

# Building on Erich Fromm's Scientific Contributions

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*Abstract:* Erich Fromm's scientific contributions were based on his theory of social character and the methods he developed to test it. Social character describes the deep-rooted emotional attitudes shared by people raised in the same culture. Family, schooling, work, and play shape the social character so that people want to do what they need to do to prosper economically and socially in a particular culture. Fromm's first study of German employees and workers before the rise of Hitler showed that despite subscribing to a democratic ideology the majority would support whoever gained power. The second study of Mexican peasant villagers provided statistically significant results demonstrating that social character explained both productivity and psychopathology. These findings were reinforced by subsequent studies. The nucleus of social character is the psychoanalytic character types discovered by Freud and modified by Fromm. This theory makes use of knowledge from economics, sociology, anthropology, and history. Maccoby has continued to show the relevance of the concept of social character in understanding leadership and motivation at work.

We meet today in the context of extremist violence throughout the world, the unchecked spread of weapons of mass destruction, insufficient response to challenges posed by climate change and the lack of the visionary and ethical leadership we need to survive on this planet. The list goes on. We urgently need to understand the causes of these problems to generate solu-

tions. But our current theories are inadequate. The most influential theories in contemporary scholarship can teach us a lot about micro processes of perception and emotions framed in the context of cognitive and neurosciences, but they have little to say about either the power of emotions from a depth psychological perspective, or from the point of view of economic, political, cultural structures and dynamics. The social sciences do address these larger structures and institutions that shape our world, but do so in ways that marginalize serious analysis of emotions and, what Erich Fromm termed, social character.

We need to understand and address both the causes of social pathology, and the factors that affect further human growth. On the one hand, we need to understand the roots of violence, the escapes from freedom, and the commercialization of culture. On the other hand, we need to promote models that will be conducive to human collaboration, or to use Fromm's terms, promote models that will value being over having lifestyles and develop a saner society. Erich Fromm's work is perhaps the best point of departure to try to understand these complex issues.

In this chapter, I will first discuss Fromm's impressive scientific output, then research that his work inspired, and finally elaborate on the work that still needs to be done for Fromm's contribution to continue improving our understanding of both human and socio-economic development.

In July, 1960, having just received a doctorate from Harvard and a research and training fellowship from the National Institute of Mental Health, I drove, together with my wife, Sandylee, from Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Cuernavaca, Mexico. The purpose of this journey was to study psychoanalysis with Erich Fromm and join him in a study of Mexican villagers. For eight years, I worked with Fromm as a student and a colleague. For another ten years I met and corresponded with him. Fromm helped me to better understand myself, to develop a philosophy of life that has guided my work and relationships, and to acquire theoretical knowledge that I have employed in my own research, writing and teaching.

Fromm wanted the Mexican study to achieve four goals. They were:

- To test and establish scientific evidence for his theory of social character.
- To understand what causes the social pathologies of alcoholism and

violence in Mexican villages and what, in contrast, leads to sustainable social and economic development.

- To understand what is needed to facilitate individual development in peasant society.
- To give something back to Mexico which welcomed him and supported his work.

I believe the study published in our book, *Social Character in a Mexican Village* (Fromm/Maccoby 1970b) achieved Fromm's purposes.

Before describing Fromm's specific scientific contributions, I would like to talk about the widely discussed problem of defining science, particularly in relation to social science. Starting with Aristotle who described science as seeking the causes of phenomena, different definitions of science have been proposed. The Oxford English dictionary defines science as "theoretical perception of a truth as contrasted with moral conviction." This definition reflects the truth that "facts" without theory cannot be tested.

The Science Council of the UK proposes a definition demonstrating the way most scientists think about science. "Science is the pursuit and application of knowledge and understanding of the natural and social world following a systematic methodology based on evidence." The Scientific Council provides the following list of scientific methodologies:

- Objective observation: measurement and data (possibly although not necessarily using mathematics as a tool)
- Evidence
- Experiment and/or observation as benchmarks for testing hypotheses
- Induction: reasoning to establish general rules or conclusions drawn from facts or examples
- Repetition
- Critical analysis
- Verification and testing: critical exposure to scrutiny, peer review and assessment

Fromm's scientific contributions include theories that have been *tested* with evidence and measurable data and some that are *testable* but have not yet been tested. I will describe both kinds of Fromm's theories.

