REVIEWS

SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION WITHOUT SEX-ECONOMY


The striking thing about Fromm's sociological and characterological analysis of the human fear of freedom is the way in which he appropriates sex-economic findings without acknowledging their source. In contradistinction to sex-economy, which considers human character structure as the result of a conflict between social and biological functions, Fromm's "psychology of interpersonal relationships" is a kind of sociological philosophy: "man is primarily a social being,"—"the problem of psychology is that of the specific kind of relatedness of the individual to the world and not that of the satisfaction or frustration of this or that instinctual need per se" (italics are the reviewer's). Small wonder, then, that his "dynamic psychology" has to be supplemented again and again by metaphysical formulations such as the instinct for self-preservation and its counterpart, the "need for avoiding aloneness," or the "primary ties" which are supposed to exist at the beginning of social and individual development and which guarantee security and oneness with nature and society. According to this concept, nothing happens in the period of "pre-individualistic existence" which individuals as well as humanity have to go through; in fact, this period is the paradise lost. The historical and individual development is termed "individuation." It consists in an economic, political and individual emancipation from the "primary ties" and leads increasingly to a sham freedom ("freedom from" instead of "freedom to"). One dialectical aspect of this growing individuation is the insecurity, the powerlessness, of man. The other—the restoration of the disturbed harmony, the relatedness to the world, as expressed most clearly in love and productive work—Fromm has to postulate. This, though, has been done by all moral philosophers before him.

Fromm's "primary ties" are an unfortunate construction, even if used figuratively (he considers them "organic"). His excursions into the Middle Ages and the capitalistic epoch show that by the security-giving "primary ties" he really means the economic and social limitations of earlier epochs. As capitalism develops, it does away with them, and social "individuation" begins. To speak of security in the early phases of human development, however, is untenable. On the other hand, Fromm fails to explain what other reasons there may be for the "primary ties" which here are particularly strong. Do they mean "oneness with nature, with the clan, with the church," do they mean what is called the feeling for nature in the primitive or the "oceanic feeling" in modern man? At any rate, Fromm has failed to take into account the facts which are the basis of these feelings and which are described by Reich in his orgasm theory. The process of "individuation" works most strongly in the child. The psychoanalyst Fromm would be hard put to it were he to explain why an infant which has just learned to walk should long back to the kicking about in the crib and why it should feel "powerless" (loss of a "primary tie")—unless he were to accept the sex-economic concept of disturbed vegetative motility. But Fromm even declines to accept Freud's concept of infantile sexual development.

One asks oneself, where is the energy point of view in this "dynamic psychology," and what are the laws of psychic development? True, it has its own particular law, that of "dynamic adaptation," which mediates between the instinct for
self-preservation (whatever forms this may take in a given society) and the "need for avoiding aloneness," and which thus leads to the social formation of a character structure, either in the sense of "mechanisms of escape" (such as masochistic submissiveness or sadistic destructiveness) or (with appropriate guidance?) to relatedness to the world, spontaneous work, etc. "Character in the dynamic sense of analytic psychology is the specific form in which human energy is shaped by the dynamic adaptation of human needs to particular modes of existence of a given society." "Human energy," with Fromm, is nothing but an empty phrase; with him, it does not even play the role of a serious hypothesis as it did in psychoanalysis. Yet, Fromm does away with the psychoanalytic theory of reaction formation as pure instinct psychologism. For, according to Fromm, the "true" nature of man, and his "human needs," do not consist in "certain needs, such as hunger, thirst, sex, which are common to man," but in "those drives which make for the differences [italics are Fromm's] in men's characters, like love and hatred, the lust for power and the yearning for submission, the enjoyment of sensuous pleasure and the fear of it [which] are all products of the social process. The most beautiful as well as the most ugly inclination of man are not a part of a fixed and biologically given human nature, but result from the social process which created man. In other words, society has not only a suppressing function—although it has that too—but it has also a creative function. Man's nature, his passions and anxieties are a cultural product."

What Fromm, according to his definition of character, calls "human needs," are the symptoms of the character armor, pure and simple. They represent the vegetative energy in its specific social function, that is, in the function of defense against natural needs and in that of adaptation to authoritarian society. Sex-economy, which is aware of this bio-sociological function of the character armor, can make it a basis for sociological practice. Fromm neither has given any examples for such practical measures, nor does his definition of character allow the assumption that he would be able to do so. He only says that the character structure ("human needs") is shaped by the environment (instinct for self-preservation plus need for avoiding aloneness). Such a formulation does not require the introduction of the concept of "dynamic adaptation": any school of social behaviorism could say the same thing. The real meaning of "dynamic adaptation," however, consists in camouflaging the fact that social conditions are reproduced in the character structure.

