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Erich Fromm's moral antonyms

INTRODUCTION

Erich Fromm was a scientist exploring various fields of expertise, specialising mainly in humanistic psychoanalysis. He was also interested in philosophy, ethics, sociology, psychology and religions: Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism. His studies on man and society were grounded in the ideas and writings of Meister Eckhart and Baruch Spinoza, but it was mainly from Sigmund Freud's and Karl Marx's findings that he drew conclusions from and built his theories on (Fromm, 1962, pp. 21–22). Fromm acknowledged that Freud's psychoanalysis greatly influenced his ideas: "I had been trained in accordance with the strictly orthodox Freudian procedure of analysing a patient while sitting behind him and listening to his associations" (Fromm, 1962, p. 117). On the other hand, he polemicalised against Freud's view of man as being driven solely by sexual impulses. In Fromm's opinion, one had to account for cultural and social influences. Freud made a fundamental error by mixing an anthropological model with a cultural one (Fromm, 1991, pp. 44–63). Fromm agreed with Marx that the production of objects engrosses people so much that they cannot reach their full development in capitalism. On the other hand, he questioned Marx's hypothesis about man's total submission to economic processes. In Fromm's opinion, one has to value the psychological at moral elements of a man. In his book *Beyond the Chains of Illusion: My Encounter with Marx and Freud*, Fromm compared Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis with Karl Marx's social sociology, pointing out similarities and differences. Fromm also took inspiration from the works of Spinoza (*Ethics, Demonstrated in Geometrical Order*), Sigmund Freud (*The Interpretation of Dreams*) and Karl Marx (*Capital. Critique of Political Economy* and *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*). Thus, Fromm's analysis of human nature was based on Meister Eckhart's spirituality, Spinoza's moral dissertations, Freud's

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psychoanalysis and Marx's historical materialism. Fromm wrote, for instance: "I was deeply troubled by questions concerning individual and social phenomena, and I was eager for an answer. I found answers in both Freud's and in Marx's systems" (Fromm, 1962, p. 16).² He also pointed out that any scientific work aimed to "clarify the relation of my psychoanalytic concepts to Freud's theories" (Fromm, 1964, p. 7).

Fromm created a typology of human characters to which he attributed two main properties: productivity or destruction. He believed that based on character orientation one can determine a number of conditions caused by humans in social life (Funk, 1988, pp. 215–229). He devoted a large part of his studies to the question of the essence of man and society, including the problems of good and evil. In one of his book's introductions, he wrote: "In this book I discuss the nature of evil and of the choice between good and evil" (Fromm, 1964, p. 6). Inspired by Baruch Spinoza, Erich wrote that doing good brings a person closer to their identity, while evil causes them to become increasingly distant from it (Fromm, 1964, p. 113). Fromm emphasised that human life is about more than "releasing tension and avoiding pain" (Fromm, 1962, p. 119). He also offered an exact paradigm of a morally mature man and a healthy society (Fromm, 1949, p. 6).

When interpreting reality, he was using innovative and, at the same time, quite opposing words (i.e., giving a reverse meaning to the chosen term). These moral antonyms include juxtapositions such as: authoritarian-humanistic religion, authoritarian-humanistic conscience, priests-prophets, wolf-sheep man, authoritarian-heteronymous obedience, idolatry-faith, mode of having-being, needs-desires, destructive-constructive needs, alienation-productivity, decay-growth syndrome and necrophilia-biophilia. Using terms that constitute a semantic counterbalance, Fromm described the moral situation of man and society.

It should be noted that despite numerous studies, commentaries and articles, there is no research devoted to Fromm's antonyms, which should not only be considered a determinant of his work, but – above all – an indicator of his innovative descriptive method allowing diagnosis of the moral condition of man and society at that time. The author of the article aims to fill this gap.

AUTHORITARIAN-HUMANISTIC RELIGION

Fromm sees religion as an integral part of a culture, making understanding of the world easier. He argues people need three things in life: religion, faith and value models because thanks to them, their existence is free of suffering and alienation (Fromm, 1942, pp. 32–36). According to Fromm, there are no societies

² Researching Fromm's workload, M. Cortina (2015, pp. 388–422) rated his genial synthesis of Freud and Marx as one of the most significant accomplishments of Fromm.

