

The Fromm-Marcuse debate revisited

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Erich Fromm has long been out of fashion.¹ Although Fromm was a lifelong critic of capitalist society as well as the figure chiefly responsible for the Frankfurt Institute's integration of Marx and Freud, few studies of Western Marxism examine his work in any detail;² articles about his writings rarely appear in the leading journals of the left;³ and his death in 1980 has, as far as I know, brought forth few attempts by scholars in this country to examine what his legacy might be.⁴

The neglect of Fromm's contribution is due in part⁵ to the interpretation placed on his work by his former colleagues at the Institute of Social Research – most notably, Herbert Marcuse.⁶ In his famous "Critique of Neo-Freudian Revisionism," Marcuse argued that although Fromm's early work is indeed radical, his later psychology is essentially conformist in character. In rejecting Freud's libido theory and certain elements of his metapsychology, Fromm, H. S. Sullivan, and Karen Horney, Marcuse wrote, had deprived psychoanalysis of its most critical concepts, stripped it of a "conceptual basis outside the established system" (*Eros and Civilization*,⁷ hereafter cited as *EC*, p. 6), and in its place offered an idealistic ethic that preached adaptation to the status quo.

Since the renaissance of critical theory in the 1960s, Marcuse's essay has set the tone for the left's reading of Fromm's work. The aim of the present article is to challenge this interpretation by arguing that it fundamentally distorts both the general tenor and specific content of Fromm's thought. In particular, I will contend, in opposition to Marcuse and others, that although the rejection of libido theory marks an important shift in Fromm's thinking, it does *not* signal his transformation from a radical to a conformist theorist. On the contrary, from the early 1930s until his death, Fromm developed a consistently critical social psychology, the central aims of which remain unchanged even after libido theory has been abandoned.

In order to support my argument for the need to re-evaluate Fromm's work, I will first outline the central but neglected project that constitutes the centerpiece of his thought – namely, the development of a Marxist social psychology – and then turn to a detailed examination of Marcuse's essay that will focus on his critique of the revision of Freud's theory as well as of Fromm's values.

Fromm's Marxist social psychology

The collapse of the socialist revolutions in Europe at the end of World War I made evident one of the chief failings of Marxist social theory as a whole – namely, its neglect of the subjective factor in social phenomena. In Germany, after November 1918, Karl Korsch wrote, “the organized political power of the bourgeoisie was smashed and outwardly there was nothing else in the way of the transition from capitalism to socialism.” But the revolution did not materialize. The “great chance was never seized,” Korsch went on to say, “because the *socio-psychological* preconditions . . . were lacking.”⁸ Orthodox Marxism had not taken into account that the psychological situation of the working class largely determines the possibilities for fundamental social change. Clearly, if historical materialism were to attain an adequate understanding of social phenomena, it must supplement its social theory with a psychology. It was with this realization that a number of thinkers, in the years following the war, turned to psychoanalysis – as the most advanced materialist psychology developed to date – in order to integrate its insights into Marxist theory.⁹

Erich Fromm was one of several leftist analysts (Otto Fenichel, Siegfried Bernfeld, and Wilhelm Reich were among the others¹⁰) who, during the 1920s and early 1930s, sought to effect a marriage of Marx and Freud. Like Reich, whose ideas on this issue paralleled his own at many points, Fromm believed that the key to the synthesis lay in the psychoanalytic conception of character. He differed somewhat from Reich in his understanding of what this concept involved; for whereas the latter employed such original categories as “character armor” and spoke of three structured layers of personality,¹¹ Fromm's characterology derived directly from Karl Abraham and Sigmund Freud.¹²

Beginning with a paper on “Character and Anal Eroticism” in 1908,¹³ Freud, and later such disciples as Abraham and Jones, laid the foundations for a dynamic theory of character. Among the chief features of this

theory were (1) its effort to explain manifest behavior in terms of underlying motivating forces rooted in the character structure; (2) its claim that character largely determines the individual's consciousness,¹⁴ (3) its clinical description of the various character types (oral-receptive, oral-sadistic, anal, and genital); and (4) its attempt to provide a theoretical explanation of how character is formed. Fromm's aim is to use this characterology – in combination with Marx's theory – to explain the attitudes, actions, and ideologies of social classes and entire societies. In order to carry out this task, however, and arrive at a synthesis of Marx and Freud, certain changes in analytic theory are required. In a series of papers published between 1930–1932,¹⁵ Fromm spells out these requirements in detail.

First, if psychoanalysis is to be extended from an individual to a social psychology, it must shift the focus of its inquiry; for unlike individual analysis, the analytic study of social phenomena does not seek to arrive at a relatively complete picture of the individual's psyche. Rather, it focuses on the character traits common to the members of a group – i.e., on what Fromm calls “the libidinal structure of society” or, later, the “social character.”¹⁶ Such a shift in subject matter necessarily means that one gains less insight into the total character structure of any particular group member, but it also provides one with a powerful tool for understanding the group as a whole and the role its shared character traits play in the social process.¹⁷

Second, analytic social psychology assumes that the most influential factor in molding the social character is the social and economic situation in which the group members exist. The “phenomena of social psychology,” Fromm writes,

are to be understood as processes involving the active and passive adaptation of the instinctual apparatus to the socio-economic situation. In certain fundamental respects, the instinctual apparatus itself is a biological given; but it is highly modifiable. The role of primary formative factors goes to the economic conditions. . . . The task of social psychology is to explain the shared, socially relevant, psychic attitudes and ideologies – and their unconscious roots in particular – in terms of the influence of economic conditions on libido strivings.¹⁸

In other words, Fromm seeks to integrate into analytic theory Marx's claim that the economic and social structure of society is the most powerful force shaping human consciousness. Hitherto, psychoanalysis had failed to comprehend the influence of socioeconomic conditions on

the formation of character. By integrating one of the basic tenets of historical materialism, Fromm seeks to rectify this error.

It should be noted that Fromm achieves this integration without sociologizing psychological drives. Although “we have emphasized the modifiability” of the instincts, he writes,

...one should not overlook the fact that the instinctual apparatus, both quantitatively and qualitatively, has certain physiologically and biologically determined limits to its modifiability and that only within these limits is it subject to the influence of social factors. Because of the force of the energy it sends forth, moreover, the instinctual apparatus itself is an extremely active force; inherent in it is the tendency to alter living conditions so that they serve instinctual goals.¹⁹

If Fromm avoids sociological reductionism, however, his effort to acknowledge social influences appears to leave him open to another criticism: Psychoanalysis argues that character is essentially formed in early childhood, when the infant’s contact with society is minimal. If this is the case, how then it is possible for socioeconomic conditions to affect the child’s development so profoundly? The answer, Fromm believes, is that the family, which constitutes the child’s first social environment, engenders the attitudes, character traits, and ideologies typical of its social class. Freud had correctly regarded the family constellation as the decisive influence on the formation of character. But he failed to see the extent to which the family itself is shaped by social and economic forces. Its attitudes and ideals, in large measure, are determined by its position in the given social order. These attitudes and traits it then transmits to the child. The family, then, is both the product of social conditioning and the “psychological agent of society,” the medium through which the social structure places its stamp on the character and hence the consciousness of its individual members.

Once these revisions in analytic theory have been made, the value of Fromm’s synthesis becomes evident. “Man’s instinctual apparatus,” Fromm writes, “is one of the ‘natural’ conditions that forms part of the substructure (*Unterbau*) of the social process.”²⁰ Knowledge of this factor is necessary, then, for any adequate theory of society. Psychoanalysis can enrich historical materialism precisely at this point: “It can provide a more comprehensive knowledge of one of the factors that is operative in the social process: the nature of man himself.”²¹

In particular, psychoanalysis can supplement certain gaps in Marxist

theory. Marx had argued that a society's ideological superstructure arises from its material base, but he had failed to state precisely how this process comes about. Fromm's theory attempts to provide the explanation. Eschewing the vulgar Marxist view that consciousness directly reflects economic reality, Fromm argues that social character is the mediating link between the economic substructure and the prevailing attitudes and ideologies. Specifically, he claims that human drives dynamically adapt to socioeconomic conditions; that the product of this process is the social character; and that character is what directly determines consciousness²² – i.e., the attitudes and ideals dominant in a given society.²³

In addition, analytic social psychology can tell us something about the psychological appeal – and hence the success or failure – of various ideologies.

It can show that the impact of an idea depends essentially on its unconscious content, which appeals to certain drives; that it is, as it were, the quality and intensity of the libidinal structure of a society which determines the social effect of an ideology.²⁴

Furthermore, Fromm's theory tries to show how, once molded in a particular form, the social character itself becomes an *active* force determining the social process. The new social character that resulted from the decline of feudalism, for example,

became in its turn an important factor in shaping the further social and economic development. Those very qualities which were rooted in this character structure – compulsion to work, passion for thrift, the readiness to make one's life a tool for the purposes of an extra personal power, asceticism, and a compulsive sense of duty – were character traits which became productive forces in capitalistic society and without which modern economic and social development are unthinkable.²⁵

The active role of the social character is further evinced in its capacity to stabilize or undermine the established order. As we have seen, social character is shaped in accordance with the needs of a particular economic system: external necessities are internalized in the form of drives so that the individual wants to act as he or she has to act if the society is to continue to function. Once a certain character structure has developed, Fromm writes, the individual finds it psychologically satisfying to act in accord with his or her character. As long as society can provide the opportunity for such satisfaction, and as long as action in accord with one's character is practical from the standpoint of meeting one's

material needs, we have, Fromm writes, a situation in which the psychological forces serve to “cement” the given social structure. Eventually, however, “a lag arises. The traditional character structure still exists while new economic conditions have arisen, for which the traditional character traits are no longer useful.”²⁶ At this point, the original psychic traits, still charged with energy but unable to find satisfaction within the new system, cease to act as stabilizing forces of the given order and function instead as social dynamite.

The relative stability of the social character in the face of changing economic conditions also helps to explain why changes in ideology tend to lag behind changes in the economic base. Although character traits eventually adapt to social and economic conditions, they do not change as rapidly as the conditions themselves. “The libidinal structure, from which these character traits develop,” Fromm writes, “has a certain inertia; a long period of adaptation to new economic conditions is required before we get a corresponding change in the libidinal structure and its consequent character traits.”²⁷ Because ideology is anchored in the character structure, it too lags behind changes in the economic base.

Finally, Fromm’s theory can be used to study empirically the social character of a given society or class, on the basis of which predictions can be made regarding the possibilities for social change. Under the auspices of the Institute of Social Research in 1929, Fromm and his colleagues studied the incidence of authoritarian versus democratic-revolutionary character types among German workers and employees. If one knew the deeply rooted political attitudes of these groups, they reasoned, one could predict whether, in the event of Hitler’s ascension to power, the workers would become Nazis or fight against Nazism. By developing an “interpretive questionnaire” that enabled the researchers to apply psychoanalytic methods of interpretation to the study of large groups, they sought to pierce below the workers’ surface opinions to the political convictions rooted in their character structure.

The study’s findings indicated that a minority of the workers showed strongly authoritarian or anti-authoritarian character traits, while the vast majority – about seventy-five percent – had an ambivalent character. These findings, Fromm argued, were confirmed by later historical developments because they roughly coincided with the percentage of German workers and employees who eventually became ardent Nazis, fought against Nazism, or made up part of the larger group that followed neither course of action. (This study, translated and edited by

Wolfgang Bonss, was published in Germany in 1980. In 1984, an English version appeared under the title *The Working Class in Weimar Germany* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984].)

In 1970, Fromm and Michael Maccoby, having refined the methodology of the original German study, published their investigation of *Social Character in a Mexican Village*. The results – which showed a correspondence between the three main types of social character in the village and the distinct socioeconomic conditions of each – tended to confirm the central claim of the Marx-Freud synthesis: namely, that the primary factor determining the nature of the social character is the given socioeconomic situation. The passivity and dependence characteristic of the landless day laborers, for example, were viewed as resulting from the powerless position this class had long held at the bottom of the economic hierarchy.

Fromm's integration of Marx and Freud underwent only one major revision after its original formulation.²⁸ While retaining the bulk of Freud's characterology – specifically, the view that surface behavior is rooted in underlying and often unconscious motivating forces; that character determines consciousness; and that character traits tend to cluster together into distinct “types” – Fromm replaced Freud's explanation of how character is formed with his own theory.²⁹

Fromm had first developed his project for a Marxist social psychology within the framework of Freud's libido theory. That is, he accepted the view that character is to be explained in connection with the various phases of libidinal development. Freud and Abraham had argued that in early childhood the sexual instincts pass through a certain line of development, at each stage of which the focus of libidinal satisfaction is shifted from one to another zone of the body. Character traits are viewed as direct expressions of impulses associated with particular erogenous zones, sublimations of these impulses, or reaction formations against them. During the anal stage, for example, sexual gratification is centered around the processes of retention and evacuation of the feces. If, due to overstimulation, excessive frustration, or certain constitutional factors, the libido becomes fixated at (or regresses to) this stage and so fails to follow the normal course of development, the strivings typical of the anal phase will, usually in disguised form, become part of the individual character structure. Thus, the traits of parsimony and obstinacy that form part of the syndrome of the anal character, may be viewed as sublimations of the infant's original refusal to give up the pleasure of retaining the stool

With the publication of *Escape from Freedom* in 1941, Fromm abandoned libido theory altogether, and with it, Freud's account of character development. In the section below on Marcuse's critique of the revision of Freud, we will discuss some of the reasons for this change in some detail; at present, however, I want to focus only on the one most relevant to the Marxist social psychology: namely, Fromm's realization that an account of character formation based in libido theory is essentially incompatible with the basic tenets of the Marx-Freud synthesis.

That by 1941 such a realization had occurred is evident from remarks scattered across Fromm's work.³⁰ What is lacking, however, – what Fromm never provides – is a detailed explanation of this incongruity: *Why* is a characterology based in libido theory unable to accommodate the claims of the Marxist social psychology?

