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Review Friedman, L. J.: *The Lives of Erich Fromm*

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Erich Fromm, once a prominent figure in psychoanalytic circles and for the wider reading public, has been somewhat neglected in recent years, except for psychoanalytic institutions in which he was active, such as the William Alanson White Institute in New York and the Mexican Psychoanalytic Society and, at an international level, the IFPS (International Federation of Psychoanalytic Societies) and a quite active International Erich Fromm Society. This scholarly biography by Lawrence Friedman is thus most timely in reaffirming Fromm's continuing relevance. A well-known biographer, the author has also addressed Erikson and Menninger in the field of psychoanalysis.

This is not the very first biography of Erich Fromm. The first was written by Funk in German in 1983, three years after Fromm's death in 1980. It is full of first-hand material, since the author cooperated closely with Fromm in the last years of his life as research assistant on *To Have or to Be?*, then became his literary executor and Editor of Fromm's Complete Works in German and founded the IEFS (International Erich Fromm Society). The second is Burston (1991), which is an intellectual biography, concentrating on ideas rather than on life events, similar to the third biography that Hardeck published in 2005. On the occasion of Fromm's centenary in 2000 Funk published a biography of Fromm based on pictures, including many quotations from the so far restricted correspondence of Fromm.

The book by Friedman is by far the most detailed account of Fromm's life and works, based on years of research, chiefly carried out in the Fromm Archive in Tübingen, but also in other archives such as the New York Public Library. It is also based on tape-recorded, telephone and personal interviews. Much of this work was necessary to make up for the partial destruction of Fromm's private correspondence, carried out after his death by his third wife following his instructions (p. xvii). In his book, Friedman carries out a systematic examination of Fromm's writings in chronological order, thus providing a good guide to reading, or re-reading, Fromm's vast production.

The title of the book (*The Lives*, in the plural) refers to Fromm's multiple interests, ranging from his early Jewish religious background and the influence of Rabbi Nobel and Salman Rabinkow (which is evident in Fromm's dissertation on the function of Jewish law in maintaining cohesion in three Diaspora communities), his training in sociology with Alfred Weber, his later training in psychoanalysis, and his involvement with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, to his post-war political activism. The subtitle (*Love's Prophet*) refers to love as one of his main themes, which is explicit in *The Art of*



Loving, his best-selling book (twenty-five million copies). Basically, Fromm was referring to the love of life, or "biophilia" in his later terminology in *The Heart of Man* (Friedman, p. 255). The subtitle also refers to a certain prophetic stance, which according to Friedman characterizes Fromm's later works. This was probably rooted in Fromm's reading of the Old Testament prophets, and this root is made explicit in *You Shall Be as Gods*.

The book is divided in three parts. Part One is devoted to Fromm's roots in Germany. Part Two bears the title "The Americas", which refers to Fromm's move to the U.S. in 1933 and his twenty-three-year stay in Mexico after the war. Part Three, "Global Citizenship", refers to Fromm's political activism. In this connection, in the Foreword Gerald Grob gives first place to Friedman's stress on Fromm's political activism during the Cold War. He next says that the analysis of Fromm's early life is "another first" for this volume. I do not agree on this point, because I find Funk's biography is very revealing in this connection. As a concluding remark on the parts of the book, I may suggest that Fromm's return to Europe towards the end of his life was for him a home-coming, much like Ulysses returned to Ithaca.

In the Prologue to the book, the author says that his emphasis on Fromm's political activism is rooted in his own political involvement in the 1960s (p. xxi). He then states his opinion that *Escape from Freedom*, Fromm's first book in 1941, is "the deepest and most important" of his books (p. xxii). Accordingly, he devotes the whole of Chapter 4 to it. There are two focuses in *Escape*: totalitarian regimes and conformity in democracies, but, since the war was on, Fromm concentrates on the first. *Escape* was the outcome of Fromm's pre-war cooperation with the Frankfurt School of critical theory and its Marxian orientation, in the course of which he wrote his early papers, which according to Friedman were his most scholarly works. In particular, in those years Fromm developed his concept of the "social character", possibly his most important contribution, fully described at the end of *Escape*. According to Fromm, society reproduces itself by creating through the family the suitable character structure in individuals. He applied this concept in two important research projects: before the war, impelled by the rise of Nazism, he studied the character structure of German workers, and after the war that of Mexican peasants. Other themes of *Escape* will be taken up again in later works: the distinction between selfishness and self-love (p. 107) returns in *Man for Himself* and again in *The Art of Loving*, and destructiveness (p. 114) is at the core of *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. Fromm's optimism in *Escape* (p. 114) was based on the development of democracy, and was eventually justified by the outcome of the war.

