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Abstract

This article aims to make a case and set the foundations for retrieving Erich Fromm's Freudo-Marxist theory of action and his approach to social domination in particular. To this end, Frommian psychoanalysis is compared with the 'socio-analysis' of Pierre Bourdieu. As far as method is concerned, whereas Bourdieu focuses attention on the socio-political processes of production and reproduction of the perceptive structures that individuals and groups employ in their judgements and actions, Fromm fruitfully extends wider to include the links between perceptive and socio-political structures, on the one hand, and the innate structures of the human psyche, on the other hand. Substantively, moreover, Bourdieu tends to exclude physically violent forms of domination from his account of the material effects of symbolic constructs, whilst Fromm consistently places them centre stage. Indeed, Fromm's analytic operations and foci combine to offer a firm rebuttal to Bourdieu's curiously ahistorical contention that psychoanalysis concerns itself exclusively with the individual and always in line with some version of psychologistic determinism, thereby serving as an apologia for the abuses subjects suffer under the established order.

Keywords

Bourdieu, Freudo-Marxism, Fromm, psychoanalysis and socio-analysis, social domination, the unconscious

The social sciences are replete with attempts to produce a grand sweeping 'theory of action'. Fascinating as such a preoccupation may be to social scientists themselves, however, its practical importance is usually less than obvious to lay observers. Indeed, as

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Joas (1996) notes, it may serve to reaffirm the long-held view that academics relish the study of unnecessarily abstract issues –those referred to as ‘metaphysical’ in the insider scholarly jargon, itself pushing the layman to an even further distance–, rather than dealing directly with pressing problems of the moment. Whilst this scorn is not always without substance, a great many theorists of action have undertaken to raise and tackle what has arguably been the most pressing practical problem throughout human history: Why do people consent to forms of social domination when it is objectively against their instrumental interests and moral values to do so? Two further questions are commonly addressed in this connection, one anterior to the process of analysis and focused on the choice of method, and the other posterior to strict diagnosis and causal explanation and geared to remedial resolution in the future: Which are the analytic tools and operations that allow for capturing social domination in its full complexity and gravity? And what is to be done in order to overturn states of domination? Of course, lay scepticism may persist about the relevance of theories of action to lived reality (and it is bound to heighten when social scientists argue specifically over method in a characteristically –though often unavoidably– technical language), but this should not be taken as evidence that the problem of domination no longer pertains; quite the contrary.

The aim of this article is to make a case and set the foundations for retrieving Erich Fromm’s psychoanalytic theory of action and his approach to social domination in particular. To this end, Frommian psychoanalysis is compared with the ‘socio-analysis’ of Pierre Bourdieu.¹ Through comparison with a justly influential student of action and domination such as Bourdieu, one can unearth the wide-ranging importance of an undeservedly ‘forgotten intellectual’ that is Fromm (McLaughlin, 1998). What makes Bourdieu especially apposite for the heuristic task at hand are his famed methodological and substantive insights into unconscious assimilation as a necessary precondition of domination, his no less renowned engagement in political activism against social inequality in France and beyond, but also his outspoken aversion to all things psychoanalytic, even if deconstructing and reconstructing the unconscious is the mission of psychoanalysis *par excellence*. To reduce Bourdieusian scholarship to a heuristic device is by no means intended to detract from it, although readers are provided with various leads as to Bourdieu’s ambivalent and unfair treatment of psychoanalysis, and as to the ways in which psychoanalysis might fill some of the gaps he left behind.

To the best of my knowledge, Fromm and Bourdieu never made reference to each other in their respective writings. That Fromm did not cite Bourdieu is understandable from a temporal point of view: the former was in his twilight years when the latter was gradually achieving a reputation on the international stage; it was, in fact, in 1981, one year after Fromm’s death, that Bourdieu was appointed to the prestigious Chair of Sociology at the Collège de France. What this implies conversely, however, is that Bourdieu could hardly have been unaware of Fromm. When Bourdieu was beginning his studies in philosophy and sociology, Fromm’s career as a Freudo-Marxist scholar was already at its apogee (sociological journals, for example, were rife with citations to his work in the 1950s). Bourdieu also maintained a long interest in the so-called ‘Frankfurt School’, of which Fromm was a core member throughout the 1930s.² Indeed, given his critical stance towards the Frankfurt School, Bourdieu could not have missed the heated debate between Fromm and Marcuse in the mid-1950s, where Fromm was denigrated by

his former colleague partly for reasons that should have brought him closer to sociology and Bourdieu at that (e.g. Fromm repudiated Freudian theory of human behaviour for biological fixity and insufficient attention to social influences; see further Rickert, 1986; and below).

In any case, the similarities between Fromm and Bourdieu are striking. Both draw inspiration from Marx, as evidenced by the emphasis they place on the economy as a 'meta-structure' that profoundly influences everyday life, as well as by their fierce attachment to rationalism in the dual sense of scientific method and socio-political end-goal, yet not as a reality already practised and accomplished universally; both proceed to transcend orthodox Marxism by pointing to the material efficacy of symbolic power and the symbolic efficacy of material power, as these stand to one another in a relationship of mutual constitution; both deftly cross disciplinary boundaries with a particular liking for cultural anthropology and history; both fuse theoretical and practical research operations, continually testing the two against one another; and both issue an urgent call and set an example for putting the labours of rigorous intellectual practice to the service of uncompromising political struggles against domination in all its forms and guises. But whilst Bourdieu focuses attention on the socio-political processes of production and reproduction of the perceptive structures that individuals and groups employ in their judgements and actions, Fromm extends wider (or deeper, as his fellow psychoanalysts would have it) to include the links between perceptive and socio-political structures, on the one hand, and the innate structures of the human psyche, on the other hand. When problematizing the material effects of symbolic power, moreover, Bourdieu tends to leave physically violent forms of domination out of his account, whereas Fromm consistently places them centre stage.

Indeed, Fromm's analytic operations and foci combine to offer a firm rebuttal to Bourdieu's curiously ahistorical contention that psychoanalysis concerns itself exclusively with the individual and always in accordance with some version of psychological determinism, thereby exonerating the abuses subjects suffer under the established order as well as constructing the need for mental health which psychoanalytic practitioners may in turn exploit for profit. Himself no stranger to private psychoanalytic practice, Fromm takes his craft outside the individual clinical setting and puts entire cultures 'on the couch' without missing or undermining the forces exerted upon the collective unconscious 'from the outside'. In so doing, he wishes not only to explain mass subordination to powerful authorities as the outcome of given patterns of socialization, but also to expose how socialization may work to draw large cohorts of subordinates into acceptance or even the commission of destructive acts against weaker others. The promising implication of this otherwise dispiriting endeavour is that neither the instinctual apparatus nor the social forces that leave their imprint on it are pre-programmed towards domination. Most prominently, Fromm substitutes the mainstream, pathologizing conception of narcissism as natural precursor to submission and destructiveness with one that attends to the ways in which the form and direction of narcissistic cathexes are malleable to influences residing in the social environment, including benign influences towards reflexive disobedience and humanistic action. To search for hidden pleas *pro domo* in Fromm's suggested resolution would be futile. In no way does he call out professional psychoanalysis—he is acute enough to foresee that social ills cannot be

adequately cured through individualized treatment behind closed doors, not to mention that he openly lacks faith in the Freudianism of canonical practitioners—, and he carefully avoids elevating himself and other public intellectuals he admires (such as Bertrand Russell) to the status of Platonic Guardians.

