

# Introduction

Rainer Funk and Neil McLaughlin

No theoretical system can be successful “unless we recognize that, and why, every system as it is developed and presented by its author *is necessarily erroneous*”. When Erich Fromm wrote these lines at the end of his life in his *Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought* (1979a, p. 1) he had in mind the creative ideas of Sigmund Freud. Fromm was a great admirer of psychoanalytic insights, but he had the courage and insight in the 1930s to challenge Freud's view that most of the psychic strivings and irrationality are the outcome of drives inherent in the biological constitution of man (Roazen 1996). Fromm replaced Freud's libido theory by a theory based on the psychic need to be related – to other individuals, to reality, to social groups he belongs to and to oneself, and thus created his own unique and influential social criticism and theory of social character in such works of critical social science as *Escape from Freedom* (1941a), *Man for Himself* (1947a), *The Sane Society* (1955a), *The Heart of Man* (1964a) *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a) and *To Have Or to Be?* (1976a). The goal of this edited book is to document the global reception, continuing influence and contemporary relevance of Erich Fromm's theories while discussing some of his limitations in the spirit of Fromm's own understanding of how theoretical systems work.

All thinkers have their personal limitations, of course, something Fromm documented in his writings about Sigmund Freud to the distress of the founder of psychoanalysis' most uncritical followers; we aim to go deeper than this obvious point because Fromm's insistence on the need to constantly revise and refine theoretical systems, was based on a more pro-

found philosophical, historical and sociological account of the nature of knowledge production than one based on critiquing individual thinkers. One important dynamic at play in the creation of theoretical systems is that when a creative and innovative author has something new to say that has not been thought or said before, he or she has no choice but to express this new thought in the spirit of the time in which they lived. Moreover, because different societies have different kinds of 'common sense,' different categories of thinking, and different systems of logic therefore every society has its own 'social filter' that makes it difficult to see, understand or experience some truths that will be obvious to later generations.

In *Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought* (1979a) Fromm also states that for the one who revises the idea of another thinker the same holds true:

The process of revision of an author, which distinguishes the essential and new from the contingent, time-conditioned elements, is in itself also the product of a certain historical period that influences the interpretation. In this creative interpretation, again creative and valid elements are mixed with time-bound and accidental ones. The revision is not simply true as the original was not simply false. (Fromm 1979a, p. 4)

Thirty five years after these lines were written we may ask which of Fromm's creative ideas are groundbreaking and in which way these ideas were expressed in a time-conditioned frame of reference? That is to say, we aim to build on Fromm insights all the time looking for new evidence and looking critically at the concepts that highlight what Fromm sensed and perceived but expressed in concepts that in our days are limited or even obsolete.

These themes of the relevance of Fromm's creative ideas for today, the review of Fromm's reception and this kind of critical reappraisal of his work were topics of discussion for the first International Erich Fromm Research Conference that took place end of June 2014 at the International Psychoanalytic University in Berlin. Most papers presented in this volume have their origins in presentations given at this conference participated in by some fifty specialists from all over the world. A major focus of the conference consisted in providing a differentiated survey of the various and widespread fields and cultural contexts in which Fromm's ideas are being discussed. This is important not simply because of the global influence of

his work, but also because it is essential to understand the varied ways he was interpreted and used according to the different pressing social issues and existing social filters of the various cultural contexts his work was read in. This volume will thus document the continuing influence of Fromm in Germany and throughout Europe and Latin America, and a revival of interest in his work in North America and Japan and new space for his ideas in Russia and, most surprisingly in China. The interest in Fromm's ideas is remarkable in China, a nation leading along with European scholars what can only be called a world revival of interest in his work that is happening in the social scientists particularly sociology, psychology and psychoanalysis, and the study of philosophy, theology and religious studies. But this volume does not simply document Fromm's continuing use and relevance, it centrally engages with his theoretical system directly and critically, suggesting ways that new research, theories and insights in neurosciences, evolutionary psychology, sociology, philosophy, religious studies and radical humanist public intellectual work can help us move beyond some of the limitations of his work so that we can better reformulate his insights in order to address the current crisis of inequality, violence, cultural crisis and environmental destruction and climate change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **What did Fromm mean by Science?**

Before talking about Fromm's core concepts and his global and interdisciplinary reception, we must step back for a moment to clarify what Fromm meant by "science." Fromm's view on the time-limited nature of all theoretical systems was rooted in a broader philosophy of science, and for this reason this volume begins with the republication of a 1957 essay called "The Humanistic Science of Man" originally sketched under the title "Institute for the Science of Man".

According to Erich Fromm, science means

an attitude of objectivity. It is a human attitude (...) to have the courage (...) to examine whether the data that we gathered confirmed our idea or disproved it, and whether one had the courage to change a theory if the data showed that they had not proved it (Fromm 1991e, p. 64).

This attitude of objectivity was particularly important in the modern society of the 1950s where Fromm observed that

the average person has become the consumer of science and expects that the scientist knows it all (...) people are convinced that scientists are like priests, who have complete certainty about the world. (...) There is somebody at least who has certainty and conviction, and one feels a sense of security oneself” (Fromm 1991e, p. 65).

