antithesis, *a new* synthesis *is the only alternative to chaos: the synthesis between the spiritual core of the Late Medieval world and the development of rational thought and science since the Renaissance. This synthesis is* The City of Being."[577]

7.3 Atheistic Religiosity – Religious Atheism

Traditionally, and by its very definition, the idea of messianic time implies the anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. In his secularized interpretation of the myth, Fromm claimed that messianic time was the outcome of a collective effort of mankind, not a result of divine intervention. This, however, didn't mean that the mythical (or historical) figure of Messiah had no role in his thought. Indeed, for some it might come as a surprise that Fromm – being a Freudo-Marxist radical – held firm to the belief of a coming of the Messiah, even though for him the Messiah is not necessarily a theological or mythical figure, but a historical figure, a symbol of productivity and creativity: " … the messiah is by no means God, but utterly human, and that his coming is the result of the growing perfection of the people."[578]

> "*The Messiah is not the saviour. He is not sent by God in order to save the people or to change their corrupt substance. The messiah is a symbol of man's own achievement. When man has achieved union, when he is ready, the Messiah will appear. The Messiah is not the Son of God any more than every man is God's child: he is the anointed king who represents the new epoch of history.*"[579]

In the Jewish eschatological vision this redemptive power of the Messiah is expressed under the Hebraic concept of *Tikkun*, which points to the end of all

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577 Fromm 1976, 202.
578 Fromm 1966, 151.
579 Fromm 1963a, 144. In a letter to Clara Urquhart Fromm expresses the same sentiment: "The Jewish attitude always was that the arrival of the Messiah must mean universal peace and brotherhood. Since this has not happened, the Messiah can not have arrived." Fromm, Erich, Letter to Clara Urquhart, 10.1.1966.

things, and yet opens up a path to the new beginning.[580] Fromm's idea that the Messiah is merely a symbol for mankind's historical achievement was a common theme in early 20th Century Judeo-Germanic libertarianism: "Its messianism is distinguished by its strictly impersonal nature: it is concerned with the messianic era of the future, the accomplishment of the *Tikkun*, and hardly at all with the Messiah."[581] Fromm reinterprets this notion in Marxist humanist terms by seeing messianic time as the end of the prehistory of man and the beginning of the actual history of *man as man*. Wilde sees Fromm's fascination with the idea of the coming of the Messiah as potentially dangerous, since emphasis on such redemptive visions tends to divert our attention from real social struggles: "Any reliance on 'rescue' by an external force contradicts the commitment to self-emancipation and self-realization". It is easy to agree with Wilde's criticism, but also with his notion that this notion isn't at all typical of Fromm's whole work.[582]

However, these messianic beliefs constitute only one aspect in Fromm's attempt to deal with religious themes from a strictly thiswordly or secular perspective. In his *The Sane Society* (1955) he introduced the idea of a new world religion, which would represent a synthesis of various mystical and humanistic traditions from around the world. The emergence of this new syncretic religion would signal a further step in the process of mankind's growth. At the end of his *The Sane Society* Fromm gives the following characterization of this historical event.

> "*In fact, for those who see in the monotheistic religions only one of the stations in the evolution of the human race, it is not too far-fetched to believe that a new religion will develop within the next few hundred years, a religion which corresponds to the development of human race; the most important feature of such a religion would be its universalistic character, corresponding to the unification of mankind which is taking place in this epoch; it would embrace the humanist teachings common to all great religions of the East and the West; its doctrines would not contradict the rational insight of mankind today, and its emphasis would be on the practice of life, rather than on doctrinal beliefs. Such a religion would create new rituals and artistic forms of expression, conductive to the spirit of reverence toward life and the solidarity of man. Religion can, of course, not be invented. It will come into existence with the appearance of a new great teacher, just as they have appeared in previous centuries when time was ripe. In the meantime, those who believe in God should express their faith by living it; those who do not believe, by living the precepts of love and justice and – waiting.*"[583]

In his *Revolution of* Hope, published in 1968, Fromm had not only retained his belief in the coming of the Messiah, but proclaimed rather boldly that this historical event might already be at hand: "Such a personality has not appeared yet on today's horizon, although there is no reason to assume that he has not

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580 See Löwy 1992, 16.
581 Löwy 1992, 202.
582 See Wilde 2004, 54. Löwy makes a similar argument in regard to the whole movement of libertarian Jewish messianism: "Nothing is further from their spiritual approach than religious worship of a charismatic savior, prophet or millenarian hero." Löwy 1992, 202.
583 Fromm 1955a, 344. On the significance of rituals for Fromm, see also Fromm 1950, 111.

been born". However, to distinguish his stance from the idea emphasizing the passive anticipation of Messiah, Fromm added that mankind can't afford to wait for a new Moses or Buddha, but must cope with what it already has.[584]

One can only guess the reasons behind the change in Fromm's conviction at the end of the 1960s that the coming of the Messiah was significantly closer than he had previously believed. Undoubtedly, the emergence of 1960s counterculture had a considerable influence on his assessment regarding the possibilities for radical sociocultural change. In the Western world the 1950s was an era of economic growth and rampant conformity. These conditions left little room for social radicalism. Growing dissatisfaction with the Establishment during the 1960s created an atmosphere of change: social conventions became increasingly criticized and experiments with different lifestyles showed that the repressive morality of the capitalist-bureaucratic culture was not a natural necessity, but an artificial construction subject to choice. This does not mean that the counterculture of the 1960s constituted for Fromm the beginning of a transition towards New Society or the messianic age. However, to use Fromm's own metaphors, the rising dissatisfaction with the prevalent technocratic materialism indicated that changes in the socioeconomic conditions could transform the prevailing social character from cement into dynamite, which would then explode the whole system from within. Thus, for Fromm, the revolt of the young generation was a mere beginning of a more holistic project of social transformation. This included the emergence of new forms of humanistic religiosity.

It should be noted that Fromm's approach to religion changed dramatically twice during his life. First, there was the intimate connection with the Jewish tradition in his youth, which was followed by a Freudo-Marxist phase. The following quotation from this period shows that Fromm had agreed with the idea of religion as the opium for the people (Marx) or as the repetition of infantile dependency on the father (Freud): "To sum up, religion has a threefold function: for all mankind, consolation for the privations exacted by life; for the great majority of men, encouragement to accept emotionally their class situation; and for the ruling classes, relief from guilt feelings caused by the suffering of those whom they oppress". Later on Fromm's understanding of religion went through another transformation. Funk argues that this was primarily due to his dismissal of Freud's libido theory and his subsequent understanding of religiosity as an answer to man's existential needs.[585]

However the main distinction between Fromm's Freudo-Marxist understanding of religion and his later humanistic understanding has to do

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584 Fromm 1968a, 144.

585 Fromm 1963a, 14; Funk 1982, 102–104. See also Lundgren 1998, 17–18. Fromm's approach to religion as opium or neurosis was a brief one and lasted only few years. His re-evaluation of the significance of religion, in contrast, was a slow process and the role of religiosity became more and more important in his later books. On Fromm's critical approach to religions during the 1930s, see also Wiggershaus 1995, 57.

with the shift of emphasis from an institutional approach to experiential approach. Even in old age, Fromm held firm to the Marxist idea that institutionalized religions have played a major role in keeping the existing class relations intact; religions have played the game of secular powers.[586] However, the experiential reality behind dogmas and institutions reveals another kind of approach to religiosity, as Fromm's definition of religion from *To Have or To Be?* reveals: "To clarify, 'religion' as I use it here does not refer to a system that has necessarily to do with a concept of God or with idols or even to a system perceived as religion, but to *any group shared system of thought and action that offers the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion*." In modern industrialized countries, old forms of religiosity have been replaced by *industrial religion*, which deifies machines, profits, wealth, efficiency and power. Fromm claims that even though most people "believe" in God and consider themselves as Christians, experientially Christianity has no significance for their lives. Alienated religiosity gives no productive answers to fundamental human problems and compensates for this by focusing on mere *cerebration*, thinking the abstract religious concepts and not experiencing them. Despite the obvious incompatibilities between the Gospel and the capitalist ethos, priests – the gatekeepers of organized religions – quietly sanction the prevailing social order.[587]

In addition to the broad definition of religiosity given above, Fromm gives us a more precise definition of religious experience as *x-experience*.[588] Like any symbolization it can only point towards the richness of the actual experience. Funk writes: "X stands for the experience that underlies all the various conceptual and intellectual elaborations, an experience that, by its very definition, must remain free of all alienating determinations". Nevertheless, Fromm contends that the x-experience is characterized roughly by the following features: 1) an approach to life as a problem that demands an answer, 2) a coherent hierarchy of values, 3) the idea of man as an end in himself (this implies the refusal to turn man into a mere instrument) and the commitment to the never ending process of growth, 4) emancipation from the constraints of the ego and the attempt to create an active relationship with the world, and 5) transcendence in the sense of seeking an escape from the spiritual prison of narcissism and isolation. To these characteristics Fromm adds the fundamental

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586 On a similar idea, see Taylor 2004, 66. Taylor, however, argues that instead of being a mere pawn of secular powers Christianity has also attempted "to change and purify the power field of the world, make it more and more consonant with the demands of Christian spirituality". This stance seems reasonable considering the history of dialectical relationship between the religious and secular authorities. What remains open, however, is the strength and intensity of these conflicting influences.

587 Fromm 1950, 21; Fromm 1955a, 170–172; Fromm 1956a, 8, 81; Fromm 1960a, 108; Fromm 1976, 135–146; Fromm 1994a, 168–169.

588 Fromm lamented his inability to give a decent conceptualization for the experiential reality behind his understanding of "religious experience". He notes that "mental", "spiritual" and "religious" are all more or less problematic, and contends with the concept of x-experience, despite the fact that it sounds rather uninviting. See Fromm 1966, 57–62.

element of x-experience, which he sees as the core of the teachings of Socrates, Jesus and Buddha: the reverence for life – biophilia.[589]

Paradoxically, Fromm argues that during the modern era various anti-religious thinkers have been the strongest advocates for the sanctity of the x-experience. He claims that this has been due to the corruption of religious ideals into ideologies by priests and demagogues: "Religion as an organization and a profession of dogma was carried on in the churches; religion in the sense of religious fervor and living faith was largely carried on by the anti-religionists". Fromm interprets Marx's antireligious stance as a part of the struggle against the distorted and alienated forms of religiosity. A socialist society has no need for religion as a separate institution, since religious experiences have merged to the totality of life and are no longer expressed in a fragmented form. For Fromm, the negation of old forms of religiosity by the Enlightenment thinkers was based on a religious tradition of reason, liberty, justice and the dignity of man. They erred, however, by clinging to the debate regarding the concept of God. Instead of wasting their energies on futile disputes such as this, Fromm contends, they should have concentrated on criticizing religious authorities for their inability and unwillingness to live up to their ideals.[590]

Fromm's anti-dogmatic approach to religion is consistent with his advocacy of negative theology. Funk writes that Fromm's understanding of the historical concept of God was fundamentally a negative one in the sense that he believed the content of the concept was subject to continuous change. In *You Shall Be As Gods* Fromm argued that the evolution of the concept of God has corresponded with the growth of mankind throughout history. The original idea of Oneness, as manifested by the Old Testament depiction of God as the supreme patriarchal ruler, started to wane and was replaced by the idea of "constitutional monarchy" (after the covenant between man and God). Negative theology ushered in the development of the concept of God towards even more abstract forms. This was due to the conviction that no positive attribute of God could ever be given. Eventually God becomes a principle manifesting certain religious experiences. Lundgren puts this succinctly: "For Fromm God is a poetic word that symbolizes all that man is striving for". Fromm was convinced that in future this development would lead into a complete disappearance of theistic ideas. At the same time, he maintained that there was no reason for theists and non-theists to fight against each other – assuming of course that both were united in the struggle against idolatry and alienation.[591]

Indeed, at a first glance it seems rather strange that Fromm – as a Freudo-Marxist materialist – espouses religious ideals as potential instruments of

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589 Fromm 1966, 21, 56–62; Fromm 1976, 118–119; Fromm 1994a, 169; Fromm 1995, 17–18, 95–96; Funk 1982, 115.