Another important contribution in the pre-war years was Fromm's re-discovery of Bachofen's concept of matriarchy as a stage in human development antedating patriarchy.

Another point made by Friedman in the Prologue is that Fromm's ideas were closely intertwined with personal events in his life. An example provided later in the book (p. 170) is *The Art of Loving*, which Fromm wrote while deeply in love with his third wife, Annis Freeman. Fromm's childhood was marked by a depressed mother and tension between the parents, whereby he felt that the mother asked him to defend her against the father (p. 5). As is obvious from Figure 1, as a child Fromm's mother kept him for a long time with long hair and a girl's attire. As a result, according to Friedman, Fromm developed an "emotional triangle". "The three corners represent exuberance, depres-



sion and marginality" (p. xxx). "The first corner, exuberance, consisted of what clinicians too readily label 'hypomania'" (ibid.). In this connection, being a clinician, I think it may well be that Fromm's mother, in addition to an adverse relational atmosphere, also transmitted to her son a genetic predisposition to bipolar disorder. In connection with the second corner, the author says that "major illnesses throughout his life were also dispiriting" (p. xxxi). I suggest that there may have been a reciprocal relationship between Fromm's somatic complaints and psychological factors. Hypomanic behavior, such as "gorging on high-cholesterol food" (p. xxxi) may have contributed to his heart attacks, and these in turn would induce depression. It is very likely that many of his somatic complaints had a psychological component. As Funk reports in his biography, Groddeck was very determined in ascribing Fromm's pre-war bouts of tuberculosis to his difficulty in separating from Frieda Reichmann. As regards marginality, Friedman mentions Fromm's expulsion from the Frankfurt Institute and his later estrangement from the White Institute (p. 122). As a defense against his psychological problems, at the end of the Prologue Friedman lists four "stabilizers" utilized by Fromm: a regular daily schedule, writing, the participation in groups, and spirituality (prophetic Judaism, the Christian mysticism of Meister Eckhart, and Zen Buddhism).

In connection with the group to which Fromm belonged at the end of his life in Locarno, Switzerland, I must correct Friedman on one detail. He describes Boris Luban-Plozza, one of this group, as an "Italian psychoanalyst". Actually, Luban was not Italian but Swiss, from the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland, and was Fromm's doctor. His psychological involvement was with Balint groups, although he may well have had the ambition of being a psychoanalyst.

In the Prologue (xxvii, xxx) and on p. 160, Friedman stresses Fromm's urge to "move on" from one situation to another throughout his life. I suggest that these moves were periodical attempts to break away from his internalized parents, but the repetitiveness and his illnesses show that these attempts were illusory.

In the section on Germany, World War I was later described by Fromm as "the most crucial experience in my life" (p. 9), exposing him to collective violence and predisposing him to his enduring commitment to peace. After his University experience in Heidelberg, Fromm started psychoanalytic training with Frieda Reichmann, but their relationship acquired sexual overtones and they got married. Frieda was eleven years older than Fromm. He may have viewed her as a mother figure, which explains his distress, discussed above, when they separated.

To follow up on this theme, in the section on America Friedman describes Fromm's involvement with Karen Horney, fifteen years older than he was. At a scientific level, together with Horney, Sullivan and Clara Thompson, Fromm took part in what is known as the "neo-Freudian" group, although he objected to having that label applied to himself. This group was part of the broader "Culture and Personality" movement, including anthropologists such as Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and Edward Sapir. This moving away from Freud eventually led to Fromm's expulsion from the Frankfurt Institute in 1939, and in the mid-Fifties to his debate with Marcuse in *Dissent* (p. 191). Soon after the war, Fromm's most important work was perhaps *Man for Himself* (p. 142), with its distinction between humanistic and authoritarian conscience and its stress on the mother-child relationship.



In Chapter 5 Friedman discusses Fromm as a clinician and his concept of center-to-center relatedness. Here a central point is Fromm's move "from couch to chair", as expressed in the title of a paper by his analyst, Marianne Horney Eckardt (2009) and described by Friedman on pp. 125-126. Establishing eye-to-eye contact is justified by modern neurobiology. It belongs to the analogic mode, stemming from the right hemisphere, which is dominant at the beginning of life.