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## Tested – the Theory of Social Character

The theory of social character employed in Mexico and the principal method of studying it grew out of an earlier research project designed and undertaken in Germany. From 1929–31, Fromm and his collaborators studied the political attitudes of German factory workers and office workers. In a letter to Fromm in 1974, I asked him why he undertook this study. He wrote back (11<sup>th</sup> April, 1974):

our main motive was that we wanted to know how many of the workers and employees would in fact resist the Nazis, in spite of the fact that it seemed obvious that they would to many people, who were impressed by the strength of the Social Democratic and Communist organizations... (...) I thought that the only way to find that out was to study their character, that is to say the relationship between the anti-Nazi ‘opinion’ and their character structure.

Using a questionnaire that elicited responses that were interpreted psychologically, Fromm contrasted conscious political opinions with unconscious attitudes to authority. The study (Fromm 1980a) showed that men holding similar leftist views had different emotional attitudes to authority. Some were “humanistic revolutionaries”, some were “authoritarian rebels”, and some lacked strong convictions. Fromm reasoned that only the humanistic revolutionaries would resist the National Socialists; the authoritarians would join the Nazis, and the others would fall in line with whatever regime was in power.

Fromm concluded from this study that if the Nazis came to power, the left lacked the unity and conviction to resist them. He also theorized that people holding the same political views had different social characters because their personalities were shaped in different cultural contexts.

Building on his study, Fromm began to develop the theory of social character as a way of integrating theories of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. In 1962, he wrote:

Marx postulated the interdependence between the economic basis of society and the political and legal institutions, its philosophy, art, religion, etc. The former, according to Marxist theory, determined the latter, the ‘ideological

superstructure.' But Marx and Engels did not show, as Engels admitted quite explicitly, *how* the economic basis is translated into the ideological superstructure. I believe that by using the tools of psychoanalysis, this gap in Marxian theory can be filled, and that economic basis structure and the superstructure are connected. One of these connections lies in what I have called the *social character* (Fromm 1962a, p. 71).

A key element of social character is Freud's dynamic and systemic concept of character. Fromm modified Freud's descriptions of three character types and added a new type (Freud 1931a). These are:

- *Erotic type.* The main interest is loving and more particularly, being loved. This type is dominated by the fear of losing love and therefore people with this character can become dependent on others from whom they seek love.
- *Obsessive type.* This type has a strong superego and is dominated by the fear of conscience rather than the fear of losing love. People with this character are inwardly rather than outwardly dependent. Freud saw this type as self-reliant and "the conservative pillar of civilization."
- *Narcissistic type.* The chief interest is directed to self-maintenance. The superego is weak. These individuals are independent and not easily intimidated.

In describing the normal narcissist, Freud wrote

People of this type impress others as "personalities" and are particularly fitted to serve as support for others, to assume the role of leadership, to add new stimulus to cultural development or attack the existing order (Freud 1931a).

In contrast to Freud who theorized that these types were formed by the structuring of libidinal ties in childhood, Fromm theorized that the character types were ways of relating to the world to satisfy material needs and to relate to others, to survive materially and emotionally. He wrote that these character syndromes were shaped by socialization mediated by family, schooling, work and play. He also stated that each type can be more productive – active, self-directed, responsible, loving – or unproductive – passive, dependent and driven by internal drives.

Fromm's ideal of a fully productive person combined love and creative work. He termed Freud's erotic type *receptive* with the positive quality of caring for others. Furthermore, he labelled the obsessive type *hoarding* with positive qualities of patience, practicality, and tenacity and negative qualities of stubbornness and stinginess. Finally, he branded the narcissistic type *exploitative* adding to Freud's positive qualities the negatives of arrogance, seduction, and exploitation (Fromm 1947a, pp. 114–5).

Fromm pointed out that the behavior of people differed according to their social character. When Freud observed personalities in the early twentieth century, productive obsessives were the dominant model for character development. This was because their personality type fits the social character formed in the era of craft and bureaucratic-industrial production. An obsessive farmer or a craftsman, however, was likely to be more independent and hoarding than an obsessive bureaucrat. The farmer had to hoard to protect himself from damaging changes in the weather or in markets. The farmer, however, controlled his time, and when he worked and when he rested. The bureaucrats, on the other hand, were ruled by bosses and clocks but they tried to maximize autonomy within this role (cf. Crozier 1964).