590 Fromm 1955a, 227–228, 34 2–343; Fromm 1961a, 63–64; Fromm 1994a, 167. See also Lundgren 1998, 142.

591 Fromm 1955a, 343; Fromm 1956a, 56–57; Fromm 1966, 7, 61–62, 225–226; Funk 1982, 106–112; Lundgren 1998, 161.

emancipation. Furthermore, what should we expect to learn from such overinclusive definitions of religiosity, like the one given by Fromm, which leave everything open? It would be easy to dismiss his interest in religiosity as a remnant of his Orthodox Jewish past, as an inability to sever his ties with the tradition that seemed to give so much for him. To counter this interpretation, Fromm had already severed his ties with Orthodox Judaism before embarking on a new quest towards a formulation of humanistic (or atheistic) religiosity. Of course, one could always argue that perhaps Fromm simply set his religious commitments aside for a while because they did not fit in with the expectations of either psychoanalytic or Marxist establishments. Thus Fromm's later work could be seen as an attempt to bring together these antagonistic elements – Jewish tradition, Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxism. Be that as it may, I believe this line of interpretation leads us astray from the fundamental issue at stake here, which has to do with a metaphorical reworking of the meaning of religiosity.

To begin with, Fromm's affinity for religious metaphors could be used as a good example of the power of metaphor to hide certain aspects of religious experience and highlight others. Fromm's reinterpretation of religiosity is a huge attempt at a refiguration of the fundamental meanings of religion. This kind of reworking of existing traditions relies on the Marxist notion of immanent critique: contradictions and potentialities in the already existing sociocultural phenomena are used to open up radically new perspectives for emancipation. If, indeed, religion is at the center of society and culture (in the context of the Cold War America this notion perhaps still held relatively true), and thus exerts considerable influence on both subjective and social matters, why should a radical like Fromm who had an intimate experience of various aspects of religiosity leave this potential unused? To be precise, Fromm attempts an immensely ambitious act here. Ever heard of a person who argues that atheism could be religious? Or that God has nothing to do with religion? If Walter Benjamin was interested in winning the energies of intoxication for revolution, Fromm, in turn, was interested in winning the energies of consecration for revolution.[592]

This idea demands a closer look here. What are precisely the revolutionary elements Fromm recognized in religiosity? Needless to say, Fromm saw nothing particularly inviting in the alienated forms of main-stream religiosity. The radical potential was hidden in the prophetic writings of Isaiah, Hosea and Micah, in the teachings of mystics like Meister Eckhart, in the Chassidic Judaism and its emphasis on thiswordly joy, in the Zen search for *satori* through increasing mindfulness and awareness – all in all, in the margins of religious life. Undoubtedly, for Fromm, these kinds of religious traditions offered consolation in the sense that they evoked (at least in imagination) some of the

592 On Benjamin's notion regarding the importance of the energies of intoxication for revolution see Benjamin 1986, 189. The paradoxical concept of atheistic religiosity is spelled out explicitly by Fromm in Fromm 1994a, 133.

premodern sense of unity.[593] But even this nostalgic longing was not what Fromm essentially sought from religiosity.

Here we arrive at a pivotal point in Fromm's understanding of religion: his attempt at a reinterpretation of the ideas of *profane* and *holy* time.[594] Fromm does not express this explicitly in any of his writings, but the attempt becomes evident if we take a closer look at his persistent interest in religiosity and mysticism. Fromm argues that the revolutionary potential of religious or mystical ideas – the need for an articulate hierarchy of values, reverence for life, enhanced awareness of sensuality and perception etc. – should to be freed from the alienated idea of religion as a mere fragment of the totality of life. This is the essence of Fromm's struggle against alienation: to reclaim man's life from the rule of idols, which act as a filter between our perception and understanding of the world. In this sense, the ultimate purpose of Frommian mysticism and religiosity is to introduce some of the sense of wonder and exaltation characteristic of holy time to the profane time of everyday life.[595] This, however, is not merely a subjective undertaking, but has social and cultural implications as well: if a person takes these kinds of "religious" ideas seriously and follows them consistently, it is evident that they will eventually come into conflict with the technocratic, profit-seeking, alienating earthly powers steeped in instrumental rationality and the having mode, which deprive man of those very things which he holds most valuable. Fromm shies away from the idea of religion as consolation for the miseries of daily life and turns the whole setting upside down: now it is precisely religion which demands the eradication of socioeconomic conditions which make man suffer in the first place. In Nietzschean parlance: religion as affirmation of life and not as *ressentiment*. This is Fromm's message as a "religious-atheistic" writer.

To continue on the social implications of Fromm's attempt to refigurate the conventional meanings and associations of religiosity, he undertakes another bold attempt at a reinterpretation of the relations between the concepts of *traditions* and *revolution*. What Fromm essentially claims is that traditions and revolutions shouldn't be seen in an antagonistic relation to each other – that the idea of revolution doesn't imply an absolute rupture with the past. Here Fromm diverged from many 1960s radicals who saw the emerging counterculture as a definitive rupture with the past and its hierarchical commitments. True, Fromm felt no sympathy for the patriarchal-hierarchical society or the mainstream religious ideals that went along with it. However his understanding of revolution relies on the idea of the reinterpretation of traditions, not their complete dismissal. Here Fromm agrees with both Bauman's and Wagner's idea

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593 On this kind of approach to nostalgic notions of religion and its promise of unity, see Jameson 2006, 241–246.

594 This discussion draws from Wagner's musings between the "real" and "unreal" time and his subsequent critique of the Western fixation with measuring and spatializing time. See Wagner 1986, 81–95.

595 "One aspect of religious experience is the wondering, the marveling, the becoming aware of life and of one's own existence, and of the puzzling problem of one's relatedness to the world". Fromm 1950, 94.

of cultural change: conventions are metaphorically reinvented in an endless process of interpretation. Revolutionary changes require radical reinterpretations of the already existing socio-cultural fabric – they never come out of the blue. Thus, Fromm's advocacy of certain religious or mystical ideals is based on the conviction that these traditions contain certain revolutionary potential which can be used in creating new forms of life. Religious symbols thrive on such radical reinterpretations, as Gershom Scholem explicates: "The richness of meaning that they [religious symbols] seem to emanate lends new life to tradition, which is always in danger of freezing into dead forms – and this process continues until the symbols themselves die or change."[596]

From this perspective it comes as no surprise that for Fromm the real struggle is not waged between those who believe in God and those who do not, but among those who believe in life and liberty and those who do not. Symbolizations and conceptualizations are secondary in comparison with the experiences which give rise to them. Fromm contended that the question whether God was dead or not was misleading and should be replaced with the question whether man was dead or not. All in all, religion had a pivotal role in his project of the reinvigoration of everyday life. This becomes evident from the closing sentence of his *You Shall Be As Gods*: "What could take the place of religion in a world in which the concept of God may be dead but in which the experiential reality behind it must live?" In his unpublished manuscripts Fromm posed the same question in another form: "Is there a future for a new 'atheism', one that is deeply religious and opposed to the theistic idolatry that is dominant?"[597]

Fromm utilized the polar concepts of authoritarian and humanistic to distinguish negative forms of religiosity from its positive forms. Authoritarian religions emphasize obedience, duty and dogmas, while the role of the individual is to seek symbiosis with the all-giving authority. The loss of individuality and freedom is compensated for by the sense of purpose and security promised by the authority. These promises are, however, left unfulfilled and the submitting individual remains alienated and suffering. Humanistic religions, on the contrary, consider the growth, well-being, happiness and emancipation of the individual as their central purpose. To distinguish benign forms of religiosity from its malignant forms, Fromm suggests that we should take a look at how precisely a given religion is manifested in the lives of its followers and whether it makes man more alive or whether it pushes him further into alienation and idolatry. In Fromm's humanistic interpretation, faith in God – instead of being a repetition of

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596 Scholem, Gershom G., *On The Kabbalah and its Symbolism*. Schoken Books, New York 1965 (1960), 22.

597 Fromm 1950, 113–114; Fromm 1955a, 343; Fromm 1966, 53–54, 227–229; Fromm 1968a, 142; Fromm 1976, 139; Fromm 1994a, 133–139.

infantile dependencies towards the great transcendent father – becomes essentially faith in the principles which God represents.[598]

Since the idea of God as a symbol for mankind's spiritual aspirations is of pivotal importance for Fromm's secular understanding of religiosity, it needs to be elucidated here. The basic idea behind this interpretation is given by Fromm at the beginning of his book *You Shall Be As Gods*: "As we shall see, the more man unfolds, the more he frees himself from God's supremacy, and the more can he become like God". The process of "becoming like God" is carried out through mankind's history of growth. The whole idea has its roots in Fromm's reinterpretation of the Jewish tradition of negative theology. Since it is impossible to gain absolute knowledge of God, the emphasis is shifted from thinking about God to living according to the example of God. This principle of *Imitatio Dei* draws man closer to God, which implies that man is able to tap into the creative power assigned to God. However, to counter any hubristic pretensions, Fromm stressed that man can become *like* God, but he cannot become God. Fromm links the idea of imitating God with the Jewish tradition of *Halakha* (literally "the path"), which refers to a conviction in the Jewish religious law that one should live according to the example given by God.[599]

This emphasis on adopting a right mode of living – instead of wallowing on endless debates about what we should think or believe about God – constituted the basis for Fromm's interest in mysticism. In another attempt at a reinvention of the conventional relations between religiosity and reason, Fromm argued fervently against the traditional idea that reason and mysticism are fundamentally opposed to one another. Mysticism, he claims, is based on a rational conviction regarding the finite nature of our ability to understand the world: "It is the knowledge that we shall never 'grasp' the secret of man and of the universe, but that we can know, nevertheless, in the act of love". Fromm defined his position as "nontheistic mysticism". Ideas of unity and biophilia constitute the basis for his understanding of mysticism: "In the Eastern religions and in mysticism, the Love of God is an intense feeling experience of oneness, inseparably linked with the expression of this love in every act of living".[600]

To highlight the social significance of religiosity, however, Fromm notes that new forms of religiosity must create its own rituals and collective art. Fromm considers arts and rituals as the attempt to dramatize and *live through* the fundamental human existential problems which philosophy and theology have only sought to *understand*. Rituals and works of art have a crucial role in Fromm's utopian visions regarding the emergence of new kinds of religiosity: "For lack of a better word, I shall use 'collective art', meaning the same as ritual; it means *to respond to the world with our senses in a meaningful, skilled, productive,*

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598 Fromm 1950, 34–38; Fromm 1956a, 55–56; Fromm 1966, 54–56; Fromm 1985, 133–138. On humanistic and authoritarian religiosity in Fromm, see also Funk 1982, 104–106 and Lundgren 1998, 21–24.