Thus Fromm has little to offer to the sociologist. His formulations are, as Engels once put it in connection with the explanation of ideologies, like an algebra problem with two known quantities. 1 "It is the very task of social psychology," writes Fromm, "to understand this process of man's creation in history. Why do certain definite changes of man's character take place from one historical epoch to another? Why is the spirit of the Renaissance different from that of the Middle Ages? Why is the character structure of man in monopolistic capitalism different

1 Editor's note: That is, he explains a character trait by a character attitude, which is as if one were to say that somebody is so malicious because he is mean, or that people follow Hitler because they have a submissive attitude. Thus explaining an ideology with an ideology is a basic error which should not happen to any scientific psychologist or sociologist. The reason for this illogical reasoning is obvious. Reich has clearly shown that character traits are the result of a conflict between biological and social demands. Fromm is forced to his conclusions by the fact that he excludes the biological basis of all character traits, sexuality, altogether.—T.P.W.
from that in the 19th century?" This is what Fromm has to say to the sociologist: "Ideas can become powerful forces, but only to the extent to which they are answers to specific human needs in a given social character" (italics are Fromm's). Fromm, who knows Reich's Charakter-Analyse and "mentions" it in passing, knows exceedingly well how to nullify the importance of the findings presented in that book.

Sex-economy, on the other hand, has something else to say to sociology: "Social ideologies can become material power only on the condition that they actually change human character structure" (Reich, in the Preface to Charakter-Analyse). True, Fromm is aware of the human fear of freedom and describes it well, phenomenologically. But in attempting to explain affective processes, he always speaks in allegorical terms, such as "the thwarting of the whole life, curtailing of the expansiveness of life," etc. Today, when the orgasm theory is twenty years old, when the orgone has been discovered and when we are able to observe the "expansiveness of life" under the microscope; in brief, when we can operate with Reich's functional energy concept based on natural science, Fromm's psycho-sociological

interpretation of sexuality as the "need to avoid aloneness" impresses one simply as anachronistic.

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Infelizmente, no que se refere a orgonomia, seguir os passos de Wilhelm Reich e de sua equipe de investigadores é uma questão bastante difícil, polêmica e contraditória, cheia de diferentes interpretações que mais confundem do que ajudam. Por isto, nós decidimos trabalhar com o material bibliográfico presente nos microfilmes (Wilhelm Reich Collected Works Microfilms) em forma de PDF, disponibilizados por Eva Reich que já se encontra circulado pela internet, e que abarca o desenvolvimento da orgonomia de 1941 a 1957.

Dividimos este “material” de acordo com as revistas publicadas pelo instituto de orgonomia do qual o Reich era o diretor.
01- International Journal of Sex Economy and Orgone Research (1942-1945).
02- Orgone Energy Bulletin (1949-1953)
03- CORE Cosmic Orgone Engineering (1954-1956)

E logo dividimos estas revistas de acordo com seus artigos, apresentando-os de forma separada (em PDF), o que facilita a organizá-los por assunto ou temas. Assim, cada qual pode seguir o rumo de suas leituras de acordo com os temas de seu interesse. Todo o material estará disponível em inglês na nuvem e poderá ser acessado a partir de nossas páginas Web.

Sendo que nosso intuito aqui é simplesmente divulgar a orgonomia, e as questões que a ela se refere, de acordo com o próprio Reich e seus colaboradores diretos relativos e restritos ao tempo e momento do próprio Reich. Quanto ao caminho e as postulações de cada um destes colaboradores depois da morte de Reich, já é uma questão que extrapola nossas possibilidades e nossos interesses. Sendo que aqui somente podemos ser responsáveis por nós mesmos e com muitas restrições.

Alguns destes artigos, de acordo com nossas possibilidades e interesse, já estamos traduzindo. Não somos tradutores especializados e, portanto, pedimos a sua compreensão para possíveis erros que venham a encontrar.
Em nome da comunidade Arte Org.

Textos sobre a praga emocional e sociedade.
Texts on the emotional plague and society.

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