

The Revision of Psychoanalysis, by E. Fromm

a. People / Organizations:

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b. Quotes:

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c. General Notes:

▪ Preface (pg. vii)

- "First of all, man is a social animal. Specifically, revised psychoanalysis will examine the psychological phenomena that constitute the pathology of contemporary society: alienation, anxiety, loneliness, the fear of feeling deeply, lack of activeness, lack of joy. These symptoms have taken over the central role held by sexual repression in Freud's time. Psychoanalytic theory must be formulated in such a way that it can understand the unconscious aspects of these symptoms and the pathogenic conditions in society and family that produce them. In particular, psychoanalysis must study the "pathology of normalcy"— the chronic, low-grade schizophrenia that is generated by the cybernetic, technological society of today and tomorrow. These drives can be regressive, archaic, and self-destructive, or they can serve man's full unfolding and establish unity with the world under the conditions of freedom and integrity. In this optimal case, man's trans-survival needs are born not out of unpleasure and "scarcity" but out of his wealth of potentialities, which strive passionately to pour themselves into the objects to which they correspond: He wants to love because he has a heart; he wants to think because he has a brain; he wants to touch because he has a skin." (pg. vii)

▪ Chapter 1 - On My Psychoanalytic Approach (pg. 1)

- "The idea that my points of view are anti- (or non-) biological is based on two factors: first, on my emphasis on the significance of social factors in the formation of character; and, second, on my critical attitude toward Freud's theory of instincts and the libido theory." (pg. 1)

▪ "Freud arrived almost unavoidably at his particular mechanistic physiological theory. Considering the scarcity of hormonological and neurophysiological data at the time of Freud's original formulations, it was hardly avoidable that he should construct a model based on the concept of chemically produced inner tensions that become painful and on the concept of the release of accumulated sexual tension, a release that Freud labeled "pleasure." The assumption of the pathogenic role of sexual repression seemed all the more evident because his clinical observations were made among people belonging to the middle class, with its strong Victorian emphasis on sexual repression. The dominant influence of the concepts of thermodynamics may also have influenced Freud's thinking, as E. Ericson has remarked." (pg. 2)

- "The false dichotomy between biological versus social orientation also underlies the false dichotomy in which my work is classified —as "culturally" rather than "biologically" oriented. **My approach has always been a sociobiological one.** In this respect it is not fundamentally different from Freud's, but it sharply contrasts with that type of behavioristic thinking in psychology and anthropology which assumes that man is born as a blank sheet of paper on which culture writes its text, through the mediation of the all-pervasive influence of customs and education (i.e., learning and conditioning)." (pg. 4)

▪ "This orientation is based above all on the concept of evolution. Evolutionary thinking is historical thinking. We call historical thinking "evolutionary" when we deal with bodily changes that have occurred in the history of the development of animals. And we speak of historical changes when we refer to those that are no longer based on changes in the organism. Man emerged at a certain point in animal evolution, and this point is characterized by the almost complete disappearance of instinctive determination and by an increase in brain development that permitted self-awareness, imagination, planning, and doubt. When these two factors reached a certain threshold, man was born, and all his impulses from then on were motivated by his need to survive under the conditions that had arisen by this point in his evolution. The "evolutionary" changes in living beings occur through changes in the physical structure, from the one-celled organisms to the mammals. The "historical" changes (i.e., the evolution of man) are not changes in man's anatomical or physiological structure but, rather, are mental changes, which are adapted to the social system into which he is born. The social system itself depends on many factors such as climate, natural resources, population density, means of communication with other groups, mode of production, and so on. The historical changes in man occur in the areas of intellectual capacity and emotional maturity." (pg. 5)