Historicism and historicity: The missing link

As will become apparent below, Bourdieu and Fromm share in common a deep mistrust towards what is broadly known as rational-choice theory. This mistrust extends from the substantive assumptions of rational-choice theory about the nature of social reality and causality, to its epistemological precepts concerning the ways in which social facts can be known, to its political implications as to how to improve social conditions as needed. Rational-choice theory is a typical variant of historicism; that is, of the belief in historical determinism (Popper, 1957) or in the existence of a driving force in history (Poulantzas, 1975).³ Deriving from the British utilitarian tradition, via neoclassical economics, the central tenet of rational-choice theory is that human is endowed with the capacity for pure reason and an unyielding motivation to maximize gain. Action, it follows, is always rooted in conscious egocentric calculations and oriented towards given future outcomes.

As an analytical postulate, rational choice is undoubtedly tempting. It entails models of Euclidean geometric expression and prediction, it may help account for social situations in which interests are given a place and in which gain and advantage are rewarded (for example, markets, competitive games, political contests, arranged marriage systems), and it facilitates personal accountability and the attribution of guilt (Smelser, 1998). Some theorists, and most notably ‘second-generation’ Frankfurter Jürgen Habermas (1984), go so far as to posit that, in addition to facilitating individual success, the transhistoric or ahistoric structures of realized reason and consciousness carry within themselves the possibilities of doing away with social domination. This, as will become clearer later, is because domination is conceptualized in terms of external, objective constraints ‘of a visible type’, which do not ‘count subjectively’. The task of critical scholarship, it is concluded, is to put forth a normative model for democracy, whereby individuals will engage in the pursuit of objectives set collectively on the basis of free and undistorted discussions geared towards rational consensus (see further Poupeau, 2000).

Despite serving particular goals according to a plan that is objectively valid, however, human conduct need not (and, indeed, cannot) axiomatically be the outcome of genuinely conscious ratiocinations. For one, as Simon (1955) argues, rationality is ‘bounded’ by the finite computational resources of the human mind itself. The exercise of rational choice is also said to be contingent upon a range of social contextual factors, from a stable institutional setting (for example, a market or a political system), to a safe medium (for example, money), to a set of explicitly laid rules (for example, a legal order) (Smelser, 1998). Upon close inspection, such qualifiers are themselves no less dubious, for they imply the conflation of the *explanandum* with the *explanans*: rational choice appears possible only where it has been effectuated already. In any case, rational-choice theory is hardly helpful in explaining such phenomena as the conscious exercise of violence against others in flagrant contradiction to common principles of rationality,

the failure to recognize or exploit discernible windows of opportunities for dissent against *prima facie* illegitimate social orders, or, indeed, the voluntary acceptance of such orders. Furthermore, one cannot afford to ignore the role of emotional forces, not only as necessary preconditions of rational choice (for example, in the form of mutual trust between exchanging partners), but also as orientations of decision-making. That is to say, even if the social and social-psychological preconditions of rational choice are present, human behaviour may not be exclusively directed towards concrete, wholly identifiable ends hierarchized on the cost-benefit scale. Preferences may equally be affective and even exist in parallel as such, as when one finds pleasure and pain in the same object simultaneously (Smelser, 1998).

Bourdieu elaborates various of these points. Most notably, he argues that cognitive perception and appreciation are also commonly unconscious, save, perhaps, in times of crisis. Human behaviour, according to Bourdieu, is rooted deep within an embodied practical reason (*habitus*) and manifests itself as an accumulation of spontaneous ripostes to social stimuli; it tends to be reasonable, rather than truly rational (see, for example, Bourdieu, 1977 [1972]). In the last analysis, precisely since it must presume that behaviour is universally determined by conscious aiming at goals freely chosen by private individuals, rational-choice theory remains oblivious to the social genesis and consequent variability of interests as well as of the context within which they are pursued. If rationality appears to be a transhistoric universal, it is because, first, individuals tend to entertain fond illusions about their own powers of rational reasoning, and, second, there exist forms of social organization that are liable to foster the generalized illusion of such universality (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

It is with this in mind that Bourdieu issues a definitive call for replacing Habermasian historicism with an emphasis on historicity or, better yet, ‘double historicity’: the mutually informing affinity between positions and dispositions, the infra-conscious complicity between historically specified conditions of existence and the schemata of perception these conditions have produced to their own advantage (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; see also Wacquant, 1992, 1996). What counts as distinctive of social classes, for example, is not the ownership or non-ownership of the means of production. It is not even some form of common consciousness, at least not in the traditional, ‘economic’ Marxist sense, whereby the unfolding of the economic mode of production gives rise to class oppositions. In Bourdieu’s view, classes are sets of agents who share a ‘class unconscious’, namely, similar *perceptive dispositions* towards their position within social space, exactly because they occupy similar or neighbouring positions within this space (Bourdieu, 1991: 235). To this Bourdieu adds that dispositions consolidate the very positions they express, which is what allows *symbolic violence* to occur against weaker others:

As perceptive dispositions tend to be adjusted to position, agents, even the most disadvantaged ones, tend to perceive the world as natural and to accept it much more readily than one might imagine—especially when you look at the situation of the dominated through the social eyes of a dominant.

(Bourdieu, 1989: 18)

To be sure, recognition of social differences presupposes the aptitude and inclination of subjects, not only to perceive these differences, but to recognize them as sufficiently significant (Bourdieu, 1991). With a view to solving the emerging riddle, Bourdieu contends that the substantive meaning and formative potency of any symbolic mechanism (for example, discourse) can only be determined within the ‘field’ or ‘fields’ they themselves reflect and help consolidate; that is, within extant social microcosms endowed with distinctive values, regularities, and forms of authority (for example, academia, journalism, justice, or politics), if always nested with each other in a network of hierarchical relations. Indeed, fields perform a critical mediating function between the agents situated therein and the overarching ‘field of power’—the ‘meta-field’, say the state or the economy, that defines the general rules governing the various fields, and, as such, constitutes the stake of struggles amongst the dominant in those fields (see, for example, Bourdieu, 2005).

Thanks to their own forms and forces, fields may filter and restructure external influences, although such capacity depends on the degree of autonomy fields enjoy *vis-à-vis* the meta-field of power. A similar point may be made about agents, for position in a field determines the extent to which one is susceptible to mediated patterns of thought and conduct. In Bourdieu’s own words, ‘*the space of positions tends to command the space of position-takings*’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 105). That positions and, therefore, dispositions issue from the volume and content (economic, cultural, social, and/or symbolic) of the capital possessed by individuals or shared by groups in a certain field renders capital central to the power struggles between the dominant and the dominated. This is especially true in the case of symbolic capital, namely, ‘the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 23). Symbolic capital ‘designates the effects of any form of capital when people do not perceive them as such (as when we attribute lofty moral qualities to members of the upper class as a result of their “donating” time and money to charities)’ (Wacquant, 2006: 268).

