

# THE ETHICAL CHALLENGE OF TOURAINE'S 'LIVING TOGETHER'

by

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Published in: The Journal of Global Ethics 3 (1), 2007.

Alain Touraine's *Can We Live Together?*<sup>1</sup> is a radical response to the perceived sundering of the world into two continents, one in which all social ties are loosened in the face of rampant marketisation, and one in which communities seek to defend their purity at the cost of excluding all new ideas (Touraine, 2000, p. 3). He seeks an alternative in which all individuals have the power to forge their life projects in a multicultural social context infused with a spirit of social solidarity. Around this vision of an emancipated Subject he outlines the development of radical democracy as cultural liberation, a grand ideal which amounts to nothing less than the 'recomposition of the world' (Touraine, 2000, p. 195). For Touraine this necessitates first a move "From Politics to Ethics" and then a move "From Ethics to Politics" (Touraine, 2000, pp. 294-305), and it is the elusive nature of this 'ethics' which is the central concern of this paper. It will be argued that while an invocation of ethics and a revivification of politics is indeed necessary to achieve the change of direction which Touraine hopes for, his unwillingness to contemplate anything but the 'thinnest' form of universalism dissipates his appeal to ethics and makes the call for the emergence of an ethical politics purely gestural. Without an appeal to an ideal of common humanity it is difficult to imagine an advance towards the sort of radical democratic solidarity that he seeks. In this paper I suggest that such an appeal to common humanity is available in the form of the radical humanism expounded by Erich Fromm (1900 – 1980) in his 1947 text *Man For Himself* and in subsequent writings. This radical humanism is an explicit character or virtue ethics developed decades before the revival of this approach in modern philosophy (Crisp and Slote, 1997; Statman, 1997), and it is central to his goal of cosmopolitan human solidarity.

What follows is in four parts. The first part summarises Touraine's articulation of the need for a radical new Subject but argues that despite his identification of the centrality of ethics in his account there is a conspicuous silence about the content of such an ethics. The second part outlines Fromm's

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<sup>1</sup> Touraine's book was first published in 1997 as *Pourrons-nous vivre ensemble? Egaux et Différents*, Librairie Arthème Fayard, Paris.

humanistic ethics as a perspective which could fill this lacuna, and also indicates the uncompromising nature of his anti-nationalist commitment to human solidarity. Although Fromm was not a political theorist, his work offers a sound ethical foundation on which such a political theory of human solidarity could be built. An essential precondition for this is the clarification of the central qualities identified by Fromm as necessary for the realisation of our human essence – reason, love, and productive work – and this will be dealt with in the third section. The final section considers the problem of the compatibility of the radical humanist approach and Touraine's perspective. Despite the similarity of their goals, radical humanism calls into question Touraine's reluctance to specify the ethics which he considers to be so important and also refutes his commitment to the nation as a vehicle for promoting his normative project.

### **Touraine's Politics of the Subject**

Touraine's book confronts the problem of the increasing fragmentation of societies in the face of unfettered market forces. His analysis of the human condition and his normative commitment to a 'Politics of the Subject' is refreshing because its central thrust is the Subject conceived as the individual attempt to transform lived experience into the construction of the self as an actor. It is an assertion of freedom against the seemingly overwhelming constraints imposed by market forces on the one hand and the confinement of strong communitarianism on the other (Touraine, 2000, pp. 13–14 & p.57). Although the Subject is the starting point it needs for its realisation a social movement and a social goal. Thus democracy is its goal and the achievement of the Subject is deemed to be inseparable from the development of intercultural communication and human solidarity. Such a goal involves the realisation of the three 'inseparable' and inter-related themes, namely the Subject, communication, and solidarity (Touraine, 2000, p. 301). Touraine

displays a hard-headed awareness of the social forces which have eroded progress towards achieving the old revolutionary principles of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and in the age of globalisation he translates these principles into the imperatives of recognising cultural diversity, rejecting exclusion, and 'the right of every individual to have a life story in which he or she can realise, at least to some extent, a personal and collective project' (Touraine, 2000, p. 252).