without religion. So, the question of whether someone is religious or not is simply wrong. Rather, you should ask what religion someone professes, because there is no person who does not have religious needs. Therefore, Fromm was convinced that a person cannot develop properly without religion, that is, without a system based on values and some object of worship. He emphasised that a religious phenomenon does not necessarily require faith, divinity or an object of worship. Thus, Fromm redefined the concept of religion. He argued that being religious does not mean believing in God or a deity. There is no need to perform sacred rituals either. Religion may be a certain system of ethical thinking and action, recognising some object of cult and faith. Therefore, instead of rejecting religion, one should only choose among its various types. Searching for an appropriate method for assessing a religious phenomenon, Fromm adopts an interdisciplinary perspective, using other traditions and sources, such as Jewish, Christian and Buddhist theologians, as well as philosophers and sociologists of religion. It should be noted that the most important religious thinkers who influenced Fromm's ideas were Saint Augustine, Eckhart, Spinoza, Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, Weber and Rabbis Seligmann Bar Bamberger, Seligmann Pinchas Fromm (his grandfather and great-grandfather), Jakob Horovitz, Ludwig Krause, Nehemi Anton Nobel and Rabinikov. He devoted a large part of his work to this issue, examining the spiritual condition of humanity – especially the impact of religion on the individual and society.

Fromm creates his typology of religion, dividing it into authoritarian and humanistic. While criticising authoritarian religions – those that are exceedingly confessional as well as those used in politics or economics (because both aim to enforce the pre-planned attitudes of individuals) – he approves of humanistic religions, which lead to the independence and development of the human person. He argues that authoritarian religion is dominated by idolatrous adulation, where a deity, an institution or an organisation coerces individuals into obedience, preventively threatening them with punishments for committing some evil or breaking the rules. In humanistic religion, on the other hand, God is a symbol of strength and virtue, who assists people and helps them become the individuals they are supposed to be. Fromm points out that the symptoms of a man professing an authoritarian religion are a constant sense of guilt and sinfulness and even enslavement, while the signs of humanistic religion are a feeling of joy, love and affirmation of life. As a specific example of authoritarian religion, Fromm points to a cybernetic religion (the religion of the industrial era), in which people believe only in technological progress and submit to the management of priests-technocrats (Lidz, 1982, pp. 287–305).

Fromm sees a similarity between psychoanalytic practice and religious experience. He studies the psychological consequences of moral choices and their impact on mental health. He emphasises that man – by nature – strives not only to

satisfy his physiological drives, but also to respect universal moral norms. In his opinion, man expresses his essence to the fullest through conscience, as it defines the meaning and purpose of human existence (Fromm, 1950).

AUTHORITARIAN-HUMANISTIC CONSCIENCE

Fromm finds conscience, which is at the same time the overseer and judge of human actions, an essential element in making man aware of rules and principles of human conduct. He writes: “It is the voice which calls us back to ourselves, to our humanity” (Fromm, 2010, p. 7). Fromm rejects the Christian view that conscience comes from God because he believes that each person’s life circumstances primarily influence the form and formation of conscience (e.g., society’s culture, philosophical trends or various experiences and conditions). He believes that, thanks to conscience, a man discovers moral values and experiences freedom, enabling him to oppose various forms of evil and enslavement. On the other hand, by appeasing his conscience or acting against it, man undermines his own identity, as Fromm notes, or loses himself. Thus, the task of conscience is to amass moral knowledge that indicates the choice of good. Fromm stresses that it is not so much about fighting evil in oneself but about increasing good and opportunities for development. What should shape man’s character are not the desires of the body but the needs of conscience. At the same time, Fromm admits that cravings must be fulfilled first, but once they are satisfied, the needs of conscience should be addressed. Fromm explains that the voice of conscience in man is not easy to read because it usually puts forward what one should not do rather than what one should do.

Fromm differentiates two types of human conscience: humanistic and authoritarian (Fuchs, 2020, pp. 298–325). The first is founded on man’s freedom expressed outwardly through his individual activity and creativity. It is characterised primarily by independent thinking and independent choices of the individual. According to Fromm, an essential manifestation of humanistic conscience is a lasting sense of happiness and joy in life (Fromm, 1949, p. 157). It should be noted that Fromm, like Spinoza, associates the attitude of joy with doing good and sadness with evil deeds. Good and evil are opposed to each other and are associated with experiencing the emotions of joy or sadness. Therefore, the experience of good or evil influences a person’s behaviour, that is, it favours or harms his or her identity (Frankena, 1977, pp. 15–44). Only when a person develops according to his predispositions and existential interests does he achieve satisfaction and contentment. In Fromm’s view, the multiplication of individual talents and human abilities is always a manifestation of productivity. Man’s productive attitude and externalised joy create fundamental and constant moral

virtue. In his opinion, formation – that is, the strengthening or weakness of the humanistic conscience – depends on the degree of productivity, which should constitute an essential feature of a robust human character as well as a test of how well he is coping with his life. Whereas inefficiency or inability to achieve life goals are typical symptoms of conscience that do not work correctly, leading to frustration and even mental illness (Wilde, 2007, pp. 39–53). Therefore, Fromm noted that the sources of norms of ethical behaviour should be sought in human nature and that their violation results in mental disorders and nervous breakdowns.