Some twenty years later Horst-Eberhard Richter called this phenomenon “Gotteskomplex” (Richter 1979), and the public attitudes it describes still are widespread. In contemporary society, however, the unquestioned status of science has been eroded by the influence of various relativist philosophies of knowledge and the attacks on scientific reasoning lead by religious fanatics of various faiths and the influence of conservative and left-wing populism empowered by the failure of established elites to solve the growing social and economic problems facing the world at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Fromm’s open attitude toward existing theories and insistence on following the data where it leads is thus even more important today than it was in the 1950s, as reason itself is under siege in large parts of the world just as it was in Europe of the 1930s.

Yet science, for Fromm, is not “positivism” or “scientism” where the method of the natural science are aped by social thinkers in a simplistic way that distorts the insights of what must be a human science. Fromm made this criticism as early as 1957 when he pointed out that

the social sciences of today (with a number of notable exceptions), impressed by the success and prestige of the natural sciences, try to apply the methods of the natural sciences to the furthering of mankind. Not only do they not ask themselves whether the method which is valid for the study of things is also valid for the study of man, but they even fail to question whether this concept of the scientific method is not naive and outdated. They believe that only a method that counts and weighs can be called *scientific*, forgetting that the most advanced natural sciences today, such as theoretical physics, operate with bold hypotheses based on imaginative inferences. (...) There is a difference between ‘the objective’ approach, in which ‘the object’ is nothing but an object, and an approach in which the observer at the same time relates empathically to the persons he observes. (Fromm 1991e, pp. 102–3.)

Fromm has an enormous influence on the social sciences starting in the 1930s through the early 1960s, but he was never central to the disciplines of sociology, political science anthropology, not to mention economics and psychology, largely because of the dominance of the outmoded model of science Fromm critiques in his work. While Fromm developed his model of science to a very large extent by critiquing the positivist strains within Freud's system, psychoanalysis has generally been more open to moving beyond a simplistic positivist model than most social science with the possible exception of cultural anthropology. It is no accident that the conference was sponsored by the International Psychoanalytic University of Berlin; the model Fromm outlined for a psychoanalytic social science is consistent with the dominant approach in that association.

President Teising opened the conference in Berlin stressing how influential Fromm was as both a role model and intellectual inspiration for him individually along with a couple of generations of analysts now, and central to this influence was the power of his scientific thinking for the development of a human science engaged in healing and social reform outside the ivory academic tower. And this influence was centrally due to the power of Fromm's critique of libido theory, a major residue of outdated 19<sup>th</sup> century positivism in Freud's thought and a limitation Fromm transcended precisely by seeing psychoanalytic theory as created in a particular time and place as well as insisting that it be tested against empirical data.

According to Fromm, Freud's thought was limited by his adherence to a 19<sup>th</sup> century mechanistic theory that led him to look for a biological root for neurosis, something Fromm challenged directly. As President Teising quotes Fromm succinctly, Fromm believes that

the basic inner forces which determine man's life (...) are not his instinctual needs (although they are important too) but those which stem from the very nature and condition of human existence and its inherent contradictions (Fromm 1991e, p. 54).

And furthermore, for Fromm

these fundamental needs include the necessity for relatedness, rootedness, transcendence (creativity and destruction), sense of identity and frame of

orientation and devotion. (...) Man is a “freak of nature”; lacking the instinctive equipment which regulates the life of all animals, but gifted instead with reason, imagination, and self-awareness, life becomes for him a problem which must be solved (Fromm 1991e, p. 54).

Teising emphasizes that in the paper of 1955 that leads off this book, “Fromm defines his own position in the field of psychoanalysis. Fromm stresses his connection to Freud, recognizing that the most important of Freud’s findings have been widely accepted, at the same time not refraining from accentuating his differences with Freud.” In particular, Teising points out that for Fromm, “the polarity of Freud’s late drive theory never found the same applications to clinical data” as did some of his earlier theories and thus he, operating with the same kind of scientific objectivity we will bring to our examination of Fromm’s ideas here, rejected Freud’s view that destructiveness was “an expression of the death-drive.” Fromm’s critique of Freudian orthodoxy, as well as his critical engagement with Marxism and various forms of Jewish messianism defined his powerful set of ideas that shaped so much of 20<sup>th</sup> century intellectual in Europe, and North and South America, but we have now entered a new stage of the reception of Fromm that we hope this volume represents. In order to contribute to this new discussion, this introduction will 1) briefly review some global trends in the reception of Fromm; 2) outline some trends in his reception among the professions and selected academic disciplines, and 3) suggest some ways forward for the development of Fromm’s theory of social character. Each of these three goals is reflected in various contributions in this book, and we will highlight the some important work not included in this volume as well as discuss how the various essays in the book contribute to this larger goal of looking at the greatness, influence and limitations of Fromm’s work with an eye towards the development of a human science.