Touraine argues that the economy and culture have become divorced or 'dissociated' (Touraine, 2000, p. 9). The emergence of economic globalisation has destroyed old forms of social and political association and left politics in a state of decay, reducing the ambition of 'government' to the administration of economic and social organisation in order to maintain competitiveness in the global economy. While politicians look to the world market, voters look to their private lives (Touraine, 2000, p. 5). The space between the realities of the economic system and the desocialised mass culture is often taken up by increasingly conservative appeals to values and institutions that are no longer fit for purpose. One response to this crisis of modernity is to revive social models of the past which stress unity and emphasise 'us', but this call for community, even if it is infused with liberal sentiments, is inevitably exclusionary and therefore authoritarian. The second is the postmodernist view that we should embrace the rupture that is desocialization and celebrate the new diversity, emphasising the 'me', but the problem here is that the regulation of social life is left to the market and leaves us defenceless against its consequences such as violence and racism (Touraine, 2000, pp. 6-7). In his view this would provoke an 'inevitable backlash' of nationalistic, ethnic, or religious fundamentalisms (Touraine, 2000, p. 149). A more promising alternative is the liberal commitment to procedural democracy with rules guaranteeing respect for personal and collective freedoms. However, this is a minimalist solution which safeguards coexistence but does not ensure communication – Touraine likens it to recognizing Chinese as a cultured language but not being able to converse

with the Chinese because we haven't learned to speak the language (Touraine, 2000, p. 8).

What power then, can bring together and reconcile a transnational economy and infra-national identities? The answer he proposes to fill this space between instrumentality and identity is a personal life project which implies a refusal to allow our experience to be reduced to a 'discontinuous set of responses to the stimuli of the social environment' (Touraine, 2000, p. 13). The 'Subject' is formed in the attempt to transform lived experience into the construction of the self as a social actor, and, as such, it is the 'only possible' source of social movements that can oppose the masters of economic change or communitarian dictators. The second part of Touraine's book deals with how this apparently non-social principle can be used to reconstruct social life (Touraine, 2000, p. 14), or to defend an ideal of solidarity, as he expresses it in the conclusion (Touraine, 2000, p. 299). The first principle is one of reciprocity, whereby the Subject can develop only if others are recognized as Subjects striving to reconcile a cultural memory and an instrumental project, as in multiculturalism, the topic of chapter five. The second is that the Subject requires institutional safeguards, and the politics of the Subject develops around this project, as when he discusses an alternative educational system in chapter eight, "A School for the Subject". Touraine argues that there is a central conflict being waged, by a Subject 'struggling against the triumph of the market and technologies, on the one hand, and communitarian authoritarian powers, on the other.' (Touraine, 2000, p. 89). This cultural conflict is as central as the political conflict between the liberals and monarchists in the early centuries of modernity, and the economic conflict between labour and capital in industrial society.

This idea of a central conflict erupting at the level of individual experience brings to mind a similar dichotomy developed by Erich Fromm, encapsulated in the title of his last major work, *To Have or To Be?*, published in 1976. Fromm, like Touraine, places the normative emphasis on the development of critical faculties in all individuals, contributing to a social movement of ethical reconstruction. They both recognize the importance of

ethics in the development of solidarity, but Touraine's discussion of ethics in the conclusion to *Can We Live Together?* begs the question of what constitutes the content of such a liberational ethics. His consideration of "the ethical basis of social life" in chapter four poses the problem of the nature of this ethics but leaves the answer frustratingly elusive (Touraine, 2000, pp. 137-139). Touraine concludes that neither liberalism nor communitarianism can explain how inter-cultural communication is possible, 'or how we can live together with our differences' (Touraine, 2000, p. 138). The universalism of liberalism is so far removed from the reality of social life that it offers no more than procedural safeguards for tolerance and cannot provide a principle for social integration or inter-cultural communication. Communitarians emphasise shared values but, argues Touraine, the logic of their standpoint privileges homogeneity over diversity. Even when communitarians attempt to overcome this problem by emphasising tolerance they fall back into a position similar to that of the liberals. What Touraine seems to be getting at here is that for both perspectives the 'other' is recognized after a fashion, but remains estranged from either the individual or the group.

In order to light the way for a genuine inter-cultural communication Touraine elects for a principle of mediation which is more concrete than the liberal universalist principle or the appeal to cultural communities. It is found in the individual action that allows us all to reconcile instrumental action and cultural loyalties in our personal lives, in the process of which we become truly individual. When society recognizes and safeguards every individual's attempt to become a Subject, and encourages every individual to succeed in reconciling instrumentality and identity, inter-cultural communication becomes possible. He accepts that there can be no communication unless those communicating have a common unitary principle, but only the *attempt* at reconciling instrumental action and identity can supply that principle, and that is the definition of the Subject. Crucially, he adds that the individual cannot recognize her or his own desire to be an actor without recognizing that others also have the right to be actors in their own lives, something which he regards as akin to a 'natural right or an ethical law' (Touraine, 2000, p. 138).

