

Exploring the Psychological Mechanism of Modern People's Escape from Freedom from Fromm's Perspective

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Abstract: *Fromm is an important representative figure of Western Marxism, and his social psychology theory has had a great influence globally. His book "Escape from Freedom" systematically discusses the mechanism and reasons for the confusion of modern life. By combining Freud's psychoanalytic theory with Marx's historical materialism, Fromm points out that the fundamental difference between modern and traditional people lies in their individualization. In the process of individualization, human freedom and loneliness coexist, thus forming the inherent contradiction of modern human existence. It reveals that in order for modern people to get rid of this contradictory mentality when facing freedom, they must fully exert their creativity and move towards positive freedom.*

Keywords: Freedom; Sense of security; Positive Freedom.

1. INTRODUCTION

Erich Fromm (March 23, 1900- March 18, 1980) was an internationally renowned German American Jewish humanistic philosopher and psychoanalytic psychologist. Fromm is revered as one of the founders of the "spirit" here, as his lifelong goal was to modify Freud's theory to fit the spiritual situation of Westerners after two world wars. The characteristic of Fromm's thought is the attempt to reconcile Freud's humanistic ideas with Marx's, starting from the intersection of psychology, sociology, cultural studies, and philosophy, to provide reasonable explanations for the personality structure and psychological mechanisms of people in modern society. Some scholars refer to him as the "Freudian Marxist". Psychoanalysis Fromm analyzed the survival difficulties of people in capitalist society in "Escape from Freedom", but it also has good reference significance for us in the context of rapid economic development, and has important theoretical value for our study of modern people in Chinese socialist society.

2. THE ORIGIN AND PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISM OF MODERN PEOPLE'S "ESCAPE FROM FREEDOM"

The slogan 'Better to die than to be free' has been prevalent for many years, and everyone recognizes that freedom is the most precious thing in the world. However, in modern life, why do people pursue negative freedom without realizing it? This is one of the main questions that Fromm expounds in his book. Firstly, he proposed a comparison between traditional and modern people. Why do traditional people pursue freedom but not, while modern people voluntarily give up freedom? The reason for this cannot be ignored, and the sense of security that "bonds" bring to people cannot be ignored. Traditional people refer to the way people lived before the Middle Ages. Its characteristic is that in ancient times, humans were in the same state as the natural world and were completely subject to it. Correspondingly, humans were also in a state of "symbiosis" and mutually restrained and protected each other. People in their primitive state tend to be more inclined towards "crowds" and cannot even discuss individual freedom, let alone have free individuals. From this, it can be seen that the biggest difference between the two is individualization.

Secondly, traditional people have a sense of security that modern people cannot possess, which is entirely due to their connection with nature. Traditional people are trapped in an inescapable "cage," but the "cage" protects them from harm and provides a sense of security. The former refers to reality, while the latter refers to psychology. (In primitive societies, this is also reality.) In real life, traditional people live in a class fixed society. From their existence in the world, their status is already clear, and they take root in a structurally fixed society, which provides them with a sense of freedom in life. Fromm said, "Social order is seen as a natural order, and being a definite part of it gives people a sense of security and belonging [1]. In the Middle Ages, another important source of traditional

people's sense of security was their relationship of trust and love with God, and being able to receive forgiveness from God was an important spiritual pillar for them. In short, the freedom that modern people possess is dialectical. It brings economic and political freedom to people, but on the other hand, the individualization it brings to people creates a huge sense of loneliness.

Finally, the origin of modern people's entry into the "survival dilemma" dates back to the late Middle Ages, when social structures and human personalities underwent changes. The rise of capitalism broke traditional social structures, while the Renaissance and Reformation changed people's ideologies. Face up to this change and highlight the issue of freedom. Modern people have entered the stage of individualization, cutting off the original bond with society - the inherent social order and unchanging economic status of traditional people. As a result, modern people have lost their comfortable social status and gained freedom, and their social status has become something that needs to be fought for. Individuals are liberated from the constraints of economic and political relationships. Due to his need to play an active and independent role in the new system, he also gained positive freedom. But at the same time, he also broke away from the things that gave him a sense of security and intimacy before He was threatened by the immense power of superhuman capital and the market. Due to everyone becoming a potential competitor, relationships with others become hostile and distant; He is free, but this also means he is lonely, isolated, and threatened from all sides Heaven has forever lost its individual and faces this world alone - like a stranger thrown into an endless and dangerous world. The new freedom brings feelings of unease, powerlessness, doubt, loneliness, and anxiety [2].

