

The Revolution of Hope, by E. Fromm

a. People / Organizations:

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b. Quotes:

- "As with every other human experience, **words are insufficient to describe the experience**. In fact, most of the time words do the opposite: they obscure it, dissect it, and kill it. Too often, in the process of talking about love or hate or hope, one loses contact with what one was supposed to be talking about. Poetry, music, and other forms of art are by far the best-suited media for describing human experience because they are precise and avoid the abstraction and vagueness of worn-out coins which are taken for adequate representations of human experience." - Author (pg. 24)
- "The process of increasing awareness is nothing but the process of awakening, of opening one's eyes and seeing what is in front of one. Awareness means doing away with illusions and, to the degree that this is accomplished, it is a process of liberation." - Author (pg. 72)

c. General Notes:

▪ Chapter 1 - The Crossroads (pg. 13)

- "A specter is stalking in our midst whom only a few see with clarity. It is not the old ghost of communism or fascism. It is a new specter: a completely mechanized society, devoted to maximal material output and consumption, directed by computers; and in this social process, man himself is being transformed into a part of the total machine, well fed and entertained, yet passive, unalive, and with little feeling. With the victory of the new society, individualism and privacy will have disappeared; feelings toward others will be engineered by psychological conditioning and other devices, or drugs which also serve a new kind of introspective experience." (pg. 13)
 - "In the search for scientific truth, man came across knowledge that he could use for the domination of nature. He had tremendous success. But in the one-sided emphasis on technique and material consumption, man lost touch with himself, with life. Having lost religious faith and the humanistic values bound up with it, he concentrated on technical and material values and lost the capacity for deep emotional experiences, for the joy and sadness that accompany them. The machine he built became so powerful that it developed its own program, which now determines man's own thinking. At the moment, one of the gravest symptoms of our system is the fact that our economy rests upon arms production (plus maintenance of the whole defense establishment) and on the principle of maximal consumption. We have a well-functioning economic system under the condition that we are producing goods which threaten us with physical destruction, that we transform the individual into a total passive consumer and thus deaden him, and that we have created a bureaucracy that makes the individual feel impotent." (pg. 14)
- "My hopes in this respect are based on the following factors: (1) The present social system can be understood a great deal better if one connects the system "Man" with the whole system. Human nature is not an abstraction nor an infinitely malleable and hence dynamically negligible system. It has its own specific qualities, laws, and alternatives. The study of the system Man permits us to see what certain factors in the socioeconomic system do to man, how disturbances in the system Man produce imbalances in the whole social system. By introducing the human factor into the analysis of the whole system, we are better prepared to understand its dysfunctioning and to define norms which relate the healthy economic functioning of the social system to the optimal well-being of the people who participate in it. All this is valid, of course, only if there is agreement that maximal development of the human system in terms of its own structure—that is to say, human well-being—is the overriding goal. (2) The increasing dissatisfaction with our present way of life, its passiveness and silent boredom, its lack of privacy and its depersonalization, and the longing for a joyful, meaningful existence, which answers those specific needs of man which he has developed in the last few thousand years of his history and which make him different from the animal as well as from the computer. This tendency is all the stronger because the affluent part of the population has already tasted full material satisfaction and has found out that the consumer's paradise does not deliver the happiness it promised. (The poor, of course, have not yet had any chance to find out, except by watching the lack of joy of those who "have everything a man could want.") Ideologies and concepts have lost much of their attraction; traditional clichés like "right" and "left" or "communism" and "capitalism" have lost their meaning. People seek a new orientation, a new philosophy, one which is centered on the priorities of life—physically and spiritually—and not on the priorities of death. There is a growing polarization occurring in the United States and in the whole world: there are those who are attracted to force, "law and order," bureaucratic methods, and eventually to non-life, and those with a deep longing for life, for new attitudes rather than for ready-made schemes and blueprints. This new front is a movement which combines the wish for profound changes in our economic and social practice with changes in our psychic and spiritual approach to life. In its most general form, its aim is the activation of the individual, the restoration of man's control over the social system, the humanization of technology. It is a movement in the name of life, and it has such a broad and common base because the threat to life is today a threat not to one class, to one nation, but a threat to all." (pg. 16-17)

▪ Chapter 2 - Hope (pg. 19)