599 Fromm 1963a, 34, 47, 68–69; Fromm 1966, 40, 24, 65, 67–70, 79, 179, 188.

600 Fromm 1956a, 25, 63; Fromm 1966, 19; Fromm 1968a, 144–145; Fromm 1994a, 159. See also Funk's excellent discussion on Fromm's mysticism in Funk 1982, 119–128.

active, shared way." Remnants of these kinds of rituals are expressed in an alienated form in sports events and spectacles. The problem lies in the contained and isolated nature of these experiences. True collective art is not about "leisure activity", but instead something which brings fragmented experiences together. Fromm considers the absence of collective arts and rituals a major cause of suffering and alienation in modern societies. Thus: "The transformation of an atomistic into a communitarian society depends on creating again the opportunity for people to sing together, walk together, dance together, admire together – together, and not, to use Riesman's succinct expression, as a member of a 'lonely crowd'".[601]

Fromm's synthesis of revolutionary Marxism and mysticism mirrors his dialectic understanding of subjective and social problems. This is reflected in his tendency to write about religion from different perspectives to different audiences. For example, in *Marx's Concept of Man* his perspective is strictly atheistic, while, on the other hand, in *You Shall Be As Gods*, he writes as a "Jewish" thinker (even though he explicitly admits his non-theistic standpoint). All in all, Fromm is one of the few figures in 20th Century intellectual life who tried to reinvigorate religiosity from an overtly atheistic perspective. His undertaking was based on the conviction regarding the primacy of religious experiences over dogmas and doctrines. For him the question regarding the existence of God is completely irrelevant. However, his affinity to certain forms of mystical religiosity was not merely a personal preference, but had its roots in his fundamental understanding regarding the loss of cultural meanings in modernity. Atheistic mysticism offered a way to bring the particular back in contact with the universal. This didn't indicate a return to the nostalgic and collective idea of "the great chain of being", but an attempt to create a new sense of community through radical affirmation of individuality.

7.4 Modernity, Crisis and Ambivalence

The disappearance of certainties constitutes one of the definitive features of the transition to modernity. In the sphere of religion the process of *secularization* led to the eroding of religious worldview and ecclesiastical authority; in the sphere of politics the process of *democratization* was ushered in by the downfall of the *ancien régime*; in the sphere of culture the process of *pluralization* or *individualization* has manifested in the weakening of the relatively uniform cultural conventions characterizing traditional societies. The immensely consequential and manifold concept of modernization – understood here as the process of the opening up of perspectives *and* as the process of the eradication of certainties – would be a hopelessly abstract one from an undialectical perspective. Here a reference to Frommian dialectic behind all emancipation

601 Fromm 1955a, 140–142, 338–341; Fromm 1968a, 76–77; Fromm 1981, 83; Fromm 2005, 3.

and change is apposite: the breaking of the chains which obstruct us from realizing our humanity can be simultaneously a traumatic experience and an invigorating experience. From a dialectical perspective, modernity is simultaneously a process of the opening up of possibilities *and* of the closing of perspectives. Bauman writes: "In a world in which plurality of orders and ambivalence have been – enthusiastically or grudgingly – granted the right of permanent residence, such a substitute is no more available, and pluralism rebounds as a loss of orientation and helplessness – a bitter irony for an age that proclaimed the omnipotence of man".[602]

The concept of *crisis* offers best illustration, perhaps, of the "experience of modernity" characterized by simultaneous sensations of *danger* and *possibilities*. Following Ricoeur, we can also point at the mismatch between *expectations* and *realities* as a definitive feature of this experience. To elucidate this idea: material growth and enormous development of productivity, which have characterized the history of modern societies, have created a possibility for the complete eradication of hunger and poverty (*expectations*), but, in the world of real economy, we can witness the massive accumulation of capital in the hands of the rich and the super-rich and the corresponding widening of the income gap (*realities*). Another example: characteristically modern ideas of autonomy and authenticity have created a possibility for life devoid of toil and oppression, a life of creative self expression and playful productivity in which there is no room for any kind of discrimination whether it is racism, sexism or anything, a life of pacified social relations (*expectations*), but, in the real world, we can witness the prevalence of ideas and values which espouse competitiveness, aggressiveness, discrimination, passive consumerism and disregard for ecological destruction wrought by the capitalist system, and we can witness the existence of concrete antagonisms and conflicts which force people to live in slums, to endure the hardships of unnecessary wars, to lose themselves and give themselves up to serve the needs of gigantic multinational corporations (*realities*). The concept of crisis refers to the urgent need to find a solution to the gnawing contradiction between expectations and realities.

How, then, does Fromm respond to the fundamental ambivalence inherent in the experience of modernity? To begin with, one can note, as pointed out by Michael Maccoby, the curious friction between the two voices of Fromm, the prophetic and the analytic. If we take a look at those aspects of Fromm's work in which his prophetic voice resounds defiantly over the analytical voice, we might be led to think that there is no room at all for ambivalence and uncertainty in his view, that the crisis of modernity is simply a crisis in which two distinct forces – the forces of life or biophilia and the forces of death or necrophilia – struggle against one another. This approach suggests that we must take the stand against regression and for the growth of human potentialities. From a metaphorical and narrative standpoint this can be seen as an attempt to counter the relativizing aspect of the process of modernity by

602 Bauman 1995, 230.

introducing a certain sense of meaning to a world full of uncertainties and ambivalence. Undoubtedly, these kinds of rhetorical acts can be of immense value culturally, socially and subjectively by helping us revision the relations between horizons of expectation and existing realities. However, at the same time it is precisely these grand narratives which carry within themselves the "crusading spirit" of modernity, and have been conventionally used as tools of order-building in the modern "project of domination" and its attempts to eradicate the growing sense of contingency and ambivalence by introducing an absolute, artificial order.[603]

Pietikäinen has criticized Fromm's utopianism from a similar perspective: despite his insistence on the supreme value of the individual, there is no method in Fromm's writing which would recognize the potential dangers of a utopian project of total transformation. Pietikäinen argues that nothing guarantees that Fromm's "sane society" would not resort to coercion or the hierarchical rule of the Platonic elite.

> *"There is a disquieting element of authoritarianism in Fromm's commitment to human emancipation that is more in line with religious doctrines than with the kind of 'agonistic' value-pluralism that Berlin was concerned with. As Berlin wrote in his essay on liberty: 'The sage knows you better than you know yourself, for you are the victim of your passions, a slave living a heteronomous life, purblind, unable to understand your true goals.' Undoubtedly, Fromm was such a sage."*[604]

Pietikäinen refers to Isaiah Berlin's classic critique of the idea of "positive liberty" from his essay *On Liberty*. Berlin considered utopian projects to straighten the "crooked timber of humanity" as inherently authoritarian. Fromm's visions of the "New Man" and "New Society" can be interpreted as pointing towards this direction: a radical analyst espousing a humanistic ideal of perfection and renouncing altogether the banality of the sick and alienated "organization man" who is nothing but a pawn in the game of gigantic corporations and bureaucracies. As Pietikäinen notes, belief in the perfectibility of man has been a defining characteristic of utopianism; this stance has often gone together with a strong disdain for the current state of humanity. Here we can refer again to the culture shock experienced by a Marxist-Jewish psychoanalyst in the midst of the daily absurdities of rising American consumer culture. From this perspective Fromm's critique of modernity betrays his disdain towards the life of the average "man of the street". However, it is another question to link this personal attitude to the idea of violent reorganization of society according to utopian ideals. In any case, the messianic

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603 See Bauman 1995, 231–234.

604 Pietikäinen 2004, 114. See also Pietikäinen 2007, 204–205. Schaar has voiced a similar critique of Fromm's utopianism: "Given the diversity and perversity of men, the general insecurity and fear aroused by sweeping social change, and the tenacity of the vested interest of all kinds, it is inevitable that many more than one segment of society would refuse to march with Fromm toward the sane society. This means that Fromm's revolutionaries would very promptly be confronted with the choice of watching the revolution fail or attempting to establish a more and more control over society. The communitarians would soon have their Lenin." Schaar 1961, 260.

ideas of new unity and harmony have connotations which are not particularly appealing considering the brutal history of 20th Century utopian projects. Reckless advocacy of lofty utopian dreams of total transformation can lead to the negligence of concrete life processes, as Hans Jonas argues: "The basic error of the ontology of 'not yet' and its eschatological hope is repudiated by the plain truth – ground for neither jubilation nor dejection – that genuine man is always there and was there throughout known history: in his heights and his depths, his greatness and wretchedness, his bliss and torment, his justice and his guilt – in short, in all the *ambiguity* that is inseparable from his humanity".[605]

As a critique of Fromm's prophetic utopianism and messianism this interpretation is undeniably relevant. However other aspects in Fromm's work point to another kind of approach to the problem of ambivalence – namely, an approach which acknowledges the manifold and dialectic nature of modernity and acts as a counterforce acting against the excesses of Fromm's prophetic rhetoric. To be sure, a critique of compensatory attempts to gain security and certainty by resorting to any kind of complete solution constitutes one of the defining features of Fromm's thought. That has been illustrated in this work through various discussions, whether the question was about Fromm's narrative of the growth of mankind, his humanist ideal of personal development or his understanding of the psychodynamics of freedom and security. Indeed, Fromm's theory on the rise of National Socialism and the post-war prevalence of democratic conformity rely on the fundamentally deceptive character of compensatory absolute certainty. From this perspective Fromm's critique of modernity echoes Bauman's discussion on the failings of the project of modernity.

However, for Fromm, the ultimate obstacle for any sort of final solution lies in his conception of human nature. Uncertainty is a price man must pay for his self-awareness: "He has no certainty; the only certain prediction he can make is: 'I shall die'."[606] Despite the promises of various authorities and escape mechanisms, in Fromm's vocabulary certainty is always utterly illusory. This becomes evident from a following quotation.

> "*I believe that neither life nor history has an ultimate meaning which in turn imparts meaning to the life of the individual or justifies his suffering. Considering the contradictions and weaknesses which beset man's existence it is only natural that he seeks for an 'absolute' which gives him the illusion of certainty and relieves him from conflict, doubt and responsibility. Yet, no god, neither in theological, philosophical or historical garments saves, or condemns man. Only man can find a goal for life and the means for the realization of this goal. He cannot find a saving ultimate or absolute answer but he can strive for a degree of*

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605 Pietikäinen 2004, 111, 115; Pietikäinen 2007, 10. Quotation by Hans Jonas from Bauman 1995, 52. Maccoby has presented a similar critique of Fromm's utopianism in Maccoby 1996, 87–88.

606 Fromm 1968a, 62. See also Fromm 1963b, 5 and Fromm, Erich, "Remarks on the Policy of Détente". In *Détente. Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations*. US Senate, 93rd Congress, 2nd Session, Washington, (1975). http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1975a-e.pdf, 4.

> *intensity, depth and clarity of experience which gives him the strength to live without illusions, and to be free."*[607]

Thus, for Fromm, the solution is not the search for certainty, but the striving towards such modes of life in which conflicts inherent in the existential predicament of man are reconciled productively. As the discussion on Fromm's idea of the "escape from freedom" indicated, emancipation implies increasing insecurity: "Freedom is based on the achievement of liberating oneself from the primary ties that give security, yet cripple man". Or, to put it in another way: "Free man is by necessity insecure; thinking man by necessity uncertain."[608] The best illustration, however, of Fromm's stance against any sort of ultimate solution is given in *The Sane Society*.

> "*How can a sensitive and alive person ever feel secure? Because of the very conditions of our existence, we cannot feel secure about anything. Our thoughts and insights are at best partial truths, mixed with a great deal or error, not to speak of the unnecessary misinformation about life and society to which we are exposed almost from the day of birth. Our life and health are subject to accidents beyond our control. If we make a decision, we can never be certain of the outcome; any decision implies a risk of failure, and if it does not imply it, it has not been a decision in the true sense of the word. We can never be certain of the outcome come [sic] of our best efforts. The result always depends on many factors which transcend our capacity of control. Just as a sensitive and alive person cannot avoid being sad, he cannot avoid feeling insecure. The psychic task which a person can and must set for himself,* is not to feel secure, but to be able to tolerate insecurity, without panic and undue fear."[609]

From this perspective, it becomes evident that Fromm is definitively not trying to escape the difficult question of ambivalence, but instead he is confronting it quite explicitly. As the above quotation shows, he even argues that the attempt to escape from the insecurities of life will lead to decay and suffering. While criticizing Marcuse and his radicalism, Fromm contends that even the utopian "New Society" cannot eradicate conflicts and contradictions. In a biting remark to Marcuse, he adds that perhaps "completely alienated people" may dream of a future society devoid of any sort of contradictions, but that these dreams reflect more their "own emotional limitations" than real possibilities: "The

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607 Fromm 1962, 191. In a letter to Lewis Mumford Fromm revealed his mistrust of systems and totalities: "I am myself averse to all systems which demand that they should be accepted as total explanations. In fact I believe that even the best of systems only presents some aspects of reality seen through the creative power of the system builder and that his claim to make it a total system is based , if not on his personal ambition, on the simple necessity to have the courage to present the creative aspects based on the belief that they are a total and new explanation of the world." Fromm: Letter to Lewis Mumford 11.11.1974.