The most complete – though insufficiently developed – response to this question appears in the “Appendix” to *Escape from Freedom*. Here, after contrasting Freud's account of character formation with the interpersonal theory, Fromm writes:

Only from this point of view [i.e., explaining character in terms of interpersonal relationships rather than libidinal fixations] can Freud's characterological findings become fruitful for social psychology. As long as we assume, for instance, that the anal character, as it is typical of the European lower middle class, is caused by certain early experiences in connection with defecation, we have hardly any data that lead us to understand why a specific class should have an anal social character. However, if we understand it as one form of relatedness to others, rooted in the character structure and resulting from the experiences with the outside world, we have a key for understanding why the whole mode of life of the lower middle class, its narrowness, isolation, and hostility, made for the development of this kind of character structure.³¹

This passage can best be understood as Fromm's attempt to explain the incompatibility of Freud's theory with the two basic claims of the Marx-Freud synthesis: namely, (1) the view that a given social group can be characterized by its “social character”; and (2) that the primary influence in molding the social character is the socioeconomic situation in which the group members live.

With regard to (1), awareness of the following difficulty seems to underlie Fromm's remarks. Freud's characterology had been developed within the framework of an *individual* psychology. Thus, while it could – in principle, at least – explain the individual's character structure in terms of libido theory, it found it much more difficult to give an adequate ac-

count of *social* character. Specifically, Freud's theory could not answer in any satisfactory way the question of *why* a given class should have developed a certain kind of social character. Confronted with the anal social character of the European lower-middle class, for example, Freud's theory would have to assume that "certain early experiences in connection with defecation"³² had caused most members of that class to become fixated at the anal stage of development. But why such a fixation should have occurred across an entire social class and what connection this fixation might have to the class's role in the social structure were questions for which Freudian theory had no ready answers.

(2) A similar difficulty plagued the attempt to reconcile Freud's account of character with the view that social character is essentially formed by the socioeconomic structure. Freud's theory had been formulated without having taken into account the influence of the mode of production on the formation of character. Instead, the latter was fully explained in terms of the impact of childhood experiences on the libido's development. Thus, the traits typical of the anal character (parsimony, obstinacy, and orderliness) were viewed not as resulting from adaptation to a particular economic system, but as the outcome of the frustration or over-stimulation of impulses associated with the anal stage of libidinal development.

If one were to retain Freud's account of character and at the same time acknowledge the impact of economic forces, one would have to show a connection between the formative early experiences and the material base of society. Specifically, one would have to demonstrate how the latter conditioned the former in order to produce a particular character structure. In terms of the example cited above, it would be incumbent upon one to show how the capitalist mode of production gave rise to certain early experiences that led to the fixation of libido at the anal stage of development, thereby producing an anal character structure. Fromm apparently believed that no convincing connection of this kind could be made. Thus, he must have concluded that because Freud's theory had originally been formulated without reference to socioeconomic factors, when one now tried to integrate them, one saw that the theory had no adequate way of taking them into account.

In response to this dilemma, Fromm developed a theory that *could* show the connection between the economic conditions and the prevailing character traits as well as explain *why* a particular class should have a specific kind of social character. Both aims were achieved, and the

difficulties of Freud's theory avoided, by denying the libido's role in the formation of character. This meant that the impact of social reality was not mediated by the sexual instincts. Rather, the socioeconomic structure *directly* molded human energy and passions in such a way as to produce the traits required for the continued functioning of the given social order. The question of why a particular class should have a specific social character was explained not in the unconvincing terms of Freud's theory, but by saying that the socioeconomic situation of that class directly conditioned the character traits found in most of the population.³³

Specifically, Fromm's new theory argued that in order to meet needs for physical and psychic survival, human beings relate themselves to the world and others through the "process of assimilation and socialization."³⁴ The particular form these modes of relatedness take – i.e., the specific ways in which the individual satisfies these needs – constitutes his or her character structure. Character, then, is a certain orientation to the world that develops in the process of meeting needs for survival and meaning.

The force that most powerfully shapes character, according to Fromm, is the whole network of social relationships that make up the individual's experience. And the main factor determining the nature and quality of those relations is the given socioeconomic structure and resulting practice of life. A particular social character, then, does not develop because of certain experiences of overstimulation or frustration during one of the phases of libidinal development. Rather, it develops in direct response to the child's experience of social reality as constituted by the requirements of a particular socioeconomic system and transmitted by the family environment. Capitalism, for example, requires "men who are eager to work, who are disciplined and punctual, whose main interest is monetary gain, and whose main principle in life is profit as a result of production and exchange."³⁵ These character traits develop in a capitalist system not because of the vicissitudes of the sexual instincts, but because they are engendered and reinforced by the whole conduct of life in capitalist societies. And once established, the social character of the given capitalist system gives rise to an ideology that stabilizes and reinforces the most "desirable" traits of character.

To summarize: From the beginning, Fromm was convinced of the truth of Marx's claim that social existence determines consciousness. In the early 1930s, Fromm used Freud's theory of character to flesh out this claim in some detail. The socioeconomic system, he argued, molds the

character structure, which in turn directly determines consciousness. By 1941, Fromm realized that Freud's theory could not easily accommodate Marx's insight. Consequently, he put forth a new theory of character formation that could explain the social character specific to a society or class as the result of the given socioeconomic conditions. And it was precisely the abandonment of libido theory that enabled Fromm to revise analytic characterology in a Marxian direction.

In concluding this outline of the Marx-Freud synthesis, I want to stress that the theoretical integration of the early 1930s, though it ultimately had to be revised, serves as the basis for all Fromm's later work in social theory and social psychology. In *The Dogma of Christ* (1930), Fromm traces changes in early Christian dogma to their roots in psychic attitudes that were themselves the result of the early Christians' altered social and economic situation. In *Escape from Freedom* (1941), he tries to show that the widespread acceptance of Protestantism and Nazism lay in their appeal to strong emotional needs that had been shaped by new economic conditions. In *The Sane Society* (1955), he locates the sources of the modern individual's alienation and conformity in the contemporary capitalist economy. In the Mexican study (1970), Fromm and Maccoby try to demonstrate how different types of social character and their corresponding ideologies are the product of distinct socioeconomic circumstances. In each of these books, spanning a period of forty years, Fromm's main concern remains the same: to explain the dominant character traits, attitudes, and ideologies of a society or class in terms of the adaptation of human drives (regardless of whether they are defined as resulting from "libidinal strivings" or – as in the later Fromm – "existential needs") to the requirements of a specific socioeconomic system. The continuity of Fromm's project – both before and after 1941 – is a point that deserves special emphasis, for it demonstrates that the abandonment of libido theory in no way alters the basic aim of the Marx-Freud synthesis. Indeed, as we have seen, it is only with the rejection of an instinctually based character theory that this synthesis becomes – for the first time – genuinely possible.

Marcuse's critique: the revision of Freud's theory

Before turning to the substance of Marcuse's arguments against Fromm, one remark should be made about his method. Marcuse proposes to treat the so-called "Neo-Freudians"³⁶ as a unit; consequently, he will "neglect the differences among the various revisionist groups and con-

centrate on the theoretical attitude common to all of them” (*EC*, p. 226). Such a procedure, however, is prejudicial to Fromm in two respects: First, one of the chief factors distinguishing Fromm from Sullivan and Horney is that he is a Marxist, very much concerned with integrating Marxism and psychoanalysis and developing a critique of capitalist society. By ignoring this difference, Marcuse ignores the most radical aspects of Fromm’s work (e.g., the theory of social character and the critique of capitalism) and so avoids confronting substantial evidence contradicting his claim that Fromm is a “conformist” thinker. Secondly, as Fromm himself noted in the course of the debate, the failure to distinguish between the Neo-Freudians enables Marcuse to cite passages from Sullivan and Horney and treat them as if they applied to Fromm as well. As I shall demonstrate below, this practice results in major distortions of Fromm’s position.

In the following, I will be concerned with examining Marcuse’s critique only insofar as it is directed against Fromm’s writings. I will not address the question of whether or not Marcuse accurately represents the views of Sullivan and Horney.

Marcuse advances two related sets of arguments against Fromm’s psychology. The first is aimed at his “mutilation” of Freud’s theory, whereas the second attacks his allegedly conformist values.

Marcuse differs fundamentally from Fromm in his belief that psychoanalysis stands in need of “no new cultural or sociological orientation” (*EC*, p. 5). Freud’s theory is already “in its very substance ‘sociological’” (*EC*, p. 5) insofar as it contains an implicit critique of the established order. In his instinct theory and theory of culture, Marcuse writes, Freud demonstrated that civilization arises only through the repression and renunciation of instinctual claims to freedom and happiness; and in so doing, he exposed the depth of the conflict between the biological strivings of human beings and their social institutions. By downplaying the role of the instincts in his own theory of human nature, Fromm has in fact profoundly weakened Freud’s radically critical theory and thereby reduced “the social substance of psychoanalysis” (*EC*, p. 222). This claim is central to Marcuse’s entire critique. “The crucial point,” he remarked years after the debate,

was and is the explosive content of Freudian instinct theory – not the reconversion (*Rückverwandlung*), but the confinement of psychoanalysis to a praxis devoid of decisive theoretical impulses. In my opinion Fromm was one of the first to eliminate the explosive elements from Freudian theory.³⁷

On the face of it, Marcuse's claim seems valid. Freud's theory does indeed have socially critical implications and Fromm did abandon it early in his career. Is he therefore to be regarded as a conformist figure who has eliminated what is best in Freud's thought? Certainly many on the left believe this is the case. Below, however, I will argue that Marcuse's affirmative answer to this question is ultimately unconvincing for the following reasons: (1) Marcuse's procedure of contrasting orthodox and revisionist theories solely on the basis of their sociological implications and without reference to the theoretical or empirical grounds for each is an untenable one; (2) Fromm's own anthropology even without the instinct theory retains a critical, oppositional stance; and (3) given the central aims and general tenor of Fromm's thought, his repudiation of libido theory cannot justify the view that he is a conformist thinker. Let us examine each of these arguments in turn.

(1) In the introduction to *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse draws a sharp distinction between psychoanalytic theory and therapy, stating that he seeks to elucidate the implications of the former, not to correct or improve theory in the light of clinical practice.³⁸ In his epilogue, Marcuse then contrasts the revisionist doctrines with Freud's on the basis of each theory's philosophical and sociological implications in an attempt to show that whereas the latter is inherently critical, the former is essentially conformist.

Two objections may be raised against such a program. First, by focusing exclusively on theory and judging psychoanalysis "under philosophical criteria" (*EC*, p. 7), Marcuse obscures the fact that both Freud and Fromm – though to some extent philosophical thinkers – also view psychoanalysis as a science whose constructs are grounded in empirical data. The standards by which their theories should be appraised, therefore, must be those of science as well as philosophy. The social implications of their ideas is certainly a point of interest, but the decisive question to ask with regard to them both is not which is more radical, but which is closer to the truth? Which theory gives the more adequate account of the phenomena in question? To evaluate a theoretical construct *solely* according to philosophical standards is untenable in a field that purports to be an empirical science, for the social implications of a purportedly scientific theory are not one of the criteria by which its truth value may be appraised.³⁹

Secondly, by "mov[ing] exclusively in the field of theory," (*EC*, p. 7) and, more specifically, by focusing only on each theory's social implica-

tions, Marcuse avoids confronting the empirical and theoretical arguments on which the Neo-Freudians' revisions are based and hence the question of whether they are justified.⁴⁰

To be sure, Marcuse provides an account of the origins of Fromm's position. To avoid conflict with an increasingly repressive society, he tells us, Fromm redefined his goals for therapy so that they became compatible with prevailing values. This task was accomplished by discarding a materialistic conception of happiness rooted in sexuality in favor of an idealistic one – a move that led, in turn, to a deemphasis of the instincts in Fromm's theory of human nature (*EC*, pp. 222–223).

If Marcuse's analysis is logically consistent, it is also purely speculative. At no point does he examine the reasons Fromm himself provides for rejecting Freud's views. With regard to the justification noted in the section above – i.e., Fromm's belief that a characterology based in libido theory is incompatible with the aims of the Marx-Freud synthesis – it must be acknowledged that Fromm's elaboration of this point is so cryptic and obscure that Marcuse cannot be faulted for ignoring it. This is not true, however, of Fromm's other arguments on behalf of revisionism.⁴¹

Although Fromm eventually rejected both the early and later versions of the instinct theory, he questioned the concept of Thanatos from the first. In a *Zeitschrift* paper of 1932, he notes the highly speculative nature of the formulation and argues that it contradicts Freud's overall view that the instincts as such are life-serving drives.⁴² In *Escape from Freedom*, he remarks that insofar as the theory implies a more or less constant level of destructiveness across cultures, it is clearly contradicted by empirical evidence.⁴³ To be sure, Fromm's own account of destructiveness was partly inspired by Freud's formulation, but in Fromm's theory, the biologically based death instinct is recast in the concept of necrophilia as a purely psychological phenomenon that develops only in response to hostile environmental forces.⁴⁴

Second, Fromm rejected one of the best known features of the theory of sexuality – the Oedipus complex – at least partly on the grounds that it found little support in empirical data.⁴⁵ Clinical and anthropological evidence, Fromm argued, undermined Freud's claim concerning the universality of this phenomenon; the hostile rivalry between father and son, for example, is, in Fromm's view, specific to patriarchal cultures like Freud's own. Further, Fromm claimed that the tie to the mother is

not essentially sexual in nature; “pathological dependence on the mother,” he wrote,

is caused by non-sexual factors – particularly by the dominating attitude of the mother, which makes the child helpless and frightened thus intensifying the need for the mother’s protection and affection.⁴⁶

Third, Fromm contends that the power and intensity of human passions cannot be explained by viewing them as manifestations of instinctual drives. “The most striking feature in human behavior,” Fromm writes,

is the tremendous intensity of passions and strivings which man displays. Freud more than anyone else recognized this fact and attempted to explain it in terms of the mechanistic-naturalistic thinking of his time. . . . But brilliant as his assumptions were they are not convincing in their denial of the fact that a large part of man’s passionate strivings cannot be explained by the force of his instincts. Even if man’s hunger and thirst and his sexual strivings are completely satisfied “he” is not satisfied. In contrast to the animal his most compelling problems are not solved then, they only begin.⁴⁷

Only by focusing on imperative needs for meaning that arise from the specific conditions of human existence, Fromm argues, can one understand the depth and intensity of human passions.