## **A Global Public Intellectual and Scholar: The Maturation of Contemporary Fromm Scholarship**

Fromm was arguably one of the first truly global public intellectuals, after emerging on the world intellectual scene with his hugely influential and

powerful analysis of Nazism in *Escape from Freedom* (1941a). Fromm had been influential among the critical theorists we now know of as the Frankfurt School in Germany in the late 1920s and early 1930s but it was in his exile and adventure in America that he gained world-wide fame and a global audience with his own unique synthesis of Freudian, Marxist, sociological and Jewish radical intellectual traditions. The theoretical synthesis was developed in scholarly publications in the 1920s and 1930s, but with *Man for Himself* (1947a), *The Sane Society* (1955a) and *The Art of Loving* (1956a), Fromm was widely read by mass publics around the world, particularly in the English speaking world (the United States, Britain and Canada, in particular) most of Western and Central and Eastern Europe and throughout Latin America, where he lived from 1950 to his retirement years back in Europe. There has been a distortion in the reception of Fromm's work, however, because in North America, in particular, his intellectual reputation was damaged severely during the Cold War period and the 1960s by attacks on his work by orthodox Freudians, dogmatic Marxists and neo-conservatives intellectuals. It has even been argued that by the 1970s and 1980s, Fromm had become a "forgotten intellectual" among elite intellectuals and scholars in the English-speaking world.

Fromm was never really forgotten, however, in large parts of Europe, and indeed the reception of his work has been steadily growing in Germany since the late 1970s when he spent his last years in Switzerland and appeared extensively in German media. Rainer Funk's Dissertation (*Mut zum Menschen*, published 1978 and translated to English as *The Courage to Be Human*, New York 1982) was the first publication that pulled together a discussion of Fromm's life and his various influences, shaping the reception of Fromm after his death. There were numerous other dissertations published in German language in the eighties (mostly importantly Wehr, Klein, Bierhoff, Hardeck, Bader). European conferences on Fromm took place as early as 1981 in Yugoslavia in Dubrovnik and more or less from 1986 on every year in Italy and the Fromm Society's national and international conferences from 1985 on in various German and European cities. This book thus has a strong representation of this continuing influence of Fromm in Europe and Germany, with two essays by Rainer Funk, and one by Jürgen Hardeck.

The same relative continuity in the reception of Fromm's work can be

seen in Latin America, led by the participatory action research agenda and psychoanalytic theorizing of Sonja Gojman de Millán and Salvador Millán from Mexico. While the German reception of Fromm has seen an emphasis also on Fromm's contributions as a philosopher, education researcher and student of religion, the Latin American scholarship particularly has emphasized Fromm's engaged research on social character, represented here by the Milláns' summary of their three decades of research with poor communities in Mexico. It makes sense, of course, that Fromm scholarship in Latin America would emphasize the engaged elements of his work, given his years spent in Mexico City where he founded the Mexican psychoanalytic Institute, dialogued with a generation of Latin American intellectuals temporarily exiled from dictatorships in Brazil, Argentina and elsewhere. The Milláns held the first conference on Fromm, in Mexico in 1981, and have been refining and developing the method Fromm outlined first in *Social Character in a Mexican Village* (1970b) for three decades now. In the social sciences since the 1970s, there has been an enormous growth of participatory action research, particularly in North American sociology and social work, although little of it has taken into account the tradition of social character research represented by Maccoby in the United States and the Milláns in Mexico.

Even in North America where a number of myths about Fromm became almost conventional wisdom (he allegedly was a Freudian revisionist hostile to Freud, a simplistic popularizer who was never a theoretically important member of the Frankfurt School, and his political views were dangerous and naïve), there has been a revival of Fromm's ideas beginning in the early years of the 1980s and 1990s. With the English translation of Rainer Funk *The Courage to be Human* (1982) and later Daniel Burston's *The Legacy of Erich Fromm* (1991) we had two full-length studies on Fromm's ideas and influence that began to revive interest in his work in North America after a couple of decades of attacks on his ideas. Michael Maccoby's research group based in Washington had continued the development of Fromm's social character theory after his death, based on Maccoby's own co-authorship and training with Fromm that produced *Social Character in a Mexican Village* (1970b) and his own interest in organizational leadership. This was an uphill battle in North America, because of the concerted efforts of Fromm's many enemies among orthodox Freudians, dogmatic Marxists, neo-conservative Cold warriors and the academic establishments in sociology, philos-



ophy, anthropology, political science and religious studies and theology had left Fromm relatively isolated among the intellectual elite in the English speaking world. Fromm's central role in the creation of Frankfurt School critical theory had previously been erased from historical memory. And his influence within humanist psychology, early feminist thinking and the social scientific study of religion had been largely forgotten.