608 Fromm 1966, 89; Fromm 1995, 84, 190.

609 Fromm 1955a, 190. In another context Fromm writes about the symptoms of the neurotic striving for certainty and order: "If one is so filled with expectations of 'order' – which is, after all, a category of his own mind – that he expects 'order' in a living being, he will be disappointed. If his desire for order is very strong, he may try to force life into orderly patterns to control it, and in his frustration and fury when he finds out that it cannot be controlled, he may eventually try to strangle and kill it. He has become a hater of life because he could not free himself from the compulsion to control." Fromm 1997, 198.

assumption that the problems, conflicts, and tragedies between man and man will disappear if there are no materially unfulfilled needs is a childish daydream".[610] As a human project, the creation of a "New Society" has its reservations.

> "*Building such a society means taking the next step; it means the end of 'humanoid' history, the phase in which man had not become fully human. It does not mean the 'end of days', the 'completion', the state of perfect harmony in which no conflicts or problems confront men. On the contrary, it is man's fate that his existence is beset by contradictions, which he has to solve without ever solving them. ... The new phase in human history, if it comes to pass, will be a new beginning, not an end.*"[611]

Furthermore, it is difficult to ignore Fromm's relentless advocacy of the supreme value of the individual with a mere reference to the questionable nature of his utopian vision of total transformation. The critique against the disregard of the dignity of the individual in utopianism – voiced by Berlin, Popper and others – undoubtedly holds true for various kinds of 19th and 20th Century utopian projects. From a Frommian standpoint, however, a social utopia which does not proceed from the fundamental conviction that society should be remade according to the needs and desires of the individuals is utterly useless and oppressive. Social emancipation is a subjective matter, or it is no emancipation at all. Thus emphasis on the value of psychoanalytic understanding of character, non-theistic mysticism, Zen, self-analysis and dreaming etc. distinguish Fromm's voice from those radicals who have no room for "subjective projects of liberation". For Fromm, it is all up to the individual, whether he or she has the experience of living abundantly and responsively, or whether he or she feels confined, limited and repressed in his or her daily life.

> "*I believe that no one can 'save' his fellow man by making the choice for him. All that one man can do for another is to show him the alternatives truthfully and lovingly, yet without sentimentality or illusion. Confrontation with the true alternatives may awaken all the hidden energies in a person, and enable him to choose life as against death. If he cannot choose life, no one else can breath life into him.*"[612]

In his tendency to underline the importance of safeguarding the autonomy and the authenticity of the individual Fromm concurs with the leftist libertarian

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610 Fromm 1968a, 111. As a critique of Marcuse's position this claim misses the point. Marcuse didn't believe, as Fromm accuses him of believing, that a society without conflicts and contradictions could be created, as a quotation from his *Aesthetic Dimension* clearly shows: "The institutions of a socialist society, even in their most democratic form, could never resolve all the conflicts between the universal and the particular, between human beings and nature, between individual and individual." Marcuse 1979, 71–72. It is possible that Marcuse wrote this as an answer to Fromm's accusation, but this is open to speculation, since he does not explicitly say so.

611 Fromm 1955a, 354. A similar quotation can be found in Fromm 1963a, 76. See also Burston 1991, 95. Pietikäinen recognizes this too, while remaining sceptical of Fromm's utopia: "Fromm was not arguing for a conflict-free society, but he never paused to think about the potential limitations of his Sane Society ... ". Pietikäinen 2004, 113.

612 Fromm 1962, 191.

tradition – exhibiting sometimes even faint signs of anarchism, as indicated, for example, by his systematic advocacy of direct democracy in all areas of society and economy. The biographical background for his thought points to the same direction: what prompted Fromm initially to delve into psychoanalysis and Marxism was his attempt to understand why people were eager to escape the burden of individuality through authoritarianism, conformity etc. It is evident that the project of the utopian transformation of society and culture Fromm proposes cannot be executed hierarchically, since the whole idea behind it is to topple the hierarchical principle altogether.[613] His theory on the transition from "here" to "there" recognizes this explicitly: to challenge the imperatives of power, social and cultural transformation must start from below; it must be fuelled by the creative and productive activity of the oppressed. In this sense, Popper's general critique the utopian projects of "the transformation of man", which aim at molding the "men and women to fit into" a new society, misses its point when it comes to Fromm's utopianism.[614]

Thus, the idea of an avant-garde toppling the foundations of power and then conveying the revolutionary consciousness to the uninformed masses has nothing to do with Fromm's democratic[615] radicalism. This is also reflected in a critique Fromm voiced against Freud's authoritarian attempts to mould the psychoanalytic movement into a closed and dogmatic cult led by the inner circle: "Since he had no faith in the average man, this new scientific morality was an aim to be accomplished only by the elite, and the psychoanalytic movement was the active *avant-garde*, small but well-organized, to bring about the victory of the moral ideal".[616] This, of course, could be seen as an attempt by Fromm to project his own disagreeable characteristics on to a "father-figure" turned into a straw-man. But in the light of all the evidence we have of his theoretical stance towards authorities and his personal relationship to power, this interpretation is difficult to sustain.

However, it is of course true that a utopian thinker like Fromm cannot prevent people from making their own interpretations from his thought and using all the metaphoric means with which interpretations are executed to create new associations and open up new perspective to his thought. This includes those interpretations which might have seemed objectionable to

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613 This notion, like many other aspects in Fromm's thought, has its roots both in the leftist libertarian tradition and in the tradition of Jewish messianism. See Löwy 1992, 20.

614 See Popper 1975. Popper's liberal critique of utopianism proceeds along the same lines as Berlin's critique.

615 The word democracy is used here in reference to the idea of the autonomy as the self-governance of people. In such forms of direct or radical democracy power is used always from below to above and not executed bureaucratically as in the existing forms of representative democracy. However, despite Fromm's emphasis on the idea of direct democracy, he advocated a system of balanced centralization and decentralization of power in his notion of socialist democracy. See, for example, Fromm 1955a, 331–335.

616 Fromm 1959a, 100. See also Fromm 1959a, 109, where Fromm accuses Freud of wanting to build a "dictatorship of reason" to lead the docile masses.

Fromm himself. He recognizes this danger in passing when discussing a patient of his: "Of course, one never knows what happens when one incites people to rebellion".[617] Here a distinction must be made between various forms of utopianism to correct the faulty idea that all utopianism is alike. It is evident that utopianism is merely an umbrella term for various radical revisions of society and that not all utopian projects of social transformation can be assigned to Berlin's conception that absolute certainty is the definitive feature of utopianism.[618]

When it comes to Fromm, this kind of certainty, as an option, was definitely not on the cards. The struggle for a new society contains its risks. But these risks are present in the capitalist system as well, whose "normal" functioning secures the foundations of life (and more) for some, while for others it offers only servitude, poverty, illness and death. It is a mistake to assign risks only to social experiments and to ignore risks in the existing order, which may seem as "natural" to many, but is, in reality, as "artificial" as any other social order.[619] Fromm's conviction regarding the severity of the crisis implied that rebellion had to be provoked, just like the aforementioned patient had to be provoked to act: "But that would be my first attempt, because I know unless she does that, she will never get well or have a happy life. She is like in a posthypnotic state where she has to fulfill what was suggested to her".[620] The Frommian metaphor of the social body and the analogy between individual and social sickness implies that the alienated capitalist societies are in a similar posthypnotic state, which prevents people from realizing their true situation. The dreamer must wake up.

It is another question, however, how Fromm manages to solve rhetorically the evident conflict between his two voices – between the prophecy that the current crisis reflects a struggle between the forces of light and those of darkness, and between the analytic recognition of the pluralistic and ambivalent nature of modernity. In this sense his "presence" is definitely marked by paradoxical features. How can he claim that we have to choose, ultimately, between two possible alternatives and still admit that no certainty can ever be reached? A partial answer can be found from an example from Fromm's characterology. Character orientations, Fromm maintains – including those of biophilia and necrophilia – are never found in a "pure" form, but every character always consists of a combination of several orientations. What this implies in relation to his understanding of modernity and its potentialities is

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617 Fromm 1994b, 161.

618 Here Skinner's criticism of the history of ideas is at place: " … there is no determinate idea to which various writers contributed, but only a variety of statements made by a variety of different agents with a variety of different intentions, what we are seeing is that there is no history of the idea to be written". Skinner 2002, 85. See also Schaar 1961, 240–244, for a typology of various forms of utopianism and the differences between them.

619 As Ulrich Beck and others argue, in the current phase of modernity – the "risk society" – these risks fall increasingly upon individuals. See, for example Beck 1994.

620 Fromm 1994b, 161.

that the dualist vision of a struggle between biophilia vs. necrophilia is merely a rough scheme, which gives us a holistic perspective on the flux of modernity, while still leaving intact the ambivalent nature of modern societies and recognizing different shades of grey between the two opposites. It is, of course, a matter of debate and speculation whether Fromm succeeds in this rhetorical act.

This interpretation gives rise to another consideration regarding the foundations of Fromm thought and his approach on modernity. Fromm was apparently concurring with the crusading spirit of modernity in his tendency to perceive social reality through stark contrasts. This Western conception of reason has its critics. Bauman, for example, points to the disquieting historical concurrence between reason and domination, as illustrated by the painstakingly rational apparatus of Nazism: " … the concept of knowledge as power, reason as the judge of reality and an authority entitled to dictate and enforce the *ought* over the *is*". Ingleby, too, points to this element in Fromm's thought: "He seems totally unaware that the same ideals of mastery over nature and the sovereignty of the individual, which underlie the growth of capitalism, are the ones which he puts forward under the label of 'humanism'".[621]

However, it seems that Ingleby, in turn, is totally unaware that the ideals Fromm advocates are subject to various kinds of interpretations and are not Platonic ideas which maintain their "original" form whether they are recuperated for the use of the market society and its ideologues or whether they are applied as tools in the struggle for social emancipation and solidarity. Through a metaphorical reworking of the associations of these cultural symbolizations, leftist, rightist, anarchist, aesthetic, religious etc. interpretations of core modern values like autonomy and authenticity can differ considerably in actual content from each other, and even form new polar opposites. For example the conception of freedom espoused by the religious right in America, on the one hand, and that of the Zapatista guerrillas in Mexico, the Chiapas, on the other, have little in common with one another – despite the fact that naturally both claim that their interpretation represents the true of understanding freedom. It must be acknowledged however that Ingleby's critique is not completely out of place considering Fromm's tendency to exhibit universal ideals like freedom, emancipation, growth etc. without always giving a clear indication of what exactly he means when he talks about them. His tendency to utilize hyperbolic rhetoric – as a means to indicate to his readers that the alarmist and prophetic message he is giving is something he passionately believes in – further strengthens this impression. Nevertheless Fromm's position in regard to the aforementioned universal concepts becomes clear in the full context of his work – even though a quick reading of his texts might lead to confused impressions.

Ingleby writes: "Where Fromm stands is perfectly clear: he is a modernist, an heir – albeit a critical one – to the Enlightenment, and a humanist who

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621 Bauman 1995, 37; Ingleby 2002, xlvii.

believes that a diagnosis of human ills can be grounded in an objective conception of what man essentially is."[622] But what precisely are these critical aspects in Fromm's thought, and where does he simply concur with the modernist tradition? Finding even a partial answer to this question could help us understand better the possible relevance (or irrelevance) of his work to our current understanding of modernity and the problems we are facing right now – in addition to giving us a picture of how it fits into the temporal and cultural contexts of its own time.

