

ERICH FROMM: CARATTERE E SVILUPPO PSICHICO  
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Abstract "Decadence Syndrome in Fromm's humanistic psychoanalysis".

*Fromm developed in '60's decade in many books the "decadence's syndrome" who affected humans being, over all in 20th century. first at all individually and then socially.*

*Mental illness, social destructiveness of humans beings and psychopathology demonstrate this thesis as well as the 2 World Wars and the nuclear bomb (maybe today islamic terrorism or still fanatic nationalism). The factors which feed "decadence syndrome" are:*

*1) malignant narcissism (inability to exit from extreme narcissism primary, return back to prehuman condition (pre-reason and unawareness of I) and the (false) sense of unity of the world with the sense of omnipotence and whole egocentrism where "I=World" and reciprocally "World =I", inability to broken narcissism symbiotic with the mother;*

*2) necrophilia (attraction for "the Dead" and "anal character" (attraction for all what is dead, not alive, in-organic as metals, iron steel objects, cars and buildings) 3) incestuous symbiose: connection totally of the "I" with "the Mother" (and his symbols Hearth, Blood, Family, Nation) as symbol of protection, security, feed, love, fusion with the subject, total unconditioned absolute love, unbroken blood connection, failed emersion of identity of I rational).*

*All these factors make interruption of "Biophilic feeling" which becomes Necrophilia (Dead instinct).*

## DEVELOPMENT (20 minutes)

Erich Fromm developed a humanistic psychoanalysis in his life and long work (1900-1980) in Germany (Berlin Frankfurt), USA and Mexico and finally in Switzerland. He defined this dialectic revision of Freud's Theory. About Fromm, the Freudian theory was too much based on libido, the powerful energy psychosexual who is overwhelming prevalent and always present in psychic phenomena: unconscious, dreams, language, family interpersonal relations, neurosis, psychopathology, culture etc. In opposite, in Fromm's theory the libido is not the most powerful force in behaviour and in man's psyche.

The Unconscious about Fromm is humanistic and existential based on the possibilities of thought and action inside the man existence's real situation. The man is emerged from the nature with awareness, thinking, imagination: he is in and out from the

nature the unconscious are the stages before what the man humanize itself and one dynamic function of the psyche which exchange the contents of the awareness.

The power and energy most strong inner of the man is the Biophilia, the force what tends to develop and growth all is live and must live in the man whose need is self actualisation in the world even the confirm to be worth of live as individual man. (to say, the need of recognition of itself as unique person). The force is this motivation to live and develop man's abilities and faculty: if this energy has blocked by traumatic experiences or psychic complexes or negatives social cultural conditions, it converts its in destructive force against itself or the others. This is the beginning of mental disease and more of the psychopathology (anxiety, aggressiveness, self hate, depression, schizophrenic troubles). Then, the destructivity and the evil in general is the product of this energy biophilic which reverse its self in necrophilia and Dead Instinct. The positive life's force becomes negative destructiveness (what which Freud defines Thanatos). The relation between these two force is inversally proportional and then overturned: more productivity biophilic more well being, minus destructivity and diseases existence and mental insanity.

This necrophilia to say attraction toward the death and all is dead, not alive, is about Fromm related also to earliest phases of mental child development overall at anal phase of Freud's theory when this the child is engaged with the problem of feces evacuation or retention: here is one choice alternative: evacuate feces means give something of Self (i.e. Ego) to outside reality (no I. Other") and obey to rules of family and society education; disobey means to keep parts of Self (of I) and don't recognize the "Other", the Reality external, to say to shut up itself in itself, to withdraw in oneself, don't give nothing of Self outside, to exterior world (above all human being), considered dangerous, then enemy, hostile, negative figures. Live is a strong fight to maintain, keep and increase myself without give and exchange nothing so to reject all is "Other" outside from Me, believed of inferior quality in regard to Me. So the man becomes a fortress, or a "black hole" which swallow and eats all is near to him. Nothing must be lost and exchanged with the outside; but on the contrary, the Outside must be controlled and dominated by the I of character anal character which identifies Its. her I with all which has accumulate from exterior to interior: here the the root of The "to Have Orientation" for which "I am what I have", orientation increase from the consumistic structure of modern capitalistic industrial society (maximum production and consumption of objects.)

Another factor of destructivity is the malignant narcissism: for it, Fromm means for it the energy which remains in the Ego enveloped and embodied totally with the absolute relation with the Mother in a symbiotic relation (I= Mother and viceversa Mother =I, but unconsciously Mother and I are the World) and in all is in connection real or metaphoric with her, to say blood, ground, family and other symbols (Nation, Homeland).