The North America Fromm revival continues with historian Lawrence Friedman's biography *Love's Prophet: The Lives of Erich Fromm* (2013). Written over a ten year period by a major American biographer and intellectual historian, and published by the prestigious Columbia University Press, *Love's Prophet* has been widely and largely positively reviewed and has been instrumental in reminding the intellectual public, in North America, at least, of Fromm's seminal contributions to psychoanalytic theory, social criticism and public intellectual life. Combined with the efforts of intellectual historian Thomas Wheatland *The Frankfurt School in Exile* (2009) and the critical theorists Stephen Eric Bronner (1994), Douglas Kellner (1992) and Kevin Anderson (1998), and political scientist Jack Jacobs (2014), Fromm's role in bringing Freud and Marx together in a critical theory research agenda in Frankfurt and at Columbia in the late 1920s and early 1930s that laid the foundation for the theory of the authoritarian personality research tradition is now indisputable. This volume has essays by many of the major contributors to the revival of Fromm's reputation in North America, including Maccoby, the psychoanalyst Maurico Cortina, the prominent America Marxist sociologist Kevin Andersen and the philosopher Joan Braune. A similar revival of Fromm's influence in Japan is happening, as he was highly influential in the 1950s but lost status in the social sciences in later years, only to find new audiences in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century as discussed by Takeshi Deguchi in this volume.

There is enormous room for growth in the reception of Erich Fromm in the Global South and countries that lived under communist dictatorships during the height of Fromm's influence in the West. Probably the biggest surprise in this book is the data presented that shows a massive interest in Fromm's work in China over the past couple of decades. There have been more dissertations written in China on Erich Fromm over the past 10 years than in the rest of the world in the same period, and the scholarship there tends to emphasize themes of belletristic literature, social theory, concepts

of man, alienation, religion while psychoanalytic theory or psychological research is not the focus of interest. The Marxist Fromm was once also influential in Japan and interest is returning to these ideas given the economic conditions in the country today (cf. Takechi Deguchi's contribution). Fromm is being discussed more frequently in Russia in recent years, with translations of his work and new debates about his relevance, as reflected in the contributions of two Russian philosophers here (Tatjana Panfilova and Nikolay Omelchenko). And while we do not have contributors in the book from Arab or Muslim majority countries or Africa, the visibility of Fromm's writings during the Arab spring suggests that Fromm's focus on freedom and skepticism towards consumerist modernity and critique of the inequalities of capitalism will find a new audience in coming decades.

We are thus entering a stage of the reception of Erich Fromm where the reach of his work is now truly global. Fromm, of course, was never a parochial thinker, having grown up in Germany, spent years in cosmopolitan New York, and lived in Mexico for 23 years. And Fromm's theories were concerned with a universal human science; his work always dealt with global politics from a comparative perspective. Yet his influence was strongest in North America, Japan, and Latin America in the middle years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and especially in Germany in the 1970s and among intellectuals of socialist and humanist circles in Europe in the sixties and seventies (Poland, Hungary, and the former Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia). Fromm's ideas often spread during times of social crisis and change, and the fall of the Iron Curtain and the period of the Arab Spring created a tremendous interest in Fromm in Eastern and Central Europe and now in the Middle East. One of the contributions of this volume is to frame the reception of Fromm's work in comparative and global terms, suggesting the need for new research on the influence and applicability of Fromm's theory of social character in China, Russia and in Arab and/or Muslim majority states.

### **Fromm's growing influence among the professions and academic disciplines**

A major dynamic that is fueling this new global reception of Fromm is that there is now new room for Fromm's ideas within various applied professions

and academic disciplines and applied professions that did not exist previously when Fromm was under attack by his many critics. Fromm, of course, was influential with American psychoanalysis in the 1940s and 1950s, but there was a number decades where orthodox Freudian hostility to Fromm's revision of Freud pushed his ideas to the margins of the profession. Jay Greenberg's and Stephen Mitchell's influential 1983 book *Object relations in psychoanalytic theory* was the beginning of a new trend in writings on the history of psychoanalysis in North America that restored Fromm's place in the development of cutting edge theory in the field, a trend that has increased as relational and object relations have gained influence. The magnificent historical research and psychoanalytic theorizing of the late Stephen Mitchell has re-introduced Fromm's role in 20<sup>th</sup> century psychoanalysis as an important precursor to the influential contemporary relational, object relations and self psychology schools of thought.

Recent decades have seen a global trend towards integrating Fromm's contribution to the psychoanalytic profession. Romano Biancoli pioneered the application of Fromm's social character theory to psychotherapy and psychoanalytic treatment and founded a Frommian training institute in Bologna in the late 1980s. Marco Bacciagaluppi of Milan applied Fromm's relational psychoanalytic approach to psychotherapeutic treatment and published his papers in both English (in the influential journal *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*) and Italian. And Fromm's influence remains strong and has been developed further in Mexico by Jorge Silva and Salvador Millán and Sonia Gojman de Millán of the *Seminario Sociopsicoanalítico*. Rainer Funk's edited collection *The Clinical Erich Fromm: Personal Accounts and Papers on Therapeutic Technique* (2009) published also in German and Spanish has pulled together a discussion of Fromm's global influence on analytic technique in a volume that will likely help frame the debate over the next decade.