As the mode of production and its cultural frame shifted from manufacturing to service, Fromm observed that a new personality type was emerging to adapt to the new, more service-economy oriented market. Fromm termed this chameleon-like type the *marketing personality*. It has become the dominant personality type of a new social character that I, in turn, have called the interactive social character (Maccoby 2007).

The productive marketing type combines independence with interactivity. Flexible to the point of being protean, marketing types adapt easily to changing situations. Their negative traits include lack of a center, insincerity and disloyalty. Like narcissists, marketing types lack a strong superego, because they don't identify strongly with parental figures. But unlike the narcissist who responds to the commands of an internalized ego ideal, the moral code of the marketing character is continually programmed and re-programmed by groups considered essential for their success. They are controlled by anxiety of rejection by the group as contrasted with the narcissist's efforts to avoid the feelings of shame, even humiliation for not living up to an ideal image.

Fromm considered these character types as the nuclei of the social char-

acter, combined with the attitudes to authority. In the Mexican study, we defined social character as follows:

The concept of social character does not refer to the complete or highly individualized, in fact, unique character structure as it exists in an individual, but to a “character matrix,” a syndrome of character traits which has developed as an adaptation to the economic, social, and cultural conditions common to that group (Fromm/Maccoby 1970b, p. 16).

## The Scientific Contributions of the Mexican Study

The most important contributions of *Social Character in a Mexican Village* to scientific knowledge concern the relationship between social character and behavior and the interaction between economic, social, cultural, historical, and psychological factors in explaining social pathologies.

At the start of the study, Fromm raised the following question: What happened to the peasant farmers (*campesinos*) after the Mexican revolution in the 1920s? Despite the fact that they were given land, many peasants failed to take advantage of their opportunities. Alcoholism increased, and there was a high incidence of violence. Why did this happen?

The study showed the importance of social character in explaining this failure of development. Those villagers brought up before the revolution in the culture of the semi-feudal hacienda lacked the self-confidence and the self-directed, hard-working character of successful peasants throughout the world. Their submissive, receptive, unproductive character that was adapted to life in the hacienda, made them vulnerable to alcoholism and exploitation after the revolution. Furthermore, the children of these villagers were apt to become like them.

In contrast, the villagers who came from free villages demonstrated adaptive, productive, hoarding traits. They farmed their land effectively, and they attempted to maintain conservative, patriarchal values and traditions. Those few villagers with a modern outlook and an entrepreneurial character, the productive exploitative types, proved best able to take advantage of the new opportunities, and they also took advantage of the unproductive villagers. They opened small businesses, and they rented land from those

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unproductive receptive types, many of who were alcoholics. These entrepreneurs took the lead in transforming the culture, getting rid of costly fiestas, while building roads and schools.

The study demonstrated that although the revolution left the villagers in a state of equality, a class system emerged because of differences in social character. One of the most significant findings of the study is the relationship between character and the actual farming behavior of the *campesinos*. Those who were psychologically more productively hoarding, as interpreted from the questionnaires, were also economically more productive. This finding was statistically significant. These productive peasants planted the major part of their land in cash crops, such as rice and vegetables that demanded much care and hard work. Some of the receptive unproductive landholders rented out their land. The others farmed it with sugar cane, producing a much lower profit but greater security. Cane required fewer days of work and less care. The difficult and dirty job of harvesting the cane was done by migrant workers who occupied the lowest class in Mexican rural society and were hired by the sugar refinery, the so-called “cooperative” that took on the paternalistic role of the old hacienda. Some landholders who tried to escape the control of the cooperative found their crops ploughed under. Some of the most astute villagers planted a small percentage of their land in sugar cane, just enough to satisfy the cooperative, gain their benefits (scholarships for their children, health care, low cost loans) and avoid trouble, while optimizing their income.