Finally, Fromm believes that Freud’s conception of human nature in general and his account of character formation in particular is simply too static and mechanistic.⁴⁸ The human individual, he argues, is not a closed system of fixed drives whose character can be explained within a quantitative conceptual framework – specifically, in terms of the satisfaction or frustration of physiological drives and the subsequent fixation of libidinal development. Rather, Fromm argues, humans are primarily social creatures whose being is constituted in their social relationships.⁴⁹ To account for character structure, then, one must attend to the specific nature and quality of the individual’s experience of other people. If, through such experiences, Fromm writes, the child’s

feeling of his own strength is weakened by fear, if his initiative and selfconfidence are paralyzed, if hostility develops and is repressed, and if at the same time his father or mother offers affection or care under the condition of surrender, such a constellation leads to an attitude in which active mastery is given up and all his energies are turned in the direction of an outside source from which fulfillment of all wishes will eventually come.⁵⁰

Here lies the origin of an oral receptive character structure; it cannot be explained merely in terms of the frustration of instinctual drives. “For an infant who has confidence in the unconditional love of his mother,” Fromm continues,

the sudden interruption of breast feeding will not have any grave characterological consequences; [while] the infant who experiences a lack of reliability in his mother's love may acquire "oral" traits even though the feeding process went on without any particular disturbances.⁵¹

To summarize my argument: In judging psychoanalysis as philosophy, Marcuse neglects its claim to the status of science. This leads him into the methodological error of appraising two purportedly scientific theories solely on the basis of their social and philosophical implications, while the empirical and theoretical grounds for their differences are simply ignored.

(2) The instinct theory is of value to Marcuse because (a) it allows him to ground his social critique in a theory of human nature; and (b) it implies, in Martin Jay's phrase, "a stratum of human existence stubbornly out of reach of total social control"⁵² – that is to say, a source of resistance to domination rooted in human nature itself. By de-emphasizing the role of the instincts, especially sexuality, Fromm allegedly weakens both of these critical features of Freud's thought.

A question that naturally arises here, but one that Marcuse fails to raise, is whether Fromm's revised theory of human nature retains these critical functions. To answer these questions, let us examine Fromm's position in some detail.

With regard to the first point (a), we have already noted that Fromm's theory differs fundamentally from Freud in that he ascribes far less importance to the role of the instincts. For the latter, instincts are the basic driving forces in human behavior. For Fromm, however, the key to human psychology lies not in our biological drives, but in the fact that we possess, in addition to instincts, the specifically human traits of self-awareness, reason, and imagination – traits that give rise to "existential needs" for meaning (e.g., for "relatedness," "effectiveness," "a frame of orientation and devotion") that must be met to ensure psychic survival.

Having made this point, Fromm goes on to say that "the way in which the psychic needs can be satisfied are manifold, and the difference between various ways of satisfaction is tantamount to the difference between various degrees of mental health."⁵³ In other words, some ways of answering the various needs are better than others. Some responses serve to unfold one's capacities and talents; others lead to sterile suffering. But whatever answer one gives, Fromm adds, the particular form in which the needs are met is largely determined by the given socioeconom-

ic structure. The need for effectiveness, for example, can be satisfied by both creative work and destructiveness, but whether the first or the second alternative develops in the individual character structure is largely due to the nature of the society in which the individual lives.

On the basis of his anthropology, then, Fromm is able to judge a particular social order by the criterion of whether it cultivates or cripples “productive” answers to the various existential needs. The “criterion of mental health,” he writes, “is not one of individual adjustment to a given social order, but a universal one, valid for all men, of giving a satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence.”⁵⁴ With this criterion, Fromm avoids the conformism inherent in the position of those “sociological relativists” who argue that “each society is normal inasmuch as it functions” and who define pathology “only in terms of the individual’s lack of adjustment” to his society.⁵⁵ Thus, although Fromm has relinquished libido theory, his revised conception of human nature – like Marcuse’s use of Freud – provides a “conceptual basis outside the established system” (*EC*, p. 6) that grounds his social critique.

With regard to the second point (b), it is true, of course, that in abandoning libido theory, Fromm has given up a construct that has served an important theoretical function for the left; for, as Fromm’s Frankfurt colleagues argued, only by postulating “a level of human existence beyond immediate social control [namely, the libidinal drives, was it] possible to avoid the premature (and hence repressive) reconciliation of individual and society.”⁵⁶ The question, however, is whether Fromm’s new theory of drives, though different in content, serves the same critical function.

One of the recurring themes of Fromm’s social psychology is his belief that human nature has its own inherent dynamic. “Man is not a blank sheet of paper on which culture can write its text,”⁵⁷ he insists.

While it is true that man is molded by the necessities of the economic and social structure of society, he is not infinitely adaptable. Not only are there certain physiological needs that imperatively call for satisfaction, but there are also certain psychological qualities inherent in man that need to be satisfied and that result in certain reactions if they are frustrated.⁵⁸

Chief among these qualities is “the tendency to grow, to develop and realize potentialities which man has developed in the course of history – as, for instance, the faculty of creative and critical thinking and of having differentiated emotional and sensuous experiences.”⁵⁹

This drive, which Fromm views as the “psychological equivalent of the identical biological tendency,”⁶⁰ not only serves as the basis of the striving for freedom and the hatred of oppression (because “freedom is the fundamental condition for any growth”⁶¹); it is, in addition, the suppression of such drives that results in the “formation of destructive and symbiotic impulses.”⁶²

In positing such a drive and in arguing that certain reactions are generated when this drive is blocked, Fromm has provided himself with the basis for a further and more important claim: namely, that if the demands of society conflict beyond a certain point with those of “human nature,” that conflict will generate reactions in the form of new drives that may ultimately undermine the given social structure.

Despots and ruling cliques can succeed in dominating and exploiting their fellow man, but they cannot prevent *reactions* to his inhuman treatment. . . . Whole nations, or social groups within them, can be subjugated and exploited for a long time, but *they react*. They react with apathy or such impairment of intelligence, initiative and skills that they gradually fail to perform the functions which should serve their rulers. Or they react by the accumulation of such hate and destructiveness as to bring about an end to themselves, their rulers and their system. Again their reaction may create such independence and longing for freedom that a better society is built upon their creative impulses. Which reaction occurs, depends on many factors: on economic and political ones, and on the spiritual climate in which people live. But whatever the reactions are, the statement that man can live under almost any condition is only half true; it must be supplemented by the other statement, that if he lives under conditions which are contrary to his nature and to the basic requirements for human growth and sanity, he cannot help reacting; he must either deteriorate and perish, or bring about conditions which are more in accordance with his needs.⁶³

The obvious objection to Fromm’s formulation concerning an inherent tendency to growth and desire for freedom is that, compared with the instinct theory, it seems both vague and idealistic.⁶⁴ Indeed, Fromm himself acknowledges that in making this assumption he is “on dangerous ground theoretically.”⁶⁵ What I wish to emphasize, however, is that even if Fromm’s construction is in some ways theoretically less satisfying, it serves the same critical function as Marcuse’s use of the instinct theory: it attributes to human nature an inherent drive that resists and under certain circumstances explodes repressive social structures.

(3) In his effort to portray Fromm as a conformist thinker, Marcuse not only stresses his repudiation of the instinct theory, but also consistently downplays the most critical features of Fromm’s thought. The analyses of early Christian, Protestant, and fascist ideology; of authoritarianism

and the culture industry; of the origins of “inner worldly asceticism,” and of the theory of social character are never mentioned in Marcuse’s essay.

To be sure, Marcuse cites with approval the early paper in which Fromm attempts the integration of Marx and Freud. But he seems to believe that this project collapses – or, at least, loses its critical power – with the abandonment of libido theory. Given this misconception, Marcuse can chastise Fromm for having “forgotten” ideas that are in fact central to the Marx-Freud synthesis. Thus, Marcuse writes:

To be sure, personality has not disappeared: it continues to flower and is even fostered and educated – but in such a way that the expressions of personality fit and sustain perfectly the socially desired pattern of behavior and thought. [EC, p. 231].

Yet what do these comments express if not the central claim of Fromm’s theory of social character – specifically, the view that society molds character in such a way that people want to act as they have to act if the given social structure is to continue to function.⁶⁶

In addition, Marcuse argues that although Fromm’s work may appear radical, such appearance is deceptive. “[I]n spite of the outspoken critique of some social institutions, the revisionist sociology accepts the foundation on which these institutions rest” (EC, p. 242); for in rejecting the instinct theory and with it the theory of culture, Fromm abandoned Freud’s effort to question the origins and legitimacy of a repressive civilization.

What Marcuse’s argument forgets, however, is that the repudiation of Freud’s theory by no means entails acceptance of established institutions as “finished products. . . given rather than made facts” (EC, p. 250). For if Fromm rejects Freud’s theory of culture, he adopts that of Marx and Engels. Objectively given material conditions determine the mode of production and social organization that in turn determines consciousness.

Finally, Marcuse accuses Fromm of a theoretical shift of emphasis away from the primacy of the unconscious, thereby reorienting psychoanalysis “on the traditional consciousness psychology of pre-Freudian texture” (EC, p. 226). Although this charge has been widely accepted by writers sympathetic to Marcuse,⁶⁷ the evidence does not bear it out.

From the beginning of his career until his death, Fromm regarded the discovery of the unconscious as Freud's "most creative and radical achievement";⁶⁸ one that profoundly extended "our knowledge of man and. . . our capacity to distinguish appearance from reality in human behavior."⁶⁹ Indeed, the concept is so central to Fromm's understanding of human psychology and his conception of psychoanalysis that this work is inconceivable without it. The characterology developed in *Man for Himself* (1947), for example, rests on Freud's dynamic concept of character, which views the latter as a system of largely unconscious strivings that underlie and motivate behavior. The task of psychoanalysis is to pierce beneath the surface of such phenomena as dreams, parapraxes, and symptoms to the hidden and repressed forces that drive the individual to act and think as he or she does. In *The Forgotten Language* (1951), Fromm tries to extend the significance of Freud's discovery by arguing that the unconscious is not only the seat of irrational strivings, but also of our deepest insights into reality. On the basis of this claim, Fromm stresses the sociological significance of the unconscious by contending that it is precisely because of the negative impact of social reality that our most penetrating insights undergo repression. In his later writings – admittedly published some years after the debate with Marcuse – Fromm develops the idea of the "social unconscious," a concept referring to "that repression of inner reality which is common to large groups,"⁷⁰ and which functions to keep thoughts "dangerous" to society from reaching awareness.⁷¹

Marcuse's error in claiming that Fromm downplays the importance of the unconscious derives primarily from the ambiguity of the term itself. In accordance with the usage of the later Freud, Marcuse essentially identifies the unconscious with the id and the primary instincts.⁷² Consequently, he infers that Fromm's de-emphasis of instincts necessarily entails a de-emphasis of the unconscious as well.

Marcuse is, of course, right in asserting that Fromm assigns comparatively little importance to the instincts in his theory of human nature. The conclusion of his argument does not follow, however, for the simple reason that his first premise – insofar as it applies to Fromm – is incorrect. For Fromm does *not* adopt Freud's later usage of the term; he does not essentially equate the contents of the unconscious with instinctual drives. Rather, Fromm uses the word in the sense Freud originally gave it: as a term denoting a quality of certain mental states not identified with any particular contents.⁷³ One motive for using the term in this way is to extend the significance of the unconscious so that it is not es-

entially limited to repressed sexual strivings, but refers to “the whole range of repressed psychic experiences.”⁷⁴

Marcuse thus commits a two-fold error: first, in ascribing to Fromm a view that he does not hold and in using this as a premise for his argument that Fromm de-emphasizes the importance of the unconscious; and second, in failing to see the sense in which Fromm *does* use the term and the central place this usage holds in his thought.

Marcuse's critique: Fromm's values

With regard to Fromm's values, Marcuse contends that although they appear critical, they are in fact repressive and conformist, because they are defined in terms of the given reality principle (*EC*, pp. 238–239). Although Marcuse brings forth several arguments in support of this claim, none of them is finally convincing, because they are based on a narrow and error-ridden reading of Fromm's work.

The revisionists' “distinction between good and bad . . . productive and unproductive,” Marcuse writes, “. . . is not derived from any theoretical principle but simply taken from the prevalent ideology” (*EC*, p. 228). This statement contains two separate claims, the first of which is simply false. Fromm's ethics, like the “libidinal morality” of *Eros and Civilization* (*EC*, p. 208), is in fact derived from an extensive theory of human nature. Good and evil are defined on the basis of an understanding of this “nature” and of what is conducive or harmful to its full development. Indeed, *Man for Himself* is *primarily* concerned with the task of arriving at “objectively valid” ethical standards on the basis of a philosophical anthropology.⁷⁵

To substantiate the charge that Fromm's values are ideological, Marcuse identifies Fromm with idealistic ethics, a moral tradition for which reason is “in its very function repressive” (*EC*, p. 100) of nature both inside and outside the human individual. Here, Marcuse writes, the natural world is viewed merely as an object of domination, while all the “higher” moral values are defined in terms of the repression of the sensuous faculties.