▪ "The sociobiological orientation is centered around the problem of survival. Its fundamental question is: How can man, given his physiological and neurophysiological apparatus, as well as his existential dichotomies, survive physically and mentally? That man must survive physically needs no explanation; but that he must also survive mentally requires some comment. First of all, man is a social animal. His physical constitution is such that he has to live in groups and therefore must be able to cooperate with others, at least for the purposes of work and defense. The condition for such cooperation is that he must be sane. And in order to remain sane - that is, to survive mentally (and, in an indirect sense, physically) - man must be related to others. He must have a frame of orientation that permits him to grasp reality and to maintain a relatively constant frame of reference in an otherwise chaotic reality. In turn, this frame of reference enables him to communicate with others. He must also have a frame of devotion, including values, that enables him to unify and channel his energy in specific directions, thereby transcending mere physical survival. The frame of orientation is partly a matter of cognition, acquired by learning the thought patterns of his society. But to a large extent it is a matter of character. Character is the form in which human energy is channeled during the process of "socialization" (relatedness to others) and "assimilation" (mode of acquiring things). Character is, in fact, a substitute for absent instincts. If man, whose actions are not determined by instincts, had to decide before every action how to act, he would be unable to act efficiently; his decisions would take too long to make and would lack consistency. But by acting according to his character, he acts quasi-automatically and consistently; and the energy with which his character traits are charged guarantees effective, consistent action beyond what the force of learning can accomplish." (pg. 6-7)

- "The sociobiological function of character determines the formation not only of the individual character but also that of the "social character." The social character constitutes the "matrix" or "nucleus" of the character structure of most members of a group. This character structure develops as a result of the basic experiences and mode of life common to that group. The function of the social character, from a sociobiological standpoint, is to mold human energy in such specific ways that it can be used as a "raw material" for the purposes of the particular structure of a given society. It should be noted here that there is no society "in general" but only various structures of society - just as there is no psychic energy "in general" but only psychic energy channeled in various ways characteristic of a given character structure. The development of the social character is necessary for the functioning of a given society, and the survival of society is a biological necessity for the survival of man. Of course, this is not to say that a given social character guarantees the stability of a given society. When the social structure is too contradictory of human needs, or if new technical or socioeconomical possibilities emerge at the same time, the previously repressed character elements will arise in the most advanced individuals and groups and help transform society into one more humanly satisfactory. Character, the cement of society during periods of socioeconomic stability, becomes dynamite in periods of drastic change. To sum up: There is no "cultural" versus "biological" orientation, the former expressed by Freud, the latter by the "cultural school" of Fromm. Quite aside from the fact that I am not the founder of a school but, rather, a psychoanalyst who has attempted to further Freud's theory by making certain revisions, my orientation is a sociobiological one in which the development of personality is

understood as the attempt of man, having emerged at a certain and definable point of evolution of animal life, to survive by dynamic adaptation to the social structure into which he is born. The false dichotomy between cultural and biological orientation is due partly to the general tendency to turn ideas into convenient clichés, rather than to understand them, and partly to the ideology of the bureaucratically organized international Psychoanalytical Society, some of whose members and sympathizers seem to need an easily grasped label to rationalize their dislike for the ideas of those analysts who believe that psychoanalysis and the bureaucratic spirit are incompatible." (pg. 8-9)

- Chapter 2 - The Dialectic Revision of Psychoanalysis (pg. 11)