Perhaps another look at Fromm's affinity with negative theology could give us a good start, since, for him, the significance of this idea is not limited only to the sphere of theology, but offers instead a fundamental *method* for all understanding. His systematic emphasis on dialectical forms of thought is evident here, too. This starting point makes it uneasy for him to rely on 19th Century historicist ideas of modern reason (this does not indicate however that he shuns such considerations altogether). In the Jewish tradition of negative theology, truth can be revealed only through interpretations; this makes it is impossible to grasp it ultimately. As Bauman explains, the scriptures that God gave to Moses, who in turn passed them on to the Jewish people, had to interpreted and reinterpreted: "The process never ends, never can end, never will end". Bauman points to the connection between the tradition of negative theology and psychoanalysis, which was also concerned about *interpretation*, but not only of the holy scriptures but of the whole inner world of human beings: "It transformed the human world, *the whole of it* (not just the abnormal, the diseased, the unguarded, the uncontrolled part of it), into a text to be interpreted; it refused to accept the pinned-on labels as meanings, the filing-cabinet code-names as identities".[623] The emphasis on interpretation as the basis of all understanding implies the recognition of ambivalence which lies at the core of the idea of modernity as flux: divergent interpretations can be reached from the same material. There is no certainty, no ultimate truths. For Fromm, however, this doesn't prevent taking a normative and passionate stance or distinguishing between what is beneficial to us and what is not. The standard of evaluation lies, in the end, in man's ability to suffer – and in the hope that life without suffering is possible.

Fromm's critique of patriarchy constitutes an apt example of his attempt at a radical reinterpretation of one of the definitive features of modern thought. In essence his critique aims at a wholesale dismissal of the patriarchal complex, as the discussion in Chapter 7.1 indicated. Fromm recognizes the value of

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622 Ingleby 2002, xix–xx.

623 Bauman 1995, 173–175. Hornstein, too, stresses the central role of interpretation for the Talmudic tradition. See Hornstein 2000, 288. However, it is also true that the interpretative method of psychoanalysis can be used for various purposes. For example, we can understand psychoanalysis as a tool of liberation, which frees us from a restricted Western view of consciousness and reason, or we can understand it as a tool of social repression and assimilation, with the psychoanalysts being the priests of modernity (on such interpretation of Frommian psychoanalysis, see Ingleby 2002, lii).

patriarchy, but also argues that one-dimensional emphasis on patriarchal features is one of the main reasons for the crisis of modernity. Ingleby, however, points to Fromm's shortcomings in following systematically his critique of patriarchy in the symbolizations he prefers: Fromm presents us with a narrative on the growth of *Man*, a narrative with a male proponent, the modern *man*. There is an attempt by Fromm to confront this issue in a preface to his *To Have or To Be?*, where he admits having resorted to sexist and patriarchal uses of language in his previous works.[624]

The radical reworking of the conventional understanding of sanity offers another example of Fromm's reinterpretation of conventional Western understanding of both rationality and good life. Here Fromm's critique constitutes a complete reversal of the meanings and associations of sanity. Like Foucault after him, Fromm challenges the conventional idea of his time that sanity is intrinsically linked to successful assimilation of the prevailing social norms and goals, and introduces a radical humanistic definition of sanity, which adopts as its standard the aliveness and responsiveness of the individual. To say that contemporary Western societies are severely sick and alienated indicates a radical departure from the mainstream understanding of modern identity. On the other hand by taking this stance Fromm concurs with a more marginal tradition of modern thought: the incessant revolt against existing social and cultural conditions. This emancipatory tradition contributes to the flux-like nature of modernity, by turning against all forms of authority, all institutions, all cultural symbols which seem to embody oppression and cannot give adequate justification for their existence. Fromm's work constitutes an attempt to maneuver the *real* juggernaut of modernity by controlling its *symbolic* representations.

In his metaphorical task of highlighting certain aspects in the tradition of modern thought and hiding others, Fromm was engaging in a psychoanalytic attempt to break through the resistance of his audience and to uncover the existence of repression, which denied people the possibility for a sane and meaningful life. In this attempt at derepression, Fromm was following the steps of his prophetic Old Testament predecessors: "With their seers' eyes they penetrated into the inmost recesses of the apparently happy life, and recognized that its foundations were rotten".[625] His undertaking was undoubtedly a unique

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624 Fromm 1976, xxi. Ingleby's critique is certainly at place, as the explicit admission by Fromm, too, indicates. However Ingleby goes further than this. He argues that Fromm's conception of the nature of man is essentially patriarchal, since he considers self-awareness and reflection as central features of man's existential predicament (both being definitive characteristics of patriarchal reason). Considering the fact that in addition to these "patriarchal elements" in the existential conditions of man, Fromm also introduces "matriarchal elements", such as the need for relatedness and rootedness, it is difficult to agree with Ingleby's critique here. See Ingleby 2002, xlix–li. On a similar critique against Fromm use of sexist language, see Burston 1991, 127; McLaughlin 1998a, 228 and Thomson 2009, 25–26.

625 See Klausner, Joseph, *The Messianic Idea in Israel.* The Macmillan Company, New York 1955, 37. Klausner refers to prophets Amos and Hosea here. These lines are

one, but not without parallels, as the example set by various libertarian Judeo-German contemporaries of his shows. This shared task of refiguring the possibilities *and* realities of modernity is something all traditions which influenced Fromm's work – Jewish, Marxist and Freudian – agreed on. A quotation by Fromm from a Jewish folklore illustrates this stance: "It is not up to you to finish the task, but you have also no right to withdraw from it".[626] Fromm's understanding, however, of the multidimensional crisis modernity was faced with implied also that there was certainly no time to lose.

Fromm's whole work – as a figuratively intense form of symbolization – embodies in an exceptional way the notion of culture as a struggle. Despite his profound recognition of the fundamental ambivalence and uncertainty of modernity, Fromm insisted on speaking with a resounding voice, shunning all antiquarian dabbling with theories and abstractions detached from any real concerns with concrete life processes. He took part passionately in the world he was living in – and not only cerebrally, but as a sensitive living being. Here we are reminded of the relevance of the Nietzschean notion of the will to power for all cultural symbolization: if, indeed, every speech act and every idea has a potential to change reality through the metaphorical reorganization of the associations and conventions of language, then we can see that they carry within themselves not only considerable responsibility, but also immense transformative power. This endless process of the invention of culture decides, to a large extent, what kinds of forms culture will take and what kinds of contents the manifold concrete life processes within this culture will manifest. The question is: *what are we willing to give birth to*? In a situation like ours, which arguably shares with that of Fromm's time a concrete awareness of a multidimensional *crisis*, it would be nothing but absurd – and even irresponsible – to refuse to take part in this struggle for the common future of our culture and society.

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marked by Fromm in his edition of Klausner's book (available at the Erich Fromm Archive, Tübingen).

626 Fromm 1966, 157.

8 CONCLUSION. Crisis Awareness and Culture of Liberation

From the perspective of the discourses on modernity, Erich Fromm's work constitutes an original attempt at a synthesis between scathing social critique directed against "the sick society" of his time and radical metaphorical reworking of hitherto unactualized emancipatory potentialities of modernity. His apparently paradoxical message was conveyed with a "voice" or "presence" emphasizing the vital necessity of the spreading of crisis awareness. This was not a fear appeal, but a call to action, a passionate plea for a radical rethinking and reworking of the determining conditions of our lives.

Fromm's approach to modernity was essentially not that of a doomsday prophet, but of someone who recognized its emancipatory potentials, despite the alienating and inhuman influence of modern economic, political and social institutions. Fromm argued that modernity carried within itself a promise of "a truly human state", and here he concurred with the strong Western tradition of humanism, emphasizing the "principle of hope", which formed the essence of a common struggle, against alienation and oppression, shared by various subversive mystical, philosophical, social and cultural traditions. However, Fromm's approach differed from that of 19th century progressivism, which was intoxicated with the sweeping technological and sociocultural developments ushered in by the emergence of modernity. By appealing to his conception regarding the dialectics of liberation, Fromm adopted the notion of *crisis* as a central figurative tool in his understanding of modernity. From this dialectical perspective, which was shared by various other analysts of the crisis, modernity's hopes and sufferings went together; this metaphorical synthesis of possibilities and threats forming the essence of the conventional understanding of the idea of crisis. From this perspective, modernity is an era of transition, a moment of destruction *and* redemption.

Psychologically, for Fromm, the emergence of modernity was followed simultaneously by an increase in liberties and the development of techniques of control. While the bourgeois character of the 19th Century, discussed by Freud and Weber, was characterized by a rigorous work ethic and innerwordly

asceticism, 20th Century capitalism needed and molded individuals who are willing to work in large groups and huge hierarchical systems, who think and feel in terms dictated by the economy, who have swallowed and internalized the principles of power, who seek their gratification in both production and consumption, who confuse their servitude in the system with real freedom. This psychological predicament forms the basis for the escape from freedom. The individual, burdened by increasing insecurities and risks, is a powerless atom at the mercy of modern institutions and techniques of control. It is precisely this phenomenon which threatens to nullify the promises of modernity, and transform the history of humanity into a tragic narrative of the fall of man.

Escape from freedom can take several forms. Initially, Fromm's approach to this theory was influenced by his analysis of the rise of National Socialism. Authoritarianism offered the burdened individual a new compensatory security and certainty – with the price of the loss of integrity and autonomy of the self. Destructiveness exacerbates further the element of sadism already present in authoritarianism and turns it into an active attempt to eradicate the object which produces anxiety. Here we can see Fromm as a critic of the modern obsession with order, as discussed by Bauman and others. In this discourse the idea of modernity as rationalization gains a pivotal role, as indicated, for example, by Weber's and the Frankfurt School's general analysis of the closure of modernity. A careful contextualization of this critique shows that this view should not be taken as a critique against modernity *per se*, but as a critique of a particular phase of modernity, dubbed "organized modernity" by Peter Wagner. During this phase, the interests of the markets are safeguarded by the states, which provide the citizens with certain social security measures and maintain an elaborate system of bureaucracies to manage the ambivalences of modern societies. For Fromm and others it was evident that this state-led attempt to eradicate the sense of insecurity created by the emergence of modernity was not only insufficient, but also fundamentally misguided. Modernity was transformed into a machinery of control, while the control of the machinery was increasingly slipping out of the hands of its creators.

In Fromm's view organized modernity intensified the control over individuals to a new level, as illustrated by the almost hysterical emphasis on uniformity and consumption during the (early) Cold War era. Fromm's figurative inventions, such as "automaton conformity", "anonymous authority", "pathology of normalcy", "receptive orientation", "marketing orientation" etc. should be seen as attempts to transform the positive self-image of "freedom loving democracies" into a negative image, revealing to his audience the utterly illusory nature of liberal ideology, which flirted with abstract and vague images of freedom and happiness, but failed to deliver them for the majority of the population. Here Fromm is utilizing the Marxist notion of immanent critique, by drawing attention to the chasm between expectations and realities of modern "democratic" societies.

Fromm, however, went further than this by applying his clinical experience as a psychoanalyst to the understanding the woes of modern

societies. As indicated, for example, by his analysis of "the pathology of normalcy", Fromm was engaged in the attempt to cure the social psyche of its diseases. Illness and health, referring primarily to the physical condition of the human individual, are used by Fromm as metaphorical tools in the analysis of societies and cultures. This figurative move of associating the individual body with that of the society gave him the necessary authority in the eyes of his audience to execute judgments on the health and sickness of the whole of civilization.