To be sure, Fromm identifies with some of the major figures of the Western philosophical tradition, drawing explicitly, for example, on the ethical theory of Aristotle and Spinoza.⁷⁶ But what he embraces in this heritage are its emancipatory features: its concern with happiness, human

solidarity, and the development of human potentialities. Reason does indeed play a central role in Fromm's thought, but it is for him an instrument of truth and demystification that seeks to apprehend the world as it is rather than manipulate it for instrumental ends.⁷⁷ The most repressive feature of idealism – the call for the “domination of one part of the individual, his nature, by another, his reason,”⁷⁸ – is repudiated explicitly. “Idealistic philosophers,” Fromm writes,

... have insisted upon splitting human personality, so that man's nature may be suppressed and guarded by his reason. The result of this split, however, has been that not only the emotional life of man but also his intellectual faculties have been crippled. Reason, by becoming a guard set to watch its prisoner, nature, has become a prisoner itself; and thus both sides of human personality, reason and emotion, were crippled.⁷⁹

The task of ethics, Fromm argues, is not to repress human strivings, but to create the conditions conducive to human development.⁸⁰ Liberation is defined not in terms of the repression of the instincts, but as a productive response to the human situation involving the transformation of one's experience in all spheres of one's being: intellectual, emotional, and sensuous.⁸¹

Unlike Marcuse, Fromm does not place sexuality at the very center of his psychology or his conception of liberation, but this by no means makes him, as some suggest, a “rabid sexual conservative.”⁸² From the papers of the early 1930s through *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973), Fromm views sexuality as a productive force for human freedom and happiness.⁸³ Moreover, “legitimate” sexual relations are not narrowly defined in terms of behavior that serves procreation. “Sexual desire,” Fromm writes,

even when no love is present, is an expression of life and of mutual giving and sharing of pleasure. Sexual acts, however, that are characterized by the fact that one person becomes the object of the other's contempt, of his wish to hurt, his desire to control are the only true sexual perversions; not because they do not serve procreation, but because they pervert a life-serving impulse into a life-strangling one.⁸⁴

If Fromm's views on sexuality are “non-repressive” as I suggest, what are we to make of his response to Marcuse's work? In “The Human Implications of Instinctivistic ‘Radicalism’” and several later writings,⁸⁵ Fromm speaks of Marcuse's vision of the release of Eros as irrational, infantile, and regressive. Surely, one might conclude, such remarks express a hostile attitude towards sexuality. Such an inference, however,

would be in error. In order to understand why this is so, it may be helpful to compare Fromm's reading of Marcuse with that recently presented in the pages of this journal by Nancy Julia Chodorow.⁸⁶

Many of Fromm's comments about *Eros and Civilization* bespeak a careless reading of that work. Fromm believes, for example, that Marcuse is calling for the "complete and unrestricted satisfaction of . . . sexual desire,"⁸⁷ the "immediate gratification" of instinctual needs, the reactivation of coprophilia and sadism in their present forms. But this is simply not so. Fromm ignores Marcuse's efforts to limit instinctual liberation to the extent necessary for preserving a non-repressive society. He takes no notice of the distinction between basic and surplus repression and the transformation of sexuality into Eros — a process involving the "self-sublimation" of the sexual instincts and the emergence of an "order of gratification" guided by a non-repressive reason (*EC*, chapters 9–11).

More fundamentally, Fromm shows little understanding of Marcuse's overall project. He does not see that under Nietzsche's influence, Marcuse is trying to articulate a materialist conception of liberation that is free of the repressive features of idealistic ethics. Marcuse has chosen to express this vision within a Freudian framework. But it is precisely the use of Freudian constructs that blocks Fromm from fully understanding the goals Marcuse is trying to express. When the latter uses the concept of narcissism, for example, to articulate the notion of a non-alienated relation between nature and the human individual, Fromm sees only the regressive connotations inherent in this construct; he is insensitive to the progressive intent underlying Marcuse's use of it.

In contrast, Chodorow's essay exhibits a much firmer grasp of Marcuse's project as a whole as well as of the specific goals he is trying to articulate. She sees, for example — as Fromm does not — the motives behind the celebration of narcissism and the infantile perversions. But she also understands — and this is her key insight — that the way in which Marcuse chooses to appropriate psychoanalysis profoundly limits the content of the goals he is trying to express. By focusing exclusively on drive theory as the radical core of psychoanalysis and articulating his vision within the framework this theory provides, Marcuse is led to put forth an asocial and hyperindividualistic view of society as well as a conception of liberation that essentially conceives of "people as children and as male."⁸⁸ Thus, although Chodorow reads Marcuse with much more sympathy and understanding than does Fromm, she nevertheless con-

firms some of Fromm's claims:⁸⁹ specifically, the view that Marcuse's notion of liberation is indeed tantamount to advocating "never growing up or moving beyond childhood."⁹⁰

By valorizing the "narcissistic mode of relating to the world and unconstrained bodily pleasure," Chodorow writes, Marcuse retains "the psychological stance of the infant,"⁹¹ and as a consequence, precludes from his theory of society "those very intersubjective relationships that should form the core of any social and political vision."⁹²

"Refusal to accept separation from the libidinous object (or subject)," "the union of the self with a whole world of love and pleasure" denies that object or external world its own separateness and choice, requiring that others be objects, not subjects, and denying subjectivity to the other, who can only be a narcissistic extension of the self and an object instrumental for one's own gratification.⁹³

By pointing out the psychologically regressive and profoundly asocial features of this theory, Chodorow makes it evident that a repudiation of Marcuse's vision (such as one finds in Fromm) by no means implies a repressive attitude towards sexuality per se. It is one thing to put forth a materially based theory of liberation. It is another to use Freud's drive theory to articulate a social philosophy that denies human agency and intersubjectivity while promoting a radically restricted conception of human experience.

The effort to brand Fromm's ethics as ideological finds further expression in Marcuse's treatment of the concept of productiveness. This highest of Frommian values, Marcuse claims, refers mainly to traits that "show forth in good business, administration, service, with the reasonable expectation of recognized success" (*EC*, pp. 236–237). That is to say, Fromm's conception is not different from the "goal of the healthy individual under the performance principle" (*EC*, p. 236).

That these remarks grossly misrepresent the meaning of Fromm's formulation is obvious from a close reading of Fromm's work. Far from defining the "productive orientation" in terms of traits required for "good business" and "recognized success," Fromm's writings – e.g., the analyses of the origins of the work ethic⁹⁴ and the marketing character⁹⁵ – constitute a powerful critique of precisely these values. It may be, as H. P. (Henry Pachter)⁹⁶ suggests in his review of *The Sane Society*, that Fromm's "term is most unfortunate because it can be confused with one

of the most outrageously alienated idols of capitalism.” But it is nevertheless the case, as Pachter goes on to remark, that

Nothing... is farther from Fromm's intention than the idea of productiveness for its own sake. If we look into the descriptive part, [of the book, Fromm's]... meaning becomes clear: productiveness is an attitude towards life, the universe and mankind which allows the development of a person's full potentialities; it is what Friedrich Schiller and Huizinga call “play,” and no sadder indictment of our alienation could be found than this lack of a proper word for our most profound yearning and the central conception of a non-alienated self-realization.⁹⁷

Only by playing on the repressive connotations of the term “productiveness” (which, throughout *Eros and Civilization*, has been linked with the performance principle [see, e.g., *EC*, pp. 199–202]) and by simply ignoring Fromm's definition, can Marcuse suggest that the latter partakes of the features of the given reality principle.

Another example of Marcuse's distortion of Fromm's work may be found in his discussion of the Neo-Freudians' concept of mental health. Although at one point Marcuse admits that Fromm rejects the “therapy of adjustment,” (*EC*, pp. 237–238) he suggests that this claim is ultimately hollow: in the last analysis, Fromm, along with Sullivan and Horney, conceives of mental health operationally, in terms of “successful adjustment” to the given social order. Marcuse can arrive at this interpretation, however, only by failing to make crucial distinctions between Fromm, Horney, and Sullivan and by treating passages from the latter as if they applied to Fromm as well. The most remarkable instance of this practice is his use of a long quotation from H. S. Sullivan in which Sullivan speaks of political radicals as psychopathic personalities. Though Sullivan's views on this matter have nothing in common with Fromm's,⁹⁸ Marcuse writes as if they did: Sullivan's remarks are used as the basis for a general denunciation of Neo-Freudian psychology. “The passage,” Marcuse writes,

illuminates the extent to which the interpersonal theory is fashioned by the values of the *status quo*. . . . Deep conformity holds sway over this psychology, which suspects all those who “cut loose from their earlier moorings” and become “radicals” as neurotic. . . . This “operational” identification of mental health with “adjustive success” and progress eliminates all the reservations with which Freud hedged the therapeutic objective of adjustment to an inhuman society. . . . (*EC*, pp. 233–234)

To attribute such a view to Fromm is to do great violence to the whole spirit of his work. As we have seen, on the basis of his conception of

human nature, Fromm attacks those who view society's way of life as "normal" insofar as it is functional and who define neurosis only in terms of the individual's lack of adjustment to the given order. For Fromm, the standard of mental health and pathology is determined not on the basis of prevailing social attitudes and behavior but from the standpoint of genuine human needs. Indeed, one of the major themes of Fromm's work is the extreme alienation and automaton conformity characteristic of the "normal" individual in modern society. In "Individual and Social Origins of Neurosis" (1944) and later in *Man for Himself* and *The Sane Society*, Fromm speaks of "socially patterned defects" across large populations and discusses at length the "pathology of normalcy." Indeed, the last of these works is a detailed investigation into the "pathology of civilized communities."⁹⁹

Finally, Marcuse accuses Fromm of a theoretical shift of emphasis from sociological to spiritual concerns. The "decisive struggles," Marcuse writes, are no longer between society and the individual, but between rational and irrational forces "in the 'soul' of man" (*EC*, p. 242). Having transformed "the brute fact of societal repression . . . into a 'moral problem,'" (*EC*, p. 243) Fromm holds the individual responsible for falling short of his or her potential and speaks of neurosis as a symptom of moral failure.

Although, once again, Marcuse's claim has some basis in fact, it is highly misleading to characterize Fromm's thought in this way without qualification. For Fromm combines his religiosity and moralism with a profound sense of the impact of socioeconomic forces on the individual psyche. This is the main point not only of the theory of social character but of his classic studies of modern society. In a letter to Martin Jay, Fromm insists that he never saw the problem of change in moralistic terms:

The essential point of *Escape from Freedom* is to show the socio-economic conditions which determine man's difficulty in achieving freedom to. In *The Sane Society* I continued the same topic. 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.¹⁰⁰

Moreover, when Fromm speaks of neurosis as a symptom of moral fail-

ure, he is referring to the fact that acts of self-betrayal (as evinced, for example, in the marketing character's motto, "I am as you desire me") often result in neurotic conflict as well as to his belief that "defeat in the child's fight against irrational authority [is] to be found at the bottom of every neurosis."¹⁰¹ The neurotic is a "moral failure" in the sense of not having become what he or she might have; the neurotic's capacity for autonomous thought and feeling has been crippled. But this by no means implies a moralistic judgment against the individual¹⁰² or a negation of the indictment of society for its part in crushing his or her humanity.

Fromm's moralism has been a source of great irritation to most of his critics on the left. What they have all chosen to ignore, however, is that in developing a *moral* critique of capitalism, Fromm was merely assigning central importance to a theme that had been implicit in Marxism from the first. Moreover, he was anticipating the position that Marcuse himself eventually came to embrace: namely, that "Morality is not necessarily and not primarily ideological. In the face of an amoral society, it becomes a political weapon. . . ."¹⁰³

Jacoby and Adorno: the repression of a theory

Under the influence of Marcuse's critique, Fromm came to be regarded as a conformist thinker who had weakened the most critical aspects of Freud's thought. Consequently, his contribution to critical theory, Freud-Marxism, and his critique of the psychoanalytic movement, were minimized or ignored altogether. Paul Robinson, for example, excludes Fromm from his study of *The Freudian Left* on the grounds that he is a "rabid sexual conservative,"¹⁰⁴ while H. Stuart Hughes, going even farther than Marcuse, places Fromm and the revisionists on the "Freudian Right" because of their de-emphasis of the role of sexuality.¹⁰⁵ The most important and influential study along these lines, however, is Russell Jacoby's *Social Amnesia*, a book that seeks to extend Marcuse's analysis back to Adler and forward to Laing.

Since, with regard to the critique of Fromm, at least, Jacoby essentially adopts Marcuse's position, his claims are open to many of the same objections. Once again no distinction is drawn between the work of Fromm, Sullivan, and Horney,¹⁰⁶ once again we encounter the myth concerning the shift away from the unconscious¹⁰⁷ and the "explanation" of Fromm's position as resulting from an attempt to achieve immediate therapeutic gains.¹⁰⁸ Once again the bulk of Fromm's writings

are simply ignored or forgotten: His corpus is reduced to the rejection of libido theory, some pastoral remarks in *The Art of Loving*, and his admittedly unconvincing suggestions for social change. The powerful social critique and the theory of social character are downplayed or passed by altogether.¹⁰⁹

More significant, however, are the distortions resulting from Jacoby's charges of "sociologism." Drawing on Adorno's famous essay on the autonomy and irreducibility of sociology and psychology,¹¹⁰ Jacoby begins by arguing that most attempts to reconcile "'Marx and Freud,' . . . 'sociology and psychology,' have exuded a positivistic and mechanistic approach."

This manner of posing the problem suggests that the task is to make agreeable the incompatible by a round-table discussion that tables the contradictions. A harmonious synthesis of Marxism and psychoanalysis presupposes that society is without the antagonisms that are its essence.¹¹¹

Here Jacoby is restating Adorno's claim that the conceptual integration of sociology and psychology implies a harmonious subject. As long as the individual is "non-identical with himself, both social and psychological at once,"¹¹² such a synthesis of theories belies the reality and thus serves an ideological function.