Much of the scholarship on Fromm has tended to emphasize the ways his psychoanalytic thinking helped influence therapists, social workers, clergy and educators, and recent years have also seen a revival and expansion of interest in Fromm's work in the helping professions and applied professions. We have seen calls for bringing Fromm's work back into social work practices (Rasmussen and Salhani 2008) and an explosion of literature on critical pedagogy based on the work of Paulo Freire, some of which takes

account of Fromm's contributions to radical educational thinking (Matias and Allen 2013). We have also seen a new focus on the kind of participatory action research tradition pioneered by Fromm in *Social Character in a Mexican Village* (1970b, pp. 203–25).

In addition, while so much of the response to Fromm's work among theologians and religious scholars in 1940s, 1950s and 1960s was critical, we are seeing a revival of work among Christian, Jewish and humanist scholars concerned with questions of spirituality and Fromm's radical humanism. Some of the most important works that deal with Fromm's religious thought are Angelo M. Caligiuri (1966), Brian Richard Betz (1974), Jörg Jeremias (1983), Jürgen Hardeck 1992, Svante Lundgren (1998). This trend is represented in this volume by Jan Dietrich's contribution on "Erich Fromm in Hebrew Bible research" and in Dietmar Mieth's discussion of Fromm's position in the reception of Master Eckhart.

One of the important developments in recent years in Fromm scholarship in English has been the publication of three major books of political philosophy and social theory addressing Fromm's contributions in sophisticated ways. Lawrence Wilde *Erich Fromm and the quest for solidarity* (2004) and, more recently, Kieran Durkin's *The radical humanism of Erich Fromm*. (2014) and Joan Braune's *Erich Fromm's revolutionary hope: Prophetic Messianism as a Critical Theory of the future* (2014) have put Fromm's philosophical thinking back on the agenda for scholars. While the influence of Fromm's ideas on applied fields like psychoanalysis, social work and education is vitally important, in the end, it is Fromm's theoretical contribution that must be emphasized and refined. So we will conclude by talking about what we see as the central contribution of Fromm's ideas represented by his concept of man as a relational and social being and by his theory of social character, and suggest some directions for its development in light of new developments in the human sciences since Fromm's death.

## **Conclusion: Building on the greatness and limitations of Fromm's thought**

By returning to where we started with our discussion of what we mean by a human science, it must be said that despite the excitement created by

both the continuing and new interest in the work of Erich Fromm, the full potential of his ideas will not be felt unless we address head on the time-bound aspects of Fromm's work as he himself did with Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, Johann Jacob Bachofen and all the major thinkers he engaged with to produce his theory of social character. The debate and discussion about Fromm's work has shifted in recent decades away from a concern with whether he is really a Freudian or a Marxist, and what he disagrees with in these systems of thought, to a new level of debate about Fromm's own theory on its own terms. From our perspective, the core of Fromm's ideas worth building on for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is his scientifically sound concept of man as a social being and his theory of social character.

Fromm's own theoretical system was built, of course, on the foundation of Freud's theory of character and Marx's historical materialism but with an innovative revision of both. What is special about both Fromm's psychoanalytic approach and his sociological-historical analysis is that he understands the person as having always been related to others not only in the sense of interactive sociality but as a social relatedness that precedes all concrete perceptions of relatedness because it is rooted in a larger social structure. This larger social structure has its psychic representation in the social character. The social character has the same function that Steven Mitchell assigns to the "relational matrix" (Mitchell 1988, pp. 41ff.) as the connection between the intrapsychic and the interpersonal therefore the various relational and interpersonal versions of psychoanalysis that emerged since Fromm's early theoretical writings have created new space for social character theory. It is more possible today to connect Freudian insights on character to sociological perspectives on history and social structure than it was in the 1930s and 1940s when orthodox Freudian theories dominated the field. And Fromm's theory of social character does a far better job of connecting the intrapsychic to the social than anything that has yet been developed within either psychoanalysis or sociology. For Fromm, the interpersonal is subordinated to the social. It is involved in two intrapsychic structural dimensions: the social character and the individual character. For the intersubjective construction of reality, this means (expressed in Mitchell's terms) that not only the personal, but also the social "microcosms of the relational field" (Mitchell 2003, p. 57) play a part in organizing the self and the outside world.

According to Fromm

The members of the society and/or the various classes or status groups within it have to behave in such a way as to be able to function in the sense required by society. It is the function of the social character to shape the energies of the members of society in such a way that their behavior is not left to conscious decisions whether or not to follow the social pattern but that *people want to act as they have to act* and at the same time find gratification in acting according to the requirements of the culture. In other words, the social character has the function of molding human energy for the purpose of the functioning of a given society. (Fromm 1949c, p. 5.)

Fromm always tries to see the person, even in his intersubjectivity and relatedness, as a social being. He thus overcomes, theoretically and clinically, a social amnesia that social scientists, in particular, accuse psychoanalytic theory and practice of showing. Sociologists have begun again to examine their own traditions critically with regards to their ignoring of the power of feeling and emotions and are making finding their way to the more sociological oriented currents within psychoanalysis such as object relations, relational and self-psychology (Chancer and Andrews 2014).