- "Nothing is expected to happen in the now but only in the next moment, the next day, the next year, and in another world if it is too absurd to believe that hope can be realized in this world. Behind this belief is the idolatry of "Future," "History," and "Posterity," which began in the French Revolution with men like Robespierre, who worshiped the future as a goddess: I do nothing; I remain passive, because I am nothing and impotent; but the future, the projection of time, will bring about what I cannot achieve. This worship of the future, which is a different aspect of the worship of "progress" in modern bourgeois thought, is precisely the alienation of hope. Instead of something I do or I become, the idols, future and posterity, bring about something without my doing anything. While **passive waiting is a disguised form of hopelessness and impotence**, there is another form of hopelessness and despair which takes exactly the opposite disguise—the disguise of phrase making and adventurism, of disregard for reality, and of forcing what cannot be forced. This was the attitude of the false Messiahs and of the Putsch leaders, who had contempt for those who did not under all circumstances prefer death to defeat. In these days, this pseudo-radical disguise of hopelessness and nihilism is not rare among some of the most dedicated members of the young generation. They are appealing in their boldness and dedication but they become unconvincing by their lack of realism, sense of strategy, and, in some, by lack of love for life." (pg. 20-21)
- "Hope is paradoxical. It is neither passive waiting nor is it unrealistic forcing of circumstances that cannot occur. It is like the crouched tiger, which will jump only when the moment for jumping has come. Neither tired reformism nor pseudo-radical adventurism is an expression of hope. **To hope means to be ready at every moment for that which is not yet born, and yet not become desperate if there is no birth in our lifetime.** There is no sense in hoping for that which already exists or for that which cannot be. Those whose hope is weak settle down for comfort or for violence; those whose hope is strong see and cherish all signs of new life and are ready every moment to help the birth of that which is ready to be born." (pg. 22)
 - "**To hope is a state of being. It is an inner readiness, that of intense but not-yet-spent activeness.** The concept of "activity" rests upon one of the most widespread of man's illusions in modern industrial society. Our whole culture is geared to activity - activity in the sense of being busy, and being busy in the sense of busyness (the busyness necessary for business)." (pg. 24)
 - "**Hope is a psychic concomitant to life and growth.** If a tree which does not get sun bends its trunk to where the sun comes from, we cannot say that the tree "hopes" in the same way in which a man hopes, since hope in man is connected with feelings and awareness that the tree may not have. And yet it would not be wrong to say that the tree hopes for the sunlight and expresses this hope by twisting its trunk toward the sun." (pg. 25)