Later in the book he reaffirms that it is not simply the recognition of the 'other' that is important, but the recognition of the basis of the other's subjectivization (Touraine, 2000, p. 247). Touraine clearly feels that this sort of appeal is preferable to an appeal to shared communitarian values which, he feels, implies a form of homogenising power which is bound to provoke resistance from the Subject. Resistance of this sort, he argues, has been underestimated by Habermas and Rawls in their attempts to provide general principles and procedures which, if followed, would promote social harmony.

According to Touraine the pain of not being a Subject gives rise to the 'tragic power' of a social movement. We are divided and fragmented, but what can allow us to live together is the 'kinship' between our attempts to harmonise our interests and our cultural identities (Touraine, 2000, p. 139). It is interesting that he chooses to use 'kinship' in this respect, because it implies a natural basis for the development of this ethic of self-realisation, but clearly this is not a path which Touraine wants to go down. His approach implies that any invocation of such 'thick' universal principles as 'common humanity' would lead to the negative outcomes he attributes to communitarian logic. However, without a consideration of common human needs it becomes difficult to argue *why* people should choose to move away from either egoism or enclavism. Touraine asserts that the starting point for the universalism of the Subject has to involve placing restrictions on the powers of markets on the one hand and communities on the other (Touraine, 2000, p. 140), but it is hard to imagine how support for such a radical turn could be generated on the basis of an appeal to his very 'thin' ethical law of reciprocal freedom. Radical humanism tries to address these issues by considering the questions of human nature and human flourishing. It aims to draw out from people's own experience a recognition of the deep inadequacy of both egotism and tribalism and an awareness of the possibility of richer ways of self-realisation and inter-cultural communication.

## Radical Humanism

In *Man For Himself* Erich Fromm argues that 'there is no meaning to life except the meaning man gives his life by the unfolding of his powers, by living productively' (Fromm, 1990, p. 45). Fromm's psychological inquiry into ethics reveals an adherence to a character ethics which lies within the tradition of virtue ethics, which, at that time (1947), had been eclipsed within philosophy as an academic discipline. Moral philosophy was largely concerned with a 'rules and principles' approach which focuses on the rights and wrongs of particular actions in particular circumstances, whereas virtue ethics, dating back to Ancient Greece, is grounded in a teleological perspective which conceives of the ideal character in the good society and focuses on the virtues which are required to achieve that end. Fromm, coming from a background in psychoanalysis and sociology rather than philosophy, reaches back to the older form of ethical philosophy to focus on questions of human essence and human flourishing.

Before outlining Fromm's contribution to humanistic ethics it should be acknowledged that there is great resistance in the social sciences to anything that smacks of 'essentialism' or teleology, based on the suspicion that arguments of this sort may be (or *must* be) deterministic, reductionist and incompatible with the defence of difference. I have argued elsewhere that the radical humanist perspective does not fall into these traps, despite the fact that it operates with a strong view of human essence and a normative commitment to the fulfilment of positive human potential and is therefore essentialist and teleological (Wilde, 2004b, pp. 50-54; Wilde, 2000, pp. 41-45). It is important to consider what such an ethic actually looks like and what it has to offer that might be absent from mainstream approaches to global ethics. One advantage is that it offers criteria for human flourishing that can be utilised to assess the extent to which certain ideas and movements can move us closer to the goal of 'living together'. It is interesting that even Richard Rorty, an arch-opponent of appeals to 'common humanity', nevertheless feels the need to fall back on a veiled form of essentialism based



on the uniquely human experience of humiliation, in his attempt to argue for greater human solidarity and moral progress (Rorty, 1989, p. 92 and pp. 189-91). Not only does this call into question his derision of 'metaphysics' (Geras, 1995, pp. 47-70; Wilde, 2004a, pp. 162-167), but it indicates a need for greater clarity on the questions of human nature and human flourishing, something that is offered by the radical humanist approach.

