

## Erich Fromm's Marxist Humanism Revisited

*Erich Fromm's 1958 Socialist Manifesto and Program*

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*Abstract:* Erich Fromm, perhaps the seminal thinker of the Frankfurt School, wrote a socialist program for the Socialist Party that was reprinted several times in the 1960s in limited circulation. "Let Man Prevail: A Socialist Manifesto and Program" is a forty-page pamphlet which still constitutes a classic work of socialist history, influenced intellectuals in the 1960s, and deserves readership today. It introduces three sets of proposals, short range, intermediate and long term, and includes Fromm's concern with combating alienation and the evolved character traits that capitalism has fostered. Reviewing this pamphlet is essential for those trying to grapple with Fromm's 1960s breakthrough socialist books: *Marx's Concept of Man*, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion: My Encounter with Marx and Freud*; *Socialist Humanism*, and *The Revolution of Hope*. Some consideration will be given to Fromm's correspondence with Marxist Humanist philosopher Raya Dunayevskaya and Fromm's philosophical disagreement with Herbert Marcuse, who also corresponded with her. As a campus radical and philosophy major in the 1960s, I was particularly grateful to Fromm for his collection of essays, *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium*. Fromm was always an organizer, and his "international symposium" was a great eye-opener for me, particularly because it introduced me to the work of the Eastern European Marxist Humanists: Ernst Bloch, Gajo Petrovic, Mihailo Markovic, Eugene Kamenka, Karel Kosik. Although these were thinkers virtually left out of discussion by the Marxist-Leninist Parties of the 1960s to which I was attracted; I found them remarkably refreshing and helpful. I personally was involved in many small discussions inspired by Fromm's 1965 "symposium." But comparing Dunayevskaya's entry in *Socialist Humanism*, Fromm's own entry, and Marcuse's is most instructive today. My presentation will also reference how Fromm's 1958 socialist program brings about his "symposium" seven years later.

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*Erich Fromm and Georg Lukacs: Marxist Humanism and the Productive/Creative Process*

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*Abstract:* This paper compares Erich Fromm and Georg Lukacs' accounts of the production and of the process through which the individual is able to understand the "whole" of the productive process. "Production" is an important theme for Fromm and Lukacs, both of whom draw heavily from Marx. Fromm relies primarily upon Marx's *1844 Manuscripts*, while Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness* reconstructs much of the early Marx through a reading of the late Marx together with Hegel. Although Fromm and Lukacs take distinct approaches to the question of production, with Fromm drawing more upon Freudian analysis, along with other influences, and with Lukacs drawing more heavily from phenomenology and Neo-Kantianism, there are some interesting commonalities between the two approaches. For Fromm, "productiveness" is "the moral problem of man" and its production is a crucial element in achieving real "love" (*Man for Himself*). When an individual's ability to produce creatively and freely is stifled, the individual and society suffer psychologically and morally. Free, creative production is the human essence, and, as Fromm states in his famous "Credo" in *The Heart of Man*, humanity has yet to become fully human and achieve its human essence. Lukacs seems to share the view that production plays a crucial role in humanity's attempt to achieve its own essence, and his description of "fragmentation" in capitalist production has similarities to Fromm's description of the way natural, human productive impulses are stunted by the capitalist production process. Lukacs and Fromm also share a commitment to the view that the productive process must be understood as a "whole" or "totality." This commitment to seeing the "whole" opens up space for (rather than restricting) a strong commitment to the dignity of the individual human being. For Lukacs and Fromm, understanding the individual within the context of the entire historical, social productive process is the only way to truly comprehend and acknowledge the worth of individuals, and, for

Fromm, it is this kind of knowledge that is necessary for human beings who seek to express the highest form of love: “productive love” (*Man for Himself*).

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*Erich Fromm and Paulo Freire on the Social and Cultural Character of Oppression*  
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*Abstract:* This paper offers a comparison of the views of Erich Fromm and Paulo Freire on oppression and culture. Fromm’s semi-autobiographical study of Marx and Freud, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion: My Encounter with Marx and Freud*, in which Fromm offers a psychoanalytic analysis of class oppression in his chapter on the “Social Character,” will serve for one major point of comparison with Freire. This paper also draws heavily from Freire’s *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Education for Critical Consciousness* (which discusses Freire’s literacy program in greater detail). Just as Paulo Freire’s collaborators Jonathan Kozol and Augusto Boal got into trouble for their radical use of the arts—Kozol was fired early in his career for teaching his students about Langston Hughes, while Boal was exiled from Brazil for his radical “theater of the oppressed”—Freire’s work with a radical local artist led to accusations that he was “Bolshevizing” the people. Freire would present a painting by the local artist—for example, a hunter in a forest with a bow and arrow—and ask his peasant “teacher-students” to notice what in the picture was a creation of human beings and what was merely a part of the natural environment. This exercise attempted to show that, contrary to what the alienating “fetishism of commodities” under capitalism would lead us to believe, all working class people are the true authors of culture. And since “we” created this, “we” can change it. Freire was influenced by Fromm and uses his characterizations of the sadism and necrophilia to describe the “oppressor consciousness” and the consciousness of the oppressed. In line with Fromm’s Marxist humanism, Freire seeks to respect the dignity of the Brazilian people by contextualizing Marxism to their culture and seeking an understanding of “freedom” from a uniquely Brazilian perspective, a problem that seems to have arisen with particular force for a number of radicals throughout Brazilian history. There is a fundamental necessity that all revolutionary movements be able to respect the uniqueness of local cultures, while any other approach is “an inauthentic solution,” “doomed to failure.” At the conclusion of the paper, some applications of Freire and Fromm’s ideas are made to the current struggle at University of Texas Pan-American against the CIA’s “Intelligence Community” recruitment project and the students’ attempts to raise consciousness through their own educational campaign.

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