- "Hope is an intrinsic element of the structure of life, of the dynamic of man's spirit. It is closely linked with another element of the structure of life: faith. Faith is not a weak form of belief or knowledge; it is not faith in this or that; faith is the conviction about the not yet proven, the knowledge of the real possibility, the awareness of pregnancy. Faith is rational when it refers to the knowledge of the real yet unborn; it is based on the faculty of knowledge and comprehension, which penetrates the surface and sees the kernel. Faith, like hope, is not prediction of the future; it is the vision of the present in a state of pregnancy." (pg. 25-26)
 - "Hope is the mood that accompanies faith" (pg. 27)
- "Fortitude is the capacity to resist the temptation to compromise hope and faith by transforming them, and thus destroying them into empty optimism or into irrational faith. Fortitude is the capacity to say "no" when the world wants to hear "yes.!" (pg. 27)
- "Hope and faith, being essential qualities of life, are by their very nature moving in the direction of transcending the status quo, individually and socially. It is one of the qualities of all life that it is in a constant process of change and never remains the same at any given moment. Life that stagnates tends to die; if the stagnation is complete, death has occurred. It follows that life in its moving quality tends to break out of and to overcome the status quo. We grow either stronger or weaker, wiser or more foolish, more courageous or more cowardly. Every second is a moment of decision, for the better or the worse. We feed our sloth, greed, or hate, or we starve it. The more we feed it, the stronger it grows; the more we starve it, the weaker it becomes. What holds true for the individual holds true for a society. It is never static; if it does not grow, it decays; if it does not transcend the status quo for the better, it changes for the worse. Often we, the individual or the people who make up a society, have the illusion we could stand still and not alter the given situation in the one or the other direction. This is one of the most dangerous illusions. The moment we stand still, we begin to decay." (pg. 28-29)
 - "Man and society are resurrected every moment in the act of hope and of faith in the here and now; every act of love, of awareness, of compassion is resurrection; every act of sloth, of greed, of selfishness is death. Every moment existence confronts us with the alternatives of resurrection or death; every moment we give an answer. This answer lies not in what we say or think, but in what we are, how we act, where we are moving." (pg. 29)
- "As I said before, the hopelessness is covered up as optimism and, in a few, as revolutionary nihilism. But whatever a man thinks about himself is of little importance in comparison with what he is, with what he truly feels, and most of us are not aware of what we feel. The signs of hopelessness are all here. Look at the bored expression of the average person, the lack of contact between people—even when they desperately try "to make contact." Look at the incapacity to plan seriously for overcoming the ever-increasing poisonousness of the city's water and air and the predictable famine in the poor countries, not to speak of the inability to get rid of the daily threat to the lives and plans of all of us—the thermonuclear weapon. Whatever we say or think about hope, our inability to act or plan for life betrays our hopelessness." (pg. 34)
- "But there are still other reasons for the increasing hopelessness: the formation of the totally bureaucratized industrial society and the powerlessness of the individual vis-à-vis the organization, which I shall deal with in the next chapter. If America and the Western world continue in their state of unconscious hopelessness, lack of faith and of fortitude, it is predictable that they will not be able to resist the temptation of the big bang by nuclear weapons, which would end all problems—overpopulation, boredom, and hunger—since it would do away with all life. Progress in the direction of a social and cultural order in which man is in the saddle depends on our capacity to come to grips with our hopelessness. First of all, we have to see it. And second, we have to examine whether there is a real possibility of changing our social, economic, and cultural life in a new direction which will make it possible to hope again. If there is no such real possibility, then indeed hope is sheer foolishness. But if there is a real possibility, there can be hope, based on examination of new alternatives and options, and on concerted actions to bring about the realization of these new alternatives." (pg. 35)
- Chapter 3 - Where Are We Now and Where Are We Headed? (pg. 36)
 - "We are not on the way to free enterprise, but are moving rapidly away from it. We are not on the way to greater individualism, but are becoming an increasingly manipulated mass civilization. We are not on the way to the places toward which our ideological maps tell us we are moving. We are marching in an entirely different direction." (pg. 36)
 - "What is the effect of this type of organization on man? It reduces man to an appendage of the machine, ruled by its very rhythm and demands. It transforms him into Homo consumens, the total consumer, whose only aim is to have more and to use more. This society produces many useless things, and to the same degree many useless people. Man, as a cog in the production machine, becomes a thing, and ceases to be human. He spends his time doing things in which he is not interested, with people in whom he is not interested, producing things in which he is not interested; and when he is not producing, he is consuming. He is the eternal sucking with the open mouth, "taking in," without effort and without inner activeness, whatever the boredom-preventing (and boredom-producing) industry forces on him—cigarettes, liquor, movies, television, sports, lectures—limited only by what he can afford. But the boredom-preventing industry, that is to say, the gadget-selling industry, the automobile industry, the movie industry, the television industry, and so on, can only succeed in preventing the boredom from becoming conscious. In fact they increase the boredom, as a salty drink taken to quench the thirst increases it. However unconscious, boredom remains boredom nevertheless." (pg. 48-49)
 - "The passiveness of man in industrial society today is one of his most characteristic and pathological features. He takes in, he wants to be fed, but he does not move, initiate, he does not digest his food, as it were. He does not reacquire in a productive fashion what he inherited, but he amasses it or consumes it. He suffers from a severe systemic deficiency, not too dissimilar to that which one finds in more extreme forms in depressed people. Man's passiveness is only one symptom among a total syndrome, which one may call "the syndrome of alienation." Being passive, he does not relate himself to the world actively and is forced to submit to his idols and their demands. Hence, he feels powerless, lonely, and anxious. He has little sense of integrity or self-identity. Conformity seems to be the only way to avoid intolerable anxiety—and even conformity does not always alleviate his anxiety." (pg. 49)
 - "Logical thought is not rational if it is merely logical and not guided by the concern for life, and by the inquiry into the total process of living in all its concreteness and with all its contradictions. On the other hand, not only thinking but also emotions can be rational. "Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point," as Pascal put it. (The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of.) Rationality in emotional life means that the emotions affirm and help the person's psychic structure to maintain a harmonious balance and at the same time to assist its growth. Thus, for instance, irrational love is love which enhances the person's dependency, hence anxiety and hostility. Rational love is a love that relates a person intimately to another, at the same time preserving his independence and integrity. Reason flows from the blending of rational thought and feeling. If the two functions are torn apart, thinking deteriorates into schizoid intellectual activity, and feeling deteriorates into neurotic life-damaging passions." (pg. 50-51)
- Chapter 4 - What Does It Mean to Be Human? (pg. 65)
 - "Man is born as a freak of nature, being within nature and yet transcending it. He has to find principles of action and decision making which replace the principles of instinct. He has to have a frame of orientation that permits him to organize a consistent picture of the world as a condition for consistent actions. He has to fight not only against the dangers of dying, starving, and being hurt, but also against another danger that is specifically human: that of becoming insane. In other words, he has to protect himself not only against the danger of losing his life but also against the danger of losing his mind. The human being, born under the conditions described here, would indeed go mad if he did not find a frame of reference which permitted him to feel at home in the world in some form and to escape the experience of utter helplessness, disorientation, and uprootedness. There are many ways in which man can find a solution to the task of staying alive and of remaining sane. Some are better than others and some are worse."