- "Even the greatest genius is a child of his time, and he is influenced by its prejudices and modes of thought. Often he is so absorbed by the struggle with old views or the formulation of new and original ones that he loses his perspective on what actually constitutes the essence of his system. He may consider some details necessary for proceeding to new positions as being more important than do those by whom his discoveries have been accepted and, hence, are not in need of the auxiliary constructions." (pg. 12)
- "Discovering the essence of a system is primarily a historical task. What does this task require! Whoever tries to undertake it must determine which new and creative thoughts in the system contradicted the views and ideas generally accepted at the time. He must then proceed to examine the general climate of thought and personal experience that existed during the period in which the system was created, from a social perspective as well as in the context of the master's life. He must also study how the master tried to express his new discoveries in terms of keeping in touch with the thought of his time, so that neither he nor his pupils feel completely isolated or "crazy." The task, then, is to understand how the formulations of the original system have been influenced by the attempt to find a compromise between the new and the extant; and eventually how, in the process of social change, the core of the system can be widened, translated, and revised. In a short formula the most crucial point could be expressed thus: The essence of the system is that which transcends traditional thought minus the traditional baggage in which this transcending thought is formulated." (pg. 13)
- "Returning now to the system that Freud created, I believe the crucial discoveries were as follows: (1) Man is largely determined by drives that are essentially irrational—drives that conflict with his reason, his moral standards, and the standards of his society. (2) Most of these drives are not conscious to him. To himself he explains his behavior as being the outcome of reasonable motives (rationalization), all the while acting, feeling, and thinking according to the unconscious forces that motivate his behavior. (3) Any attempt to bring into his awareness the presence and operation of these unconscious drives meets with an energetic defense—namely, resistance—which can take many forms. (4) Aside from his constitutional equipment, man's development is largely determined by circumstances operating in his childhood. (5) Man's unconscious motivations can be recognized by inference from (i.e., interpretation of his dreams, symptoms, and unintentional small acts. (6) Conflicts between man's conscious view of the world and himself, on the one hand, and these unconscious motivating forces, on the other—if their intensity transcends a certain threshold—can produce mental disturbance such as neurosis, neurotic character traits, or general, diffused listlessness, anxiousness, depressiveness, and so on. (7) If the unconscious forces become conscious, a most particular effect ensues: The symptom tends to disappear, an increase in energy occurs, and the person experiences greater freedom and joy." (pg. 13-14)
 - "All of these seven points among Freud's findings have a special relationship to the historical time in which he worked. He lived both at the peak and at the end of the period of rationalism and enlightenment. He was a rationalist, inasmuch as he believed that the power of reason is capable of solving the riddles of life (to the extent that they are solvable). But he transcended rationalism by recognizing that man is motivated by irrational forces to a degree that the rationalism of the eighteenth century did not foresee. This discovery of man's irrationality and of the unconscious character of the irrational forces within him constitutes the most radical discovery of Freud, through which he transcended, and in a sense defeated, the optimistic rationalism current in the middle-class thought of his century. He dethroned conscious thought from its superior place, but he gave reason an even stronger foundation through his critique of conscious thought. By rationally explaining the irrational, he put reason on a new and very much more solid basis. But Freud might have become an advocate of pessimism and despair had he not discovered a method to liberate man from the power of irrational forces—by making the unconscious conscious. This principle (Freud once expressed it with the words "Where there is id there shall be ego") turned Freud's insight into man's irrationality into an instrument for man's liberation. Thus Freud created not only a new dimension for truth but also a new dimension for freedom. Political freedom and freedom of trade and in the use of property would mean little if man could not free himself from the irrational and unconscious forces within him. The free man is the one who knows himself, but knows himself in a new way—by penetrating the deceptive cover of mere consciousness, and by grasping the hidden reality within himself." (pg. 14-15)
 - "When all is said, the fact becomes clear that Freud's historically crucial discoveries were these: (1) the presence of powerful irrational forces motivating man, (2) the unconscious nature of these forces, (3) their pathogenic consequences (under certain circumstances), and (4) the curing and liberating effect of making the unconscious conscious." (pg. 16)
- "The views of "neo-Freudians" are by no means identical. What they do have in common is a greater emphasis on cultural and social data than was customary among the Freudians. But certainly this emphasis was Freud's elaboration of the basic social orientation, which saw man in a social context always and attributed to society a crucial role in the process of repression. Sullivan placed less stress on sexuality and more on the avoidance of anxiety and insecurity. Horney emphasized the role of anxiety, of fears, and of incompatible ego-ideals. She also suggested fundamental changes in Freud's psychology of women. And, finally, the present writer, who became increasingly doubtful of the libido theory, suggested one in which the needs rooted in man's condition of existence took the center. He emphasized the role of society, not as "culture" but as a specific society structured along the lines of its mode of production and its main productive forces, and stressed the significance of value and ethical problems for the understanding of man." (pg. 18)
- "A creative renewal of psychoanalysis is possible only if it overcomes its positivistic conformism and becomes again a critical and challenging theory in the spirit of radical humanism. This revised psychoanalysis will continue to descend ever more deeply into the underworld of the unconscious; it will be critical of all social arrangements that warp and deform man; and it will be concerned with the processes that could lead to the adaptation of society to the needs of man, rather than with man's adaptation to society." (pg. 19)
 - "Specifically, it will examine the psychological phenomena that constitute the pathology of contemporary society: alienation, anxiety, loneliness, the fear of feeling deeply, lack of activeness, lack of joy. These symptoms have taken over the central role held by sexual repression in Freud's time, and psychoanalytic theory must be formulated in such a way that it can understand the unconscious aspects of these symptoms and the pathogenic conditions in society and family that produce them. In particular, psychoanalysis must study the "pathology of normalcy"—the chronic, low-grade schizophrenia that is generated by the cybernetic, technological society of today and tomorrow. I see the dialectic revision of classic Freudian theory as occurring—or continuing—in six areas: the theory of the drives, the theory of the unconscious, the theory of society, the theory of sexuality, the theory of the body, and psychoanalytic therapy." (pg. 20)
- "The "essence" of man is a dichotomy that exists only in the human being. It is an opposition between being in nature and being subject to all its laws, and simultaneously transcending nature, because man, and only he, is aware of himself and of his existence; in fact, he is the only instance in nature where life has become aware of itself. At the basis of this insoluble existential dichotomy lies an evolutionary, biologically given fact: Man emerges from animal evolution at the point where determination by instincts has reached a minimum, while at the same time the development of that part of the brain that is the basis for thinking and imagination has developed far beyond the order of size that is found among the primates. On the one hand, this fact makes man more helpless than the animal; on the other, it gives him the possibility for a new, albeit entirely different, kind of strength. Man