The child and after the adult don't have a one Ego separated from this symbiotic incestuous relations: Ego is the World, then the world outside is an extension of the

Ego, the awareness of separation I-Not I is not achieved, interior and exterior are still blurred, the "I individual" is not emerged from this preconscious perhaps unconscious indistinct unity. The consequence is the birth of the complex of omnipotence and omniscience for which I am the master of World and all other is Nothing, at my disposal because I have power of life and of death (almost as being God). The malignant narcissism raises one wall between the individual and the outside world: for it, matters only the "I" who masters all the world and other human beings. The "I" is all, and is my God, the rest is Nothing.

All these three factors together form the "decays syndrome": more are strong, more the individual can't develop and express his faculties and powers in the reality, overall that what Fromm defines «the social and loving essence of the man» (Art of Loving). Productivity and "well being" are not achieved and the mental illness can occur. It is clear that peace and other good ways of life individually and socially are arrested and blocked, and this converts into aggression and bad ways of life.

Same phenomena occurs in nations and States behaviour and relations. In fact about Fromm the relations between States work alike to relations interpersonal with relative psychological mechanism, to say:

1) paranoid thinking (the "other" State, nation, culture, society, ideology, religion insecurely and at all my enemy), as occurs in the patient paranoic where the "reality is based on logical possibility not on probability, then the thinking is formally logic and correct but the contact with the reality is very thin and little:"... the reality for him, is mainly what exists within himself, his own emotions, fears, and desires. The world outside is the mirror or the symbolic representation of his inner world" (E. Fromm "May man prevail?" p. 19-20);

2) the projection psychic pathological mechanism: the subject (State, Nation, religion, Party, people etc.) accuses one "other" of his own problems with own feelings and ideas, what is the result: the enemy -the other- appears as the embodiment of all evil because all evil that I feel in myself is projected on to him. Logically, after that has happened, I consider myself as the embodiment of all good since the evil has been transferred to the other side, the result is that indignation and hatred against the enemy and critical, narcissistic self-glorification. This can create a mood of common mania and shared passion of hate. Nevertheless, it is a pathological thinking, dangerous when it leads to war and deadly when war means destruction" (ibid p. 22);

3) the fanaticism", to say with the Fromm's world directly: «it is easier recognize the fanatic by some qualities rather than by contents of his conviction». In fact «the most important and usually an observable-personal quality in the fanatic is a kind of "cold fire" a passion which at the same time has no warmth. The fanatic is unrelated to the world outside himself; he is not concerned with anybody or anything- even though he may proclaim his concern as an important part of this faith. The cold glitter in his eyes often tells us more about the fanatical quality of his ideas than the apparent "unreasonableness" of the ideas themselves», moreover «the fanatic can be described as a highly narcissistic person who is disengaged from the world outside», he does not really feel anything since authentic feeling is always the result of interaction between oneself and the world.

The fanatic's pathology is similar to that of a depressed person who suffers not from sadness (which be a relief) but from the incapacity to feel anything. But more «...the fanatic is different from the depressed person... in as much as he has found a way out of acute pressure. He has built for himself an idol, an absolute, to which he surrenders completely but of which he also makes himself a part. He then acts, thinks and feels in the name of his idol or rather, he has the illusion of "feeling" of inner excitement, while he has not no authentic feeling»; then «He lives in a state of narcissistic excitement since he has drowned the feeling of his isolation and emptiness in a total submission to the idol and in a simultaneous deification of his own ego, which he has made a part of the idol. He is passionate in his idolatric submission and in his grandiosity, yet cold in his inability for genuine relatedness and feeling» (ib. p. 25).

Then his attitude may be described symbolically as "burning ice". He will be particularly deceptive to others if the content of his idol is love, brotherliness, God, salvation, the dangerous political, the race, honor, etc., rather than frank destructiveness, hostility, or overt desire for conquest. But, as far as the human reality is concerned, it makes little difference what the nature of idol is. Fanaticism is always the result of the incapacity for authentic relatedness. «The fanatic is so seductive, and hence so dangerous politically, because he seems to feel so intensely and to be so convinced.» (ib.). And finally for all this «... is it surprising that the fanatic succeeds in attracting so many with his counterfeit faith and feelings?».

So, result clear the importance to master and to control these pathological mechanism of thinking from political men and naturally people opinion who can be manipulated and "eterodirected", particularly in case of domination of one leader believed as a "Idol".

The last factors of maintain and develop the love per Life (Biophilia) and diminution of Aggression and destructivity are the social economic conditions:

- 1) surety in sense that material conditions for a worthy life are not threatened;
- 2) justice for what anybody can be one mean for the purpose of a other;
- 3) freedom: to say the possibility that any an active and responsible member of society: this point has very importance ("The heart of man" p. 69).

With that, even today the thinking of Erich Fromm is actually and useful to understand the phenomena of destructivity.

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