The Neo-Freudians in particular "flatten out a society-individual antagonism"¹¹³ by abandoning the instinct theory and shifting the emphasis to social factors, thereby sociologizing psychological drives. This move not only entails replacing a dialectical model of the individual/society relation with a mechanistic one (in which the individual is passively shaped by social forces), it also "prematurely cuts off an exploration of subjectivity."¹¹⁴ "In sidestepping the psychic structure," Jacoby writes, revisionism must remain on the surface, unable to reach and explore "society's deeper reign over the individual."¹¹⁵ In contrast, critical theory maintains the dynamic tension between the psychological and social dimensions. Drawing on orthodox psychoanalysis with its irreducible notion of the psychic realm, critical theory pursues "subjectivity till it hits bottom," there unmasking not only the objective "social and historical events that have preformed and deformed the subject,"¹¹⁶ but the very eradication of subjectivity itself. "Negative psychoanalysis," Jacoby writes, "is 'twice' objective in that it traces at first the objective content of subjectivity, and second, discovers there is only an objective configuration to subjectivity."¹¹⁷ Today the subject "is being administered out of existence."¹¹⁸

In Adorno's view, the harmonistic approach of revisionism is further evinced in its tendency to view character as an integrated whole. "The stress on totality," Adorno writes, "as against the unique, fragmentary impulses, always implies the harmonistic belief in what might be called the unity of personality, [a unity that] is never realized in our society."¹¹⁹

Although the charge of "sociologism" has a prominent place in the Frankfurt School's critique of Fromm's work,¹²⁰ few scholars, including Jacoby, have either acknowledged Fromm's attack upon sociologism or his effort to avoid this approach.

In the first chapter of *Escape from Freedom*,¹²¹ Fromm writes that while he rejects the Freudian tendency to psychologize social phenomena, he "disagrees as emphatically with those theories which neglect the role of the human factor as one of the dynamic elements in the social process."¹²² Common to all such theories, he writes,

is the assumption that human nature has no dynamism of its own and that psychological changes are to be understood in terms of the development of new "habits" as an adaptation to new cultural patterns. These theories, though speaking of the psychological factor, at the same time reduce it to a shadow of cultural patterns. Only a dynamic psychology, the foundations of which have been laid by Freud, can get further than paying lip service to the human factor. Though there is no fixed human nature, we cannot regard human nature as being infinitely malleable and able to adapt itself to any kind of conditions without developing a psychological dynamism of its own. Human nature, though being the product of historical evolution, has certain inherent mechanisms and laws, to discover which is the task of psychology.¹²³

Several features of Fromm's anthropology and social theory illustrate these claims concerning the irreducibility of psychic drives. First, as we noted above, Fromm posits, as the psychological parallel to a similar biological phenomenon, a tendency to grow and develop that if thwarted, results in new reactive drives that may undermine the given social order. Second, Fromm argues that there are imperative existential (as well as physiological) needs that must be met to ensure psychic survival. Every society that is to continue to function must provide some means of satisfying these needs.

Third, Fromm conceives of social character as a "precipitation of the intersection"¹²⁴ between two irreducible dimensions: the social structure and "the nature of man." "[I]n speaking of the socio-economic structure of society as molding man's character," he writes,

we speak only of one pole in the interconnection between social organization and man. The other pole to be considered is man's nature. . . . The social process can be understood only if we start out with the knowledge of the reality of man, his psychic properties as well as his physiological ones, and if we examine the interaction between the nature of man and the nature of the external conditions under which he lives. . . .¹²⁵

To be sure, "human nature" is shaped by social and economic factors, but it "has also a certain independence" from them. "[P]sychological forces . . . are molded by the external conditions of life, but they also have a dynamism of their own; that is, they are the expression of human needs which, although they can be molded, cannot be uprooted."¹²⁶

Fourth, Fromm's account of the *way* in which psychic drives adapt to reality is indicative of their non-reductive nature. Social character, Fromm writes, is not passively and mechanistically shaped by social forces; rather, it "results from the dynamic adaptation of human nature to the structure of society."¹²⁷ To appreciate this remark, one must be acquainted with Fromm's distinction between "static" and "dynamic" forms of adaptation. The first term designates "such an adaptation to patterns as leaves the whole character structure unchanged and implies only the adoption of a new habit." A change from the Chinese custom of eating to the western habit of using a knife and fork is a case in point.¹²⁸ By the latter term, however, Fromm refers to the fact that the very process of adapting to external conditions not only creates drives that "fit" those circumstances, but a host of other strivings as well, which are formed in reaction to the external conditions and to the very drives that are congruent with the latter's demands. As an example, Fromm cites the case of a boy growing up in a strict, authoritarian environment. In coming to terms with this situation, the boy not only develops the "appropriate" traits of character (obedience, for example), but also, in reaction to these traits — as well as to his father's demands — a whole series of other drives, many of which may remain unconscious. The boy's submission may, for example, create intense hostility toward the father that, because it is too frightening to acknowledge, is repressed. Though not manifest, the unconscious hostility acts as a dynamic factor in the boy's character structure, generating still further reactions: it may, for example, create new anxiety that in turn may lead to greater submission or to vague feelings of defiance directed against life in general.¹²⁹ If human nature had no dynamism of its own, if it were without inherent structures and needs, "dynamic adaptation" in Fromm's sense would not be possible.

Finally, Fromm argues that the relation between character and society is a dialectical one. Human drives are shaped by social reality, but they shape that reality as well. Once a social character structure has developed, it in turn becomes an active force molding the social process. This is a central but neglected theme of *Escape from Freedom*. As we noted above, Fromm there argues that the character traits that developed in response to the collapse of medieval society and had been stabilized by Protestant doctrine themselves came to serve as “productive forces in the development of capitalism.”¹³⁰

If Jacoby is wrong in asserting that Fromm collapses psychic drives into social factors, he is equally incorrect in his claim that revisionist theory must remain on the surface because it “prematurely cuts off an exploration of subjectivity in the name of society.”¹³¹ As I have argued throughout this essay, Fromm remains a depth psychologist to the end. This is evinced not only in his adherence to the concepts of the unconscious, repression, and the dynamic theory of character,¹³² but also in his approach to social analysis. As we have seen, the aim of his “interpretive questionnaire” is to apply psychoanalytic methods to the study of large groups; i.e., to get past surface opinion and ideology to the dynamic and often unconscious forces that constitute the individual’s character structure. In *Social Character in a Mexican Village*, Fromm and Maccoby, while stressing the influence of social factors, use the questionnaire (and, to a lesser extent, Rorschach and TAT responses) to gain access to their respondents’ unconscious drives.

Further, it is worth noting that the approach Jacoby himself advocates is open to question. “Negative psychoanalysis” eschews “superficial” concern with social factors. Instead, it claims to burrow into the subject and there “rediscover the social element at the very bottom of the psychological categories.”¹³³ But the example of *The Authoritarian Personality* puts this claim into question.¹³⁴ As Martin Jay has noted, this study “was criticized for being psychologically reductionist and overly concerned with subjective rather than objective phenomena. . . .”¹³⁵ Indeed, two of its leading critics remarked that in abandoning a sociological approach, Adorno and his co-authors “take the irrationality out of the social order and impute it to the respondent, and by means of this substitution, it is decided that prejudiced respondents derive their judgments in an irrational way.”¹³⁶ The over-emphasis on psychology may, as Jay suggests, have been balanced by the Frankfurt School’s socially oriented theoretical writings of the 1940s. But if “negative psychoanalysis” functions as Jacoby says it does, such supplementation should not

be necessary. The psychological categories themselves should reveal “the objective content of subjectivity.”¹³⁷

The plausibility of Adorno’s and Jacoby’s broader claim has been effectively challenged by Richard Lichtman. In response to the charge that the integration of social and psychological theories presupposes a harmonious totality, Lichtman writes:

A harmonious synthesis between Marx and Freud *presupposes nothing*, least of all a harmonious society, for the simple reason that such a harmonious synthesis of *theories* is absolutely impossible. An alleged antagonism between Freudian and Marxist *theory* is a wholly different issue than the antagonism between individuals in capitalist *society*.¹³⁸

In its concern to authenticate the individual against the ravages of totalitarian society, critical theory mistakenly concluded that a “logic of the individual psyche” is required. Now, it is one thing to wish to protect the individual against mass domination. It is a wholly different matter to equate this desire with a *theory* based on the “logic of the individual psyche.”¹³⁹

Extending these remarks, one might add that it is one thing to accurately register the antagonistic nature of social reality; it is quite another, however, to equate this effort with an insistence on “culturing the differences” between sociology and psychology. Indeed, if the response to *The Authoritarian Personality* is any indication, such efforts may obscure rather than articulate the antagonisms.

Even if Adorno’s and Jacoby’s point were granted, however, Fromm’s work belies the charge that he has achieved a harmonious totality that implies the “unity of personality.” We have just seen that Fromm does not – as is often claimed – collapse the psychic dimension into the social. In addition, however, it should be noted that Adorno’s claims concerning the “harmonious” features of revisionist characterology apply to neither of the most salient aspects of Fromm’s character theory: namely the concept of social character and the theory of character types.

In formulating the theory of social character, Fromm does not *deny* the “unique, fragmentary impulses;” indeed, he acknowledges their importance.¹⁴⁰ He selects only those traits common to the members of a group, however – that is, he deliberately restricts his focus – because he seeks to cast light on a problem that he believes the analysis of the individual alone cannot illuminate: namely, the way in which “human energy is channeled and operates as a productive force in a given social order . . .”¹⁴¹

Moreover, Fromm's theory does not imply anything at all about the "integration" (or lack of it) in the character structure of any particular group member. The concept of social character focuses on the traits common to the members of a group. It acknowledges, but does not attend to those traits that fall outside the common matrix. Any particular group member may have some traits that he shares with the other members of his society and that therefore form part of the social character. But any other traits he may possess are defined by the theory only to the extent that they are *not* part of the common character matrix. There is nothing in the idea of social character to imply that the traits specific to the individual must somehow be congruent either among themselves or with those of the social character. That is, the theory in no way implies that it is dealing with "integrated personalities."

Adorno commits a similar error with regard to Fromm's theory of character types. Fromm uses a typology as a means of elucidating the complex phenomenon of human personality. Speaking of the various character orientations, Fromm writes:

... these concepts are "ideal-types," not descriptions of the character of a given individual... while, for didactic purposes, they are treated here separately, the character of any given person is usually a blend of all or some of these orientations in which one, however, is dominant.¹⁴²

To describe someone as a "receptive" character, for example, is to say that this is his or her dominant orientation toward the world. It is not to deny that traits associated with other character types may be found in the person's character structure; nor does it imply that the person is an "integrated" or "harmonious" personality. Indeed, Fromm's descriptions of the various character types tend to stress their negative, regressive features.¹⁴³ Only when Fromm speaks of character as a system do we encounter notions of integration and totality. In *Man for Himself*, Fromm writes that his own theory

follows Freud... in the assumption that the fundamental entity in character is not the single character trait but the total character organization from which a number of single character traits follow. These character traits are to be understood as a syndrome which results from a particular organization or, as I shall call it, orientation of character.¹⁴⁴

Two points about this passage are worthy of note. First, in stressing the fact that character is an organized totality rather than a disparate collection of traits, Fromm, as he indicates, is well within the bounds of the Freudian tradition. In his classic paper on "Character and Anal Eroti-

cism,” Freud argues that the traits of parsimony, obstinacy, and orderliness do not occur together by chance; rather, they constitute a syndrome of traits rooted in a common libidinal source.¹⁴⁵

Second, while Fromm does speak of character as a system, he uses the term in a descriptive, not a normative, sense. The totalistic aspect of character is not “a desirable goal that is yet to be achieved;”¹⁴⁶ it is simply a fact about character structure. What Martin Jay says about the Western Marxists’ use of a non-normative concept of totality applies to Fromm as well:

...it stems from a methodological insistence that adequate understanding of complex phenomena can follow only from an appreciation of their relational integrity. When, for example, Western Marxists talk of the “totality of bourgeois society,” they obviously do not mean that this society has achieved the harmonious order of a true whole. Instead, they suggest that the various component parts of bourgeois society, as disparate and unconnected as they appear, are inextricable elements in a larger complex whole.¹⁴⁷

In summary, neither Fromm’s concept of social character nor his character typology imply “unified” personalities; and when Fromm does draw on the concept of totality, he uses it in a non-normative sense.

In concluding this section, it is important to note that despite his attack on Fromm, Adorno later reversed his position on character types and thus undermined his own earlier critique. Whereas in the case of the revisionists, typology allegedly implied a harmonious character, its use in Adorno’s study of *The Authoritarian Personality* is “justified” on the grounds that it accurately reflects the loss of individuality in modern culture.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, whereas four years earlier Adorno had claimed that “The stress on totality, as against the unique, fragmentary impulses, always implies the harmonistic belief in what might be called the unity of personality,”¹⁴⁹ he now defends the legitimacy of general concepts.

The radical renunciation of all generalizations beyond those pertaining to the most obvious findings would not result in true empathy into human individuals but rather in an opaque, dull description of psychological “facts”: every step which goes beyond the factual and aims at psychological meaning . . . inevitably involves generalizations transcending the supposedly unique “case,” and it happens that these generalizations more frequently than not imply the existence of certain regularly recurring *nuclei* or syndromes which come rather close to the idea of “types.” Ideas such as those of orality, or of the compulsive character, though apparently derived from highly individual studies, make sense only if they are accompanied by the implicit assumption that the structures thus named, and discovered within the individual dynamics of an individual, pertain

to such basic constellations that they may be expected to be representative, no matter how “unique” the observations upon which they are based may be. . . .¹⁵⁰

In radically revising his interpretation of concepts that he had previously viewed as conformist, Adorno tacitly abandons his critique of Fromm’s theory of character types.

Conclusion

Clearly, there is some validity to the Marcuse-Jacoby critique of Fromm’s work. In repudiating the instinct theory, Fromm does indeed abandon a construct that has served an important theoretical function for the left.¹⁵¹ Moreover, he does, as Marcuse claims, introduce certain idealistic themes into Freud’s materialist psychology. What I have argued throughout this essay, however, is that despite these changes, Fromm remains a socially critical thinker from beginning to end. It is only by failing to qualify their charges against him, by neglecting to draw distinctions between Fromm and the Neo-Freudians, and finally, by simply ignoring the greater part of his work, that Marcuse and Jacoby can portray Fromm as a conformist figure.

