March 19, 1980

Dear Sisters: (copy to be read to all locals)

The death of Erich Fromm naturally saddened me, the more so that when I looked into our lengthy correspondence I found that not only had it continued over two full decades, but that he was so magnificently objective a person that he would not be deterred by the fact that psychoanalysts were evidently not my favorite breed of people. The first time I heard from him -- and it was upon his initiative -- was with the publication of MARXISM AND FREEDOM, when he congratulated me upon it and asked me to translate two more of Marx's Essays. I said no because I had been translating it from the Russian and it would have been a double-translation. The point is that I had evidently made it clear that my admiration was for Marx not Freud. He nevertheless sent me his essay, "Marx's Concept of Man"-- and even accepted my criticism that it was abstract, writing to me: "As to the substance of the points you make about the concrete nature of Marx's humanism, I naturally entirely agree with you. Also about what you write of the role of the Plant psychoanalyst and Daniel Bell's position."

The reason I singled out the form of a Dear Sisters letter was that, in warming up to Fromm and re-reading the correspondence I found that he had quite a bit to say about the Man/Woman relationship; he even repeated the manner in which I write it -- with both capitalized and a slash between. And, of all things, he referred back to Bachofen. It turns out that he found reading of Bachofen congenial, not because he believed in any matriarchal society, but because it did give a vision of an alternate society to the patriarchal, authoritarian, capitalistic, alienating existing society. He even had a word for it : patricentric-aquisitive.

When Terry was working on Susan E. Blow I wrote to him about Blow's experience with Dr. Putnam, the Freudian psychoanalyst whom she interested in Hegelian dialectics, and who, in turn, tried to get the anti-Hegelian Freud interested. Here is what Fromm wrote me: " I find it of considerable historical interest, and Freud's reaction to Putnam's philosophical remarks is also an interesting historical footnote to Freud and the history of the psychoanalytic movement. Why don't you write a note on this and publish it somewhere?" Whereupon he tried to get me to write for Contemporary Psychoanalysis or the Spanish psychoanalytic journal Revista.

What excited me most was his attitude to my work on Rosa Luxemburg: "I feel that the male Social Democrats never could understand Rosa Luxemburg, nor could she acquire the influence for which she had the potential because she was a woman; and the men could not become full revolutionaries because they did not emancipate themselves from their male, patriarchal, and hence dominating, character structure. After all, the original exploitation is that of women by men and there is no social liberation as long as there is no revolution in the sex war ending in full equality, which has never existed since pre-history. I believe she was one of the few fully developed human beings, one who showed what a human being can be in the future....Unfortunately I have known nobody who still knows her personally. What a bad break between the generations."

Yours,

Raya

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