Fromm regards the human essence not as a given quality or substance but as 'a contradiction inherent in human existence' (Fromm, 1964, pp. 116-117). This contradiction lies in our being simultaneously part of nature and yet transcending nature. Unlike other animals the instinctual apparatus of humans is very poorly developed, but this weakness is compensated by the development of the essential human qualities. Human beings develop self-awareness, becoming aware of the past and the inevitability of death, of our own smallness and powerlessness, and of our relationship to others as friends, enemies, or strangers. This self-awareness disrupts the oneness which other animals experience and turns us into anomalous beings, at once subject to the laws of nature and yet transcending nature. Human existence is in a 'state of constant and unavoidable disequilibrium,' but this condition generates needs which transcend those of animal origin and result in an 'imperative drive to restore a unity and equilibrium' between humanity and the rest of nature.

There are both regressive and progressive responses to this existential dilemma. As a psychoanalyst and a social psychologist Fromm dealt with the regressive responses, in the form of neuroses in individuals and what he termed a 'socially patterned defect' at the social level (Fromm, 1990, p. 221). However, what concerns us chiefly here is his idea of a progressive response to the human dilemma, encapsulated in his early work as a drive towards freedom, and, in *Man For Himself*, as the development of the productive character. The productive character displays the independent, rational realization of our potentials, in a general 'mode of relatedness' in all realms of human experience (Fromm, 1990, pp. 87-88). Through productiveness we resolve the paradox of human existence by simultaneously expressing our

oneness with others *and* our uniqueness (Fromm, 1990, pp. 96-97). He specifies the necessity of achieving happiness by the full realisation of the quintessentially human qualities of reason, love, and productive work. (Fromm, 1990, p. 45). We will clarify in the next section what 'full' realisation of these qualities meant to Fromm and what it might mean for radical humanism in the age of globalisation, but at this juncture it is important to note the utmost importance he attaches to the general social relation without which such a realisation was impossible, the condition of solidarity. Humans can find fulfilment and happiness 'only in relatedness to and solidarity with' our fellow humans, and this love of our neighbour is not a power *transcending* humanity but rather something inherent in and radiating from us (Fromm, 1990, p. 14). Nor was this commitment to solidarity assumed to develop within some vague notion of 'society', for Fromm was very clear that it was human solidarity, the solidarity of all humanity, that had to be forged. Furthermore, in a lecture in 1962 he predicted that the emergence of the One World was imminent, and that it would probably be the most revolutionary event in the history of mankind (Fromm, 1998, p. 61). This leaves a difficult problem, for such a cosmopolitan consciousness is not widespread and allegiances to the nation have demonstrated remarkable durability.

Fromm's response to the challenge of nationalism was uncompromising. Viewing nationalism as an 'incestuous fixation' which poisons the relationships not only of the individual to the stranger but also to members of the clan and to himself/herself, Fromm considers the person who is still in thrall to ties of blood and soil as not yet fully born, as the capacity for love and reason is crippled. Fromm argues that 'nationalism is our form of incest...our idolatry...our insanity,' and that 'patriotism' is its cult', although he is careful to distinguish that attitude which puts nation above humanity and above the principles of truth and justice from a loving interest in one's own nation (Fromm, 1991, pp. 58-59). He goes on to assert that love for one's country which is not part of one's love for humanity is not love at all, but idolatrous worship. In his view, nationalism offers a feeling of security which is unnatural, for the free person is, of necessity, insecure, and the psychic

task which people should set for themselves is not to feel secure but to be able to tolerate insecurity 'without panic and undue fear' (Fromm, 1991, p. 196) In psychological terms, regression to the incestuous fixation of nationalism can be reversed only through the development of love and reason towards the goal of 'human solidarity and justice,' a new form of rootedness which will transform the world into a truly human home (Fromm, 1991, p. 60). Fromm accepts that the tendency to remain bound to our primal ties is inherent, but it is constantly in conflict with the opposite tendency to progress and to grow, and the latter is the progressive and healthy path. We must choose the latter and transcend the group narcissism that is nationalism if we are to move closer to the goal of human solidarity. Fromm suggests two ways in which we could move towards a benign narcissism without reducing the narcissistic energy in each person. The first is that the object of narcissism be changed to that of mankind, the entire human family, so that the creativity of the species is celebrated and shared. The second is a feature common to all benign narcissism, namely the development of an emphasis on achievement, through common goals for the eradication of hunger and disease and for the dissemination of knowledge and culture (Fromm, 1964, pp. 90-91). However distant these possibilities may appear, Fromm considers that the advancement of the philosophical idea of the equality of all human beings has at least prepared the way for the emergence of a new form of cosmopolitanism.