In the end, Bourdieu (1991) concludes, the task of the genealogist of power is to engage in a *Realpolitik* of reason and morality, to uncover the processes by which sole ownership of the means of *cultural* production comes into effect, the ever-lasting symbolic struggle for the monopolist production of common sense and ethical principles. Crucially, to debunk the universality of rationality is not to negate its desirability and feasibility, or even to deny that some of its theoretical foundations may have been stipulated already; quite the contrary. ‘*Realpolitik* of reason and realization of the universal are here joined together: the universality of rationality is not presupposed, but constitutes the goal to be attained, rationally and institutionally’ (Poupeau, 2000: 86). Whilst not relying on moral exhortation, then, a realist politics of reason may well seek support from particular anthropological laws, say that there are material and symbolic benefits in subordinating the ‘I’ to the ‘us’, or in sacrificing individual interest to the general good—often the very values of civic virtue which the unveiled reality purports to nourish (Bourdieu, 2008 [2000]).

Bourdieu is quick to acknowledge that, if prerequisite to achieving the universalization of rationality in the sense of a generalized and incessant rational critique of common sense is to subject to the exercise of reflexivity those universes where knowledge

is produced and reproduced, then academics and their field need to undergo a rigorous (self-)analysis themselves (see, for example, Bourdieu, 2007; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 36–46). Such epistemic reflexivity or ‘exoticization of the domestic’ (Bourdieu, 1988: xi) is not easy to accomplish, Bourdieu forewarns. Not only are intellectuals in the least favourable position to realize their very own habitus and the role they themselves may be playing in the symbolic production of social divisions—for they have been subjected to this formative process as pupils and students more intensively than the average person, and now continue to contribute to its existence (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 170); the fall from self-indulgent grace such realization may entail seems so unbearable a prospect that it is more likely to be repressed into oblivion (see further Wacquant, 1996).

This notwithstanding, the animating force behind Bourdieu’s own sociology seems to be the doxic belief that sociologists-observers enjoy far greater access to the mental world of ‘natives’ than natives themselves. Bourdieu, of course, possesses great convincing powers, not least owing to his rigorous blending of theoretical and practical research operations, the latter ranging from ethnologies of agriculture in colonial Algeria and enforced bachelorhood in post-war rural France, to survey data on the social status of museum visitors and university students, to historical insights into the French literary field in Flaubert’s time and the artistic field around Manet’s era (see further Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). But still, one cannot help asking, why is the capacity for reflexivity not granted to subjects on an equal footing? As Jenkins writes, ‘if sociologists such as Bourdieu can set themselves goals and objectives, which they then pursue, why can this not also be true for their research subjects’ (2007 [1992]: 73–74)? At any rate, when stressing the generative role of symbolic violence, Bourdieu does not make reference to subaltern categories such as the criminal and the mentally ill, only more generally to the state apparatus, its agencies, functionaries, and missions (Wacquant, 2005b). Nor does he pay adequate attention to instances of direct, physical violence, rather treating such instances as uneconomical, unnecessary, less efficient, and less legitimizable modes of domination. Whilst, in other words, Habermas (1984) only speaks of the possibility of visible external constraints devoid of subjective effects, Bourdieu fails to extend the observation made by the ‘gloved-hands-of-the-state theorists’ that violence is misrecognized because of its very familiarity (see, for example, Foucault, 1972), to include explicitly crude and violent forms of power. Implicit here is also Bourdieu’s limited treatment of emotions. He does recognize that cognitive dispositions may give rise to, and eventually take the form of, unconscious emotional reactions which help reproduce subordination (for example, negative feelings of self-worth amongst working-class children at school as they anticipate failure; Bourdieu, 1990; see further Reed-Danahay, 2005), yet is inattentive to the ways in which negative emotions may relate causally to banal physical destructiveness (Scheper-Hughes, 2002).

Most importantly for the present discussion, whereas Habermasian historicism commits the error of transcendentalizing the social by failing to grasp the various and variable social forces that condition perception (Poupeau, 2000: 85), the historicity of Bourdieu may be said to over-socialize the transcendental by ignoring the role of innate psychic dynamics in the social construction of perception. In arguing that external reality exerts immense pressures upon mental and affective schemata, turning them

eventually into our ‘second nature’, Bourdieu engages in description more than in explanation. This is because he misses ‘first nature’ or ‘prehistory’, ‘what must have gone on *before* the subject could establish a relationship with “external reality”—the process which ... acquires the form of the I’s absolute act of positing (of itself as) the object’ (Žižek, 2008 [1992]: 57). If, in other words, we are adequately to understand why rationality has yet to become a universal constant, we need to approach the unconscious from a psychoanalytic angle. We need to shift the theoretical starting point from the ways in which perception adjusts to forces external to the self, to how external forces interact with deeply esoteric perceptive dispositions, those hidden in the region of instincts. In fact, that perception assumes forms attributable to the effect of external forces is because the internal psychodynamics of the character structure allow or even push it to do so (Craib, 1990: 194). This is not the same as arguing that the interaction between external reality and the world of instincts may only result in states of irrationality; quite the contrary—as Žižek argues,

the only way to save historicity from the fall into historicism, into the notion of the linear succession of ‘historical epochs’, is to conceive these epochs as a series of ultimately failed attempts to deal with the same ‘unhistorical’ traumatic kernel.

(2008 [1992]: 94)

True, Bourdieu alludes in his various writings to the purview of psychoanalysis. For one, he links human behaviour to the ‘bodily emotions’ of shame, humiliation, timidity, anxiety, and guilt (Bourdieu, 2001), or to an innate, non-material desire to negate ‘the contingency, finitude, and ultimate absurdity of existence’ by attaining distinction and recognition from others (Wacquant, 2006: 265). Next, he employs such concepts as ‘libido’, ‘misrecognition’, ‘illuso’, ‘sublimation’, ‘denial’, ‘projection’, ‘identification’, ‘ego splitting’, and ‘phallonnarcissism’, not to mention the ever-present psychoanalytic resonances of ‘habitus’ and ‘dispositions’. And in *Masculine Domination*, one of his last works, he even appeals, not to reflexive sociological knowledge, but to the mystical union of different selves through intimacy and love, as the way out of the secular consecrations of domination (Bourdieu, 2001; see also Steinmetz, 2011: 53–54). For the most part, however, as if psychoanalysis exhausts itself in the ‘naïve psychologism or essentialism of La Boétie’s “voluntary servitude”’ (Wacquant, 1992: 24), or as if psychoanalytic reflexivity is necessarily tied to unique, singular biographies (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 72), or as if unveiling ‘the impostures of egoistic narcissism’ does not itself amount to a ‘means of contributing ... to the construction ... of something like a subject’ in the sense of ‘liberation’ (Bourdieu, 1990: 21), Bourdieu only analyses the production of unconscious complicity and the possibility of its resolution in strictly sociological ‘objectivist’ terms.⁴ We are inevitably left wondering: Why is this or that position-taking more desirable in itself than others? Why is it that agents with different social trajectories may be equally willing to share a single stance (for example, the ‘fond illusion’ that, by nature, humans are rational beings)? What is the precise nature of the desires or ‘necessities’ whose communication and objectification make the social integration of an arbitrary order possible? Is it likely to divert them away from relationships of inequality

and towards a universal culture of brotherly love? If so, by what means? Finally, to ask the attendant existentialist question, under what conditions, if any, can the ethical bonds of ecumenical brotherliness allow for the individual pursuit of meaningfulness in life through distinction?

