



FROMM-Online

Credo

Erich Fromm

- I believe that the unity of man as opposed to other living things derives from the fact that man is the conscious life of himself. Man is conscious of himself, of his future, which is death, of his smallness, of his impotence; he is aware of others as others; man is in nature, subject to its laws even if he transcends it with his thought.
- I believe that man is the product of natural evolution that is born from the conflict of being a prisoner and separated from nature, and from the need to find unity and harmony with it.
- I believe that the nature of man is a contradiction rooted in the conditions of human existence that requires a search for solutions, which in their turn create new contradictions and now the need for answers.
- I believe that every answer to these contradictions can really satisfy the condition of helping man to overcome the sense of separation and to achieve a sense of agreement, of unity, and of belonging.
- I believe that in every answer to these contradictions, man has the possibility of choosing only between going forward or going back; these choices, which are translated into specific actions, are means toward the regressing or toward the progressing of the humanity that is in us.
- I believe that the fundamental alternative for man is the choice between „life“ and „death“; between creativity and destructive violence; between reality and illusions; between objectivity and intolerance; between brotherhood-independence and dominance-submission.
- I believe that one can attribute to „life“ the significance of continuous birth and constant development.
- I believe that one can attribute to „death“ the significance of suspension of growth; continuous repetition.
- I believe that man, with the regressive answer, tries to find unity, liberating himself from the unbearable fear of loneliness and uncertainty, distorting that which makes him human and torments him. The regressive orientation develops in three manifestations, separate or together: necrophilia, narcissism, and incestuous symbiosis.

By *necrophilia* is meant love for all that is violence and destruction; the desire to kill; the worship of force; attraction to death, to suicide, to sadism; the desire to transform the organic into the inorganic by means of „order.“ The necrophile, lacking the necessary qualities to create, in his impotence finds it easy to destroy because for him it serves only one quality: force.

By *narcissism* is meant ceasing to have an authentic interest in the outside world but instead an intense attachment to oneself, to one's own group, clan, religion, nation, race, etc.-with consequent serious distortions of rational judgment. In general, the need for narcissistic satisfaction derives from the necessity to compensate for material and cultural poverty.

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 respon-



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sibility, of freedom, of awareness, and to be protected and loved in a state of certainty dependence that the individual pays for with the ceasing of his own human development.

- I believe that the man choosing progress can find a new unity through the full development of all his human forces, which are produced in three orientations. These can be presented separately or together: biophilia, love for humanity and nature, and independence and freedom.
- I believe that love is the main key to open the doors to the „growth“ of man. Love and union with someone or something outside of oneself, union that allows one to put oneself into relationship with others, to feel one with others, without limiting the sense of integrity and independence. Love is a productive orientation for which it is essential that there be present at the same time: concern, responsibility, and respect for and knowledge of the object of the union.
- I believe that the experience of love is the most human and humanizing act that it is given to man to enjoy and that it, like reason, makes no sense if conceived in a partial way.
- I believe in the need for „liberty from“ internal and/or external ties, as a preliminary condition for being able to have „liberty to“ create, build, want to know, etc., to be able to become a free, active, responsible individual.
- I believe that freedom is the capacity to follow the voice of reason and knowledge, against the voices of irrational passions; that it is the emancipation that renders man free and puts him on the way to using his own rational faculties and to understanding objectively the world and his own part in it.
- I believe that „struggling for freedom“ has in general had the sole meaning of struggling against the authority which is imposed, overcoming individual will. Today, „struggling for freedom“ should mean freeing ourselves individually and collectively from the „authority“ to which we have submitted „willingly“; freeing ourselves from the inner forces that necessitate this subjection because we are incapable of bearing freedom.
- I believe that *freedom* is not a constant attribute that „we have“ or „we don't have“; perhaps there is only one reality: the act of liberating ourselves in the process of using choices. Every step in life that heightens the maturity of man heightens his ability to choose the freeing alternative.
- I believe that „freedom of choice“ is not always equal for all men at every moment. The man with an exclusively necrophilic orientation; who is narcissistic; or who is symbiotic-incestuous, can only make a regressive choice. The free man, freed from irrational ties, can no longer make a regressive choice.
- I believe that the problem of freedom of choice exists only for the man with contrasting orientations, and also this freedom is always strongly conditioned by unconscious desires and by placating rationalizations.
- I believe that none can „save“ his fellow man by making a choice for him. To help him, he can indicate the possible alternatives, with sincerity and love, without being sentimental and without illusion. The knowledge and awareness of the freeing al-



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ternatives can reawaken in an individual all his hidden energies and put him on the path to choosing respect for „life“ instead of for „death.“

- I believe that equality is felt when, completely discovering oneself, one recognizes that one is equal to others and one identifies oneself with them. Every individual bears humanity inside himself; „the human condition“ is unique and equal for all men, in spite of the inevitable differences in intelligence, talent, height, color, etc.
- I believe that *equality* between men must be remembered, especially, to prevent one man's becoming the instrument of another.
- I believe that *brotherhood* is love directed toward one's fellow men. It will remain, however, a word without sense, until all „incestuous“ ties that prevent one from being able to judge the „brother“ objectively are eradicated.
- I believe that if an individual is not on the path to transcending his society and seeing in what way it furthers or impedes the development of human potential, he cannot enter into intimate contact with his humanity. If the tabus, restrictions, distorted values appear „natural“ to him, this is a clear indication that he cannot have a real knowledge of human nature.
- I believe that society, while having a function both stimulating and inhibiting at the same time, has always been in conflict with humanity. Only when the purpose of society is identified with that of humanity will society cease to paralyze man and encourage his dominance.
- I believe that one can and must hope for a sane society that furthers man's capacity to love his fellow men, to work and create, to develop his reason and his objectivity of a sense of himself that is based on the experience of his productive energy.
- I believe that one can and must hope for the collective regaining of a mental health that is characterized by the capacity to love and to create; by the liberation of man from incestuous ties with the clan and the soil; by a sense of identity based on the experience that the individual has of himself as the subject and agent of his powers; by the capacity to affect reality inside and outside of himself and bring about the development of objectivity and reason.
- I believe that inasmuch as this world of ours seems to become mad and dehumanized, an ever greater number of individuals will feel the need to associate and work with men who share their worries.
- I believe that these men of good intention should not only arrive at a human interpretation of the world, but must point the way and work for a possible transformation. An interpretation without wish for change is useless; a change without preliminary interpretation is blind.
- I believe in the possible realization of a world in which man can *be* much, even if he *has* little; a world in which the dominant motivation of existence is not consumption; a world in which „man“ is the end, first and last; a world in which man can find the way of giving a purpose to his life as well as the strength to live free and without illusions.

Presumably written in 1965, but not published by Erich Fromm.