## REASON, LOVE, AND PRODUCTIVE WORK

One of the problems with character or virtue ethics is that the qualities which are commended as of universal value are invariably culturally specific and frustratingly ambiguous. As such they lose their purchase when it comes to mobilising them into a meaningful applied ethics. In the case of Fromm's radical humanism, the specified qualities are already present as manifestations of our human essence, but their expression is considered to be

alienated. The potentials are real but unfulfilled, and there is a hiatus between our essence and our existence. It is therefore vital to ascertain what the 'full realisation' of these qualities would look like in order to form a clearer picture of what would constitute human flourishing. As with Touraine's conception of the Subject, Fromm focuses on the potential of each individual, on the explicit understanding that true self-realisation is possible only in the context of self-realisation for all. For a condition of solidarity to prevail it is necessary that these potentials are realised by most members of society, in accordance with the normative goal originally expressed by Marx and Engels whereby 'we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all' (Marx and Engels, 1976, p. 506).

Fromm's concept of reason owes a great deal to Spinoza, who emphasises the need to understand the causes of the choices we make and the consequence of those choices in order that we can develop our active emotions. To submit to passive emotions generated by uncomprehended external forces is, for Spinoza, a failure of reason, and, indeed, he comments that the miser who thinks of nothing but money or profit and the ambitious man who thinks of nothing except glory have succumbed to a species of madness (Spinoza, 2002, p. 169). In Spinoza's view, therefore, extreme egotism is not simply a moral failing, it is an offence against reason, and he argues that to live under the guidance of reason is simultaneously to seek what is good for oneself and to act according to virtue (Spinoza, 2002, p. 155). As we are naturally social beings this involves a drive for greater interaction with others and with the world in general (see Collier, 1999, p. 41). Whatever promotes agreement also promotes reason and the good, whereas that which fosters discord is irrational and bad (Spinoza, 2002, p. 68). As Fromm points out, Spinoza considers true self-knowledge to involve awareness that we are social beings and also the determination to act upon that awareness (Fromm, 1964, pp. 144-145).

Translated into modern sociological discourse, the radical humanist conception of reason comes closer to Weber's idea of 'substantive rationality',

whereby actions are calculated according to their efficiency in achieving 'ultimate ends' which inevitably involve some sort of ethical commitment (Weber, 1978, pp. 85-86). In a valuable discussion of Weber's typology of rationality, Immanuel Wallerstein points out that Weber draws two pairs of distinctions, between 'instrumental' and 'value' rationality in the sphere of social action, and between 'formal' and 'substantive' in the sphere of economic action. 'Value rationality' refers to action informed by ethical considerations which is undertaken irrespective of its prospects for success, and Weber is clearly sceptical of its prospects in the face of the seductive power of instrumental rationality. However, he is far more receptive to the possibility of achieving substantive rationality, and this opens up the possibility of subordinating the pursuit of short-term individual gain to long-term social goals (Wallerstein, 1999, pp. 141-144). The unfettered pursuit of utility maximisation in open markets in the nineteenth and early twentieth century produced vast inequalities in the distribution of resources, but this was rectified to some extent within the industrialised countries by the emergence of the welfare state. In the twenty-first century, the challenge to reassert substantive rationality now shifts to the management of the world economy. Although Weber was careful not to specify what the 'ultimate ends' ought to be, for radical humanism the focus is clearly on freedom and equality. The aim would be to strive for a situation in which individuals are free to develop their potentials with an awareness that this freedom entails the freedom of all others to do likewise. This is very close to Touraine's goal of the reconciliation of instrumental reason with cultural identity, which he describes as the defining feature of the Subject, (Touraine, 2000, pp. 292).

This conception of reason brings morality back into our choices – doing the right thing is not simply about utility maximisation by atomised individuals but about the self-realisation of social citizens. As John Holloway argues in *Change the World Without Taking Power*, the formalisation of reason that has occurred in modernity is at the same time the separation of the is from what ought to be – not the elimination of 'ought' but its separation from the 'is' (Holloway, 2002, pp. 66-67). Now, if we reintegrate the 'ought' into the