In Fromm's opinion, the main obstacle to the proper formation of the humanistic conscience is the attitude of conformity, consisting of a more or less unconscious repetition of behaviour dictated by external authorities or a particular human weakness and apathy in developing consistent action following one's conscience. Then, "the individual ceases to be himself; he adopts entirely the kind of personality offered to him by cultural patterns and he, therefore, becomes exactly as all others are and as they expect him to be" (Fromm, 1942, p. 160). According to Fromm, conformists are focused mainly on consumption and satisfying their desires because they value the world of commodities more than openness and relationships with other people. Fromm reminded us that the authority in power usually tries to force citizens into respecting the regulations and laws issued. Thus, "the contents of the authoritarian conscience are derived from the commands and tabus of the authority; its strength is rooted in the emotions of fear of, and admiration for, the authority. A good conscience is a consciousness of pleasing the (external and internalised) authority; a guilty conscience is the consciousness of displeasing it" (Fromm, 1942, p. 121). Therefore, argued Fromm, the authoritarian conscience is shaped by external factors imposed by various socio-political conditions (Alexander, 2021, pp. 3–9).

PROPHETS-PRIESTS

Using the *prophets-priests* antonym, Fromm draws attention to important differences in ethical attitudes of the leaders of humanistic and authoritarian religions. He also explains the importance of their ideas and their influence on their followers. He states that it is not enough for religious guides to point out a new way and teach a certain truth. They themselves must be its zealous followers and worshippers. "If a man expresses the idea of humility and is humble, then those who listen to him will understand what humility is. They will not only understand, but they will believe that he is talking about a reality, and not just voicing words" (Fromm, 2010, p.12). In his opinion, only those who are convincing (i.e., who propagate original ideas and are guided by them) can be called prophets. Among the prophets who played an essential role in human

history, Fromm includes Socrates, Christ, Buddha and Spinoza, stressing that their actions always coincided with the teachings and views proclaimed (Fromm, 2010, p. 14). “Most of Fromm’s writings do not address Judaism or the Bible in depth, but they present a number of consistently recurring themes which Fromm strongly linked in his writings on humanistic psychology to the values espoused in the Prophets and, though to a lesser extent, in the Talmud and other rabbinical texts as well” (Schimmel, 2009, pp. 9–45). The prophets, unlike the priests, preached something they truly believed in and were even willing to sacrifice their health and life for it, while the priests could only copy certain concepts from the prophets and interpret them for their own benefit. Passing themselves off as the prophets’ successors and continuators, the priests thus gained the power to influence the conduct of the people. Fromm also emphasised that prophets, unlike priests, did not “inherit” their vocation but were convinced God Himself had chosen them and entrusted them with their mission. Quoting an idiom of biblical origin, Fromm warned against treacherous priests or wolves in sheep’s clothing: “Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening” (Matthew 7, 15). He also pointed out that the life of priests had little to do with their mission of transmitting prophetic teachings.

WOLF-SHEEP MAN

In examining the causes of human destructive behaviour and the reasons for using violence and committing crimes, Fromm poses two crucial questions: why do some people quickly give in to evil promptings and take actions that are unfavourable to them? And what determines why some people are considered wolves while others are considered sheep? Fromm strongly rejects T. Hobbes’ hypothesis that *man is a wolf to man* and the belief that, by nature, man can be *a wolf in sheep’s clothing*. T. Hobbes argued in *Leviathan*: “If any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies. Therefore, in trying to attain their end, which is principally their own conservation, or sometimes it is only their delectation, men endeavour to destroy or subdue one another. (...) This war is every man against every other man” (Hobbes, 2016, p. 205). He challenges the common belief that people can be divided into good and bad and that those who easily submit to powerful leaders can be called sheep, while those who think primarily of domination, power and killing can be called wolves. Fromm states that only seemingly most people are sheep, and a minority are wolves, for man has a dormant tendency to be both wolf and sheep. He emphasises that situations or circumstances only to some extent determine man’s actions but do not release him from responsibility for doing both good and evil. Fromm agrees with Spinoza that if an individual does evil, he becomes more evil,

because experience shows that “hatred increases through mutual hatred” (Fromm, 1964, p. 11). According to Fromm, nature does not condition one attitude or another because man, as a free being, can always make a choice. He points out that even giving in to destructive desires does not mean that they are insurmountable or always determining (Fromm, 1964, p. 15).