We argue, however, that the false dichotomy of individual psychology and social structure is not really transcended by relational psychoanalysis or the intersubjective paradigms. Comparing Fromm's approach with the intersubjective approach, as Stolorow and Atwood developed it, Fromm's perspective surpasses the dimension of intersubjectivity in order to allow us to do justice to the social imprint of society's norms on individual people. A person's sociability is defined in the intersubjective paradigm only from the interactive social position, and not from that which the person has to develop in terms of irrational pathogenic drives to adjust to the demands of a certain society. The intersubjective paradigm thus lacks the potential for social critique that allowed Freud to recognize the meaning of repressed sexual urges in the development of psychic illnesses and brought Fromm to unmask authoritarianism as pathogenic, given its inherent quest for both power and subordination. At issue is a social-psychological approach that highlights what society needs to function and how this is manifested in the person as a powerful striving. And crucially for Fromm's theory of social character, we can use it to help understand when society's needs and the passions this creates also make human beings sick.

We would argue that there are three major social crises in the contempo-

rary world situation that cannot be fully understood theoretically without the insights of a rediscovered and revised version of social character theory: the threat of human extinction due to climate change, the outbreak of violence we are seeing around the world in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the accelerating inequality we see globally and internally within most nations.

Looking beyond the specific scientific debates about the causes of climate change, and the policy differences addressing solutions, the reality is there is no realistic way to limit carbon emissions and thus halt global warming without dealing with excessive consumerism. There is no competing social psychological theory that is more focused and useful on this question than Fromm's concept of social character. This social psychoanalytic approach lets us recognize, for example, that the socially required and promoted striving for security, predictability, and quantifiability stifles a person's ability to trust and to love. These powerful internalized consumerist passions prevent critical distance from the consumerism that is omnipresent today, where what goes into a person and what he can acquire and become are the only things that count, rather than what he can bring out of himself by his own abilities. Such consumerism occurs today especially with respect to the experience of feelings and passions. The production of emotions, affects, and passions are in full force and bring the individual to relinquish his innermost perception of feelings and affective powers in order to experience the proffered emotions. The pathogenic effects of this can be seen in insurance companies' statistics of depression and in the inner emptiness and lifelessness that overcome people more and more if they do not let themselves be animated, entertained, stimulated, and enlivened (cf. Funk 2011). Without addressing these issues, the vast majority of people will resist the kinds of societal changes that would be required to prevent catastrophic climate change, leaving us a choice between the destruction of human life on the planet or some kind of anti-democratic imposed solution, enforced by elites.

Similar dynamics are at play, as we watch the emergence of mass movements around the world promoting various hatreds and scapegoating, something that inevitably leads to violence. Elite interests often lay behind state violence, something Fromm highlighted in *Escape from Freedom* (1941a) and *May Man Prevail?* (1961a). But it is not possible to fully understand



the re-emergence of neo-Nazism and fascism throughout Europe, the surprising popularity of Putin in Russia, the violence of radical Islam and the irrationality of the American tea party without some account of the social characters that create a passion for violence, revenge and irrationality in particular historical contexts. As Sagall (2013) has worked out by referring to Fromm's concept of necrophilia sociological and economic theories that operate purely at the structural and rational levels are inadequate, as are social psychological perspectives that connect individual psyches to societal dynamics without a theoretical perspective on human passions that avoids the biological determinism we find in orthodox Freudian theory.

And finally, recent debates about inequality globally and inside Europe, the United States and Latin America, for example, are unproductively polarized between structural perspectives that highlight economic factors and moral and social psychological perspectives that put an emphasis on the individual's role in re-producing the unhealthy patterns of behavior that led to drug abuse and alcoholism, passivity and violence and criminality. Only Fromm's theory of social character allow us to connect the emotions and passions that are imprinted in human psyches by society to the larger historical and structural patterns that must be understood as central to any discussion of poverty, inequality and human hopelessness. From our perspective, one of the important tasks for building a human science in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be taking this theory of social character, and developing it further while identifying the aspects of Fromm's original formulations that were limited by Fromm's own historical conditioning and the theoretical limitations that flow from this.

## **Fromm's theory of social character for the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

We are fortunate to have an essay by Michael Maccoby in this book, and as Fromm's co-author in the most extensive development of the theory in *Social Character in a Mexican Village* (1970b) he is well positioned to frame the history of social character research for us as a living tradition that he has developed over several decades of research with corporate leaders and public sector managers. It is unfortunate that this social character research tradition has not been taken up and developed within contemporary soci-



ology, although recent scholarship has been suggesting that Fromm's ideas could usefully be combined with the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu whose theory of habitus has affinity with theory of social character (Cheliotis 2011). Bourdieu's theory is more sociologically and methodological advanced than the work Fromm did before Bourdieu emerged as a major scholar in the 1970s while at the same time, lacking Fromm's psychoanalytic depth. Kieran Durkin (2014) has also called for more work synthesizing Fromm and Bourdieu, and we think this is a vitally important direction for future research. And we have seen a new opening to psychoanalysis within sociology in recent years, something that bodes well for the further reception of Fromm in that discipline (Chancer and Andrews, 2014; Cheliotis 2011; David-West 2014).