Another major finding of the study had to do with relationships between the sexes. In the most successful village marriages, husband and wife shared a productive-hoarding social character and were hardworking, conservative, churchgoing, and supportive of each other. However, in those dysfunctional families where husbands and wives fought with each other, the husband and wife expressed different values. The men had unproductive receptive traits and were dependent on their mothers, but they covered it up by acting tough and independent or in other words *macho*. The women were long-suffering and self-denying, but with stubborn hoarding traits, tougher and more independent than the men. Fed up with male posturing and the underlying weakness of their husbands, these wives became hard and unloving, sometimes ridiculing the men who responded violently to the humiliation.

The study of alcoholism described the combination of social character, relationship between the sexes, economic factors, historical factors, and cultural context, which taken together explained the prevalence of alcoholism in the village. The typical alcoholic male was a receptive unproductive landholder with a social character, formed in the hacienda, who planted cane, spending his money and free time on drinking. The fact that he was in a culture where alcohol was relatively cheap and beer and liquor flowed freely at fiestas, increased the social support and impetus to drink. The alcoholism accounted for most of the village violence. Fights often broke out because of drunken insults about a person's masculinity or his mother.

## Building on Fromm's Contributions

A number of studies using Fromm's theory of social character have expanded understanding of personality and motivation. Soon after its' publication, the concepts and findings of *Social Character in a Mexican Village* were applied to a study of village women, sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. I was a member of an advisory group that included the anthropologist Margaret Mead (Reining et al. 1977).

The study of village women explored why women in Kenya, Mexico, and the Philippines either have many children or limit the number of children they have. In two Mexican villages studied by Sonia Gojman, a Mexican psychoanalyst, social character, combined with economic factors, explained the findings concerning fertility. One village, called Santa Maria, was much like the village of *Social Character in a Mexican Village*, perhaps with an even more psychopathological environment. These villagers were descended from hacienda peons, with the receptive unproductive social character. Within families, men tried to dominate their wives by force and both parents treated their children as exploitable property. The men saw sons as future laborers who could either help them farm or could migrate to the United States and send money home. The women saw their children as potential allies against their husbands and as insurance to care for them in old age. Furthermore, because there was so much alcoholism and violence, women wanted many children to replace a son who might be murdered.

The institutions of Santa Maria also reflected this social character. The receptive villagers were constantly looking to the government to give them money and solve their problems. Village leadership was arbitrary, corrupt, and authoritarian.

The other village, called Tierra Alta, was no richer than Santa Maria and was poorer in land, but it had never been a hacienda. The villagers had a long tradition of independent landholding. The women supplemented their income by raising animals and through the cottage industry of sewing. Their economic independence allowed them to challenge the traditional patriarchy. But their economic activity could not be separated from character and values. In Santa Maria, the war between the sexes smoldered underground. The women appeared to accept male domination, but were in fact resentful, and both men and women undermined each other. In Tierra Alta, the struggle between men and women for control of the family was open and acknowledged, but it was tempered by values of human respect. Bringing women into the new economy strengthened their ability to limit their families, and the village's capacity to adapt to change. This process was supported by local leadership, both religious and secular, which was responsive and democratic.

While the social character of Tierra Alta supported economic and individual development, that of Santa Maria did not. The women of Tierra Alta said that they wanted to practice birth control in order to be free to enjoy life more or to have enough resources to provide for their children. In contrast, the mothers of Santa Maria, because they lived in a violent distrustful society, were interested neither in birth control, nor in planning for the education of their children. The researchers found that fertility rates were significantly lower in Tierra Alta even before the introduction of modern contraception. These findings have held up in other studies and supported programs to strengthen the economic independence of women.

Dr. Gojman, together with Dr. Salvador Millan, have continued to employ the methods of social character to study issues of human development in rural and urban Mexico, and they have trained a number of students who have participated in this research.

## **Building on Fromm – Studies of Leadership and Social Character**

When I returned with my family to the United States in 1968, I joined Fromm in opposing the Vietnam War and supporting Senator Eugene McCarthy's anti-war campaign for president. Fromm and I constructed a survey to compare life-loving (biophilic) attitudes vs. anti-life attitudes with political choices such as support for the war. We found statistical evidence that a person's deep-rooted emotional attitudes could be more important than social class or identification with a political party in predicting political positions on issues of war and peace (cf. Maccoby 1972).