AUTHORITARIAN-HETERONOMOUS OBEDIENCE

Fromm emphasises that man can discover fair and objective ethical norms through his mind. Therefore, no one should obediently accept legal regulations or moral principles promulgated by the legislator and adopted by society. Fromm polemicalises, among other things, with the classic assertion that all obedience is a virtue and disobedience a vice. He believes a man should obey human nature, but – above all – his own reason and conscience (*heteronomous obedience*). Therefore, human disobedience to any ideology or various authorities (*authoritarian obedience*) was a virtue. Thanks to this distinction (*heteronomous-authoritarian obedience*) Fromm can show the complexity of the above dilemma and draw boundaries between obedience and disobedience. He argues, among other things, that in history, the progress of mankind required courage and was based on constant acts of disobedience. He writes: “By breaking the ties with earth and mother, by cutting the umbilical cord, man emerged from a pre-human harmony and was able to take the first step into independence and freedom” (Fromm, 2010, p. 4). He also argues that – just as the ancient acts of disobedience described in the Hebrew traditions or in Greek myths (the story of Adam and Eve or Prometheus and Antigone) were sparks that initiated human history – so obedience may cause its end (Fromm, 2010, p. 5). Man’s intellectual development also depended on disobedience (i.e., contesting an unacceptable reality, resisting overbearing power or not succumbing to collective public opinion). According to Fromm, man, through an attitude of disobedience, learns best to live in freedom and self-reliance. Thanks to the predisposition of reason and, above all, the ability to doubt and think critically, man is capable of renouncing obedience to an authoritative state, political institution or production organisation. Fromm emphasises that both obedience and disobedience should only be subject to the imperative of human conscience and reason.

BEING-HAVING MODE

Some goods and commodities are necessary for human life and development, but man cannot always use them correctly. In his works, Fromm draws attention

to the issue of excessive consumption, man's dependence on possessions and the habit of buying goods with no heed to actual needs. Therefore, according to Fromm, man must learn to make moral choices between excessive desires and essential needs. By desires, Fromm understands a constant yearning to accumulate resources and increase wealth while needs fulfil elementary provisions for a decent life. The choice between needs and desires depends on what mechanism a person will implement: developmental or defensive. "From these two contradictory strivings in every human being it follows that the social structure, its values and norms, decides which of the two becomes dominant" (Fromm, 2008, p. 86).

Fromm points out that man only thinks he is a free and independent consumer, while environmental or political-economic conditioning and, above all, advertising affect his desires and decisions. He emphasises that entirely intentional human purchasing activities are rare because buyers easily succumb to specialists and management experts, as well as to the company's positive image, creating artificial and illusory desires. As he recalls, in the preface to *The Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx had already written: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (Marx, 2007, p. 4). He himself agrees with Marx that a person's desires influence his feelings and actions. He realises that even people's unconscious desires shape their relationships with society.

One of the better-known questions formulated by Fromm is whether a man should *be more* or *have more*? In analysing another moral antonym (*the mode of having-being*), Fromm is inspired by the teaching of Meister Eckhart, who wrote that "people should not consider so much about what they are to *do* as what they *are*. (...) Thus, take care that your emphasis is laid on *being* good and not on the number or kind of things to be done" and "however holy the deeds may be, they do not sanctify us insofar as they are deeds, but rather, insofar as we are and have being" (Eckhart, 2009, p. 489). Fromm also refers to Karl Marx, who saw the primary motive of action in human greed, in the unbridled desire to consume and possess more and more (Fromm, 1962, p. 47). Fromm resolves this quandary by distinguishing between constructive and destructive needs, where the former favours human development while the latter leads to the disintegration of human beings. He also mentions two types of property: functional and personal; the first is natural and supports life, while the second is the result of the human desire to possess and acquire ever newer products (Fromm, 2008, pp. 78–79). Thus, he tries not only to separate, but to contrast the two ways of human existence. To *the category of the being mode*, Fromm attributes the following features: openness, prudence, a positive approach to change, kindness, commitment or a search for truth. On the other hand, according to Fromm, the *having mode* is characterised by excessive material consumption, apathy, fear of unintended change, distrust and pretence (Fromm, 2008, p. 72).