The problem of alienation was, for Fromm, the major cause of distress both subjectively and socially. The commodification of human beings under capitalism constituted the key element for his understanding of suffering caused by modern institutions and forms of power. By adopting the notion of alienation as a pivotal element of his critique, Fromm was expanding Marx's analysis of the alienation of workers and giving it new content. The expansion of the logic of the capitalist economy to all areas of life was a concern Fromm shared with other Marxist analysts of modernity. This development was symbolically justified by the metaphorical association between life and the marketplace. Thus Fromm's discussion of alienation under modernity should be seen as an attempt to expose this metaphor and deconstruct its appeal by pointing out the incompatibility of this conception of life with the modern ideals of autonomy and authenticity of the individual.

Considering the harshness of Fromm's critique, one could raise the question whether it was Fromm who was alienated from the daily life of "the average man", and not the average man from his humanity. Indeed, the experience of exclusion plays a pivotal role in Fromm's understanding of modernity. His unique form of cultural and social critique was born out of a multiple experience of strangerhood. Being a Jew in the midst of German mainstream culture, a European immigrant in America and an intellectual critic of the masses in the midst of a rising consumer culture all contributed to his experience of exclusion. This, however, is not the whole picture, as McLaughlin's characterization of Fromm's position as "optimal marginality" indicates. Despite being in a situation of a stranger, Fromm had the contacts and resources he needed in order to fulfill his prophetic role in conveying the awareness of the crisis for his audiences. Here Fromm's position clearly reflects that of many of his contemporary German Jewish radicals, as discussed by Löwy, who were similarly striving towards a synthesis between Jewish tradition and modern radical thought.

The transition from critique to social utopia was implemented in Fromm's thought through his prophetic "voice" or "presence". The seemingly unbridgeable gap between his view of the almost complete alienation of modern societies and his utopian vision of thisworldly redemption was overcome by an appeal to the dialectical conception of modernity. Fromm refused the nostalgic notion of return to the imaginary premodern sense of oneness, and argued that the contradictions of modernity are driving mankind towards a decisive crisis between humanism and barbarism, between life and

death. The sense of the urgency of this crisis was an essential part of Fromm's prophetic rhetoric. These prophetic aspects of his work formed a definite counterpart to his analytic voice, and lent some credibility to the idea of his work as an example of "public moralism". It is important to note that Fromm was not primarily a philosopher interested primarily in conceptual or theoretical issues, but a psychoanalyst interested in curing the symptoms of both subjective and social sicknesses. He followed Marx in his conviction that knowledge without subsequent emancipatory action is utterly useless. This idea was strengthened also by his "gnostic" conception of history, according to which the current alienated epoch should be understood as a transition phase between prehuman state of harmony and the coming redemption. However, Fromm's narrative was not teleological or predetermined in the sense that the promise of salvation was nothing but a potentiality, which could be actualized or not.

The 1960s counterculture represented for Fromm a new kind of hope for a sweeping social and cultural transformation. But unlike Herbert Marcuse, Fromm never became a guru of the student movement. He could not identify with the spontaneous character of the revolt of the young generation, and criticized its negative character and its excessive reliance on matriarchal elements. Furthermore, as a thinker deeply influenced by the Jewish tradition, Fromm considered the young generation's mistrust of all traditions alarming. In his narrative of liberation, revolution did not necessitate a complete rupture with the past, but a radical reinterpretation of the already existing emancipatory traditions. Here Fromm concurs with a much larger socialist project of liberation, as discussed by Bauman, which was simultaneously a continuation of the liberal-capitalist culture as well as its rejection. Ultimately, the gap between realities of the counterculture and Fromm's traditionalist view of culture was unbridgeable.

One of the definite features of Fromm's mistrust of the rebellion of the 1960s was his conviction that it was unable to transform its indignation at the Establishment into an active stance to create alternative modes of living. In Fromm's dialectical scheme, elements of emancipation are already present in the existing alienated society and culture. The task of prophecy is to disseminate the awareness of these transformative powers and to turn the submissive and passive character of the "organization man" into dynamite, which then would explode the social system from within. The emergence of revolutionary characters, who want life instead of the mechanical repetition of everyday banalities, was in Fromm's view a prerequisite for a radical social transformation. Despite his eschatological visions regarding the coming New Society, Fromm considered liberation as a never ending process, not as a cataclysmic revolutionary event that would change the course of history once and for all. This view was influenced by the idea of the spiritual perfection of mankind, as advocated by both Jewish and humanistic traditions.

Since Fromm rejected the criteria of health, happiness and normality suggested by the "sick society" of his time, he had to find new justification for

his normative radical humanism. To meet this challenge, Fromm developed a theory of the existential needs of man, which he considered as universal and timeless. However, since Fromm also acknowledged the historical materialist idea that man's nature changes with the change in material conditions, he proposed a paradoxical notion of contradiction as the definitive feature of man. In the Frommian scheme man is part of nature and yet above it. By shifting the attention to the various answers given to man's existential contradiction Fromm was able to recognize the almost endless diversity of human cultures, while still holding on to the idea that man's nature is not completely malleable. His strong normative humanist stance is revealed in his conviction that essentially answers to man's existential contradiction could be seen as either productive or regressive, that since man's emergence from a preindividual and prehuman unity with nature he has to make a decision between growth and regression. This conception forms the basis not only for his understanding of the growth of the individual but also for his grand narrative of the growth of man.

Alienation reduces man into a thing and thus denies him the possibility to actualize his human potentialities. Stifled growth, in turn, results in various pathologies. Fromm's radical humanist ideal constitutes a definitive counterpart to his analysis of the alienated character of modern man. By utilizing various metaphorical expressions throughout his work – productivity, spontaneity, creativity, biophilia, being – Fromm gave an elaborate depiction of the utopian figure of the New Man. In this respect his work reflected a general fascination by the counterculture of the 1960s and the New Left towards the "revolution of everyday life". Like various other critics of the Establishment, Fromm contended that socioeconomic changes must go together with a radical change in the character structure of man – or more poetically: in the heart of man. Fromm's Freudo-Marxist philosophy should be seen as a part of a radical re-evaluation of the role of subjectivity in radical theory and activism. Appealing to his experience as an analyst, Fromm underlined the importance of derepression in increasing awareness of those social mechanisms which obstructed human emancipation and called for a general cultivation of sensitivity towards everything that is alive. All in all, Fromm's continuing interest in formulating ethical ideals through various metaphorical expressions was motivated by his attempt at a radical reworking of existing moral standards. This necessitated creative rhetorical inventions and reversals of meanings attached to the conventional understanding of morality. Skinner's conception of "innovative ideologists" can be applied to Fromm's case too, with certain reservations.

Despite his persistent interest in the subjective aspects of emancipation, Fromm was also taking part in a more ambitious project of narrating the growth of man from prehistory to the modern age. His grand narrative of civilization – inspired by the great 19th Century historicist narratives – is based on the analogy between ontogenesis (the development of the individual) and phylogenesis (the development of the species). Here Fromm diverges from his adherence to dialectical modes of thought by suggesting that the history of

mankind should be understood as the maturing of man and his reason. Again we can see the influence of the Gnostic scheme of unity – alienation – unity for Fromm's thought: man is estranged from a symbiotic relationship with nature and thrown towards culture, which alone can bring thiswordly redemption for man. Strong mythic elements and stark contrasts between growth and decay, life and death, add to the rhetorical appeal of Fromm's narrative. However, unlike some humanists, Fromm shunned the one-sided idealization of culture and advocated instead the apparently paradoxical notion of culture as a tool of both emancipation and disciplinization.

As a subnarrative to this wider story of the growth of man in history, Fromm offered another narrative of the struggle between matriarchal and patriarchal principles. His critique of the patriarchal complex of modern societies should not be taken as a plea for a return to matriarchy, but as an attempt to balance the influence of both principles in contemporary societies. This stance was indicated, for example, by his criticism of the pathological "neo-matriarchal features" he recognized in the young generation's revolt of the 1960s.

The utopian aspects of Fromm's work are revealed in their full extent in his Judeo-Marxist messianism. The prophetic vision of messianic time converged in his thought with the Marxist idea of communist society. Here again Fromm is seen as a representative of a larger group of German Jewish radicals striving towards a synthesis between Jewish tradition and radical libertarian politics. The vision of messianic time offered not only an imaginary reconciliation for suffering, but it also pointed the way towards material reconciliation in the struggle to eradicate nationalism and other forms of social narcissism. This attempt at a restoration was motivated by the wish to overcome the intense experience of exclusion, as the various visions of unity and solidarity by Fromm and others illustrate. It is easy to agree with Bauman's notion that the particular experience of strangerhood by the Jews led the way towards a more universal analysis of alienation and how to overcome it. However it should be underlined here that the solution, for Fromm, was not regression to earlier stages of development, but a synthesis between the "lost paradise" of the imagined past and the emancipatory elements of modernity.

Fromm's role as a synthesizer bringing together divergent traditions was further strengthened by his persistent interest in wedding traditional religious ideals and practices to radical politics. Despite his conviction that mainstream forms of institutionalized religiosity contributed to the continuing alienation of man and served as ideological and mystifying tools of control for the Establishment, Fromm insisted that marginal mystical and spiritual traditions could be used instead as tools of emancipation. This affirmation of religiosity was, undoubtedly, another element which distinguished Fromm's thought from that of the radicalism of 1960s youth. Fromm's religious stance seems to fit poorly with the image of a Freudo-Marxist critic of capitalism, and it has been seen by some radicals as unwillingness to let go of his Orthodox Jewish past.

Be that as it may, Fromm's ultimate purpose was to execute a similar metaphorical reworking of the meanings of religiosity as he had carried out in regard to the conventional understanding of morality. In addition to this, one of his methods was to underline the gap between religious ideals and realities in an effort to show that the existing forms of alienated religiosity were nothing but abstractions without any concrete experiential basis in the daily life of capitalist societies. Radical humanistic religiosity, in Fromm's view, has a tangible bearing on life: it brings some of the sense of wonder to profane time, it has the potential for enhancing our awareness of sensuality, it spreads the reverence for life etc. Since there can be no radical change without corresponding change in consciousness, this kind of new religion and its creative rituals play a pivotal role in the creation of alternatives for the sick culture based almost solely on production and consumption.

However, Fromm's prophetic vision of humanist socialism and his sometimes eschatological views regarding the crisis of modernity as an ultimate decision between life and death is not the whole picture of his view of modernity. The strong "analytic" element in his work has the effect of tempering the excesses of his grand narrative and of introducing a certain sense of ambivalence to his otherwise defiantly prophetic rhetoric. In fact, Fromm's work constitutes a resolute denial of the possibility of any sort of ultimate decisions or certainty, which is reflected for example in his dialectic view of modernity and culture as emancipation *and* disciplinization, or in his thesis of the escape from freedom. Even the messianic time cannot eradicate the basic contradiction rooted in the nature of man. Similarly, no revolution can do away with all human conflicts and suffering. How well Fromm succeeds in bringing these two voices – the analyst and the prophetic – together is, of course, open to speculation.

Despite his traditionalist leanings and his severe critique of modern societies, it obvious that Fromm was never an antimodernist in the strict sense of the term. His attack on modernity implied implicitly also the affirmation of potentialities. Here we can underline the importance of the idea of immanent critique for his whole work, which should be seen as a metaphorically and rhetorically executed reinterpretation of the subversive and emancipatory potentialities of modernity. Fromm held firm to modern ideals of autonomy and authenticity; he was convinced that the modern industrial society contained within itself the seed of liberation; he considered the development of individuality as the most important achievement of modernity; he emphasized the value of the modern idea of democracy; he welcomed the collapse of patriarchy and similar forms of oppression and so on. However, as his dialectical method required, affirmation can come only after negation. Thus, in Fromm's view, we can accept modernity only after we have done away with its distorted and illusory manifestations, only after the social and economic apparatus has been reappropriated to the service of human emancipation – only after mankind has been put back into the saddle.