The last period of his life is when Fromm showed his political activism. During the Cold War he was much concerned with the prospect of a nuclear war and the extinction of humankind. He drafted a Manifesto for the American Socialist Party, with the aim of building a "third way" of socialist humanism between American corporate capitalism and Soviet state capitalism, to which he hoped the nonaligned countries could contribute. He advocated reciprocity between America and Russia in achieving nuclear disarmament. To achieve these aims he was in touch with Bertrand Russell and Senator Fulbright (p. 207), and also testified before US Congressional committees. He also contributed to the unsuccessful Presidential campaigns of Adlai Stevenson and Eugene McCarthy. It may also be that he exerted some influence on President Kennedy during the Berlin Crisis and the Cuban Missile crisis.

In this last period, Fromm's central work is *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. In order to write it, Fromm went back to his scholarly tradition and studied areas with which he was unfamiliar, such as ethology and the neurosciences. In it, after challenging the views of Konrad Lorenz (described on p. 301, with an obvious misprint, as a founder of "ethnology" instead of "ethology") on innate aggression, he distinguishes between benign and malignant aggression. In turn, malignant aggression includes sadism, in which the perpetrator enjoys the victim's suffering, and necrophilia, in which the perpetrator wishes to destroy the victim. As an example of the first Fromm describes Himmler, of the second, Hitler. He states that malignant aggressiveness arises in unnatural living conditions, and in this connection cites the observations of Zuckerman on the aggressiveness that broke out in the baboons held in overcrowded conditions in London Zoo.

In fairness to Lorenz, he qualifies his statement on innate aggression. He points out that in other species predation is interspecific, and aggression within the same species is ritualized. Only in humans is aggression intraspecific. This is due to what Lorenz calls "pseudospeciation": humans view members of other groups as belonging to a different species. This process is favored by the increasing diversification of cultures in the course of history, as compared to the cultural uniformity of prehistory. It may serve to overcome an innate reluctance to kill other members of our own species. Another valuable concept of Lorenz is that of the "imprinting" of experience in sensitive periods of childhood.

I now wish to add other comments of my own to this description of the book. I suggest that Fromm's views could be usefully integrated with later developments. In 1983, shortly after Fromm's death, Greenberg and Mitchell published *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*, which has become a classic. In it they make a fundamental distinction between drive models and relational models in psychoanalysis, and within the relational model they discuss Fromm extensively. They state (Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983, p. 106) that Fromm addressed many contemporary psychoanalytic issues decades before others, yet his contributions have gone unrecognized in many quarters. In



their book Fromm is not placed within the narrow confines of "neo-Freudians", but in a much wider framework, together with Heinz Kohut in the USA and the British school of object relations on the other side of the Atlantic. In his biography, Burston (1991, p. 63) speaks of the "profound affinities" between Fromm and the British school. According to the relational model, relatedness is a primary need and is not secondary to the satisfaction of physiological needs, as Freud maintained. This is borne out by experimental research and naturalistic observation: chicks follow the hen for protection from predators and not in order to be fed, for they are quite able to peck food for themselves.

According to Greenberg and Mitchell (1983, p. 182), Ferenczi may well be considered the initiator of the relational model. He has a special historical importance, because towards the end of his life he re-discovered the importance of sexual trauma, the reality of which had been denied by Freud in 1897 (a "disastrous volte-face", according to Bowlby, 1988, p. 78). This leads to distinguishing between the early Freud, when he developed "the most valuable aspects" of his work (Friedman, p. 226), which Fromm always recognized, and the later Freud, when he became the authoritarian leader of an orthodox church. Ferenczi's re-discovery of trauma led to his excommunication, which took the form of considering him insane. Fromm, who had met Ferenczi in Groddeck's institution in Baden-Baden (Friedman, p. 333), rose twice in his defense: the first time in one of his early papers in 1935, in which he juxtaposed Ferenczi to Freud's "patricentric" authoritarian attitude, and the second time in 1958, in opposition to Jones' biography of Freud, in which Jones reiterated the charge of insanity against Ferenczi. Ferenczi may be regarded as the predecessor of the vast literature on trauma which developed after World War 2, following two strands, the emphasis of feminists on the abuse of women and children, and that of Vietnam veterans on war trauma, and which led to the concept of PTSD and to its incorporation into the DSM-III in 1980 - an event that Fromm did not witness, owing to his death that year.

The British school leads me to another connection, that with John Bowlby's attachment theory, which is only mentioned once, on p. 50, in Friedman's book. Fromm could not have been familiar with the whole of attachment theory, because the third volume of Bowlby's trilogy, *Loss*, was published in 1980, the year Fromm died. However, in the Fromm Archive there is a copy of the first volume, *Attachment*, with notes in Fromm's handwriting. On p. 97 of Friedman's book there is a quote from *Escape from Freedom*: "the primary bonds that give security". This is an anticipation of Bowlby's definition of the mother-child relationship as a secure base. Fromm was quite right in making the "universalist assumption" (p. 102) concerning the mother-child bond, so much so that, as Bowlby points out, we have attachment behavior in common with all mammals and with many birds. The bond is innate, but an alienated culture can affect its quality. A frustrated mother can take it out on the child.