Unfortunately, this portrait has gained wide acceptance among intellectuals on the left, and as a consequence, many of Fromm’s contributions have been forgotten. Jürgen Habermas is one of the few who have taken note of this fact. In an interview conducted with Marcuse shortly before the latter’s death, Habermas remarked:

I would like to know if, retrospectively, you’re not doing a disservice to the contribution Fromm made to the rise of Critical Theory as it developed in New York. . . . Wasn’t Fromm the first to introduce the program of a Marxist social psychology to the Institute, at the end of the twenties? . . . Wasn’t it Fromm, certainly urged on by Horkheimer, who tried to reconcile Marx and Freud in his own fashion, a fashion decisive for Critical Theory? Wasn’t it Fromm who made it clear that some trivial psychological assumptions cannot determine the subjective factor, but that the latter . . . must integrate basic conceptualizations of psychoanalysis and Marxism? Isn’t the image of Fromm that you’re painting now heavily colored by the later dispute with Fromm the revisionist, and isn’t his contribution to Critical Theory’s formative period underestimated?

To these questions, Marcuse replied:

Yes, I concede that without reservation. And the description I gave was, as you said, colored by the position of the late Fromm. . . . But Fromm’s early works,

especially those on Christian dogma and then the first essays in the *Zeitschrift*... were received as radical Marxist social psychology. That is correct.¹⁵²

Habermas does not challenge Marcuse's reading of Fromm's *later* writings; he merely suggests that this reading (however accurate it may be) has influenced his assessment of the earlier work. In contrast to this view, I have tried to put Marcuse's account of "Fromm the revisionist" into question. In the course of this essay, I have argued that Marcuse presents a highly distorted interpretation of Fromm's later thought, and that, under the influence of this account, Fromm's contributions – both before and after 1941 – have undergone repression.

In the face of such pervasive amnesia, it is important to recall that it was Fromm who, in *Escape from Freedom* and *The Sane Society*, introduced certain themes of critical theory to a mass audience,¹⁵³ and who, during the complacent 1950s, sustained, together with C. Wright Mills and a handful of others, a radical critique of contemporary society.¹⁵⁴ Further, Fromm perhaps more than any other analyst, sought to sharpen the most critical features of Freud's thought.¹⁵⁵ Over a period of fifty years, Fromm developed a thorough-going critique of psychoanalysis, directed against its theory, therapy,¹⁵⁶ and what he regarded as the conformist nature of the psychoanalytic movement.¹⁵⁷ The most important element of that critique – and the centerpiece of his thought – was his effort to integrate Marx and Freud. This project was not abandoned, but, Fromm would argue, significantly enhanced, by the repudiation of libido theory. (The main flaw in Russell Jacoby's book on Otto Fenichel¹⁵⁸ is that, in dismissing Fromm as a heretic, he excludes from the ranks of the radical Freudians their most independent and productive member and thereby distorts the very tradition he seeks to retrieve.) Finally, it should be noted that Fromm remained committed to radical politics until the end. His social activism was expressed not only in his campaign against the nuclear arms race,¹⁵⁹ in his protest against the Vietnam war,¹⁶⁰ and his lifelong sympathy with revolution;¹⁶¹ it also showed forth in his analytic practice and in his role in giving the Mexican Psychoanalytic Institute, which he founded, a socially critical orientation.¹⁶² As this commitment to the union of theory and practice suggests, Fromm was ironically perhaps closer to Marcuse than to any of his other colleagues at the Institute of Social Research. (Martin Jay long ago noted some of the similarities between the two thinkers.¹⁶³) Inspired by Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, both appeal to a theory of human nature and a conception of true human needs as the basis for their critique of advanced industrial society. Both expose the depth of

alienation beneath the surface “happiness” of modern consumerism and examine the ways in which the culture industry manipulates and controls the public consciousness.¹⁶⁴ Both attack conformist tendencies in the social sciences and develop critiques of technological irrationality.¹⁶⁵ Both insist on the revolutionary power of art¹⁶⁶ and, unlike some of their Frankfurt colleagues, offer a positive vision of what a genuinely human society would be like.

Despite his critique of Fromm, the similarities between the two apparently was not entirely lost on Marcuse. According to Fromm, when *One-Dimensional Man* appeared, Marcuse asked him to review the book because Fromm was “almost the only [person] who would understand him.”¹⁶⁷

Marxism originally turned to psychoanalysis in an attempt to understand the role of psychological factors in social phenomena. Specifically, it sought an account of the origin and power of ideology, the subjective conditions for social change, and the processes by which society enters the individual psyche.

One of the primary aims of Fromm’s work was to provide the answers to these questions. On a theoretical level, he tried to supplement Marxist theory by arguing that character is the mediating link between the material base and superstructure of society. In his empirical investigations, he provided an analytic technique – namely, the “interpretive questionnaire” – for studying the character of social groups. In so doing, he offered a valuable tool for assessing the impact of socioeconomic conditions upon character and of predicting whether the latter would resist or facilitate radical social change.¹⁶⁸ In distorting and subsequently neglecting his work, Fromm’s critics have not only repressed the thought of one of the left’s most passionate and penetrating spokesmen, they have also failed to benefit fully from the insights Fromm has to offer.

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Notes

1. See the concluding remarks in Paul Robinson's review of Erich Fromm's *Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, "Cleaning Up Freud," *Partisan Review* 41 (1974): 280–283. See also Paul Roazan, "A Stranger to Narrow Fashion," *Nation* 5 February 1977: 151–154. Roazan's review anticipates a number of points made in the present paper.
2. Among the notable exceptions to this general trend are Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973); Wolfgang Bonss, "Critical Theory and Empirical Social Research: Some Observations," *The Working Class in Weimar Germany: A Psychological and Sociological Study* by Erich Fromm (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 1–38; Ron Eyerman, *False Consciousness and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1981), chapter Five; Ken O'Brien, "Death and Revolution: A Reappraisal of Identity Theory," *On Critical Theory*, ed. John O'Neill (New York: Seabury, 1976). Many works on the Frankfurt Institute discuss Fromm in passing but not in detail.
3. Three such articles are Michael Maccoby, "Social Character versus the Productive Ideal: The Contribution and Contradiction in Fromm's View of Man," *Praxis International* 1 (1982): 70–83; Rudolf J. Siebert, "Fromm's Theory of Religion," *Telos* 34 (1977–78): 111–120; and Hugh Willmott and David Knights, "The Problem of Freedom: Fromm's Contribution to a Critical Theory of Work Organization," *Praxis International* 2 (1982): 204–225. Fromm's work has received a good deal of attention from the Praxis group in Yugoslavia. The papers by Maccoby, Willmott, and Knights were originally presented at a conference on "Man and Society in the Thought of Erich Fromm" in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, December 1981.
4. See, however, the brief memorial piece by Raya Dunayevskaya, "Erich Fromm: Socialist Humanist," *News & Letters*, April 1980: 10; and Michael Maccoby, "Erich Fromm," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Biographical Supplement* (New York: The Free Press, 1979) 18: 215–220.
5. In addition, Fromm's religiosity and humanism, his "old-fashioned" belief in the existence of human nature and in the possibility of developing objectively valid ethical standards have all served to alienate him from current intellectual sensibilities. Further, Foucault's questioning of the central tenets of Freud-Marxism may have indirectly contributed to the neglect of Fromm's work. In making this point, however, it is worth noting that Foucault's critique is primarily directed at the "sexual repression" hypothesis and therefore is in this respect much less applicable to Fromm (especially since 1941) than to other figures on the Freudian left. Finally, one might speculate that Fromm's popularity with the general reading public has done nothing to enhance his reputation among academics.
6. Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse all criticized Fromm's revision of Freud. See Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, Chapter Three. Adorno criticized Fromm in his 1946 lecture on "Social Science and Sociological Tendencies in Psychoanalysis." A German translation may be found in Theodor W. Adorno, "Die revidierte Psychoanalyse," *Gesammelte Schriften* 8: 20–41. Marcuse's critique of Fromm was first published under the title "The Social Implications of Freudian Revisionism," *Dissent* 2 (1955): 221–240. It was reprinted under its present title, "Critique of Neo-Freudian Revisionism," as the Epilogue to *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (1955; New York: Vintage Books, 1962), 217–251.
7. All citations to *Eros and Civilization* refer to the edition noted above.
8. Quoted in Fred Halliday, "Karl Korsch: An Introduction," *Marxism and Philosophy*

- by Karl Korsch (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 10. Despite these remarks, Korsch himself did not explore the psychic dimension in any depth. See Russell Jacoby, *Social Amnesia: A Critique of Conformist Psychology from Adler to Laing* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), 76.
9. In addition, Fromm in particular wanted to use psychoanalysis to study such irrational social phenomena as the rise of fascism. For a good discussion of the background to Fromm's synthesis, see Wolfgang Bonns, "Critical Theory and Empirical Social Research" and Ron Eyerman, *False Consciousness and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, Chapter 5.
 10. For a discussion of Fenichel's interest in political psychoanalysis and his connection with Bernfield, Reich, and Fromm see Russell Jacoby, *The Repression of Psychoanalysis: Otto Fenichel and the Political Freudians* (New York: Basic Books, 1983). For a brief analysis of efforts to integrate Marxism and psychoanalysis, see "When Dogma Bites Dogma, or The Difficult Marriage of Marx and Freud;" *The Times Literary Supplement* (8 January, 1971).
 11. See Wilhelm Reich, *Character Analysis* (1933; New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1972). For a very brief comparison of Reich and Fromm on character theory, see David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980) 116–117. See also Paul Robinson, *The Freudian Left: Wilhelm Reich, Geza Roheim, Herbert Marcuse* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 9–73.
 12. For the exchange between Fromm and Reich on the question of the extent to which psychoanalysis is applicable to the study of society, see Erich Fromm, "The Method and Function of an Analytic Social Psychology," *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis: Essays on Freud, Marx and Social Psychology* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970) 114. Reich replies in Wilhelm Reich, *Sex-Pol: Essays, 1929–1934*, ed. Lee Baxandall (New York: Vintage Books, 1972) 66ff. See a defense of Reich against Fromm in Phil Slater, *Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 104–105.
 13. Sigmund Freud, "Character and Anal Eroticism," *Collected Papers*, 2 (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), 45–50.
 14. For a discussion of the crucial connection between character and consciousness, see Erich Fromm, "Appendix: Character and the Social Process," *Escape from Freedom* (1941; New York: Avon, 1970), 305–310.
 15. These papers include the title essay in Erich Fromm, *The Dogma of Christ and Other Essays on Religion, Psychology and Culture* (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1973), 15–93; "The Method and Function of an Analytic Social Psychology" and "Psychoanalytic Characterology and Its Relevance for Social Psychology" in Fromm, *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis*, 110–134 and 135–158. All three papers originally appeared in German. "The Dogma of Christ" was published in *Imago* 16 (1930); "Method and Function" appeared in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* I, 1/2 (1932); "Psychoanalytic Characterology" in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* I, 3 (1932). In the following exposition of Fromm's theory, I have, in addition to these essays, occasionally drawn on such later papers as the "Appendix" to *Escape from Freedom*.
 16. See Fromm's footnote on this terminology in "The Method and Function of an Analytic Social Psychology," 133.
 17. For Fromm's discussion of this point, see "The Dogma of Christ," 16–17.
 18. Fromm, "The Method and Function of an Analytic Social Psychology," 121. Italics deleted.
 19. *Ibid.*, 120–121. We will discuss the issue of sociologism in Fromm's later writings in the section on Jacoby and Adorno.

20. *Ibid.*, 127.
21. *Ibid.*, 126–127. Italics deleted.
22. The importance of Fromm's effort to ground consciousness in the character structure has been succinctly summarized by Ron Eyerman in *False Consciousness and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, 200–201: "What [Fromm's] research did was to move the discussion of subjectivity to a deeper level and to show the immense importance of its transformation for a Marxist theory of political praxis. In attempting to link unconscious impulses and desires to an understanding of working class action, Fromm argued that more than ideas were involved in false consciousness. . . 'consciousness' is more than a form of thought that can easily be transcended by a more rational form. Rather, consciousness in its full meaning involves a form of life, a being in the world, that has an emotional as well as cognitive dimension. As such, it is not so easily 'demystified' or transcended. A full explanation of working class behavior, then, must take into account these unconscious and sometimes 'irrational' impulses and emotions in order to understand that human action may be a product not only of false conception, but also of alienated being."
23. In later writings, Fromm stresses the fact that social character not only determines ideology but is determined by it as well. "The ideas, once created, also influence the social character and, indirectly, the social economic structure." (Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion: My Encounter with Marx and Freud* [1962; New York: Pocket Books, 1963], 93). Social character, then, is the intermediary in both directions between the ideological superstructure and the material base. This means that the latter both determines and is determined by social character and ideology.
24. Fromm, "The Method and Function of an Analytic Social Psychology," 128. Thus, Fromm writes in *Escape from Freedom*: "the idea of work and success as the main aims of life were able to become powerful and appealing to modern man on the basis of his aloneness and doubt; but propaganda for the idea of ceaseless effort and striving for success addressed to the Pueblo Indians or to Mexican peasants would fall completely flat" (307).
25. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, 122.
26. *Ibid.*, 312.
27. Fromm, "Psychoanalytic Characterology and Its Relevance for Social Psychology," 149. Many years later, Fromm noted one of the implications of this lag for Marxist theory. In *Social Character in a Mexican Village* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970), Fromm and Michael Maccoby write: ". . . the failure to understand this characterologically conditioned lag is one of the factors which Marxist theory overlooked, and . . . this led to the overoptimistic view that changed conditions would *immediately* produce a changed man" (235).
28. Fromm restated the nature of his Marx-Freud synthesis many times in his writings. The most important of these statements appear in "Appendix: Character and the Social Process" in *Escape from Freedom*, 304–327; "Psychoanalytic Characterology and Its Application to the Understanding of Culture" in *Culture and Personality*, ed. S. S. Sargent and M. W. Smith (New York: The Viking Fund, 1949), 1–12; "Individual and Social Character" in *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, 76–94; Erich Fromm and Michael Maccoby, *Social Character in a Mexican Village*, chapter One, especially 16–23; and "The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory" in *On Disobedience and Other Essays* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), 24–40.
29. That Fromm accepted and deeply admired the other features of Freud's character theory is evident from the characterology developed in *Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (1947; Greenwich: Fawcett, 1969). There, Fromm

writes: "The theory presented in the following pages follows Freud's characterology in essential points: in the assumption that character traits underlie behavior and must be inferred from it; that they constitute forces which, though powerful, the person may be entirely unconscious of. It follows Freud also in the assumption that the fundamental entity in character is not the single character trait but the total character organization from which a number of single character traits follow. . . . The main difference in the theory of character proposed here from that of Freud is that the fundamental basis of character is not seen in various types of libido organization but in specific kinds of a person's relatedness to the world" (65–66). In addition, it should be noted that Fromm accepted Freud's clinical description of the various character types. He differed in giving these types different names (e.g., Freud's anal character becomes for Fromm the "hoarding" character) and in expanding them to include, e.g., the "marketing orientation."