Fromm states that modern man in industrial society has completely surrendered to the economic conditions that have determined his way of life. Gradually submitting to the products of his work, he became a thing himself (Fromm, 1962, p. 48). In this way, man depersonalises both himself and other people, treating human beings as products or commodities with a price tag, which makes them subject to market exchange. Such a person increasingly loses control over the fruits of his or her labour because, as Fromm noted, things can dominate the sense of human identity and influence the mental state to such an extent that human existence depends on the things owned and purchased. He criticises individuals whose professional goal is to adapt their personality to the employer's requirements or the organisation's mission, regardless of their values. He adds that such people want to respond to the demands of commerce and to be desirable in the personality market. Fromm called this phenomenon a marketing character: the living being became a commodity and the economic market determines his use and value. Thus, while studying the phenomenon of human consumerism, he points to many pathologies of the capitalist system.

Fromm emphasises that in modern economics, there is no place for people who do not work or buy because not only are they useless and unnecessary; worse, they are a burden on society. Therefore, only those who produce or consume are valued. Fromm points out that the constant increase in production leads to market pressure to buy in order to maintain existing customers, as well as to acquire new ones. Decades later, sociologist Z. Bauman confirmed Fromm's predictions by writing that in today's world, the productive part of society has been replaced by a consumer society. The work ethic has been replaced by the aesthetics of consumption too (Kietliński, 2007, pp. 69–82). Fromm argues that it is impossible to reconcile the principles of capitalism, which constantly seeks to increase production and generate ever-greater profits, with the pursuit of the common good and the concept of a fairly managed society. In his view, such a system not only fails to satisfy natural needs, but also perpetually creates new desires. As a result, individuals spend their time focused on accumulating wealth to enhance their purchasing power, rather than enjoying life. The capitalist system of commodification inevitably fosters an idolatrous cult of possession and a reliance on cheap, readily available entertainment and distractions. Fromm contends that within capitalism, what matters are artificial, false and non-developmental commodities, with the desire to amass as many possessions as possible being a prime example.

In his book *To Have or to Be?* Fromm notes the drama of the modern world is an idea of man, whose existence can be summed up in the phrase *I am what I consume*. Fromm points out that man does not see the danger of reducing his life to acquiring and using commodities. He criticises the attitude in which the status of possession counts above all, leading man to spend his life in pursuit of constant

enrichment and the search for new products (Fromm, 2008, pp.134–135). That is why Fromm postulates the definition of certain limits in the exploitation and use of limited natural goods. Crossing these limits not only makes it impossible to maintain the virtue of moderation but also leads to the reduction of human life merely to its material dimension. Man then forgets spiritual values, and the only purpose of his existence becomes to buy, appropriate and use things. Thus, the desire to have more and more becomes an obsession for man and, at the same time, a trap – because it will never be fully satisfied. That is why Fromm warns against the greediness which makes human beings slaves to what they possess. Based on the teaching of St. Paul, Fromm identifies greed as the root of all evil. In this perspective, human attachment to possession rather than to existence qualifies as a devil's temptation. "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6, 10). Fromm emphasises that the truly rich are those who give much, not those who possess much. „The hoarder who is anxiously worried about losing something is, psychologically speaking, the poor impoverished man, regardless of how much he has" (Fromm, 2009, p. 22). Fromm argues that a life focused on having leads to the dehumanisation of man, who measures his value by the amount of accumulated or purchased goods. Therefore, he postulates that the economy should be guided by the principle of fulfilling elementary human needs and not by achieving income and profit. Fromm emphasises that the duty of companies and organisations operating in a given region is to contribute to the development and well-being of society. He sees the need for a moral renewal of society, which should once again become a subject of productivity and not a human resource dependent on the strategies of economists or politicians. Fromm believed that true productivity should be free from the desire to hold on to things. A manifestation of a person's productive character is the production of both ideas and goods, assuming that productivity should always serve human development.

ALIENATION-PRODUCTIVITY

Fromm sees man as a being lost in the modern world, immersed in the dichotomy of life and death, which is both an animal and a person, a physical being but also a spiritual one, a being belonging to two incompatible realities. Thus, the human being, according to Fromm, is at the same time assigned to nature and transcends it. "Man is confronted with the frightening conflict of being the prisoner of nature yet being free in his thoughts; being a part of nature and yet, as it were, a freak of nature; being neither here nor there" (Fromm, 1964, p. 104). He points out that since man broke the primary bond with the natural environment, he was forced to create a secondary relationship with the world and society. Therefore, the determinant of human action became the socio-economic