exercise of reason this calls into question the strict separation of faith and reason insisted upon by many humanists. In the radical humanism associated with the work of Fromm the ethical choice displays a faith in the potential of humanity to establish a harmonious world, and as such he regards his own position as a form of non-theistic religiosity, in which religion is defined by its provision of a common frame of orientation and an object of devotion (see Wilde, 2004b, pp. 45-50). This opens up the possibility of communication between humanism and religion at the level of ethics, especially given the fact that most religions share a commitment to some version of the 'Golden Rule' (Küng, 1997, pp. 98-99). In practical terms the possibility of such communication is vital if there were to be real progress towards human solidarity, but the aggressively anti-religious perspective of conventional Enlightenment humanism precludes this. Rorty falls into this category, for despite his enthusiasm for human solidarity, he dismisses appeals grounded in notions of common humanity as no more than 'a philosopher's invention...an awkward attempt to secularise the idea of becoming one with God' (Rorty, 1981, p. 198). The problem that arises here is that the rationalist's scorn for theology and metaphysics precludes a meaningful dialogue with millions of 'believers' without whose involvement human solidarity will remain a chimera. Fromm, in contrast, emphasises the positive relation between reason and religious thought, while remaining sceptical of the constructive impact of all organised religions. He views religion as a manifestation of the human need to make sense of our existential dilemma. In *Psychoanalysis and Religion* he argues that throughout the Judaeo-Christian tradition there is a religious strain which sees God as a symbol of what humanity potentially can be, as opposed to authoritarian religion in which God's perfection serves to highlight our own powerlessness (Fromm, 1978, p. 37). In this respect we note here the influence of Herman Cohen's *Religion of Reason*, in which he speculates that religion might be the 'mark that distinguishes man from animal', and argues that the origin of religion is reason itself, as the first attempt to make sense of the purpose of life (Cohen, 1995, p. 6).

To encourage the practice of reason outlined above would require a fundamental change of direction whereby societies openly prioritised human welfare above the narrow economic needs of the economic system. The role of education becomes a central issue here, as has been recognised by a number of radical reformers, including Fromm (1964, pp. 91-92), Touraine, and Roberto Unger. Touraine emphasises the importance of a radical reform of education in his chapter "A School for the Subject" (Touraine, 2000, pp. 265-287), and Roberto Unger does something very similar *Democracy Realized* in which he talks about schools encouraging the emergence of 'little prophets' capable of developing critical thought (Unger, 1998, pp. 229-235). However, such schemes tend to look Utopian in the context of the movement of education towards greater and greater emphasis on instrumental rationality. If we think rather of what tendencies there are to encourage substantive rationality *despite* the apparent triumph of neo-liberalism we see another aspect of globalisation, namely, the emergence of debates at the individual level about purpose and quality of life, at the social level in the various claims for recognition, and at the political level in terms of North-South relations and issues of trade, debt, and development. The emergence of a variety of movements – new social movements and anti-capitalist networks – is challenging this separation of the is from the ought and bringing the 'big', directional questions into wider consideration.

Turning now to the concept of love, this does not figure largely in social theory because it is assumed to be so intimate and private that it is not appropriate to consider it at the social level. Yet this is so central to all our lives – even in its absence – that it cannot be ignored. 'Love', writes Fromm, 'is the only sane and satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence' (Fromm, 1995, p. 104). The emphasis which Fromm places on love reflects the influence not only of his reading of the Prophets and his attachment to philosophical humanism, but also his clinical work in psychoanalysis, for it is here that he was able to see the damage caused by the withholding of love in childhood. He argues that love is a potential within us all, a character trait expressive of a loving person. It is not something suddenly 'triggered' by our

interaction with an intimate 'other', but rather a capacity which is developed and expressed to all those with whom we come into contact. Erotic love, of course, is particular, not general, but it is likely to be deceptive if it is not infused with a more general, loving disposition (Fromm, 1995, pp. 41-45). Thus for Fromm love is not an abstraction coming *after* the love of a specific person, but rather the premise on which that lover is based. Fromm terms his ideal form of love 'brotherly' love, which may be more usefully conceived as 'compassion'. It involves the responsibility, care and respect we practise towards others, beginning with love of the helpless, the poor, and the stranger, based on an understanding that what we share in common as human beings is far more important than our differences (Fromm, 1995, pp. 37-38).