30. See the comments from *Escape from Freedom* quoted below in the main body of this essay. See also Fromm's remark in *Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 61, that "Freud did not arrive at the concept of a 'social character' because on the narrow basis of sex, such a concept could not be developed"; and his statement in "The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory" in *On Disobedience*, 28, that "A condition for the formulation of the concept of the social character as being molded by the practice of life in any given society was a revision of Freud's libido theory, which is the basis for his concept of character." These remarks are tantamount to a tacit admission – which Fromm never, as far as I know, makes explicit – that the Marx-Freud synthesis of the early 1930s did not really succeed because it was couched in terms of libido theory. Only when Freud's instinctually based character theory is replaced by a theory of interpersonal relations does Fromm's Marxist social psychology become genuinely possible.
31. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, 321.
32. *Ibid.*
33. In *Social Character in a Mexican Village*, 15, Fromm and Maccoby find support for Fromm's theory of character formation in Erik Erikson's study of the Yurok Indians. They write: "Erikson [in *Childhood and Society*] has expressed a similar point of view in terms of 'modes,' without emphasizing so clearly the difference from Freud. . . . Erikson has demonstrated in regard to the Yurok Indians that character is not determined by libidinal fixations. Erikson shows that the typical Yurok has an anal-hoarding character, including stinginess, suspiciousness and obstinacy. . . . The ideal of the Yurok was to be 'clean,' 'sensible,' and restrained.' Yet there is no evidence that these traits can be traced to constraints on anal eroticism. Indeed, Erikson writes that 'there seems to be no specific emphasis on feces or the anal zone. . . .' (178). And 'there is no shame concerning the surface of the human body' (179). Rather, the economic demands of Yurok life as peasant fishermen appear to make what we would term a moderately productive hoarding orientation the one best suited for survival, and Yurok institutions reinforce the ideals that fit this character type. In describing Yurok character, Erikson rejects an essential part of the libido theory, and his results confirm the position earlier taken by Fromm (1941). But he has continued to speak, it seems to us somewhat inconsistently, in terms of instinct and libido theory. . . ."
34. Fromm, *Man for Himself*, 67.
35. Fromm, "The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory," 28. These are but a few of the traits developed in a capitalist society. Fromm argues that the changing structure of capitalism has resulted in different types of social character. The hoarding character of the nineteenth century, for example, has been replaced by

the marketing and receptive character orientations of today. See *Man for Himself*, 88–89 and *The Sane Society* (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1969).

36. In view of the fact that Fromm repudiated this label on many occasions, its continued application to his work is open to question. In *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis*, 21 and “The Present Crisis of Psychoanalysis,” *Praxis* 3 (1967), 74, Fromm notes the crucial distinction between his work and that of Sullivan and Horney: While the latter conceived of cultural influences in the “traditional anthropological sense,” his focus is specifically Marxist. In the *Praxis* paper, Fromm, writing in the third person, states that he “differs from Sullivan and Horney in his concept of culture. He sees society in the dynamic sense of Marxist theory, and tries to understand how a particular practice of life resulting from the basic elements of social structure, molds human passions in such a way that they become useful for the function of that particular social structure (social character)” (74).
37. “Theory and Politics: A Discussion with Herbert Marcuse, Juergen Habermas, Heinz Lubasz, and Telman Spenglar,” *Telos* 38 (Winter 1978–79):127.
38. “The purpose of this essay,” Marcuse writes, “is to contribute to the *philosophy* of psychoanalysis – not to psychoanalysis itself. It moves exclusively in the field of theory, and it keeps outside the technical discipline which psychoanalysis has become. Freud developed a theory of man, a ‘psycho-logy’ in the strict sense. With this theory, Freud placed himself in the great tradition of philosophy and under philosophical criteria. Our concern is not with a corrected or improved interpretation of Freudian concepts but with their philosophical and sociological implications. Freud conscientiously distinguished his philosophy from his science; the Neo-Freudians have denied most of the former. On therapeutic grounds, such a denial may be perfectly justified. However, no therapeutic argument should hamper the development of a theoretical construction which aims, not at curing individual sickness, but at diagnosing the general disorder.” *EC*, 7.
39. This argument applies to Marcuse’s procedure regardless of whether one grants psychoanalysis the status of a science. It is enough that analytic theory tries to arrive at the truth through an empirical method. Given this aim and this method, the proper way to assess its hypotheses is to examine them in the light of the available evidence, not to judge them on the basis of their social and political implications (since this is irrelevant to the question of whether the hypotheses are true). For a lucid discussion and critique of analytic claims to scientificity see Barbara Von Eckardt “The Scientific Status of Psychoanalysis,” in *Introducing Psychoanalytic Theory*, ed. Sander L. Gilman (Brunner/Mazel: New York, 1982) 139–180.
40. To cite one example: Marcuse criticizes the revisionists for discarding such philosophically radical concepts as Freud’s theory of the primal horde and the killing of the primal father. He attributes this move to their effort to assimilate Freud’s critical theory to conformist therapy. What he ignores is that it is the Neo-Freudians’ conception of psychoanalysis as an empirical science that leads them to abandon Freud’s most speculative concepts.
41. In addition to the arguments noted in the text of this essay, Fromm may have had other grounds for rejecting the instinct theory. In *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, he writes: “There is not a single theoretical conclusion about man’s psyche, either in this or in my other writings, which is not based on a critical observation of human behavior carried out in the course of [my] psychoanalytic work” (10). The lack of clinical case histories in his writings, however, makes it impossible, on the basis of Fromm’s published work, to trace in any detail the clinical basis for his rejection of the instinct theory. In this connection, it should be noted, however, that very early

- on – even before he was aware of the incompatibility of Freud’s theory with the claims of the theory of social character – Fromm seems to have found important features of the Freudian account of character formation unconvincing. See his 1932 remarks, for example, in “Psychoanalytic Characterology and Its Relevance for Social Psychology,” in which he stresses the importance of object relations, questions the “central role given to the erogenous zones,” (137) and speaks of the entire theory as a “rough schema that is hypothetical in many respects. Further analytic research will have to alter many important points and introduce many new ones” (147).
42. Fromm, “The Method and Function of an Analytic Social Psychology,” 110–111.
 43. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, 205–206.
 44. See Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), chapters twelve, thirteen and the Appendix on “Freud’s Theory of Aggressiveness and Destructiveness.”
 45. I am indebted to Jorge Silva-Garcia for pointing out the connection between Fromm’s rejection of the Oedipus complex and his abandonment of libido theory as a whole. Conversation with Dr. Silva, Mexico City, 21 March 1985.
 46. Erich Fromm, “The Oedipus Complex and the Oedipus Myth,” *The Family: Its Function and Destiny* ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), 357–358. In later writings, published after his debate with Marcuse, Fromm extended his critique of the Oedipus complex. In “The Oedipus Complex: Comments on the Case of Little Hans,” *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis*, 69–78, he argues that the clinical evidence that Freud cited in support of his theory actually puts that theory into question. In *Greatness and Limitations of Freud’s Thought*, he contends that the instability of sexual relationships and the fickle nature of sexual desire make it absurd to “assume that men should be bound to their mothers because of the intensity of a sexual bond that had its origin twenty or thirty or fifty years earlier. . .” (29).
 47. Fromm, *Man for Himself*, 54.
 48. Otto Fenichel, in “Psychoanalytic Remarks on Fromm’s Book ‘Escape from Freedom,’” *Psychoanalytic Review* 31 (1944), 133ff., and Adorno, in “Social Science and Sociological Tendencies in Psychoanalysis,” criticize Fromm for “misrepresenting” the sexual instincts as rigid and fixed. On the contrary, they argue, the instincts are remarkable for their plasticity. In his penetrating analysis of the instinct theory, however, Richard Lichtman shows that Freud’s metapsychology makes it impossible for the instincts to possess the variability that Fenichel, Adorno, and Freud himself want to grant them. See Lichtman’s *The Production of Desire: The Integration of Psychoanalysis into Marxist Theory* (New York: The Free Press, 1982), 57–59.
 49. Lichtman makes the same point, thought much more radically than Fromm. See *The Production of Desire*, chapters two and three.
 50. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, 319.
 51. *Ibid.*, 320–321.
 52. Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 103.
 53. Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (1955; Greenwich: Fawcett, 1969), 67–68. Italics deleted.
 54. *Ibid.*, 23.
 55. *Ibid.*, 21.
 56. Bruce Brown, *Marx, Freud, and the Critique of Everyday Life* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1973), 63.
 57. Fromm, *Man for Himself*, 32.
 58. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, 315.
 59. *Ibid.*

60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Fromm, *The Sane Society*, 26–27.
64. See Fenichel's "Psychoanalytic Remarks on Fromm's Book 'Escape from Freedom.'"
65. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, 316. For Fromm's defense of his position, see 316–317.
66. See, for example, Fromm's "Psychoanalytic Characterology and Its Application to the Understanding of Culture," 5.
67. See, for example, H. Stuart Hughes, *The Sea Change: The Migration of Social Thought, 1930–1965* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), 196.
68. Fromm, *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis*, 5.
69. Ibid.
70. Fromm, "The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory," 36. For a detailed discussion of the social unconscious, see *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, 95–145.
71. As the term "social unconscious" suggests, there are extremely interesting parallels between Fromm's critique of Freud and that recently developed by Richard Lichtman in *The Production of Desire*. Since a detailed discussion of the similarities and differences would require an essay in itself, the following remarks must suffice. Both writers share the same starting point: if psychoanalysis is to be assimilated to Marxist theory, it must be subjected to an extensive critique and revision. For both Fromm and Lichtman, this involves repudiating the instinct theory, criticizing Freud's tendency to reify relationships specific to his society, and exposing the mechanistic and bourgeois assumptions that underlie much of his thought. Of special interest are the parallels between the two writers' respective discussions of the unconscious. Even within the framework of his own theory, Lichtman writes, Freud's claim that the id is an ontologically given entity from which the ego emerges is simply unintelligible. On the contrary, he argues, the reverse must be the case: the unconscious develops out of consciousness. The former is not an "ontological region" but a social construct, "that portion of ourselves which we alienate from our own conscious awareness under the pressure of intolerable social forces" (178). "Our ego and superego," Lichtman goes on to say, "are elaborated out of the same process, so that the divisions of the self are the product of social and historical agencies, not only in their specific content but in the nature of their structures as well" (179). Consequently, the contents of the unconscious will vary with different social contexts. "[D]ifferent defenses will predominate in different historical periods and among different social classes. . . ." (203). This analysis resembles Fromm's in several respects. First, neither Fromm nor Lichtman equate the unconscious with an ontologically given region of instinctual drives. Second, both argue that the unconscious is a social phenomenon whose contents are socially determined. And third, both speak of a "social unconscious" characteristic of specific societies or social groups. Such parallels should not obscure the differences between the two, however. Whereas for Lichtman, what is repressed is what has been expelled from consciousness, for Fromm, the unconscious also – indeed, primarily – consists of those experiences that have never reached awareness. Because of a "socially conditioned filter" placed on experience by language, logic, and social taboos, most of what is real within ourselves never becomes conscious. "[E]xperience can enter into awareness," Fromm writes, "only under the condition that it can be perceived, related, and ordered in terms of a conceptual system and of its categories" (*Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, 124). This system is very

largely a social construct. Experiences which cannot “fit” into the system’s schemata – i.e., those which violate the rules of logic, transgress social taboos, or have no symbolic representation in one’s language – will not enter into awareness. Secondly, whereas Lichtman sees the unconscious as “governed by irrational, peremptory, insatiable demands” (185), Fromm argues that it “is the whole man – minus that part of him which corresponds to his society” (*Beyond*, 139) and consequently refers to all experiences which have failed to reach awareness, rational and irrational alike. More fundamentally, the two writers differ on the question of the dichotomy between individual and society. Whereas Lichtman challenges this duality in a radical way, Fromm never overcomes it. (See Lichtman, 107). Finally, it should be noted that while Fromm and Lichtman often agree vis-à-vis their general interpretation of Freud, Lichtman’s analysis is often more impressive since his claims are substantiated by his close and very penetrating readings of Freud’s texts. The analysis of the instinct theory cited in note 45 is a case in point.