It would be a mistake, however, to think that Fromm's theory can simply be applied to culture sociological questions without addressing current research in the natural sciences, as Fromm did himself in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a). Maurico Cortina's essay in this volume raises important theoretical issues about how Fromm's social character theory must take into account developments in neuro-sciences, attachment theory and our understanding of socio-biology and evolutionary psychology since the publication of *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a). Fromm actually stands out from most radical social critics because he was deeply committed to an engagement with all the social and biological sciences. Cortina's provocative essay suggests that Fromm overemphasized the human break with the psychological mechanisms we can see operating in various mammals and our own evolutionary ancestors, calling for a revision of social character theory. There is much debate on this question among the contributors to this book, some of whom would put more emphasis on Fromm's original argument for an existential break with instincts and biology rooted in the human condition. Leaving aside the specifics, we are sympathetic to this call for cooperation between the social sciences, Fromm scholars and cutting edge biological researchers while also insisting that social character theory also remain linked to social philosophy and its roots in radical humanism. This debate is likely to be one of the mostly lively and productive as social character theory is developed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is hard to deny, moreover, that many biological scientists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century shared Fromm's relative inattention to questions of full equality for

gay and lesbians, a issue put on the agenda for us here in Luis Jiminez's contribution that challenges Fromm's views on homosexuality while suggesting ways that his theories could be used and revised productively in light of modern awareness of the sexual diversity and rights. Similar points could be made regarding Fromm's views about gender and women, and we note that many radical feminism today are returning to Fromm's work for inspiration based on his earlier influence on Mary Daly while questioning some of his views about the essential differences between men and woman in light of current scholarship (Daly 1978; Kellner 1992). There will be differences among Fromm's scholars as to what is useful and what is problematic in his views about gender, but debating this issue is interesting precisely because Fromm was a pioneer in critically addressing gender question from his early writing on, particularly with his reception of Bachofen and Briffault and his papers on sex and character in the forties (see Fromm 1994a: *Love, Sexuality, and Matriarchy: About Gender*). More work must be done, in addition, to refine Fromm's insights in light of recent scholarship on race and racism (Traoré, Mergler and McLaughlin forthcoming; Matias and Allen 2013).

Fromm's vision of science, to be sure, was rooted in a vision of human potential and a commitment to social change, but we will not attempt to resolve this important debate that this edited book hopes to contribute it. Indeed, it ultimately will not be the many esteemed and established Fromm scholars in this volume who will determine the best way to build on and revise Fromm's thought for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, since this a task for a new generation of intellectuals and scholars. For this reason, we end the book not with a definitive statement on Fromm's theories but some questions raised by two graduate student participants from the Fromm Research Conference.

It remains only for us to thank the Karl Schlecht Foundation and Karl Schlecht, in particular, for making the First Fromm Research Conference and this book possible. And to encourage our readers to think about the prospects of a human science in the 21<sup>st</sup> century along with Fromm and this collection of scholarship in the open ended tradition of a human science he helped establish.

## References

- Anderson, K. (1998). The Young Erich Fromm's Contribution to Criminology. *Justice Quarterly*, 15(4), pp. 667–96.
- Bambery, M., and Abell, S. (2006). Relocating the Nexus of Psychopathology and Treatment: Thoughts on the Contribution of Erich Fromm to Contemporary Psychotherapy. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*, 36(4), pp. 175–82.
- Betz, B.R. (1974). *An Analysis of the Prophetic Character of the Dialectical Rhetoric of Erich Fromm*, Northwestern University Dissertation 1974.
- Braune, J. (2014). *Erich Fromm's Revolutionary Hope. Prophetic Messianism as a Critical Theory of the Future*, Rotterdam et al.: Sense Publishers.
- Bronner, S.E. (1994). *Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists*, Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Burston, D. (1991). *The Legacy of Erich Fromm*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.
- Caligiuri, A.M. (1966). *The Concept of Freedom in the Writings of Erich Fromm. An Exposition and Evaluation*, Universitas Gregoriana Roma Dissertation 1966.
- Chancer, L., and Andrews, J. (Eds.). (2014). *The Unhappy Divorce of Sociology and Psychoanalysis: Diverse Perspectives on the Psychosocial*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cheliotis, L.K. (2011). For a Freudo-Marxist Critique of Social Domination: Rediscovering Erich Fromm through the Mirror of Pierre Bourdieu. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 11(4), pp. 438–61.
- Cortina, M., and Maccoby, M. (Eds.). (1996). *A Prophetic Analyst: Erich Fromm's Contributions to Psychoanalysis*. Northvale and London: Jason Aronson Incorporated.
- Daly, M. (1978). *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaphysics of Radical Feminism*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- David-West, A. (2014). Erich Fromm and North Korea: Social Psychology and the Political Regime. *Critical Sociology*, 40(4), pp. 575–600.
- Durkin, K. (2014). *The Radical Humanism of Erich Fromm*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Friedman, L. (2013). *The Lives of Erich Fromm: Love's Prophet*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Fromm, E. (1941a). *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Farrar and Rinehart.
- Fromm, E. (1947a). *Man for Himself. An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics*. New York: Rinehart and Co.
- Fromm, E. (1949c). *Psychoanalytic Characterology and Its Application to the Understanding of Culture*. In: S. Stansfeld Sargent and Marian W. Smith (Eds.), *Culture and Personality*. New York: Viking Press, pp. 1–12.
- Fromm, E. (1955a). *The Sane Society*. New York: Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
- Fromm, E. (1956a). *The Art of Loving. An Inquiry into the Nature of Love*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Fromm, E. (1961a). *May Man Prevail? An Inquiry into the Facts and Fictions of Foreign Policy*. New York: Doubleday.
- Fromm, E. (1964a). *The Heart of Man. Its Genius for Good and Evil*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Fromm, E. (1973a). *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Fromm, E. (1976a). *To Have Or to Be?* New York: Harper and Row.
- Fromm, E. (1979a). *Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought*. New York: Harper and Row, 1980.