From this perspective Antonio Negri's and Michael Hardt's conception of *altermodernity* seems to apply also on Fromm's approach to modernity.[627] With altermodernity, Negri and Hardt imply a new stance, which avoids both antimodernity and hypermodernity. Altermodernity starts by acknowledging the critique of antimodernity against the hierarchies of contemporary societies, but proceeds from this reactive attitude to the creation of new social alternatives and new cultural forms. Thus it represents a synthesis between modernity and antimodernity – something Fromm also tried to achieve in his work. This is indicated, for example, by Fromm's criticism of capitalism and representative democracy – two fundamental social institutions of modernity. The emphasis is on alternative lines of Enlightenment thought and on leftist revolutionary tradition, which maintains that the modern promises of autonomy and democracy are still largely unfulfilled. Fromm's thought also shares with Negri's and Hardt's formulation the emphasis on becoming. In this view, liberation is a continuous process of giving birth to new humanity.

However instead of taking Fromm as an analyst of modernity in general – as if such a thing has ever existed – we should emphasize particular and context-bound aspects of his work. Here, indeed, we should avoid making history "a pack of tricks we play on the dead", as Skinner writes.[628]

> "*To demand from the history of thought a solution to our own immediate problems is to commit not merely a methodological fallacy but something like a moral error. But to learn from the past – and we cannot otherwise learn at all – the distinction between what is necessary and what is contingently the product of our own local arrangements is to learn one of the keys to self-awareness itself.*"[629]

First of all, it is evident that Fromm's work belongs to a broader cultural movement of German Jewish radicals, utopians and outsiders who sought to revision the potentialities of modernity through an original position of optimal marginality. These revolutionary creative figures had the access to university education and material means to transform their inventive visionary synthesis into reality. Partially still under the influence of "premodern" Orthodox Jewish tradition and partially inspired by the modern radical libertarian tradition, their perspective on modernity was not at all universal, but a highly unique one. Despite this background, they usually sought to deliver their message to the masses – this holds particularly true in the case of Fromm. As Bauman has noted, particular Jewish experience of exclusion pointed way to a more universal experience of strangerhood, as illustrated, for example, by the huge popularity of Fromm's work. Fromm and others transcended their particular contexts and managed to communicate their experiences to their audiences in an intimate way.

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627 See Hardt, Michael & Negri, Antonio, *Commonwealth*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2009, 101–118.
628 Skinner 2002, 65.
629 Skinner 2002, 89.

This achievement is even more remarkable in the light of the fact that probably only a small minority of his readers shared Fromm's traditionalist Jewish way of life, which implied emphasis on spiritual perfection, the singing of old Hasidic songs, daily meditation and self-analysis and disregard for mainstream culture and the rising popular culture. It is important to note however that this cultural background was an essential part of Fromm's critique of modernity and his prophetic utopianism. Pietikäinen sees Fromm's occupation with existential themes of self-expression and spiritual perfection – and his consequent disregard for concrete material struggles, such as the fight against racism – as a reflection of his position as a materially affluent analyst and a popular writer.[630] Part of this traditionalism was Fromm's unwavering advocacy of humanist appeals for truth and the dispelling of illusions, but also the affinity towards grand narratives. This strong universalist element in Fromm's thought may seem bit outdated by today's standards.

Furthermore, a great deal of Fromm's earlier work can be seen as pertaining principally to a discourse on a particular phase of modernity, which Peter Wagner has called "organized modernity". Fromm's critique of conformity, his persistent advocacy of the supreme value of the individual, his scathing analysis of the alienation of the "organization man", his systematic application of the metaphor of machinery to characterize modern societies etc. all highlight those features in modern societies which have been considered as pivotal for the "state-led" phase of modernity from the 1930s to the 1970s. This phase was characterized by nation states' attempts to curb the ramifications of free markets by providing social security measures and by controlling the free flow of capital – without, however, questioning in a radical way the moral, political or economic legitimacy of the capitalist system.

Fromm's later work, in turn, can be seen as belonging to a discourse on the failings of the Establishment to provide conditions for a meaningful life for the majority of the population caught in the grip of bureaucratic organizations, rational planning, one-dimensional emphasis on production and consumption – not to mention the human catastrophe of Vietnam War, the continuing threat of nuclear holocaust and the growing income gap between industrialized countries and Third World countries. These important contexts of Fromm's work – organized modernity and the 1960s revolt against its legitimacy – determined to a large extent the discoursive framework of his critique and utopia.

To develop this contextualization further, we can examine the process of recuperation through which originally subversive and anti-systemic ideas by Fromm and other critics of the Establishment have been contained by existing socials institutions and hierarchies. Such analysis can highlight the context-bound and particular character of this critique by pointing to the change in its central meanings and associations which has taken place during the span of time separating Fromm's world from that of ours. The fate of the Frommian

630 Pietikäinen 2007, 197–198.

theme of self-expression provides an exceptionally apt reference point here. Originally, his libertarian plea for the radical autonomy and authenticity of the individual was developed as a challenge to the prevailing social and cultural order which effectively denied the majority of the population a possibility for meaningful self-expression. It constituted an attack against cultural homogenization, excessive planning, the eradication of spontaneity and regimentation of both work and leisure, which characterized the organized modernity of mid-20th Century industrial societies. With the advance of globalization and the increasing importance of immaterial capitalism, the ideal of self-expression has been adopted as a new standard of excellence in the innovation economy. Both Frommian and Foucauldian analyses of power suggest that we are dealing here with subtle techniques and modes of control which replace the use of overt physical force and rely on the internalization of servitude as freedom. However recuperation doesn't imply that the subversive or emancipatory potential of self-expression is irredeemably lost, but instead that it has been given new meanings and associations by the powers that be.

The struggle over central meanings and associations of modernity illustrates the idea of the invention of culture. This is particularly evident is the Fromm's case, since the emphasis on inventive figurations constituted an essential part of his work. As Pietikäinen writes of 20th Century "psychoutopians": " … their strength was not their empirical investigative bent, but their imaginative ability to conjure up startling correlations, suggestive metaphors and new associations between seemingly unconnected phenomena".[631] The fate of Fromm's theories, or those of the 1960s counterculture, illustrates Wagner's notion that cultural meanings are created in a constant process of reinterpretation and invention. Since our understanding of the world is mediated through cultures we live in, this process is not merely a linguistic exercise without any concrete repercussions in real life, but a symbolic struggle which also determines to a great extent the material conditions of our lives.

Recognizing this determination does not mean, however, that we are powerless in the face of it. Instead of just acting out the "symptoms" and being determined by existing conventions, hierarchies, institutions etc., we can adopt an active stance and attempt to work through them. Thus by taking part in the invention of culture through creative and subversive reinterpretations we can transform the research process into a process of reclaiming our autonomy. This emancipatory approach to knowledge was already suggested in the introduction. What is essential here – to avoid the mistake highlighted by Skinner of regarding the instrumental and one-dimensional use of history in the solution of problems pertaining to our own time – is to be able to distinguish between two kind of approaches: understanding Fromm's work in the contexts of his time *and* understanding it in the contexts and concerns of our time. Needless to say, these two often go together, since it is impossible to draw an

631 Pietikäinen 2007, 21.

ultimate line between the past and the present (or more theoretically: between concepts and metaphors we utilize to understand concepts and metaphors of historical subjects).

To be able to fulfill this challenge of making history alive in the present without distorting it in the process, we must first recognize the differences which separate Fromm's world from that our ours. In the above discussion some attempt has been made to highlight such particularities of his work. But since ideas cannot be reduced to their contexts and always contain certain surplus of meaning, they can be given new life through inventive recontextualizations. This calls for a recognition of those processes which determine the possibility or impossibility of reinterpreting Fromm's thought in the light of our contemporary concerns.

To be sure, there are several major developments that have taken place since Fromm's death. In politics we have witnessed the end of the Cold War, the rise of neoliberal ideology and the corresponding collapse of statist socialism (in both in its social democratic and Soviet variations). This has been reflected in the sphere of economy by the increasing liberation of financial markets from the constraints of protectionism and the growing income gap between the poor and the rich. The legitimacy of representative democracy has been gradually undermined by growing political apathy, as indicated by steadily decreasing voter turnout. Ecologically the growth economy is on collision course with the ecological system and its finite resources. Not to mention the future consequences of declining oil production for the growth economy due to the gradual depletion of oil resources (the so-called oil peak phenomenon). The current system is also struggling with a severe economic crisis, which will be reflected in social unrest and the flourishing of various antisystemic movements, as the example of Greece already shows. To add the multifaceted impact of globalization and the development of communication technologies etc., we can safely assert that dramatic changes have taken place also in the sphere of culture. However, despite all these developments, central institutions characterizing modernity, such as the market economy and representative democracy, are still largely intact.

Set in the light of these new developments, Fromm's thought might at first glance seem to belong to another world altogether. A more rigorous analysis however shows that most of these changes do not necessarily indicate a definitive rupture with the past, but instead a continuation and intensification of trends analyzed and anticipated already by Fromm. Indeed, his detailed analysis of the alienating psychological consequences of capitalism seems, in certain respects, more relevant than ever. For example, we can refer to his analysis of "marketing orientation", which grasps the subtle intricacies of image-building, branding and networking skills. The impact of marketing orientation is not limited to the narcissistic world of superstars and celebrities, but has a growing relevance for all those working in the information economy. Through Fromm's concept of social character, this analysis extends to a more general analysis of the modes of control characteristic of late-capitalist societies.

In the immaterial economy ideas, personalities, networks and human relations become capital to be used in order to gain strategic advantages over market competitors. Furthermore, the increasing molding of according to the metaphorical linkage between markets and life implies that the search for strategic advantages is not limited to the sphere of the economy but has a tendency to colonize all human relationships and all cultural forms. This process is further strengthened as people are encouraged to use their creativity and their self-perfection through work – to think, feel, dream etc. in terms dictated by the economy. In fact this demand for an increasingly all-encompassing internalization of the demands and requirements of the economy becomes an absolute necessity for the workers if their company is to succeed in competition against other companies in markets demanding ever more appealing and innovative products.

The increasing psychological strain of work must be compensated for during leisure time, which, for the economy, fulfills the task of reproducing the energies of the worker. There is, however, a disturbing friction between the search for meaningful self-expression outside the workplace and the growing demands by the economy that self-expression should be sought within the limits of paid labor. Consumerism encourages further the idea that leisure time is a sphere of freedom and self-expression, but it also contains the possibility of self-expression in passive and predetermined forms. This was already noted by Fromm during the 1950s in his analysis of the chronic sense of boredom and the attempt to compensate for it through consumption. Despite apparently endless variation of essentially identical products available on the markets, mass consumption also standardizes tastes, fantasies, dreams and desires, since the objective of any producer on the markets is to encourage maximal profits and to appeal to the tastes of as many consumers as possible – even if this necessitates a subtle manipulation of their tastes, as the thriving industry of psychological marketing for children in America shows. Here Fromm's warnings regarding the manipulative use of psychology seem more relevant than ever.

To add to this situation, the development of communication technologies, the rise of the internet and so on all contribute to the increasing mass of information available to the consumer. Rainer Funk has shown the relevance here of Fromm's analysis by introducing a concept of "post-modern I-am-me orientation" on the basis of Fromm's character theory.[632] Fromm's emphasis on concentration, mindfulness and Zen can also be seen as factors countering the impact of an incessant stream of images characterizing late-modern consumer societies.

All in all, consumerism and immaterial economy set new standards also for exploitation and control by creating social characters fitting for their new role in the economy. This kind of control extends to all aspects of life through subtle mechanisms such as "the anonymous authority" (Fromm) and

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632 See Funk, Rainer, "The Psychodynamics of the Postmodern 'I-am-me' Orientation". In *Fromm Forum* 10. Tübingen, 2006.