Upon careful analysis, it is not difficult to see that the "freedom" that needs to be avoided is not true freedom. Marxism holds that the freedom that people obtain is related to the existing productive forces in society, and what they currently obtain is determined by the existing productive forces. Marx pointed out in his "Economic Philosophy Manuscripts of 1844" the three dimensions of freedom, which are based on the comprehensive development of individuals and their common social production capacity becoming their social wealth. Free individuality is the third stage of human social development after experiencing the "human dependence relationship" before capitalism and the "material dependence" of capitalism. The history of human development is a continuous transition from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom. The degree of social development determines the degree of human freedom, which is a stage that humanity cannot cross. So, 'escaping freedom' is a necessary process for the development of modern people, fundamentally because this freedom is not true freedom.

Fromm's book focuses on the modern "psychological mechanisms of escape," which mainly take three forms: "authoritarianism," "destructive desire," and "mechanical convergence. Firstly, authoritarianism means that individuals, in order to gain the power they have lost, are willing to give up the freedom and independence they have already gained, and seek a second shackle, submitting themselves to the authority of others. Totalitarianism is mainly manifested in the psychological tendencies of masochists and sadists. Both of these psychological expectations are aimed at escaping pain and gaining a sense of security. Secondly, destructiveness differs from sadomasochistic impulses in that it does not aim to establish a symbiotic relationship with the object, but rather to eliminate it, but it also stems from feelings of loneliness and powerlessness. Destructive impulse was an important concept in Freud's later years, which Fromm absorbed. Destructive is the structure of setbacks in the development of individual life forces, and when the loneliness and powerlessness that arise in the development of modern capitalism cannot be resolved, people are prone to venting this desire for destruction. Thirdly, the mechanism of avoidance psychology is mechanical and automatic adaptation. The characteristic of this psychological mechanism is that people have fully adapted to and inherited the personality given to them by existing cultural patterns, and they are no longer any different from others. Fromm believed that people with this psychological mechanism also "lose themselves" and adapt to life like machines, believing that everything is centered around "mine", which constitutes a solution for people to escape loneliness and freedom. Modern people live in illusions where they believe they know what they want, but in reality, they are just asking for advice from others. In summary, regardless of the psychological mechanism, the ultimate goal is to avoid loneliness and gain a sense of security.

3. THE PATH OF MODERN PEOPLE TOWARDS POSITIVE FREEDOM

Fromm pondered on the psychological mechanisms formed by humans in the pursuit of freedom and proposed countermeasures - the pursuit of positive freedom. Freedom has long been distorted in capitalist society, and the structure of life has been completely transformed to be filled with material possessions. All energy has been devoted to possessing material possessions, which is mistaken for a way to escape the dilemma of survival. However, modern people who are busy pursuing material things but have no time to think have not realized that

they have fallen into the "trap of safety". Thus, Fromm proposed the pursuit of positive freedom and provided some insights for people.

The first thing we need to consider is to distinguish between truth and falsehood. When faced with ideals, desires, feelings, and hopes, how can we determine that they are what we need from the depths of our hearts rather than what we need brainwashed? The true characteristics are in line with human growth and happiness, that is, all goals that promote self growth, freedom, and happiness are true. They are completely in line with people's pursuit, but the difficulty lies in whether we can discover them. Secondly, the realization of positive freedom and individualism is closely linked to changes in the economy and society, which allow individuals to gain freedom in realizing themselves. In the pursuit of positive freedom, we need to understand that freedom beyond economic foundations does not exist, and this is also the standard for checking whether we are pursuing positive freedom. Finally, this is also the most important point. Personal creativity is the most important skill for survival in modern society. Modern people born in the machine society have embarked on the path of creativity from the beginning of their education. In Fromm's view, the most creative people are children and artists, but it does not mean that we living on the assembly line cannot have artistic qualities. He pointed out that people should avoid being called huge gears, and there are ways to change this situation in the unchanging workplace. For example, people can enhance their value in the workplace, avoid being bound by machines and work systems, and also improve collectivity in work organizations (which can help everyone find their place in the organization). Cooperation can promote oneself. Freedom, Freedom can also promote the development of cooperation.

True freedom affirms that breaking free from external constraints is a necessary condition for obtaining true freedom, affirms the dignity and value of the individual, and at the same time inspires inner transcendence through spontaneous human activity. Spontaneous activity is the free activity of the self, the free activity of human will, and in the infinite freedom of self creation, the transcendence of loneliness is achieved with a high spirit. Fromm's views have their unrealistic side, but there are also many reasonable elements, as they are highly consistent with Marx's views on the free and comprehensive development of human beings and are more specific to a certain extent.

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