If looking for answers in the milieu of psychoanalysis and its intersections with philosophy might still appear unwise, this time on account of supposed scientific weakness, choosing to follow the Frommian tradition should surely seem absurd. So long as the dominant epistemological mood continues to favour value-free rationalism and abstracted empiricism (on which see further Mills, 1959), one is far more likely to fall into the scientific trappings of biological psychiatry, with its 'naïve commitment to the possibility of making exact-sounding diagnoses' (Roazen, 2000: 106), than to reflect upon the inherently subjective nature of all anthropological inquiry (psychoanalytic, philosophical, sociological, or otherwise), or to recognize that some degree of uncertainty is the price paid for the discovery and deeper understanding of the most pertinent data (Fromm and Maccoby, 1970). As for grappling with Fromm, it entails the risk of linking oneself to a largely quaint and discredited scholar, perhaps also inviting some of the fiery squabbles he sustained. Albeit not necessarily by preference, Fromm was consciously self-condemned to a lifetime of near-Nietzschean isolation. The popularity of his work on self-knowledge and love amongst publics around the world inspired the suspicion of state authorities and the bitter jealousy of colleagues, his superior ability to draw upon, and transcend, disparate disciplines, theories, models, and concepts led him into trouble with the specialized practitioners thereof, and his outspokenness against the cult-like nature and increasing bureaucratization of official psychoanalysis sealed his excommunication from its circles. At the same time as the FBI was compiling a 600-page dossier on his activism (Roazen, 2001), orthodox psychoanalysts deplored his alleged departure from Freud's teachings in favour of sociology (Bronner, 2002; Burston, 1991), sociologists accused him of intemperate 'essentialism', feminists thought he was an outworn 'sexist',⁵ Marxists found his version of revolution overly 'voluntaristic' and typical of anodyne reformism, theologians viewed him as too much of a 'humanist' (Ingleby, 2006), liberal value-pluralists rejected him as an authoritarian monist (Pietikainen, 2004), cynics scoffed at his utopianism (Wilde, 2004), and a good number of intellectuals from all camps wrote him off as a secular preacher akin to Norman Vincent Peale (Roazen, 2000). No wonder 'the merits of what Fromm accomplished have become matched by how he has been so relatively forgotten' (Roazen, 2000: 100; see further McLaughlin, 1998).

Despite –or, perhaps, in part because of– all this, the remainder of this article draws on a sympathetic appraisal of Fromm's work to make a case for tracing the 'unhistorical traumatic kernel' of domination within the narcissistic needs for corporeal survival and ontological fulfilment.

Nature or nurture? The Frommian solution

To appreciate the general tenor and specific content of Fromm's psychoanalytic take on human action and domination requires that we first pay some selective (but, hopefully, not grossly simplifying) attention to his 'encounter' with the two thinkers who inspired

him the most and whose work he painstakingly sought to synthesize: Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx.⁶ Doing so allows for elaborating the heuristic contrast between Bourdieu and Fromm, given that the former treated the epistemic field of the latter as blindly committed to Freudian dogmas in its entirety, thereby missing an arguably crucial dimension to his own break with orthodox Marxism.

A useful point of departure is a famous passage from the fifth chapter of Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, where readers are invited to recall the biblical injunction 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'. 'We will approach it naively, as if we were hearing it for the first time', Freud explains with a good deal of sarcasm in his prose. 'We shall then be unable to suppress a sense of surprise and bewilderment.'

Why should we behave this way? What good will it do us? But, above all, how shall we manage to act like this? How will it be possible? My love is something I value and must not throw away irresponsibly. It imposes duties on me, and in performing these duties I must be prepared to make sacrifices. If I love another person, he must in some way deserve it. ... He deserves it if he is so much more perfect than myself that I can love in him an ideal image of myself. I must love him if he is my friend's son, for the pain my friend would feel if any harm befell him would be my pain, too; I should have to share it.

(Freud, 2002 [1941]: 46)

The immediate question Freud asks is whether, realistically speaking, strangers can ever stand worthy of our neighbour-love as well. His reply, so instantaneous as to make the question sound rhetorical, is in the negative.

[If the other person] is a stranger to me and cannot attract me by any merit of his own or by any importance he has acquired in my emotional life, it becomes hard for me to love him. Indeed, it would be wrong for me to do so, for my love is prized by my family and friends as a sign of my preference for them; to put a stranger on a par with them would be to do them an injustice. Yet if I am to love him with this universal love –just because he is a creature of this earth, like an insect, an earthworm or a grass-snake–, then I fear that only a modicum of love will fall to his share, and certainly not as much as the judgement of my reason entitles me to reserve for myself. What is the point of such a portentous precept if its fulfilment cannot commend itself as reasonable?

(Freud, 2002 [1941]: 46–47)

But there is worse to come as soon as Freud subjects the stranger to closer scrutiny.

This stranger is not only altogether unlovable: I must honestly confess that he has a greater claim to my enmity, even to my hatred. He appears to have not the least love for me and show me not the slightest consideration. If it is to his advantage, he has no hesitation in harming me, nor does he ask himself whether the magnitude of his advantage is commensurate with the harm he does me. Indeed, it need not bring him any advantage at all; if he can merely satisfy some desire by acting in this way, he still thinks nothing of mocking, insulting or slandering me, or

using me as a foil to show off his power. The more secure he feels and the more helpless I am, the surer I can be of his behaving towards me like this.

(Freud, 2002 [1941]: 47)

Things reach their nadir when Freud proceeds to reveal ‘the reality behind all this, which many would deny’.

[H]uman beings are not gentle creatures in need of love, at most able to defend themselves if attacked; on the contrary, they can count a powerful share of aggression amongst their instinctual endowments. Hence their neighbour is not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to take out their aggression on him, to exploit his labour without recompense, to use him sexually without his consent, to take possession of his goods, to humiliate him and cause him pain, to torture and kill him. *Homo homini lupus* [Man is wolf to man]. Who, after all, in the face of all his experience of life and of history, would be so bold as to dispute this proposition?

(Freud, 2002 [1941]: 48)

Many have rushed to read the passage as watertight evidence of Freud’s Hobbesianism—and unsurprisingly so, for Freud even quotes the Latin maxim which Hobbes himself cited some three centuries earlier. Wrong takes a step further when he comments that, in essence, Freud ‘out-Hobbesees Hobbes’. Whereas the former speaks of aggression as an end in itself, a pleasurable activity deriving from inborn tendencies, the latter only views the exercise of power over others as the means by which to maintain security, material possessions, and reputation. ‘Hobbes’s state of nature and war of all against all seem positively benign in comparison’ (Wrong, 1994: 142). This is why, according to Wrong, Freud theorizes the existence and persistence of social life and civilization as mixed blessings; much like the family, Freud views culture as built upon the repression of original libidinal and often utterly destructive instincts—upon the painful submission of the ‘pleasure principle’ to the ‘reality principle’ embodied in the requirements for corporeal survival.