After the election I began a series of studies of leadership, and I organized projects to improve the quality of working life in the US, the UK, and Sweden. All of these projects made use of the concepts learned while working with Fromm.

The research questions I asked were:

- What are the values and social character of the leaders in the forefront of developing the new information technology that is changing the mode of production in the most advanced countries? Do these leaders care about the impact of what they produce on people and the environment?
- What is the social character of followers and what motivates them at work?
- How can work be changed to further human development?

I can only briefly summarize the findings of forty years of study about leaders and followers, and I will not have the time to describe the studies and projects to improve the quality of working life (see Maccoby 1981; Heckscher et al. 2003).

### **Types of Leaders**

I found three types of change leaders (Maccoby 1976). One type has an extremely competitive marketing personality. This type leads change to beat the competition. They will shape decisions for the benefit of people and the

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environment only if forced to by the government regulations, pressure from unions, or from customers.

The second type refers to productive narcissists who are motivated to change the way people live and work, as Freud wrote, “to add new stimulus to cultural development or attack the existing order.” Some want to improve life and care about the environment. Others care only for their wealth and power. These leaders have succeeded only when they have been able to partner with colleagues who complement their abilities, especially their tendency to ignore the views of others. An example is Steve Jobs who was fired from Apple when he first became CEO, because of his arrogance and egocentrism. When he returned, he learned to partner with Tim Cook in operations and Jony Ives in design and the result was a historic success.

In contrast, narcissistic leaders even those with humanistic ideas, such as P.G. Gyllenhammar of Volvo and Jan Carlzon of SAS, failed because they did not listen to subordinates (cf. Maccoby 2003; 2007a; 2015).

The third type is a more productive mixed type. Their purpose is to improve life and they have been able to develop an organization as a collaborative community. My colleagues and I have described some of these leaders and their achievements in our recent book, *Transforming Health Care Leadership, A Systems Guide to Improve Patient Care, Decrease Costs, and Improve Population Health* (Maccoby et al. 2013).

## Types of Followers

Fromm was prescient, observing that the shift from an industrial to a service mode of production was changing the social character. The cultural changes that shape the social character have accelerated since Fromm first wrote about the marketing character in 1947 (Fromm 1947a). Not only has most work in advanced societies become service (eighty-four percent in the U.S., seventy-four percent in Germany), but also the structure of the typical family and the experience of childhood development has changed.

In 1947, in the typical family in Western Europe and the US, the father went to work in an office or factory, and the mother stayed at home to care for the children and the house. Children were raised to identify with

parents and their roles. The school prepared them for bureaucratic careers, passing tests and pleasing the teacher to move up a grade.

The ideal boss at work was like a good father, a fair and caring autocrat. The few women who moved up the pyramid grew up with strong father attachments that they transferred to the boss (Henning/Jardom 1977). To succeed in the bureaucratic industrial world, people needed to develop a social character with productive obsessive traits, oriented to pleasing authority.

The negative side of the *bureaucratic social character* is overcontrol, micromanagement, and as Fromm noted, authoritarian, sadomasochistic relationships at work. The negative bureaucrat has been described by novelists such as Gogol, Dickens, Melville and Kafka as well as by many sociologists.

## The Interactive Social Character

In the 1980s, as both workplace and family began to change, so did the social character. The new knowledge-service mode of production required an *interactive social character* that was naturally collaborative and open to constant change. Besides the knowledge-service mode of production the following factors have also been instrumental in shaping the interactive social character:

1. Fewer two-parent homes with just the father working outside the home and more dual career and single-mother led households.
2. Children sent at an early age to day care centers, where they develop interactive skills and learn to depend emotionally on peers so they are less emotionally dependent on parents.
3. Early use of information/communication technology, interaction with people around the globe.
4. Schools increasingly emphasize teamwork, as well as individual achievement. Leaders of knowledge work like Bill Gates are at the forefront of changing schoolwork to prepare children for knowledge work.
5. Easy access to information on the Internet to challenge authority.
6. Less trust of companies and less lifetime employment in one company. Employees expect to be free agents, seeking the best deal and frequently moving from job to job.

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7. Increased focus on continual learning to keep up with relevant new knowledge.