72. “The main ‘layers’ of the mental structure are now [i.e., in the late Freud] designated as *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. The fundamental, oldest, and largest layer is the *id*, the domain of the unconscious, of the primary instincts.” *EC*, 27. What is unconscious cannot, of course, be entirely equated with the *id* since portions of the *ego* and *superego* are unconscious as well.
73. In other words, Fromm essentially accepts Freud’s “dynamic” conception of the unconscious – i.e., the view that an idea can be active and unconscious at the same time; but he rejects the notion that the contents of the unconscious are primarily of an instinctual nature.
74. Fromm, *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis*, 7.
75. John Schaar in *Escape from Authority: The Perspectives of Erich Fromm* (New York: Harper, 1961), 20–21, notes that in trying to derive an ethic from a theory of human nature, Fromm has committed the naturalistic fallacy (though Schaar is sympathetic to Fromm’s efforts here). While this is an important point, it should be noted that the naturalistic fallacy itself rests on the assumption that there is a radical dichotomy between facts and values – a claim whose truth has not gone unchallenged. For a discussion of the fact/value split and its role in ethics, see Douglas Kellner, “Authenticity and Heidegger’s Challenge to Ethical Theory,” in *Thinking About Being*, ed. Robert W. Shahan and J. N. Mohanty (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 159–175.
76. As Walter Kaufmann noted long ago, Fromm is also indebted to Nietzsche. (See Kaufmann, *The Faith of a Heretic* [New York: New American Library, 1978], 338). See especially Fromm’s remarks on Nietzsche in *Man for Himself*, 129ff., 155–156, 163.
77. See Fromm’s distinction between reason and intelligence in *Man for Himself*, 108–112. See also his remarks on reason in *The Sane Society*, 64–65, 152–154; and later discussions in Erich Fromm, D. T. Suzuki and Richard DeMartino, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Harper, 1970), 91; and Erich Fromm, *The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology* (1968; New York: Bantam, 1971), 42.
78. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, 189.
79. *Ibid.*, 284.
80. Fromm, *Man for Himself*, 227–232. One might summarize Fromm’s position by saying that his ethics derives from Aristotle rather than Kant. He is concerned with character and eudaimonia rather than duty and the suppression of the passions.
81. *Ibid.*, 91. See also Fromm, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, 128.
82. Robinson, *The Freudian Left*, 5.

83. In "The Theory of Mother Right and Its Relevance for Social Psychology" in *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis*, 99, Fromm writes: "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 the 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." In a letter to Martin Jay written nearly forty years later, Fromm makes a similar point. The claim that in later years, he has become more sexually conservative, he writes, "is not correct. 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." Letter from Fromm to Martin Jay, dated 14 May 1971. I want to thank Jay as well as Rainer Funk, director of the Erich Fromm Archiv in Tübingen, West Germany, for granting me permission to quote from previously unpublished sections of the Fromm-Jay correspondence.
84. Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, 281.
85. Erich Fromm, "The Human Implications of Instinctive 'Radicalism,'" *Dissent*, 2 (1955), 342–349; Fromm, *The Revolution of Hope*, 8–9; Fromm, *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis*, 14–20, 82; Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, 281, 463–464.
86. Nancy Julia Chodorow, "Beyond Drive Theory: Object Relations and the Limits of Radical Individualism," *Theory and Society*, 14 (1985): 271–319.
87. Fromm, "The Human Implications of Instinctive 'Radicalism,'" 346.
88. Chodorow, 286.
89. This is to say that some of the points that Chodorow elaborates in such detail were anticipated by Fromm, in a more cryptic and sketchy fashion, to be sure. In addition to the criticism of Marcuse noted above, the points of resemblance include not only Chodorow's general claim that "an exclusive focus on drives and the drive-repression dynamic is inadequate both as an interpretation of psychoanalysis and as a basis for social theory" (286) and her subsequent defense of a model of object relations; the two writers come together also in their objections to Marcuse's use of the term "repression," and in their defense of the view that clinical therapy provides the empirical basis for much of Freud's theory. Chodorow is not unaware of the similarities between Fromm's ideas and her own. At one point, she speaks of him as a "transitional figure" in the move toward object relations who conceptualizes "the object relational and social," but who asserts "human sociality in an idealized, unsubstantiated way" (318).
90. *Ibid.*, 296.
91. *Ibid.*, 294.
92. *Ibid.*, 293.
93. *Ibid.*
94. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, chapter three.
95. Fromm, *Man for Himself*, 75–89.
96. Hedwig Pachter confirmed my suspicion that her late husband had written this review. Letter to me, 15 December 1983.
97. H.P., "The Insane Society," *Dissent*, III, 1 (1956), 88. See Fromm's discussion of the "productive orientation" in *Man for Himself*, 89–113.
98. For Fromm's views on this matter, see his essay, "The Revolutionary Character," *The Dogma of Christ and Other Essays*, 137–154. See also *Greatness and Limitations*

of *Freud's Thought*, 134. It is especially ironic that Marcuse should attribute such a view to Fromm given Fromm's admiration for Marx and Trotsky. For his view of "Marx the Man," see Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1961), 80–83. In *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of My Youth* (New York: Schocken Books, 1980), Gershom Scholem reports that when he encountered Fromm in Berlin in the mid- to late 1920s, "he was an enthusiastic Trotskyite and pitied me for my petit-bourgeois parochialism" (156). R. Funk, ["Zu leben und Werk Erich Fromms," *Erich Fromms Gesamtausgabe*, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt)] disputes Scholem's claim that Fromm was ever a follower of Trotsky. On the other hand, according to David Riesman, who first met Fromm in New York in the 1930s and remained a lifelong friend, Fromm's admiration for Trotsky did not end with his youth. Fromm admired very few people, Riesman recalls, but Trotsky was one of them. Indeed, Riesman remarks, "Trotsky was his hero." Conversation with Professor Riesman, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 11 January 1984.

99. The phrase is Freud's. Fromm quotes it in *The Sane Society*, 28. Italics deleted.
100. Letter from Fromm to Martin Jay, 14 March 1971.
101. Erich Fromm, "Individual and Social Origins of Neurosis," *American Sociological Review*, IX (1944), 382.
102. Fromm, *Man for Himself*, 232–238. Indeed, in his post-debate writings, Fromm attacks Sartre, for example, for the lack of compassion implicit in his concept of radical freedom. In *The Heart of Man* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 125, Fromm writes that this position "reflects, like much of Sartre's philosophy, the spirit of bourgeois individualism and egocentricity. . . ."
103. Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 8. For a discussion of the moral critique to be found in Marxism, see Douglas Kellner, "Marxism, Morality and Ideology," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Supplementary Volume VII (Summer 1981), 93–120.
104. Robinson, *The Freudian Left*, 5.
105. H. Stuart Hughes, *The Sea Change*, 194.
106. Jacoby, *Social Amnesia*, xx.
107. *Ibid.*, 46.
108. *Ibid.*, 12.
109. To be sure, Jacoby cites the early papers in which Fromm developed the Marx-Freud synthesis. But like Marcuse, he seems to assume that this project collapses with the abandonment of libido theory.
110. Theodor Adorno, "Sociology and Psychology," *New Left Review*, 46 (November-December, 1967) and 47 (January-February, 1968).
111. Jacoby, *Social Amnesia*, 73.
112. Adorno, "Sociology and Psychology," 47 *New Left Review*, 85.
113. Jacoby, *Social Amnesia*, 78.
114. *Ibid.*, 79.
115. *Ibid.*, 78.
116. *Ibid.*, 79.
117. *Ibid.*, 80.
118. *Ibid.*, 99.
119. Adorno, "Die revidierte Psychoanalyse," 25. Jay quotes the original English version in *The Dialectical Imagination*, 104.
120. See Jay's discussion of this point in *The Dialectical Imagination*, 102–103, 229–230.
121. Indeed, many of Fromm's early papers devote a good deal of attention to questions of method and the problems of psychologism and sociologism. See, for example, the

- opening sections of "The Dogma of Christ" as well as "The Method and Function of an Analytic Social Psychology."
122. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, 29.
 123. *Ibid.* In effect, Fromm is here restating his claim in "The Method and Function of an Analytic Social Psychology," (1932), that human nature is one of the "natural conditions" forming part of the substructure of the social process.
 124. Jacoby, *Social Amnesia*, 86.
 125. Fromm, *The Sane Society*, 78.
 126. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, 326.
 127. *Ibid.*
 128. *Ibid.*, 30.
 129. *Ibid.*
 130. *Ibid.*, 325.
 131. Jacoby, *Social Amnesia*, 79.
 132. In a letter to Jay, Fromm writes: "I have never left Freudianism unless one identifies Freud with his libido theory. . . . I consider the basic achievement of Freud to be his concept of the unconscious, its manifestations in neurosis, dreams, etc., resistance, and his dynamic concept of character. These concepts have remained for me of basic importance in all my work. . . ." Quoted in Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 89.
 133. Adorno, in a memorandum on the Labor Project, 3 November 1944. Quoted in Martin Jay, "The Frankfurt School in Exile," *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 36. See also Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 230. See Jacoby's remarks to this effect in *Social Amnesia*, 79–80.
 134. See Jay's remarks on the psychological emphasis in *The Authoritarian Personality* and its relation to Adorno's view on non identity in "The Frankfurt School in Exile," 36–37.
 135. *Ibid.*, 37.
 136. Herbert H. Hyman and Paul B. Sheatsley quoted in Jay, *ibid.*, 37. See also Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 227.
 137. Jacoby, *Social Amnesia*, 80.
 138. Lichtman, *The Production of Desire*, 104.
 139. *Ibid.*, 105.
 140. See *Escape from Freedom*, 304–305.
 141. *Escape from Freedom*, 305.
 142. *Man for Himself*, 69.
 143. Michael Maccoby has criticized Fromm on this point. See Maccoby, "Social Character versus the Productive Ideal," *Praxis International* 1 (1982):70–83. The one exception, of course, is the productive orientation; an ideal which Fromm believes is possible though very rare in contemporary society. See Fromm, "The Human Implications of Instinctive 'Radicalism,'" *Dissent* 2 (1955), 342–349.
 144. *Man for Himself*, 65. Fromm makes this point with greater emphasis in *Social Character in a Mexican Village*, 11–12.
 145. Thus, Adorno's efforts to distance the revisionist's "totalistic" concept of character from Freud's is somewhat misleading. Adorno, "Die revidierte Psychoanalyse," 25.
 146. This is Jay's definition of "normative totality" in his *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 23.
 147. *Ibid.*, 23–24.
 148. Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), 747.

149. "Die revidierte Psychoanalyse," 25.
150. *The Authoritarian Personality*, 748.
151. Although, as we have noted, Chodorow shows the theory to be a profoundly limited one.
152. "Theory and Politics: A Discussion with Herbert Marcuse, Juergen Habermas, Heinz Lubasz, and Telman Spenglar," *Telos* 38 (Winter 1978–79):127.
153. Douglas Kellner notes this fact in a recent article, "Critical Theory and the Culture Industries: A Reassessment," *Telos* 62 (Winter 1984–85):200.
154. Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 267.
155. See Paul Roazen's comment that "Socially [Fromm] has been the most radical of psychoanalytic thinkers." *Nation* 5 February 1977, 151.
156. In her review of *Social Amnesia*, Erica Sherover defends, in opposition to Jacoby, the notion of an "emancipatory therapy" that could serve as "an agent of social liberation," *Telos*, 25 (1975):196–210. Since she fully accepts the Marcuse-Jacoby reading of Fromm's work, however, Sherover ignores Fromm's early effort to formulate and to practice a therapy that rejected conformist notions of mental health and adjustment while fully recognizing the impact of social and economic forces on the patient's character.
157. For Fromm's critique of the psychoanalytic movement, see especially *Sigmund Freud's Mission* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959); "Psychoanalysis – Science or Party Line?" in *The Dogma of Christ and Other Essays*; the title essay in *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis*; and *Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought*, chapter 5.
158. *The Repression of Psychoanalysis: Otto Fenichel and the Political Freudians* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).
159. See Rainer Funk's intellectual biography of Fromm, *Erich Fromm* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1983), 125ff.
160. Ibid.
161. Conversation with Michael Maccoby, Washington, D.C., 9 January 1982. Fromm, for example, was very sympathetic to Allende's government in Chile; indeed, he "had been invited to Chile by Allende and was preparing to go at the time of the coup." Letter from Michael Maccoby to me, 5 November 1981.
162. For an account of Fromm's years in Mexico and his role in introducing psychoanalysis to Mexican society, see Jorge Derbez, "Fromm and México: una reseña histórica," in *Erich Fromm y el psicoanálisis humanista*, ed. Salvador Millan and Sonia Gojman de Millan (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1981), 27–53. See also John Rickert, "Notes on Erich Fromm in Mexico," in *Der unbekannte Fromm*, ed. Lutz von Werder (Frankfurt: Haag und Herchen, forthcoming).
163. Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 111–112.
164. For Fromm's critique of the "amusement industry," see, e.g., *Escape from Freedom*, 149ff. and *The Sane Society*, chapter 5.
165. See Fromm's critique of the psychoanalytic movement. See also his remarks on conformist social science in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, 261. On the irrational uses of technology, see *The Revolution of Hope*.
166. Compare Marcuse's *The Aesthetic Dimension* (Boston: Beacon, 1978) with Fromm's comments on art in *The Revolution of Hope*, 75–76.
167. In his letter to Martin Jay of 14 May 1971, Fromm writes: "If Marcuse fully believed what he wrote in this discussion [i.e., the "Critique of Neo-Freudian Revisionism"] about my viewpoint, he would hardly have asked me to write a review of *One-Dimensional Man* for the New York Times, as being almost the only one who would understand him." In noting these similarities between Marcuse and Fromm, I do not

wish to cover over the important differences between Fromm's radical or Marxist humanism and critical theory. Fromm remained sharply critical of his former colleagues (see, for example, Jay, "The Frankfurt School in Exile," 41–42, and Raya Dunayevskaya, "Erich Fromm: Socialist Humanist") and they of him. In "The Frankfurt School's Critique of Marxist Humanism," *Permanent Exiles*, 14–27, as well as in *The Dialectical Imagination*, Martin Jay has discussed some of the most significant differences. To date, however, no one, as far as I know, has systematically explored the continuities and disjunctions between Fromm's position and critical theory.

168. Together with the theory of social character and the concept of necrophilia, Fromm considered the development of the "interpretive questionnaire" to be his most important contribution to psychoanalysis and social psychology. Conversation with Michael Maccoby, Washington, D.C., 9 January, 1982.