- Fromm, E. (1991e). *Modern Man's Pathology of Normalcy* [originated 1953]. In: E. Fromm, *The Pathology of Normalcy. Contributions to a Science of Man*. New York: American Mental Health Foundation, 2010, pp. 15–80.
- Fromm, E. (1994a). *Love, Sexuality, and Matriarchy: About Gender*. New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1997.
- Fromm, E., and Maccoby, M. (1970b). *Social Character in a Mexican Village. A Sociopsychanalytic Study*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Funk, R. (1978/1982). *Mut zum Menschen*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1978; English: *Erich Fromm: The Courage to Be Human*. New York: Continuum, 1982.
- Funk, R. (Ed.) (2009). *The Clinical Erich Fromm. Personal Accounts and Papers on Therapeutic Technique*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi Publisher. German edition: *Erich Fromm als Therapeut. Frühere Schüler erinnern sich an seine Praxis der Psychoanalyse*. Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2009. Spanish edition: *Recordando a Erich Fromm. Testimonios de sus alumnos sobre el hombre y el terapeuta*. Barcelona et al.: Paidós, 2011.
- Funk, R. (2011). *Der entgrenzte Mensch. Warum ein Leben ohne Grenzen nicht frei, sondern abhängig macht* [The unbounded self. Why a life without limitations and attachment leads to dependence]. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus.
- Greenberg, J., and Mitchell, S. (1983). *Object relations in psychoanalytic theory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Hardeck, J. (1992). *Vernunft und Liebe. Religion im Werk von Erich Fromm*. Frankfurt am Main and Berlin: Ullstein.
- Jacobs, J. (2014). *The Frankfurt School: Jewish Lives and Anti-Semitism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jeremias, J. (1983). *Die Theorie der Projektion im religionskritischen Denken Sigmund Freuds und Erich Fromms*, Dissertation Universität Oldenburg 1983.
- Kellner, D. (1992). *Erich Fromm, Feminism, and the Frankfurt School*. In: M. Kessler and R. Funk (Eds.), *Erich Fromm und die Frankfurter Schule*. Tübingen: Francke Verlag, pp. 111–30.
- Lundgren, S. (1998). *Fight Against Idols. Erich Fromm on Religion, Judaism and the Bible*, Frankfurt and New York: Peter Lang.
- Maccoby, M. (1995). *The Two Voices of Erich Fromm: Prophet and Analyst*. *Society*, 32(5), pp. 72–82.
- Matias, C.E., and Allen, R.L. (2013). *Loving Whiteness to Death: Sadoomasochism, Emotionality, and the Possibility of Humanizing Love*. *Berkeley Review of Education*, 4(2). Retrieved from: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9sd900g8#page-1> (April 3, 2015).
- Mitchell, S.A. (1988). *Relational Concepts in Psychoanalysis: An Integration*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Mitchell, S.A. (2003). *Relationality: From Attachment to Intersubjectivity*. New York: Analytic Press.
- Rasmussen, B., and Salhani, D. (2008). *Resurrecting Erich Fromm*. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 78(2–3), pp. 201–25.
- Richter, H.E. (1979). *Der Gotteskomplex. Die Geburt und die Krise des Glaubens an die Allmacht des Menschen. Reinbek bei Hamburg*: Rowohlt.
- Roazen, P. (1996). *Erich Fromm's Courage*. In: M. Cortina, and M. Maccoby (Eds.). *A Prophetic Analyst: Erich Fromm's Contributions to Psychoanalysis*. Northvale and London: Jason Aronson Incorporated, 1996, pp. 427–53.

- Sagall, S. (2013). *Final Solutions. Human Nature, Capitalism and Genocide*. London: Pluto Press.
- Traoré, I., Mergler, I., and McLaughlin, N. Erich Fromm, 1900–1980. In: *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Forthcoming).
- Wheatland, T. (2009). *The Frankfurt School in Exile*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Wilde, L. (2004). *Erich Fromm and the Quest for Solidarity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Zingale, N.C., and Piccorelli, J.T. (2012). Chains of Freedom: A View from Erich Fromm on Individuality Within Organizations. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 34(2), pp. 211–36.