At best, the interactive social character is both independent and collaborative. Interactives expect continual change. But they are not loyal to companies, and do not expect companies to be loyal to them. They are adept at forming relationships, but also at dissolving them. They have learned to adapt their personalities, their self-presentation, to different situations and audiences. Their morality is based on what the group considers *appropriate* vs. an internalized conscience.

Brought up in single parent families, or families where both parents work, they are used to shared leadership. They are raised with democratic values, and they have no problem questioning or contradicting authority. They become expert at negotiating with parents, playing on parental guilt at not being at home for them. They see parents less as disciplinarians than as service providers who are concerned, above all, that they do well at school and activities that will prepare them for admission to college and for successful careers.

At an early age, interactives become adept at using social and information technologies. At work, they are prepared to use these tools to innovate and solve problems. In contrast to the best bureaucrats who evaluate their products in terms of excellence, interactives view value in terms of customer acceptance.

Given the continual development of new knowledge, interactives may come to work knowing more about their jobs than their bosses. They want transparent and fully credible leaders who treat them as collaborators, not as followers. The more productive ones are engaged only by leaders who articulate and practice a philosophy, including a meaningful purpose and values.

The negative sides of the interactive social character are the lack of loyalty and the lack of personality integration, the negative qualities of the marketing character. Interactives typically are connected to many people and are related to few, if any. They are so used to adapting to different situations, of wearing different masks, that they are in danger of losing their center, the person behind the mask.

Since 2008, my colleagues and I have given a questionnaire with statements that express bureaucratic vs. interactive attitudes to hundreds of

participants in leadership workshops. Over time, an increasing number of participants have identified with interactive attitudes. Tim Scudder has run correlation tests that demonstrate the construct and differential validity of the questionnaire results.

## Testing Fromm's Character Typology

Dr. Scudder heads Personal Strengths Publishing, a company built from Elias Porter's development of the Strengths Deployment Inventory (SDI), a method allowing people to gain self-understanding based on Fromm's character types (Scudder/Lacroi 2013). The usefulness of both Freud's and Fromm's types had been limited by the negative terms they used. People did not want to be identified by terms such as erotic-receptive, obsessive-hoarding, and narcissistic-exploitative, terms that seemed judgmental. Porter called the types *motivational value systems* and made them more acceptable by emphasizing their positive qualities and renaming them with colors. He also constructed a test that indicates how motivations change in conflict. Over two million employees from over one thousand companies, universities and government agencies in six continents have participated in SDI workshops that have helped them understand their own motivation and helped them improve relationships by understanding others. Statistical tests of construct and differential validity have supported the scientific validity of the Freud-Fromm theory of character types (Scudder 2013).

## Fromm's Theories that Remain to be Tested

Fromm did not recommend that people develop the social character of their culture. The social character is a formula for adaptation and success within a culture. It is not a recipe for happiness. To the contrary, it may cripple a person's capacity for growth.

Fromm wrote about "the pathology of normalcy." However, he recognized that it takes effort and awareness to transcend the social character. He once said to me: "The question isn't why someone is insane. It is why anyone is sane, given the irrationality and the absurdity of life."

Most people stay sane by conforming. Their social character keeps them sane, but at the expense of full human development and the pursuit of happiness.

Fromm sought to understand both the nature of human development and its perversion to psychopathology. His theories integrated Aristotle's emphasis on productiveness, Spinoza's understanding of internal freedom, and Judeo-Christian lessons on love and wisdom.

In *The Heart of Man* (Fromm 1964a) Fromm presents a model of human development and psychopathology that he elaborates in that book and others. He proposes that the best solution to human existence is love, expressed in love of the stranger, and biophilia (love of life), combined with individuation, implying a humanistic conscience, a heart that listens.

This theory is not only testable; there is evidence supporting it in the conclusions of George E. Valliant in his book *Triumphs of Experience* (Valliant 2012). He writes: "There are two pillars of happiness revealed by the seventy-five-year-old Grant Study (of Harvard graduates). One is love. The other is finding a way of coping with life that does not push love away" (Valliant 2012, p. 50).

In contrast, Fromm viewed psychopathology either as a loss of freedom in conformity, sado-masochism, addiction, and dependency, or a perversion of transcendence in destructiveness, the extreme being necrophilia, an attraction to what is dead, the impulse to destroy all that is spontaneous, free and alive.