(pg. 69)

- "Awareness of existing reality and of alternatives for its improvement helps to change reality, and every improvement in reality helps the clarification of thought. Today, when scientific reasoning has reached a peak, the transformation of society, burdened by the inertia of previous circumstances, into a sane society could permit the average man to use his reason with the same objectivity to which we are accustomed from the scientists. This is a matter not primarily of superior intelligence but of the disappearance of irrationality from social life—an irrationality which necessarily leads to confusion of the mind." (pg. 73)
- "The easiest and most frequent form of man's relatedness is his "primary ties" to where he comes from—to blood, soil, clan, to mother and father, or, in a more complex society, to his nation, religion, or class. These ties are not primarily of a sexual nature, but they fulfill the longing of a man who has not grown up to become himself, to overcome the sense of unbearable separateness. This solution of the problem of human separateness by continuing what I have called "the primary ties" —which are natural and necessary for the infant in his relationship to his mother—is obvious when we study the primitive cults of the worship of the soil, of lakes, of mountains, or of animals, often accompanied by the individual's symbolic identification with these animals (totem animals)." (pg. 74)
 - "By remaining bound to nature, to mother or father, man indeed succeeds in feeling at home in the world, but he pays a tremendous price for this security, that of submission, dependence, and a blockage to the full development of his reason and of his capacity to love. He remains a child when he should become an adult." (pg. 74)
- "Our conscious thought is that type of thinking, linked with language, which follows the social categories of thought imprinted in our thinking from early childhood. Our consciousness is essentially the awareness of such phenomena which the social filter composed of language, logic, and taboos permits us to become aware of. Those phenomena which cannot pass the social filter remain unconscious or, more accurately speaking, we are unaware of everything that cannot penetrate to our consciousness because the social filter blocks its entry. This is the reason why consciousness is determined by the structure of society." (pg. 78)
- **"All great art is by its very essence in conflict with the society with which it coexists.** It expresses the truth about existence regardless of whether this truth serves or hinders the survival purposes of a given society. All great art is revolutionary because it touches upon the reality of man and questions the reality of the various transitory forms of human society. Even an artist who is a political reactionary is more revolutionary—if he is a great artist—than the artists of "socialist realism" who only mirror the particular form of their society with its contradictions." (pg. 80)
- Chapter 5 - Steps to the Humanization of Technological Society (pg. 100)
 - See text
- Chapter 6 - Can We Do It? (pg. 143)
 - "Ideologies are ideas formulated for public consumption, satisfying the need of everybody to relieve his guilty conscience in the belief that he acts in favor of something which appears good or desirable. Ideologies are ready made "thought-commodities" spread by the press, the orators, the ideologists in order to manipulate the mass of people for purposes which have nothing to do with the ideology, and are very often exactly the opposite. Such ideologies are sometimes manufactured ad hoc—for instance, when a war is made popular by being described as a war for freedom, or when religious ideologies are used to rationalize the political status quo even though it may be in complete contrast to the genuine ideas of the religion in whose name the ideologies are preached. By its very nature, the ideology does not appeal to active thought, nor to active feeling. It is like a pill which either excites or puts man to sleep." (pg. 149)
 - "Precisely because the threat today is one not only to the class interest of certain groups but to the life and sanity of all, the small hope is reasonable that the ideas of radical humanism might be effective in such a considerable sector of the population that they might accomplish a radical change. We are in the very midst of the crisis of modern man. We do not have too much time left. If we do not begin now, it will probably be too late. But there is hope - because there is a real possibility that man can reassess himself, and that he can make the technological society human." (pg. 159)

d. Further Readings:

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