qua man has been thrown out of nature, yet he is subject to it; he is a freak of nature, as it were. This biological fact of man's inherent dichotomy demands solutions; that is to say, it demands human development. From a subjective standpoint, the awareness of having been torn away from his natural basis, and of being an isolated and unrelated fragment in a chaotic world, would lead to insanity (the insane person is one who has lost his place in a structured world, one that he shares with others and in which he can orient himself. Hence the energies of man have as their aims the transformation of the unbearable dichotomy into a bearable one and the creation of ever new and, as far as possible, better solutions of the opposition. All of man's passions and cravings, whether normal, neurotic, or psychotic, attempt to solve his immanent dichotomy; and because it is vital for man to find a solution, they are charged with the entire energy inherent in a person. Broadly speaking, they are "spiritual," survival-transcending ways of escaping the experience of nothingness and chaos by finding some frame of orientation and an object of devotion; they serve mental rather than physical survival." (pg. 24-25)

- "The nature or essence of man, then, as this theory conceives it, consists in nothing but the opposition inherent in man's biological constitution—an opposition that produces different solutions. The essence of man is not identical with any one of these solutions. To be sure, the number and quality of the solutions are not arbitrary and unlimited but, rather, are determined by the characteristics of the human organism and its environment. The data of history, child psychology, psychopathology—as well as, particularly, that of the history of art, religion, and myths—make it possible to formulate certain hypotheses about possible solutions. On the other hand, as mankind has thus far lived under the principle of scarcity and hence force and domination, the number of such solutions has by no means been exhausted. With the possibility of achieving a social life based on abundance and hence the disappearance of crippling domination, new solutions to the existential dichotomy are likely to develop. This theory of the essence of man is dialectical; and it is in contradiction to those theories that assume a substance or a fixed quality to be the essence of man. But it also stands in contrast to the concepts of existentialism; indeed, it constitutes a critique of existentialist thought." (pg. 26)
 - "Man's inherent dichotomy is the basis for his passionate strivings. Which of these is activated and becomes dominant in the character system of a society or an individual depends largely on the social structures, which, by their specific practice of life, teachings, rewards, and sanctions, have a selective function with regard to the various potential drives." (pg. 27)
- "In the present framework, however, the most powerful human drives are not those aimed at physical survival but those through which man seeks a solution of his existential dichotomy - namely, a goal for his life that will channel his energies in one direction, transcend himself as a survival-seeking organism, and give meaning to his life." (pg. 28)
 - "Man is in need of the world because without it he cannot be. In the act of relatedness to the world, he becomes one with his "objects," and the objects cease to be objects. This active relatedness to the world is being; the act of conserving and feeding one's body, property, status, image, and so on, is having or using. The examination of these two forms of existing, their relationship to the concept of ego as the subject of having and using and to the concept of self as the subject of being, the categories of activity and passivity, of attraction to life and attraction to death—these are the central problems for the dialectic revision of psychoanalysis." (pg. 28-29)
- "Freud's central discovery was that of the unconscious, and of repression. He linked these key concepts with his libido theory and assumed that the unconscious was the seat of the instinctive sexual desires." (pg. 33)