Another connection concerns aggression. According to Bowlby's observations, the reactions of a child separated from the mother, either physically or emotionally, go through three stages: at first there is protest, fuelled by what Bowlby calls the "anger of hope", where hope refers to reunion with the mother; if protest is ineffective in achieving reunion, it is followed by despair, fuelled by the "anger of despair"; finally, the third stage is that of detachment, which covers up the underlying despair. I suggest that the anger of hope corresponds to what Fromm calls benign aggression in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, and the anger of despair to malignant aggression.



Within attachment theory, empirical research carried out by Grossmann is relevant to Fromm's pre-war work on German workers. The research concerned the patterns of attachment observed in Mary Ainsworth's Strange Situation in North Germany compared to South Germany. The avoidant pattern was much higher in the North than in the South. This difference correlated with difference in the quality of mothering as noticed in home observations. In the North, mothers were generally less tender and affectionate. "The ideal is an independent, non-clinging infant who does not make demands on the parents but rather unquestioningly obeys their commands" (Grossmann et al., 1985, p. 253). I suggest that in the avoidant Northern children we see the early ontogeny of the authoritarian character.

Another comment concerns matriarchy. In *The Anatomy*, Fromm discusses the archaeological excavations carried out by James Mellaart in the town of Çatal Hüyük in Anatolia, which reveal the remains of a peaceful community dating back to the Early Neolithic, characterized by the worship of the Mother Goddess. Fromm was not aware of other excavations carried out by Marija Gimbutas in the Danube region, which confirm Mellaart's findings. Evidence of the peaceful nature of these communities is attested by the fact that towns were not surrounded by walls and were not built on hill-tops for safety. According to Gimbutas, this culture was destroyed by repeated waves of invasion of a patriarchal and warlike culture from Central Asia. In a recent book, Riane Eisler (2007) discusses the possible origins of this patriarchal culture. All this confirms Fromm's early views on matriarchy, although I find that the term "maternal culture" is preferable, because "matriarchy" implies a symmetry with "patriarchy", both belonging to what Eisler (1987) calls a "dominator" model, which implies that one gender dominates over the other, whereas the maternal culture belongs to what she calls a "partnership" model. In the original hunter-gatherer culture of the Upper Paleolithic there was a spontaneous division of labor. Women were gatherers because this activity was compatible with carrying a baby (Bowlby, 1969, p. 293). Modern totalitarian states such as Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union may be regarded as a patriarchal backlash.

Finally, the archaeological evidence for these peaceful communities is compatible with the views of modern evolutionary biology on the evolution of altruistic behavior (Sober & Wilson, 1998; Boehm, 1999). This development confirms Fromm's basic optimism concerning human nature. Evolutionary biologist W.D. Hamilton presented in 1964 what he called kin-selection theory. As Mark Erickson (2006) says: "It is nothing short of a paradigm shift. Many now regard Hamilton's contribution as the most significant amendment to evolutionary biology since Darwin. ... Natural selection maximises the ability of individual organisms ... to gain genetic representation in future generations. ... The most obvious prediction of kin-selection theory is that altruistic behaviors (e.g., parental care, defense against predators) will be ... preferably bestowed on kin".

The frustration of this basic need may explain Fromm's pain, described by Funk and reported by Friedman (p. 23), at not having had children. His parental inclination showed in his paternal attitude towards Joseph Gurland, his second wife's son by a previous marriage. At first Fromm married a much older woman (Frieda Reichmann), then a sick and depressed woman who committed suicide (Henny Gurland: p. 133). When finally he had a happy marriage with Annis Freeman, it was too late. Why did this happen? Again, Bowlby can be of help with his concept of role reversal. A depressed



mother cannot give because she wants to receive, and therefore tries to keep the child bound by multiple binding mechanisms. Depression in the mother elicits premature and inappropriate caregiving behavior in the child. There was also implicit seductiveness on the part of Fromm's mother in making her son feel he had to defend her against the father. At a deep unconscious level, I suggest that Fromm could not have children of his own because he had to look after his mother as his child.

These additions to Friedman's biography establish connections between Fromm and later developments after his death (attachment theory, the trauma literature, evolutionary biology, neurobiology). They confirm the continuing relevance of Fromm's views and hence the timeliness of this book.

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