structure of society, which decided a new way of existence. Fromm recalls that the classical model of human civilisation built on Judeo-Christian tradition was challenged in favour of the new idea that human nature can be freely shaped and changed through culture. He disagrees with the views of modern psychologists and sociologists, who believe that a person can be shaped freely and that only the influence of cultural and social conditions counts. Fromm emphasises that despite the changes, man constantly strives not only for material security or physical satisfaction, but also for a sense of belonging and social ties and still seeks unity with nature. Fromm believes that the moral principles that have been written like man are immutable and, therefore, their rejection must lead to his disintegration. He criticises civilisations based on subjective beliefs, extreme individualism, the denial of natural law, moral norms and all obligations. Fromm warns that in the absence of a stable culture, man's abandonment of nature will give rise to problems that are difficult to overcome in the modern world.

Analysing the conditions of human freedom, Fromm noted that "man the more he gains freedom in the sense of emerging from original oneness with man and nature and the more he becomes an 'individual', has no choice but to unite himself with the world in the spontaneity of love and productive work or else to seek a kind of security by such ties with the world as destroy his freedom and the integrity of his individual self" (Fromm, 1942, p. 21). He knows that an alienated person who wants to free himself from internal disharmony and moral loneliness is forced to adapt to the environment and society around him, as well as to develop a new system of values. Thus, Fromm, in relation to the human person, asked: "How can man be free, how can he be fully man, how can he become what he could be?" (Fromm, 1962, p. 118). Fromm stated that the main problem of humanity is man's "loneliness and alienation, of his lack of productive interests in life" (Fromm, 1962, p. 107). He also believed that alienation is the cause of human mental disorders, social exclusion or even loss of the meaning of life. As one of Fromm's researchers wrote, productivity is a necessary condition for human development (Itzkowitz, 2017, pp. 81–92). Fromm's diagnosis was as follows: "human self-awareness has made man a stranger in this world, separate, lonely and frightened" (Fromm, 1964, p. 104). Therefore, Fromm wondered how to help a person, make him mentally healthy, productive and happy? In psychological research, he worked on transforming neuroses and irrational human behaviour into conscious and free action. "Mental health is characterised by the ability to love and create, by the emergence from incestuous ties to clan and soil, by a sense of identity based on one's experience of self as the subject and agent of one's powers, by the grasp of reality inside and outside of ourselves, that is, by the development of objectivity and reason" (Fromm, 1956, p. 64).

According to Fromm, one of the essential factors alienating man is the attitude of conformity, which occurs when a person submits to an external and

relative system of values out of a need to ensure his safety or for short-term gain. He wondered why people so easily renounce creative freedom and submit to the orders of authoritarian power or a totalitarian system. Fromm notes that man then loses the opportunity to shape reality, further weakening his position in society (i.e., deepening the sense of estrangement, frustration and alienation). Thus, a conformist, at the cost of renouncing his identity, adjusts his opinion, behaviour and views, succumbing to the opinion of a given majority. According to Fromm, such an attitude not only makes it impossible to emphasise the individuality and subjectivity of the human being, but also inevitably leads to the loss of freedom. In his psychoanalytic model, Fromm points to a certain pattern of a man with a productive orientation. He believes that it is possible to shape a human character that would be distinguished by creative thinking, creative love and practical work. He is convinced that acting in accordance with oneself brings man the joy of life, and effective action (with power) becomes a permanent human ability. “Nothing can be more useful to man in furthering the preservation of his being and his enjoyment of rational life than a man who is guided by reason” (Carlisle, 2020, p. 280). He emphasises that human productivity depends on combining two crucial factors: reason and love. Thanks to mental abilities and psychoanalytic intuition, man can get to know himself and the world around him objectively, becoming increasingly understanding of its complexity and singularity. In turn, the ability to love, Fromm counts among man’s primary and natural predispositions, which is a condition of mental health. He emphasises that authentic love is the complementary love of oneself and other people. According to Fromm, love allows people to free themselves from the state of alienation and mental disorders; it is a path leading humanity to progress and moral renewal. Thus, both productivity elements fundamentally determine man’s development and happiness. At the same time, Fromm points out that loving only one person can turn into a symbiotic bond of a sadistic or masochistic nature.