- "From this helplessness of man an extremely important phenomenon follows: The average person, regardless of his early relationship to mother and father, carries within himself a deep longing to believe in an all-powerful, all-wise, and all-caring figure. But there is more than "belief" in this relationship. There also exists an intense affective bond to this "magic helper." It is often described as "awe" or "love"; but sometimes it is not given any particular name. It resembles the attachment of the child to mother and father, in being essentially passive, hoping, trusting. But this passivity by no means reduces the intensity of the bond; if anything, it increases that intensity; inasmuch as one's life (as in the case of the infant) seems to depend on not being abandoned. In many instances the intensity of this bond far surpasses that of the ties to persons close to one in ordinary life. Of course, the less satisfaction there is in these ties, the more intense is the bond to the "magic helper." Only through belief in the support of this figure can the person cope with his sense of helplessness. Such figures can be religious idols, natural forces, institutions and groups (such as the state or nation), charismatic or simply powerful leaders, or individuals such as father and mother, husband and wife. It also makes little difference whether these figures are real or only imaginary. I suggest that we call all of these figures by the generic name "idols." **An idol is the figure to which a person has transferred his own strength and powers. The more powerful the idol grows, the more impoverished the individual himself becomes.** Only by being in touch with the idol can he try to be in touch with himself. The idol, the work of his hands and fantasy, stands over and above him; its maker becomes his prisoner. Idolatry, in the sense of the Old Testament prophets, is essentially the same concept as that of "alienation." (Cf. Fromm 1966a.)" (pg. 42)
 - "People's eyes shine with religious fervor when they see, or can touch, a man who has risen to fame and who has, or might have, power. But the need for idols exists not only in the public sphere; if one scratches the surface, and often even without doing so, one finds that many people also have their "private" idols: their families (sometimes, as in Japan, organized as ancestor cults), a teacher, a boss, a film star, a football team, a physician, or any number of such figures. Whether the idol can be seen (even if only rarely) or is a product of fantasy, the one bound to it never feels alone, never feels that help is not near." (pg. 44)
- **"The most frequently observable example of the mobilization of the "idolatric passion" is the phenomenon of "transference."** Freud discovered that patients regularly developed intense feelings of dependence on, awe of, or love for him during psychoanalytic treatment. Since then, every analyst has had the same experience." (pg. 45)
 - "Hitler exhibited a somnambulistic certainty typical only of extremely narcissistic persons. His "magic" proceeded from his success during the first nine years of his reign (although this success was largely made possible by the money supplied by German industrialists, by the failure of Great Britain and France to contribute to his overthrow, and by the discord among and lack of courage of his opponents in Germany). Hitler was not interested in any human being; thus he was free of all warm sentiments. He could show an unrestricted aggressiveness against even his main collaborators, alternating this with friendly, benevolent smiles and gestures. In other words, through his behavior he made people feel like small children and offered himself as the all-knowing, all-powerful, all-punishing idol." (pg. 50)
 - "The sense of powerlessness, and hence the need for idols, becomes less intense the more a person succeeds in attributing his existence to his own active efforts; the more he develops his powers of love and reason; the more he acquires a sense of identity, not mediated by his social role but rooted in the authenticity of his self; the more he can give and the more he is related to others, without losing his freedom and integrity; and the more he is aware of his unconscious, so that nothing human within himself and in others is alien to him." (pg. 52)
- "Aside from individual constitution and childhood experiences, social conditions are of central importance if nonidolatry is to be more than an isolated phenomenon. These conditions are not difficult to describe; among the most important ones are absence of exploitation (hence also absence of the need for confusing the mind with justifying ideologies); the possibility for each person to be free from overt or hidden force and manipulation, beginning in early childhood; and stimulating influences that further the development of all a person's faculties. Wealth and a high consumption rate have nothing to do with freedom and independence. The "capitalist" and "communist" versions of industrial society are not conducive to the disappearance of the idolatric passion; on the contrary, they further it." (pg. 53)
- **"Unconsciousness is not a place but a function.** I can be unaware of certain experiences (ideas, impulses) because strong defenses bar their entrance into consciousness. In this case these experiences can be said to be unconscious; or if not blocked, then they are conscious." (pg. 55)