Fromm did not ignore genetic and biological causes of psychopathology. But these factors do not explain the alienation and destructiveness of people in tribes and nations. Fromm theorized that a society either pulls people in the direction of growth and development or in the direction of tribalism and toward decay and pathology.

Unlike Freud, who posited a destructive death instinct, Fromm viewed love and collaboration as primary human strivings. He viewed destructiveness as a perversion, the extreme being necrophilia (Fromm 1973a). Mauricio Cortina has presented evidence from anthropology and attachment theory in support of Fromm's view (Cortina 2013). Cortina cites evidence that our ape relatives demonstrated these social instincts that have been developed during the course of human evolution.

Fromm believed that societies and organizations could shape the social

character in either a positive or negative direction. His book, *The Sane Society* (Fromm 1955a) proposed positive models. In *Social Character in a Mexican Village*, we describe *Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos* (NPH), a home for orphaned and abandoned children, founded in 1954 by Father William Wasson. Fr. Wasson's purpose was not only to provide a home for the children, but also to develop them as productive and caring citizens. To achieve this, he established a family based on love of the stranger (*agape*) with values of security, including education to prepare the children for the future; work so that each child would actively contribute to the community; sharing, caring for others; and responsibility, acting from a humanistic conscience, not just following rules.

Since we wrote about NPH, it has grown from its beginnings in Mexico to homes and schools in nine countries, with a pediatric hospital in Haiti that treated 96,000 patients in 2014. Five of the nine homes are led by people who grew up at NPH, and the executive director is a former *pequeño*. The other four are led by former volunteers from Europe and the U.S. NPH and their graduates demonstrate that a community based on humanistic values can develop the kind of social character that Fromm described in terms of human growth.

To conclude, ongoing theorizing and research continues to increase our understanding of the nature of human instincts. The distinguished biologist E. O. Wilson theorizes that through natural selection, humans have two genetically determined behavioral drives that sometimes clash – one individualistic and selfish, the other collaborative and altruistic (Wilson 2012). The logic of Wilson's argument is that our altruistic genes are fired up by threats to our identity group. He writes that humans are compulsive group-seekers; we are tribal animals that satisfy this need variously in extended families, organized religion, political groups, ethnic groups, and sports clubs. When people are threatened, their group identities are instinctively strengthened. They collaborate to survive, for sustenance or against an enemy.

Wilson's theories can expand our understanding of social character and its genetic roots. They do not contradict Fromm's theories of social and individual factors that lead to human development. Rather, they emphasize the importance of leadership that develops the kind of collaborative community that shapes a positive social character, one in which people collaborate to create rather than to destroy.

By building on Fromm's theory of social character, social scientists could expand our understanding of how different cultures develop their social characters and what it would take to shape a more humanly developed social character. But testing Fromm's theories requires a change in the dominant paradigms of the social science that favor reductionistic tests of cause and effect. Fromm's theories are systemic. They connect psychodynamic factors with society, culture, history, ideology, economy, and politics.

Erich Fromm gave us new truths that integrated his clinical observations and research with the theories of other humanistic thinkers and scientists. Yet, Fromm's paradigm has not been widely accepted, even though it could increase understanding of human and economic development. The Frommian paradigm requires interdisciplinary work, but the institutions of the social sciences, academic departments and scholarly journals, do not support this integration. I studied for my doctorate at Harvard's Department of Social Relations that combined psychology, sociology, and cultural anthropology. A few years after I received my doctorate, the department was disbanded into separate disciplinary departments. I taught Fromm's approach at the Washington School of Psychiatry, where Fromm was one of the founders together with Harry Stack Sullivan. Neither Fromm's work nor Sullivan's emphasis on integrating psychiatry with the social sciences exists today in a significant way. And the prevailing paradigm of the social sciences that claims to be value-free or that defines progress purely in material terms does not enable us to understand and address the problems that threaten humanity. For that we need Fromm's rational and critical approach that evaluates events in terms of biophilic ethics and productive human development. For those of us who have appreciated Erich Fromm's value based scientific contributions, the challenge is to engage a new generation to understand and build on them. This conference is a good place to begin.

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