According to Fromm, man can satisfy his most important needs only through love, understood not so much as a pleasant or strong feeling but as a certain erudition and knowledge that man acquires throughout his life. Love, in fact, allows man to overcome the feeling of redundancy and loneliness in relation to other people and, at the same time, to maintain his originality and uniqueness. Fromm notes that love is a certain paradox, which consists in the fact that a man and a woman – uniting in unity – at the same time lose nothing of their separateness. As for manifestations of proper love, he mentions four elements: care, responsibility, respect and commitment. In the introduction to his book *The Art of Loving*, he writes: “The first step to take is to become aware that *love is an art*, just as living is an art” (Fromm, 2009, p. 5). First, one should learn the theory and then proceed to practise because only specific knowledge and experience will allow a person to solve his most critical existential problems. The negation of love is a narcissistic

attitude, which consists of the inability to enter into relationships and build bonds with another person. Narcissism, according to Fromm, is a pathological attitude because it results from selfishness and closing oneself to reality, focusing only on oneself and one's desires. On the other hand, mature love is manifested not so much in taking from others but above all in the ability to give to others. Thus, Fromm defines life without love as a sin. Love is usually accompanied by such virtues as care, responsibility, respect and knowledge. He emphasises that a person's life cannot be happy and fulfilled without love.

NECROPHILIA-BIOPHILIA

According to Fromm, man is inherently good and life-loving. Similarly, Spinoza taught that "The free man thinks of nothing less than of death, and his wisdom consists in the contemplation not of death, but of life" (Carlisle, 2020, p. 274). Fromm noted that under the influence of abandoning nature and submitting to modern social conditions, man had lost his natural moral sense. Despite this, man still has the opportunity to do both good and evil and "is responsible to the point where he is free to choose for his own action" (Fromm, 1964, p. 134). Fromm assumed that man had almost unlimited possibilities for intellectual and spiritual development. Thus, in an individual's life, the most important thing is to work on oneself and make spiritual progress.

Fromm mentions two different attitudes of man towards the world: biophilic (love of what is alive) and necrophiliac (love of what is dead). He argues that this distinction shows the most fundamental difference between people, psychologically and morally. He repeats after Marx that "only the free and productive man, united to his fellow man, can give the right answer to man's existence" (Fromm, 1962, p. 98). According to Fromm, biophilia is more primary than necrophilia because it results from nature and affects all living beings. In contrast, necrophilia appears as an internal disharmony due to the inability to develop the instinct of life. He added that in people both tendencies coexist in different proportions. You should pay attention to the dominant tendency because it determines most of a person's life decisions and behaviours. Fromm sees in biophilia the love of life and the desire to create, which are manifested in the day-to-day existence of man. It finds its expression in everyday gestures, opinions or statements. It is part of the general aspiration of all nature to life and growth, against death and dying. A man with a biophilic character wants to be with people who love life and each other, who support development and creativity. On the other hand, people with necrophiliac tendencies most often think about illness, death and burial; they also find pleasure in what is unnatural and dead. They want to show strength by destroying life and disintegrating their environment, above all by inflicting pain and suffering

on other people. They admire those who kill while they feel only contempt for those who are killed. Fromm argues that such behaviours are distinctive to people whose proper development has been disturbed. That is why they take pleasure in enslaving others and doing something wicked to them. Fromm emphasises that in the face of adversity in life necrophiles easily give in to frustration or a sense of powerlessness. Because of insatiable desires, envy is born in them and gradually grows laced with jealousy. They are characterised by the syndrome of opposing life, which manifests itself through sadomasochism, destructiveness, greed, narcissism and incest (Durkin, 2014, p. 187). As Fromm briefly summed up in *The Fear of Freedom*, “the more the drive toward life is thwarted, the stronger is the drive towards destruction” (Fromm, 1942, p. 158).

A significant part of the society of his contemporaries Fromm assigns to the necrophiliac category. Among the typical necrophiliac manifestations, he includes the widespread cult of technology and machines in which he sees the subordination of people to dead mechanisms and artificial technological structures. Fromm emphasises that civilisation without human values and relationships with nature inevitably leads to mental disorders and self-annihilation. His illustration of this thesis is a wealthy Western society immersed in boredom and neurotic depression, guided only by the desire to possess and the search for satisfaction of countless cravings. According to Fromm, people are content with some substitute and illusion of action, accepting unquestioningly the roles imposed on them by technocrats and those with power. Fromm points out that people immersed in inactivity expect to be stimulated by simple entertainment based on destruction or various forms of violence. Living in a dehumanised world, they involuntarily succumb to such trends propagated by widely available media. Fromm warns that necrophiliacs are gradually losing their grasp on reality and cease to seek answers to questions about the meaning of life; considering themselves intelligent, they can only exist to buy, consume and use things (Fromm, 1973, p. 367).