- "An entirely different area of unconsciousness to be studied is that of "false consciousness." I am referring to the fact that we conceive of ourselves, of others, and of situations in a distorted (false) "way," and that we are unaware of what they really are - or, more precisely, of what they are not. The child in the fairy tale about the emperor's clothes is aware of what the emperor is not; he is not clothed. Our own inner needs, combined with social suggestion, almost never adequately inform us as to what a person or a situation is not. We fail to see, for example, that our actions are not in accordance with our values, that our leaders are not different from the average man, that we ourselves are not fully awake, are not making sense, are not happy. We are not aware that love and freedom are abstractions, that we cannot "have" them but, rather, can only love and liberate ourselves - which we are not doing. Although awareness of what we are not is less frightening than awareness of the chaotic unconscious described before, it is still very uncomfortable. **Unconsciousness is identical with unawareness of truth; becoming aware of the unconscious means discovering the truth.** This concept of truth is not the traditional one of the correspondence between thought and that to which thought refers; rather, it is a dynamic one, in which truth is the process of removing illusions, of recognizing what the object is not. **Truth is not a final statement about something but a step in the direction of undeception (Ent-täuschung); awareness of the unconscious becomes an essential element of truth-seeking, education a process of de-deception.**" (pg. 58-59)
- "Human existence is an absurdity; it would be impossible to experience fully the dichotomy of human existence and to remain sane. "Sanity" is "normalcy" paid for by the anesthetizing of full awareness by false consciousness, routine busyness, duty, suffering, and so on. Most people live by successful compensation for their potential insanity and thus are sane for all practical purposes—that is, for the purposes of physical and social survival. However, when any part of their compensation is threatened, the potential insanity may become manifest. For this reason any attack on compensatory ideas, figures, or institutions constitutes a serious threat and is reacted to by intense aggression. **There is only one way to overcome this potential insanity: by achieving full awareness of ourselves.** This requires that we be in touch with the archaic, irrational forces within ourselves, as well as with those with which we are pregnant and to which we have not yet given birth; it requires that we experience the murderer, the insane person, and the saint within ourselves and within others." (pg. 77)
 - "Self-awareness, decreasing defensiveness, diminishing greed, and increasing self-activation may be steps toward enlightenment if they are combined with other practices such as meditation and concentration, and if the person makes a great effort." (pg. 80)
- Chapter 3 - Sexuality and Sexual Perversions (pg. 81)
 - "What is essential for modern consumption is that it be perceived as an attitude or, to put it more correctly, as a character trait. It does not matter what one consumes; it can be food, drink, television, books, cigarettes, painting, music, or sex. The world in its richness is transformed into an object of consumption. In the act of consuming the person is passive, greedily sucking the object of his consumption while at the same time being sucked in by it. The objects of consumption lose their concrete qualities because they are sought after not by specific and real human faculties but by one powerful striving: the greed to have and to use. **Consumption is the alienated form of being in contact with the world by making the world an object of one's greed rather than an object of one's interest and concern.**" (pg. 83)
- Chapter 4 - The Alleged Radicalism of Herbert Marcuse (pg. 111)
 - See text

d. Further Readings:

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