In order to develop this capacity we must love our selves, not in the form of egotism or selfishness, but in the sense of the biblical exhortation to 'love thy neighbour as thyself'. Fromm regards self-love as the basic affirmation of one's own life which is rooted in one's capacity to love. Selfish people are not only incapable of loving others but are incapable of loving themselves (Fromm, 1995, p. 48), but if we are to love others then this implies love of humanity in general, and this must include our own 'selves'. The significance of this view cannot be over-stated, for it constitutes an attack on self-renunciation, the psychological malaise at the heart of alienation. Fromm identifies two forms of this. First, the theological self-hate in versions of Christian thought reaching back to St. Augustine and expressed forcefully by Luther and Calvin, for whom 'self-humiliation and the destruction of human pride' are central themes according to whom we are powerless and helpless sinners (Fromm, 1994, p. 84). This view of the self as unworthy and miserable becomes etched deep into western patriarchal culture. It resonates in political philosophy in the wretchedness of Hobbes's man in the state of nature and in psychoanalysis in Freud's death instinct. The second version emerges only in the twentieth century with the rise of what Fromm terms the 'marketing character' who adjusts constantly to the needs of the market and in so doing loses sight of her/his own 'self' (Fromm, 1990, pp. 67-82).



Although this character may take on a celebratory appearance it is based on a constant fear of 'not measuring up' and is often manifested in destructive competitiveness.

Fromm regrets that despite the deep-seated craving for love, almost everything else is considered more important – success, prestige, money, power. Something that appears to profit only the soul and not the pocket may be considered a luxury for which we dare not spare our energy. Fromm devotes a chapter of *The Art of Loving* to the ways in which individuals can resist the pressures of ultra-competitive society and develop the capacity to love. He accepts that in a commodity-greedy society it is difficult even for a non-conformist to express consistently a loving attitude and is in no doubt that 'the principle underlying capitalist society and the principle of love are incompatible' (Fromm, 1995, pp. 103) Nevertheless, the principle of ruthless competitiveness does not necessarily predominate in the lived experience of social relationships, which are often respectful and supportive despite (and often because of) the antagonistic structures within which they operate. It is precisely in this 'space' that the struggle to realise the potential to love might become embedded in social struggles aimed at resisting discriminations of various sorts, such as racism, sexism, and the exploitation of the less developed world. Such struggles open up the issue of respect for persons in a way which is conducive to the development of a re-prioritisation of values so that care for ourselves and our fellow sentient beings takes precedence over competitive success.

Turning now to the third quintessentially human quality, 'productive work', it may seem to be more a necessity than a virtue. However, Fromm considers work, in principle, to be a key expression of our humanity. He argues that in productive activity we transform the world and realize our own nature as rational, creative beings. In his discussion of what constitutes an authentic 'self' in *Escape From of Freedom* he extols the virtues of spontaneous activity and specifies our capacity to love and work as the two foremost components of this spontaneity. He refers to work as an act of creation which binds us closer to nature in distinction from work either as

compulsive activity to escape from loneliness, which he characterizes as 'busyness', or as a drive to dominate nature which ends up enslaving us to technology (Fromm, 1994, pp. 259-260). In *The Sane Society* Fromm locates productive work with the other essential qualities necessary for the development of an ideal society which furthers human solidarity, 'stimulates its members 'to relate themselves to each other lovingly,' furthers 'the productive activity of everybody in his work' and 'stimulates the unfolding of reason' (Fromm, 1991, p. 276).

This idea that work as a creative interaction with nature is central to what it is to be human has the teleological implication that self-realisation should involve social control over our productive lives with a maximisation of individual choice and opportunity for self-development. However, while capitalism leads to an immense development of the productive forces it does so through a social and technical division of labour which frustrates those goals. In reality unskilled work is often experienced as drudgery, and even many highly remunerated workers experience work as incessant pressure which detracts from the positive experience of life (Sennett, 1998; Beck, 2000). Fromm insists that this reaction to work as it is presently organised does not constitute a rejection of the inclination to work *per se*. He argues that laziness is not normal but rather a symptom of 'mental pathology,' that boredom is one of the worst forms of mental suffering, and that most people would prefer to be active even without monetary reward (Fromm, 2002, pp. 100-101). So, there is a deeply rooted desire in human beings 'to express our faculties, to be active, to be related to others, to escape the prison cell of selfishness' (Fromm, 2002: 196), but modern society does little to satisfy this desire, and indeed the organisation of the productive system actively discourages it by imposing insecurity and coercion in various forms on the workers.