Fromm’s reading of Freud is not too far afield from Wrong’s (or, indeed, Bourdieu’s). Fromm gives recognition to Freud for his early suggestion that men may renounce or postpone their sexual, incestuous fixation on the mother, their hatred of the father as rival and avenger, or their aggressive dispositions towards others for reasons different from attaining the negative gain of self-preservation. To foretell, as Freud does, that ‘where there is Id there shall be Ego’, that man may become aware and escape the unconscious forces which shape his fate, is to conceive of reason as equally able to grasp the positive advantages of cooperation, for example cultural achievements. In *Why War?*, Fromm notes, Freud goes so far as to blur his own earlier view of man as innately self-sufficient, isolated, and egotistical, rather describing him as primarily driven by the positive instincts of life and brotherly love. ‘There is no need for psychoanalysis to be ashamed to speak of love in this connection, for religion itself uses the same words: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”’ (Freud, 1933; quoted by

Fromm, 1984b [1973]). Whether and which biological potentialities are translated into actual practice depends ultimately on the ‘superego’; that is, on external, ‘constitutional’ constraints like parental and cultural commands which individuals come to internalize over a long process of maturation. To Fromm’s disappointment, however, Freud never manages to point to a concrete resolution, eventually sinking back into shameful despair. In *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, he closes the topic thus: ‘This is one of the dangers to health by which human beings are faced on the path to cultural development. Holding back aggressiveness is in general unhealthy and leads to illness (to mortification)’ (Freud, 1938; quoted by Fromm, 1984b [1973]).

Whilst paying respect to Freud, Fromm counterargues that the instinctual structure, much like the structure and demands of society at large, is neither a given nor, in any case, unmodifiable. To Fromm, the only fundamental, and fundamentally normal, biological drive in man is *biophilia*, the affinity to life and growth. *Necrophilia* or destructive aggressiveness, or what Freud at times refers to as the ‘death instinct’, is a secondary psychopathological phenomenon that occurs when the appropriate social conditions for life are not present (Fromm, 1964). Fromm thus accounts for the Oedipus complex by reference, not so much to incestuous fixation, but to external conditions stretching far beyond the mere confines of the family itself: the patriarchal social surroundings and the conflict they animate between, on the one hand, the father’s demand that he be obeyed, and, on the other hand, the contrary interests of the child. Just as the psychic structure of the individual is largely conditioned by early child-rearing practices in the family, so too the family itself is conditioned by its social and class background. ‘The family is the medium through which society or the social class stamps its specific structure on the child, and hence on the adult. *The family is the psychological agency of society*’ (Fromm, 1978 [1932]: 483).⁷ To put Fromm’s point in Bourdieusian terminology, the family is a small but crucial ‘cultural field’ which operates under the influence of other fields and the meta-field of class power in particular.

When Fromm describes the primary function of the family as that of producing individuals who will consent to their own subordination, his ultimate goal is to shed light on the genesis of the *social unconscious*—those dispositions which Bourdieu collectively terms the *habitus*.

Whilst [Freud] assumed that society enforced repressions, these were the repressions of instinctual forces [that is, the ‘individual unconscious’], and not the social repressions which really matter—the repressions of the awareness of social contradictions, of socially produced suffering, of the failure of authority, of feelings of *malaise* and dissatisfaction.

(Fromm, 2006b [1962]: 98)

To replace the Id with Ego, Fromm concludes, ‘humanistic social criticism is a necessary precondition’ (2006b [1962]: 98). That he turns to Marx for assistance, to ‘a figure of world historical significance with whom Freud cannot even be compared’ (2006b [1962]: 7), is only a logical consequence.

Not unlike Freud, Marx diagnoses that people often find themselves trapped in sheer illusions or what he calls ‘ideology’. The battle to be fought here, however, is not against

Mother Nature, nor is defeat a foregone conclusion. 'The essence of man', Marx explains, 'is no abstraction inherent in each separate individual', but a set of potentialities for mankind as a whole (Marx and Engels, 1939: 198). Whilst recognizing the existence of such physiological, 'constant drives' as sexual instincts and hunger, 'whose form and direction, though nothing else, social conditions can change', Marx distinguishes them from the 'relative drives' or 'desires', which 'owe their origin to a particular type of social organization', especially to conditions of production and communication (Funk, 1982: 19). As such, '[t]he whole of what is called world history is nothing but the creation of man by human labour, and the emergence of nature for man; he therefore has the evident and irrefutable proof of his *self-creation* of his own *origins*' (Marx, 1964: 139). The tragic irony is that man's own achievements have done relatively little to release and nurture truly constructive creative powers.

This is nowhere clearer, to Marx, than in the case of economic institutions and the new 'religion' of capitalism in particular. For all the wealth it produces, and for all the potential it reveals of mankind, capitalism impoverishes the very mass of working individuals, not only literally but spiritually as well. With the ever-growing division of labour, the advance of technology, and the relentless imperative of profits, man the creator, *homo fabricans*, is as much estranged from the product of his labour as from the process of production itself. At the same time as 'the worker puts his life into the object and his life then belongs no longer to himself but to the object', 'labour, *life activity, productive life* itself appears to man only as a means for the satisfaction of a need, the need to preserve physical existence. ... Life itself appears only as a *means of life*' (Marx, 1964: 101).

Marx takes especial issue with the fact that, under capitalism, all economic activities and all productive relationships and goods come to be measured solely in terms of the monetary value they accrue in the process of exchange. As an immediate consequence of this, culture revolves around the acquisition and possession of private property, a preoccupation which renders man unable (because morally uninhibited) to apprehend and value his fellow men in any but the most instrumental manner. Appearances to the contrary, neighbour-love soon becomes fundamentally exploitative. 'Every want', explains Marx,

is an opportunity for approaching one's neighbour with the air of friendship, and saying, 'Dear friend, I will give you what you need, but you know the *conditio sine qua non*. You know what ink you must use in signing yourself over to me. I shall swindle you whilst providing your enjoyment.'

'The entrepreneur', Marx goes on to argue,

accedes to the most depraved fancies of the neighbour, plays the role of pander between him and his needs, awakens unhealthy appetites in him, and watches for every weakness in order, later, to claim the remuneration for this labour of love.

(1964: 141–142)

In Fromm's interpretation, contrary to what is widely purported, at times even by communists themselves, Marx does not suggest that the way to escape mass slavery to the economy and overcome alienation at the societal level is brute physical force.

Whilst force, according to him, might be used if the minority were to resist by force the will of the majority, the main question for Marx was not the mechanism of how to attain power in the state, but how *to win the minds of the people*.

(Fromm, 2006b [1962]: 10, emphasis added)

The cure is not homeopathic. Fromm clarifies that against the demagoguery of the bourgeoisie Marx juxtaposes the 'weapon of truth': man can only be set free by being alerted to the processes and hidden functions of the transformation of ideals into mere ideologies. If Marx himself avoids the use of such words as freedom, truth, and justice, this is because 'they lend themselves to so much misuse, and not because freedom, justice, truth [are] not the supreme values for him' (Fromm, 2006b [1962]: 10). Not unlike Bourdieu, then, Fromm draws inspiration from Marx to speak of demystification of reality both as scientific method and as socio-political goal.