CONCLUSION

Drawing on an analysis of the ideas of Meister Eckhart, Baruch Spinoza, Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx, Erich Fromm proposed an idealistic vision of man and society. He described reality using antonyms, which became unconventional tools in logical semantic conversion. An innovative way of using antonyms with a moralising message to assess the situation of man and society is undoubtedly Fromm’s important contribution and brings him credit.

Fromm was able to combine different concepts in the field of philosophy, theology, psychology and economics. These were not only theoretical speculations. He strove to heal the man and society of that time. Through systematic psycho-

analytic research and discovering the role unconscious motivation plays in human choices, Fromm significantly expanded existing knowledge. According to him, conscious and unconscious processes permeate mental life and influence human behaviour and choices equally. Fromm echoed Freud and Marx that human beliefs are controlled by human cravings on the one hand and, on the other, by social structures.

In necrophilia, intense narcissism and a symbiotic-incestuous orientation, Fromm saw manifestations of the syndrome of decay, while in biophilia, love of neighbour and freedom – the syndrome of growth. For him, an alienated person constituted a case of mental pathology, while a creative, active and autonomous person was an emanation of mental health. He knew that in heading to freedom, man must become aware of the circumstances that determined his life, from which he could free himself only by making a great effort and acting according to his conscience. He assumed that a person needs the acceptance of others, belonging to a group and creating social bonds. That is why he devoted himself to the study of the complex phenomena of human alienation and social exclusion. Fromm noticed that a person experiences alienation when he or she is confused by a certain situation and is unable to respond appropriately to it. At the same time, he or she is filled with a sense of uncertainty, anxiety and guilt due to the inability to overcome loneliness. In order to solve this problem, Fromm combined philosophical anthropology with individual and social psychology. Thus, he sought the foundations of man's harmony in his relationship with society and the environment. He believed that human life could not be reduced to the acquisition or possession of commodities because the most important thing is the richness of being. Based on psychoanalytic practice, Fromm concluded that the inability or incapacity to establish a relationship with others not only leads to loneliness but also gives rise to a sense of hostility and even a desire to inflict pain and suffering. Therefore, the drama of alienation can only be overcome by providing the love that, according to Fromm, one must learn. He argued that not only love, but also life, is an art that must be practised on the basis of four elements: discipline, concentration, patience and passionate commitment. Fromm concluded that man must belong to a social group or be guided by a certain moral system in which love, justice and truth are paramount.

In the author's opinion – based on the analysis of Fromm's work – another important antonym should be added, which seems to be a logical continuation of Fromm's thinking. It highlights an opposition between desire and needs, which should make it possible to solve many of the moral dilemmas of the present age, above all in establishing the boundary between consumption that aids man and excessive consumption that makes man dependent on possessions and commodities. This antonym would draw attention to the difference between human desires and needs, where the former are associated with disordered human

emotions and feelings and therefore with something spontaneous and unnecessary, while the latter appears to be essential in maintaining a durable existence and development.

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Summary

When interpreting reality, Erich Fromm used innovative words that were, at the same time, completely opposite in meaning, giving the chosen terms an antonymic quality. Moral antonyms include combinations such as authoritarian-humanistic religion, authoritarian-humanistic conscience, priests-prophets, man-wolf-sheep, authoritarian-heteronymous obedience, idolatry-faith, way of being, needs-desires, destructive-constructive needs, alienation-productivity, decay-growth syndrome and necrophilia-biophilia. By employing terms that serve as semantic counterweights, Fromm described the moral situation of both individuals and society.

Keywords: biophilia-necrophilia, productivity-alienation, to have-to be, growth syndrome-decay, humanistic religion-authoritarian.

Antonimy moralne Ericha Fromma

Streszczenie

Erich Fromm interpretując rzeczywistość, posługiwał się słowami nowatorskimi, a jednocześnie całkowicie przeciwstawnymi, to znaczy nadającymi wybranemu terminowi przeciwne znaczenie. Do antonimów moralnych zaliczają się takie kombinacje, jak religia autorytarno-humanistyczna, sumienie autorytarno-humanistyczne, kapłani-prorocy, człowiek-wilk-owca, autorytarno-heteronimiczne posłuszeństwo, bałwochwalstwo-wiara, sposób bycia, potrzeby-pragnienia, potrzeby destrukcyjno-konstruktywne, alienacja-produktywność, zespół gnicia i wzrostu, nekrofilia-biofilia. Używając terminów, które same w sobie stanowią semantyczną przeciwwagę, Fromm opisał sytuację moralną człowieka i społeczeństwa.

Słowa kluczowe: biofilia-nekrofilia, produktywność-alienacja, mieć-być, syndrom wzrostu-zanik, religia humanistyczna-autorytarna.

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