"biopower" (Foucault). Fromm's analysis of alienation highlights the disquieting psychological impact of the commodity form of capitalist economy. For the economy people are increasingly becoming usable and abusable resources, as indicated by the growing demands of efficiency, rationalization and control, imposed by the market mechanism of grow-or-die. In addition to this, as various antisystemic critics claim, there is an alarming tendency by the capitalist economy to colonize all aspects of life. Here we are reminded of the continuing relevance of Fromm's concern that under capitalism the metaphor of trade has an increasingly pivotal role in mediating all experiences, and not just those pertaining to the economy or work. Furthermore, it can be argued that the basic antagonism of the "market-model of life" – and the corresponding creation of human relations according to the images of competition and survival – does little to encourage solidarity and cooperation, but instead encourages people to see each other as potential enemies. Even Fromm's musings on "the sick society" are not as fantastic as they might seem when considered in the light of growing body of evidence illustrating the profoundly detrimental consequences of inequality on health and well being.[633]

In addition to these aforementioned possibilities in utilizing Fromm's analysis of modern societies in the understanding of our current situation, we can point to several other themes in his work which still seem relatively relevant to our contemporary concerns. Firstly, Fromm's analysis of political apathy highlights the notion that the lack of possibilities to actually participate is evidently reflected in the lack of interest in politics in general. The crisis of representative democracy calls for an adoption of direct forms of democracy instead of the bureaucratic and patronizing tendencies which seem to characterize the political system of the European Union. If politics is seen merely as a means of adapting to the current economical status quo and its corresponding political ideology, no wonder interest in politics is on the wane. What Fromm proposes is a completely different approach to politics.

The reverse side of this political apathy is the thriving of various fundamentalist ideologies. Fromm's analyses of social narcissism, escape from freedom, authoritarianism etc. provide valuable tools in understanding the rise of the conservative Christian right in America, xenophobic populism in Europe and extremist Islamism in the Arab World and elsewhere. Similarly his analysis of paranoid thinking in foreign policy, originally coined as a critique of Cold War hysteria, can illuminate the systemic fascination with the images of "terrorist" and "terrorism". Further, Fromm's emphasis on revealing the empty and illusory rhetoric behind catchwords and values such as "freedom", "democracy" and "justice", used by state leaders and ideologues of the system to legitimate the status quo, can promote awareness of the fact that such figurations can be used for various purposes, whose actual political, economic

633 See, for example, the groundbreaking analysis of various statistics on inequality by UN, WHO, US Census Bureau and other sources by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, which clearly shows that health and social problems are dramatically worse in more unequal countries. Wilkinson & Pickett 2010.

etc. associations and repercussion can easily remain hidden if they are not submitted to thorough critical rhetorical analysis.

But there is an integral and fundamental element in Fromm's work which has not yet been discussed, and yet bears a special relevance for our current concerns: the idea of *crisis consciousness*. The metaphor of crisis highlights the absolute importance of change. It is essentially not a fear appeal, but a call to action. A notion of crisis implies that something must be done to counter the looming threat and find alternatives to the current status quo, which is seen as the cause of the crisis. Here a careful contextualization is at place. The crisis that Fromm warned his audience about was manifested by the Cold War threat to humanity, by the inhumanity of the Vietnam War, by the psychological consequences of industrialism, bureaucracy and capitalist economy, by the cultural conformity of organized modernity which condemned people to numbing boredom and routinization of life and by the systemic antagonism between classes, nations, races etc. In some respects this is evidently a reflection of a world gone by, in other respects similarities can be certainly found.

The idea of crisis directs the attention to real problems currently plaguing our societies which will undoubtedly get worse if they are not dealt with. The impact of financial and economic crisis is evident for everyone; there is a wide consensus among scientists that the ecological crisis, including the global warming, is getting out of control if radical steps are not taken; a severe water and food crisis is looming which will have serious impact, especially on Third World countries; the global production of oil has already passed its peak; yet the coming resource crisis is not limited merely to oil; economic power is becoming concentrated in the hands of giant multinational corporations; there is a growing gap between the poor and the rich, which will worsen the antagonism between those who have and those who have not; debts are spiraling out of control; consumerism is continuing the waste of resources around the world – and so on.

But this dire situation is not necessarily hopeless. Awareness of crisis also implies that the current state of affairs is not a timeless given, but should be understood as an age of transition, subject to changes and alterations. Essentially Fromm's work expresses the principle of hope that despite of the depth of the crisis, nothing is predetermined and that pessimism is not the only alternative. This was the fundamental motive behind Fromm's rhetorically appealing prophetic work: to encourage people to act and take back their autonomy, and to create a new world out of the old. The relevance of this message is further strengthened by Fromm's conviction that subjective and social projects of emancipation must go hand in hand – that the liberation of the individual necessitates that of the whole society, and vice versa. Given the immense significance of subjectivity for contemporary late-modern society and culture, the emphasis by Fromm on various aspects of subjective liberation is an important contribution to the process of creating and promoting alternative forms of modernity.

Analysis of the metaphorical and narrative aspects of Fromm's work can also usher in awareness of the significance of figuration for all understanding. Metaphors and narratives should be understood as concrete tools in the remaking of our lives. They wield an immense power to mold our senses, perceptions, experiences, fantasies, wishes etc. Fromm certainly understood this, and his prophetic work is a testimony to this insight. Conversely, "figurative illiteracy" leaves us blind in the face of forces determining the cultural context through which we view and create our lives.

Understanding the significance of figuration is, in the end, a question of reclaiming our autonomy. This implies adhering to the best tradition of modernity, the refusal of being determined by blind forces outside us – which sometimes echo also deceptively within us. In order to meet such a challenge, we must be able to invent new metaphors and narratives, new modes of life and new means of communicating our experiences to other people; we must be able to create new cultures, which recognize the processual and dialectical nature of human reality. This alone can prevent us from falling into repetition and acting out heteronomous influences. The "possible world" is created out of the potentialities inherent in the "real world". Our task is to take part in this struggle by articulating and promoting those hitherto hidden subversive potentialities in the present which open up new prospects for liberation.

SUMMARY IN FINNISH

Radikalismin profeetta. Erich Fromm ja modernisaation kriisin figuratiivinen rakentuminen

Käsittelen väitöskirjassani saksalaissyntyisen psykoanalyytikko ja yhteiskuntakriitikko Erich Frommin (1900–1980) tuotantoa metaforisesti rakentuneena vastauksena modernisation kriisille. Frommin yhteiskuntakritiikki ja hänen utooppiset käsityksensä tarjoavat ainutlaatuisen perspektiivin modernisaation kriisiä koskevaan monitahoiseen diskurssiin. Kysymyksenasettelu on kaksisuuntainen: tarkastelen Frommin elämää ja tuotantoa yhtäältä modernisaatiota koskevan diskurssin kontekstissa, ja toisaalta modernisaatiota Frommin metaforisointien ja narratiivien kautta. Keskityn tutkimuksessa subjektiiviseen kokemukseen modernisaatiosta Frommin "äänen" tai "läsnäolon" analyysin kautta. Frommin tuotantoa voidaan pitää juutalaisen tradition, psykoanalyysin ja marxilaisuuden omintakeisena synteesinä. Hänen modernisaatiota koskeva narratiivinsa oli syvästi dialektinen: vaikkakin Fromm tunnusti modernin saavutukset, hän oli sitä mieltä, että vallitsevat taloudelliset ja yhteiskunnalliset instituutiot olivat pettäneet 1800-luvun edistysuskon lupaukset. Seurauksena yksilöt joutuivat etsimään kompensatorista turvaa autoritaarisuuden ja massakonformiteetin kaltaisista ilmiöistä. Frommin yhteiskuntakritiikki on pohjimmiltaan analyysia vieraantumisen psykologisista seurauksista liberaali-kapitalistisissa yhteiskunnissa. Hänen tuotantoaan voidaan pitää osana laajempaa 1900-luvun alun freudomarxilaista liikettä, jonka pyrkimyksenä oli paljastaa moderneille yhteiskunnille tyypillisiä uusia vallankäytön muotoja."Sairaan yhteiskunnan" metafora on keskeinen Frommin kritiikissä kapitalistisia kulutuskulttuureita vastaan. Hänen radikalisminsa juuret olivat pitkälti hänen ekskluusiokokemuksissaan (juutalainen saksalaisen valtakulttuurin keskellä, eurooppalainen emigrantti Yhdysvalloissa jne.). Käsitys modernisaation kriisin akuutista luonteesta vahvisti retorisesti hänen "profeetallista" viestiään ja päätöksen tärkeyttä tuhon ja pelastuksen välillä. Yhteiskuntakritiikki oli Frommille pohjimmiltaan psykoanalyysia: analyytikon tehtävänä oli johtaa potilas – ts. yhteiskunta – kohtaamaa neuroosiensa syyt ja saada täten aikaan parantumis- ja vapautumisprosessi. Hänen humanistiset painotuksensa ovat erityisen selvästi nähtävissä hänen teoriassaan ihmisen universaaleista eksistentiaalisista tarpeista, joiden pohjalta hän myös muotoili ideaalinsa "uudesta ihmisestä". Näiltä osin Fromm yhtyy 1960-luvun vastakulttuurin ja uuden vasemmiston painotukseen subjektiivisuuden radikaalin uudelleenmuokkaamisen poliittisesta merkityksestä. Vaikkakin hän suhtautui myötämielisesti nuoren sukupolven kapinaan, Fromm pysyi skeptisenä monille vastakulttuurin realiteeteille ja sen mahdollisuudelle muodostaa vakavaa uhkaa vallitseville valtasuhteille. Modernisaation kriisi edustaa Frommin narratiivissa ihmiskunnan syntymästä ratkaisevaa vieraantumisen aikakautta. Hänen juutalaismarxilaiset visionsa messiaanisesta "uudesta yhteiskunnasta" tarjosivat imaginaarisen sovituksen kärsimykselle, mutta

osoittivat myös tietä kohti materiaalista sovitusta. Hänen utopismiaan tulisikin pitää osana radikaalin saksalaisjuutalaisen kulttuurin kukoistusta 1900-luvun alussa. Osana tätä utopismia Fromm pyrki muokkaamaan metaforisesti uskonnollisuuden perustavanlaatuisia merkityksiä. Näitä utooppisia taipumuksia Frommin ajatteussa kuitenkin tasapainotti käsityksensä modernin elämän ja ihmisen psykologisen olemuksen epävarmuuksista. Frommin tuotantoa koskeva analyysi voi osoittaa kuinka yhteiskunnan tulevaisuutta ja materiaalisia puitteita koskeva kamppailu tapahtuu myös kulttuurissa figuratiivisten merkitysten tasolla. Vaikkakin hänen tuotantoaan voidaan pitää ensisijaisesti vastauksena hänen oman aikansa ”organisoidun modernin” aikaansaamiin ongelmiin, monet hänen esille nostamansa teemat ovat edelleen erittäin ajankohtaisia. Otettaessa huomioon tulevaisuudessa häämöttävät globaalit kriisit – väestöräjähdys, energiakriisi, ruokakriisi, ilmastonmuutos, taloudellisen vallan jatkuvasti etenevä keskittyminen, epätasa-arvon kasvu jne. – Frommin viesti kriisitietoisuuden levittämisen tärkeydestä voi auttaa meitä tiedostamaan lähitulevaisuuden ongelmia. Hänen viestinsä vapautuksen kulttuurin rakentamiseksi tähdentää uusien kumouksellisten metaforisointien merkitystä vaihtoehtoisen moderniteetin luomisessa.

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634 Original publication details are based on Rainer Funk's listing in *Erich Fromm: The Courage to Be Human* and complementary listings at the website of The International Erich Fromm Society. See Funk 1982, 374. As Fromm's last assistant and literary executor of his works, Funk is the foremost authority in this matter. An up-to-date listing of all publications by Fromm can be found at http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/Gesamtverzeichnis-Liste.pdf. All articles by Fromm accessed on 20.3.2010. Fromm's works are referred in the text according to their original publication dates. Audio and video sources are available at the Erich Fromm archive in Tübingen, Germany.

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