With the benefit of hindsight, however, Fromm says of Marxian theory that, whilst 'it offers important scientific concepts for the understanding of the laws of history', it is 'lacking in satisfactory psychological insights' (Fromm, 2006a [1955]: 255). Marx's heavy preoccupation with the economic facets of capitalism, Fromm explicates, prevents him from paying sufficient attention to 'the passions and strivings which are rooted in man's nature, and in the conditions of his existence, and which are in themselves the most powerful driving force for human development' (2006a [1955]: 256). As a result, neither are we told how the economic basis of society comes to be translated into the 'ideological superstructure', nor, conversely, are we provided with a convincing remedy for the ills of capitalism. However true it may be, for example, that man is shaped by the form of social and economic organization in which he lives and works, man also affects and often even consolidates that organization in turn. Similarly, the economy influences culture as much as culture influences the economy.

The medium in which such dialectics take place, the 'transmission belt between the economic structure of society and the prevailing ideas', is what Fromm terms the 'social character'. The social character is the sum total of cognitive and affective traits typical of human beings in a given society or group. It is '*the essential nucleus of the character structure of most members of a group which has developed as the result of the basic experiences and mode of life common to that group*' (Fromm, 1994 [1941]: 276). Crucially, the content of the social character always pertains to the range of needs deeply rooted in the nature of man. For ideas to become powerful ideological forces, it follows, they have to respond directly to specific human needs prominent in a given social character; if not, they remain at best a stock of conscious convictions. Ultimately, the function of the social character is to maintain and enhance civil order by

[shaping] the energies of the members of society in such a way that their behaviour is not a matter of conscious decision as to whether or not to follow the social pattern, but one of *wanting*

to act as they have to act and at the same time finding gratification in acting according to the requirements of culture.

(Fromm, 2006a [1955]: 77)

Note, in passing, that Fromm moves further away from Marx than Bourdieu in that he does not only privilege a cultural interpretation of class relations, but also stretches such an interpretation to include the role of instincts. He thereby effectuates what we may call ‘triple historicity’: despite carrying strong overtones of historicism, instinctual tendencies are historicized alongside, and in conjunction with, cognitive and affective schemata as well as the surrounding social structures. More generally, and unlike what Bourdieu argues of psychoanalysis *tout court*, Fromm pays equal attention to the instinctual and the societal within the socialized psyche, whilst his approach is also broad enough to interpret the self as a general, cultural-anthropological category.

What Fromm terms the ‘hoarding’ character orientation, for instance, favours a puritan emphasis on work and accumulation of wealth as evidence of goodness, supports the feeling of security, and gives life meaning and a religious sense of fulfilment. The hoarding character was the backbone of nineteenth-century capitalism, for the ‘combination of a stable world, stable possessions, and a stable ethic gave the members of the middle class a feeling of belonging, self-confidence, and pride’ (Fromm, 1986 [1949]: 81). Contrariwise, the ‘having’ orientation of the character structure develops in heavily industrialized societies that nurture the greed for consumption (Fromm, 2007 [1976]). ‘Our economy’, Fromm was writing back in the 1960s, ‘would face a severe crisis if people –the working and the middle classes– were not to spend most of their income on consumption, rather than to save it’ (Fromm, 2006b [1962]: 63). The ‘marketing’ orientation arises in societies where ‘the gospel of working loses weight and the gospel of selling becomes paramount’. When social mobility declines, ‘[h]e who wants to get ahead has to fit into large organizations, and his ability to play the expected role is one of his main assets’ (Fromm, 1986 [1949]: 82). The ‘receptive’ character orientation is to be found in societies in which widespread feelings of helplessness result in a culture of resignation to powers of a higher order (the ‘expert’, the state, and so on), even though the selfsame culture may emphasize that ‘each one has to look out, and be responsible, for himself, and that he has to use his own initiative if he wants to “get anywhere”’ (Fromm, 1986 [1949]: 79).

In elaborating on the issue of needs, Fromm poses a socio-biological question: ‘What kind of ties to the world, persons, and things, must –and can– man develop in order to survive, given his specific equipment and the nature of the world around him?’ First, he answers, man ‘has to provide for his material needs (food, shelter, etc.) and for the survival of the group in terms of procreation and protection of the young’. This Fromm terms ‘the process of assimilation’. But again, man

could not remain sane even if he took care of all his material needs, unless he were able to establish some form of relatedness to others that allows him to feel ‘at home’ and saves him from the experience of complete affective isolation and separateness.

(Fromm and Maccoby, 1970: 14)

Elsewhere Fromm also refers to happiness, rootedness, and transcendence as indispensable to successful human life (see, for example, Fromm, 2006b [1962]: 64). These man achieves in the ‘process of socialization’ (Fromm and Maccoby, 1970: 14).⁸

Building on Freud, Fromm argues that the primordial need to have one’s own needs satisfied derives from *narcissism*. All people, he explains, are born into a state of narcissism, namely, in the belief that the whole world revolves around them. Whilst narcissism tends to be gradually reduced to the socially accepted minimum, it never fully disappears. What are most variable about narcissism are its objects (Fromm, 1964). From the standpoint of self-preservation, one’s own life is more important than that of another, whereas, from the standpoint of self-experience, ‘[one’s] sense of identity exists in terms of ... being identified with [a] group. He as a separate individual must be able to feel “I”’ (Fromm, 1959: 50). Which of the two narcissistic needs will acquire primacy in the sense of greater urgency, and under which affective guises; who or what poses threats to corporeal survival or the identity; what comprises identity, which group appears preferable to the individual, and with what social consequences—all these matters are dependent upon the social character that is predominant at a given historical moment, although the social character itself always appeals to the ‘narcissistic core’ of the psyche (see further Cheliotis, 2010).

Whilst, then, Fromm would agree with Bourdieu that the effectiveness of attempts at ideological incorporation cannot be wholly immanent in the symbolic mechanisms employed to this end (for example, the purely linguistic properties of some discourse), and that the potency of symbolic mechanisms is significantly ascribed to them by the social institutions of which they are part, he also calls attention to the ineluctable need for symbolism to entertain basic psychic needs—to ‘speak to’ the narcissistic core. Bourdieu appears to share this view when arguing that symbolic politics are about the intrinsic human need for recognition from others (see, further Wacquant, 2005a: 20), but this is the closest he gets to explaining the human condition as such.

It is through the lens of narcissism that Fromm proceeds to dismiss the ‘naïve optimism of the eighteenth century’, as this is reflected in Marx’s ‘romantic idealization of the working class’. ‘The famous statement at the end of the Communist manifesto that the workers “have nothing to lose but their chains”, contains a profound psychological error’, Fromm explains. ‘With their chains they have also to lose all those irrational needs and satisfactions which were originated whilst they were wearing the chains’ (Fromm, 2006a [1955]: 256–257). The aim here is neither exonerative nor condemnatory. It is, instead, to draw attention to the prior macro-social awakening of those irrational forces in man which, on the one hand, make him afraid of freedom, and, on the other hand, produce his narcissistic lust for power and destructiveness, albeit by subjugation under higher external powers, be it the state of a leader, natural law, the past, or God. This development Fromm describes under the rubric of the ‘authoritarian character’, the person who ‘admires authority and tends to submit to it, but at the same time ... wants to be an authority himself and have others submit to him’ (Fromm, 1994 [1941]: 162).

A parenthetical note is due at this juncture. Notwithstanding some obvious similarities, Fromm’s concept of the authoritarian character should not be mistaken for its infamous cousin that is the ‘authoritarian personality’, put forward ten years later by Adorno and a research team he led at the Frankfurt School. The goal of their study

was to trace a complex of personality characteristics shared by individuals holding right-wing authoritarian views in the US in the 1950s (see further Adorno et al., 1950). But it is doubtful whether the authors of *The Authoritarian Personality* ever actually grappled with the authoritarian personality in sufficient scope and depth, for they ignored both left-wing authoritarianism (Shils, 1954) and the ‘traditionalist authoritarianism’ found in agrarian settings (Burston, 1991). More fundamentally, and unlike Fromm, their primary focus was on interpersonal psychological factors of Freudian inspiration, particularly on oedipal experiences during early childhood, and far less on socio-economic class.

According to Fromm, the masochistic and sadistic strivings that comprise the authoritarian character tend to emerge under grave economic conditions (for example, the growing power of monopolies and inflation). Such conditions, he argues further, render people vulnerable to ideologies that intensify changes in the character structure and ‘further the development of economic forces even if those forces contradict the economic interests of that class’ (Fromm, 1985: 295). Fromm does not deny that the growth of contradictions in society may give rise to ‘autonomous self-conscious’ reason and thereby to insubordination (see further Fromm, 1970). Nevertheless, he claims, this possibility is commonly pre-empted through political myths that displace real insecurities onto fictitious substitutes as well as divert public anger away from accountable rulers and onto weak identifiable subjects. Ironically, whilst narratives that promulgate danger legitimate action through which to discharge anger against given targets, discharge of anger often practically presupposes collusion or a relationship of ‘transference’ with authoritarian rulers and their functionaries—those who order violent action and those who undertake it. In the process, ‘man has the illusion of acting, when in reality he only submits to, and becomes a part of, those who act’ (Fromm, 1964: 31). Any rational and moral deficits are neutralized by retrospectively evoking the very facts of subordination to authoritarian regimes and violent action against others, but also by pointing to the high degree of public consent each of these facts enjoys:

What the majority of people consider to be ‘reasonable’, is that about which there is agreement, if not amongst all, at least amongst a substantial number of people; ‘reasonable’, for most people, has nothing to do with reason, but with consensus.

(Fromm, 1964: 79–80)⁹

What makes Fromm’s case particularly compelling is that he skilfully combines theoretical construction with an intrepid search for empirical evidence in a diverse range of sources, from historical accounts of Nazi Europe, statistical data on trends in crime and recidivism in early twentieth-century Germany, experiments on the psychology of obedience to authority, and anthropological studies of aggression in ‘primitive’ and modern societies, to his own findings through clinical work with analysands, psychobiographies of historical figures such as Stalin, Himmler, and Hitler, survey research into the electoral and broader political behaviour of the working class in Weimar Germany, and ethnographic fieldwork on peasant life in Mexico (see, for example, Fromm, 1984a [1929], 1984b [1973], 2000 [1931]). Indeed, some of Fromm’s empirical forays are said to have broken new ground in their time (Bonss, 1984; Brunner, 1994).

Concluding remarks

Notwithstanding their methodological, substantive, and terminological differences, Frommian psychoanalysis and Bourdieusian socio-analysis are at times remarkably similar. This finding would have displeased a scholar as hostile to psychoanalysis as Bourdieu, hence, perhaps, the omission of Fromm from the voluminous corpus of his work.

According to Steinmetz, although Bourdieu generally dismisses psychoanalysis as 'naïve' and 'essentialist', he also tries to domesticate it, 'accepting its vocabulary while subtly redefining it in a more sociological direction, or else deploying its language in an almost decorative way while avoiding its substantive implications' (Steinmetz, 2006: 446). The conditions in which psychoanalytic operations, arguments, and terms appear in Bourdieu's writings, Steinmetz goes on to argue, can be described through Freud's concept of *Verneinung* or (de)negation. *Verneinung* is that process whereby the content of a repressed idea makes its way into consciousness, yet the condemning judgement of the idea is retained. The reason behind *Verneinung* may be found in another Freudian concept, that of fetishism (itself a form of narcissism), whereby the subject refuses to acknowledge the reality of a traumatic perception. Thus, in Steinmetz's view, Bourdieu fetishistically denies the extreme relevance of psychoanalysis for enhancing his own intellectual project. Fourny (2000) offers a sharper version of this argument when he writes that a systematic and direct engagement with psychoanalysis would threaten socio-analysis by revealing its relatively inferior acumen.

Albeit not with explicit reference to Bourdieu, Butler provides a more moderate account of the tendency in critical sociology not to afford psychoanalysis due recognition. If, she writes, power is so often cast as unequivocally external to the subject, as a force imposed wholly against the subject's will, it is with the symbolic political aim to underscore the abuses of power as real and not as the creation or fantasy of the subject. Once the reality of abuse has been established, moreover, the moral burden of responsibility can be removed from the shoulders of victims or, indeed, of fate, and placed squarely on the shoulders of the actual culprits (Butler, 1997: 20). This is entirely in spirit with Bourdieu's socio-analysis, which in fact he turns upon psychoanalysis to chastise it as a domain that reproduces hierarchies and inequalities by dissociating them from their social roots and branding them as biologically predetermined (see, for example, Bourdieu, 1977 [1972]: 92–93). (Bourdieu does not stop there; he also finds fault with psychoanalysts for fabricating the public need for psychological health which they then exploit monopolistically for profit. In Bourdieu's words, reminiscent here of Marx's portrait of capitalist entrepreneurs, psychoanalysts 'produc[e] the need for their own product, that is, a market for the goods and services they are equipped to supply' (Bourdieu, 1994 [1979]: 369)).

Whatever the substratal cause, Bourdieu may only buttress his stance towards psychoanalysis by dehistoricizing it; indeed, by committing the very fallacy he attributes by philosophical fiat to it. The point of this article, however, is not about Bourdieu the psychoanalyst *malgré lui*, nor about his uncomplicated caricatures of psychoanalysis. What should instead attract the focus of attention is that such caricatures are amply debunked by the nature and scope of Fromm's lifework. To argue, as Fromm does, that internal psychodynamic forces render people vulnerable to states of domination is not axiomatically testament to an engagement with psychologism and its determinist assumptions.

And it is neither to naturalize the abuses subjects suffer under the status quo, nor to imply their inevitability.

Granted, Fromm insists that ‘man is not a blank sheet of paper on which culture can write its text’ (Fromm, 1986 [1949]: 23). But he does not view human nature as fixed, just as he does not deny the influence exerted upon it by culture. Human nature, Fromm asserts, adapts itself to the cultural environment, which is what allows history to develop. Adaptation to culture, on the other hand, assumes specific and ascertainable forms, the reason being that the indestructible force of narcissism compels humans never to cease the search for conditions better suited to their intrinsic needs. What this implies for culture is that it cannot be ‘a fixed factor to which human nature adapts itself passively and completely’ (Fromm, 1986 [1949]: 22). The influence of culture on human nature is commensurate with the degree to which the former appeals to the needs intrinsic to the latter.

The concept of the social character reflects Fromm’s effort to account for the ways in which cultural constructs that appeal to basic human needs facilitate adaptation to objectively unsatisfactory conditions of existence and to the underlying states of social domination. In speaking of social characters, of commonly shared perceptive schemata that help sustain domination by lending it appearances of legitimacy, Fromm does not fall into the essentialist trap of stifling the possibility of individual agency and resistance. As I have shown in detail elsewhere, his ideal man is the ‘revolutionary character’, the committed humanist who ‘is capable of saying “No”’—of being free, independent, and authentic in the sense of thinking, feeling, and designing courses of action for oneself (Fromm, 1992 [1955]: 161; see further Cheliotis, 2010). What is more, Fromm eschews utopianism by arguing that instances of the revolutionary character are always already available in concrete reality, even if not at a desirable or sufficient scale. Revolutionaries, for him, are mainly to be found amongst ‘simple people, without pretensions’ (Fromm, 1977: 2). Intellectuals, meanwhile, are typically hindered by their narcissism on the way to embodying the revolutionary mode of being (Fromm, 1977: 2)—and Fromm hardly minces words about his fellow psychoanalysts and their retreat into ‘conformism and the search for respectability’ (Fromm, 1970: 16)—, although important exceptions exist: from Karl Marx and Rosa Luxemburg to Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell (see Fromm, 1981).

But the revolutionary role Fromm reserves for intellectuals, himself included, extends beyond self-reflexivity and independent thinking. He also wants intellectuals to awaken and revolutionize others by bringing to the fore the unjust nature of extant social arrangements. In addition to mastering the rules of scientific methodology so as to grasp reality as it is, the task at hand presupposes ideal-typical yardsticks against which to compare the present, whence some engagement with normative philosophy becomes unavoidable. The immediate question concerns not only the constitutive content of the yardsticks to be chosen, but also the implications such choices carry for the objects to be evaluated; in particular, is it possible to favour given anthropological laws without engaging in normative authoritarianism (Pietikainen, 2004)? Fromm, no less than Bourdieu (2008 [2000]), claims that reality can be assessed by reference to the principles of universalism it itself purports to cultivate and protect, at least so long as sufficient light is shed upon their essential meaning. He thus locates the bases of human solidarity within structures of

equality, and the bases of equality within structures that promote difference, as opposed to uniformity.

As if to anticipate the question of whether narcissistic tendencies unavoidably render the human quest for distinction incompatible with states of equality and solidarity, Fromm theorizes the possibility of a ‘benign’ variant of narcissism. This requires that man free himself from ‘the ties of blood and soil, from his mother and his father, from special loyalties to state, class, race, party, or religion’ (Fromm, 1992 [1955]: 165).

If the individual could experience himself primarily as a citizen of the world, and if he could feel pride in mankind and in its achievements, his narcissism would turn towards the human race as an object, rather than to its conflicting components.

(Fromm, 1964: 90)

This is not to imply that private individuals should not nurture narcissistic pride in their personal achievements (for example, as craftsmen or scientists) or in the achievements of particular groups to which they belong, but they do need to retain connection with external reality, consistently using mankind as their ultimate point of reference (see further Cheliotis, 2010).

With a view to putting his ideas into practice, and just as Bourdieu did in later years (see, for example, Swartz, 2003), Fromm became a leading public intellectual. True to his dictum that ‘ideas do have an effect on man if the idea is lived by the one who teaches it; if it is personified by the teacher’ (Fromm, 1981: 42), Fromm often left his private practice as a psychoanalyst to campaign actively against the Vietnam War, the Cold War, nuclear and biological armament, hunger and sickness in the Third World, and much more. Although he never saw mankind reach any closer to a state of equality and solidarity, his sense of hope remained unscathed throughout. ‘[T]o hope’, he wrote, ‘means to be ready at every moment for that which is not yet born, and yet not become desperate if there is no birth in our lifetime’ (Fromm, 1968: 9). What is all too often scorned as Fromm’s utopianism was, and still is, the utopianism of the ‘awake’, of hard-headed realists who shed all illusions and fully appreciate the difficulties (see further McLaughlin, 1999, 2001).

Notes

Thanks are due to John O’Neill, Eric Heinze, Sappho Xenakis, and the anonymous reviewers of this journal for their constructively critical comments on an earlier version of this article.

1. Steinmetz (2006: 447) notes that Bourdieu drops the hyphen in his later work (that is, ‘socio-analysis’ becomes ‘socioanalysis’). This, in Steinmetz’s view, points to an underlying psychoanalytic template in Bourdieu’s work (on which more later).
2. The ‘Frankfurt School’ is the name commonly used to refer to the Institute for Social Research at Frankfurt University, which was founded in 1923 and constituted the major centre for critical theory during the 1930s. In face of the dangerous political climate in antebellum Germany, the School moved first to Geneva and then to New York. Fromm was made the tenured director of the School’s Social Psychology Section in 1930 and left in 1939 (see further McLaughlin, 1999).

3. A different, and contradictory, conception of historicism is that which denies the existence of eternal laws and norms, rather calling for an in-depth contextualization of the phenomena under examination (that is, what I call here 'historicity').
4. It is a substantive and terminological irony that, in distancing himself from what he sees as the 'complacent and intemperate return upon the private *person*', Bourdieu praises his own version of reflexivity, which 'makes us discover things that are *generic*, things that are shared, banal, commonplace', as '*fundamentally anti-narcissistic*' and, therefore, 'genuine' and 'distinctive' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 72). Whereas, then, he chastises self-indulgence, Bourdieu does not appear to have fully avoided it himself, and, moreover, the language he employs is that of psychoanalysis.
5. Fromm, for example, uses the male pronoun to refer to either males or females. This, according to some of his critics, does not acquit Fromm of the charge of Freudian androcentric bias (on which, see, amongst others, Brookfield, 2005: 150–151; Ingleby, 2006: xlvii–xlviii). Whilst such a discussion stretches beyond the scope of this article, it is worth noting that, for Fromm, the archetypal act of emancipatory disobedience – indeed, the act which forced human on the road to history – is one committed by a woman: Eve (Fromm, 1992 [1955]: 161). Outside quotations, I have chosen to use the male and female pronouns interchangeably throughout the article.
6. If Freud and Marx are Fromm's favourites, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse, the trinity of Fromm's core colleagues during his ten-year affiliation with the Institute for Social Research at Frankfurt University, belong to the rival camp. In point of fact, the more Fromm elaborated his own attempt at synthesizing Freudianism and Marxism, putting the libidinal mechanism of the former to the test of radical historical materialism propounded by the latter, the more he fell out of favour with the institute (see further McLaughlin, 1999).
7. That Fromm traces the historicist link between family ethics, on the one hand, and politics, on the other, is a further basic difference between him and Marcuse (see O'Neill, 2002).
8. Here Fromm draws inspiration from Marx's distinction between the 'constant drives' and the 'relative drives' or 'desires'. Indeed, in his later work, Fromm proceeds to admit that, whilst not developed in a systematic fashion, Marx's contribution to psychology deserves greater recognition.
9. This is not necessarily to imply conscious manipulation for private gain on the part of ruling elites. Fromm (2006b [1962]) holds, instead, that inherent to the acquisition and exercise of power is the universal narcissistic need to keep one's own conscience satisfied, which is why governing elites tend to legitimate their position and power to themselves and to their immediate staff at least as much as to the masses they govern (see further Cheliotis, 2012, forthcoming). In *The State Nobility*, Bourdieu (with de Saint Martin, 1996 [1989]) offers a detailed analysis of the social mechanisms by which elite groups come to justify their privileged social position to themselves and others, although once again he ignores the psychic undercurrents of his subject matter.

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