The conventional socialist solution to the problem of alienation in the experience of work is for the workers to take control of the productive process. In practice, however, state control over production normally excluded workers from decision-making processes. In the few examples of

strong workers' participation in controlling their enterprises, those enterprises were still constrained by market forces. And as long as capitalism continues to offer greater productivity than socially-owned productive systems, the socialist goal remains elusive. Fromm was still committed to such a goal, 'where work would be attractive and meaningful, where capital would not employ labour but labour would employ capital' (Fromm, 1991, pp. 283-4), but he was realistic enough to recognise that progress towards the long-term goal would need to be stimulated by reforms to the work experience in the era of corporate capital. In particular he gave enthusiastic support to the idea of an unconditional basic guaranteed income for all, for without the threat of the withdrawal of all income the employers would have to make the experience of work as attractive as possible (Fromm, 1991, pp. 335-338). Fromm considered that the implications of making the labour contract genuinely 'free' for the first time would have a much wider impact in enhancing inter-personal relationships, and this has been uppermost in the minds of other social theorists who have supported the idea (e.g. Van Parijs, 1992; Gorz, 1999). In general Fromm's appeal to promote life-affirming work centred on the empowerment of workers through participation in decision-making, the democratisation of social planning, and the importance of trade unions in defending the dignity of labour (Wilde, 2004b, pp. 81-90).

## IMPLICATIONS

Can the radical humanism outlined above supplement Touraine's project and flesh out the ethics which he wants to bring back in? In philosophical terms there are clear differences in the two positions but the 'ultimate ends' are not incompatible. In political terms, however, their perspectives on the role of the nation in forging solidarity are irreconcilable.

The philosophical differences centre on the question of universalism. Radical humanism is, by definition, a universalist perspective founded on a commitment to the reconciliation of human existence and human essence.

Touraine specifically rejects two invocations of universalism, Walzer's idea of 'reiterative universalism' and Habermas's idea of communicative action based on the universality of reason, and in the course of the discussion he also voices his impatience with the empty abstraction of Kantian ethics (Touraine, 2000, p. 175). Instead he 'avoids' the problem of universalism by urging us to become 'more sociological' and less ambitious and to concentrate on the similarity of the processes through which all cultures struggle to reconcile order and change, socialisation and individuation (Touraine, 2000, p. 176). For Touraine, 'the only universalism is that of a Subject defined, not by values or even by an appeal to the universality of its experience, but solely by its attempts to reconcile instrumentality and identity (Touraine, 2000, p. 178). This seems to me a very thin form of universalism which leaves no basis for an ethics which could reach out to all cultures. Without this, his appeal to move from politics to ethics and then from ethics back to politics (Touraine, 2000, pp. 294-305) is rendered gestural. The 'thick' form of universalism that is radical humanism, in contrast, encourages just such a consideration of shared experiences, but with normative goals which can resonate with ethical commitments shared across cultures and religions.

The major political difference between radical humanism and the politics of the Subject centres on Touraine's commitment to the idea of national unity as being as much a 'primary objective' as solidarity (Touraine, 2000, p. 229). Touraine is committed to a form of national identity that is 'oriented towards the struggle against exclusion', one which is 'essential if we are to avoid a complete break between economic globalisation and cultural fragmentation' (Touraine, 2000, p. 229). He seeks to harness this powerful source of collective identity for the reconstruction of an inclusive society. From the radical humanist perspective, nationalism is by definition exclusionary and constitutes the principal ideological obstacle to the goal of human solidarity. No matter how strongly liberal nationalist arguments distance themselves from the 'bad' aspects of nationalism and emphasize the importance of the nation as a vehicle for unifying difference, the essentially tribalistic element will continue to surface. As we have seen, in Fromm's view

nationalism is an offence against reason. As a psychoanalyst he was struck by the power of the emotional attraction of nationalism and its irrational basis. The anger felt by patriots when a person is deemed to have betrayed his or her patriotic duty is at the level of an uncontrollable deep-seated rage of the sort which is rarely experienced in any other situation (Fromm, 1991, pp. 59-60; Fromm, 1964, pp. 86-87). This volatile and dangerous irrationalism does not provide fertile ground for the development of inclusive solidarity. The power of the 'nation' as an important source of identity is undeniably strong, but its irreducibly exclusive nature means that it is an illusion to think it can be 'turned' and mobilised in the cause of the emergence of the Subject and the recomposition of the world. Such an attempt is doomed to failure and would have to be abandoned in order to clear the ground for something more radical, the achievement of global citizenship (Dower and Williams, 2002; Hardt and Negri, 2001, p. 400). We have to be as bold as Cicero when he stated 'you must now conceive of this whole universe as one commonwealth, of which both gods and men are members' (cited in Fromm, 1998, p. 65).

Touraine expresses the hope that today's intellectual renewal will come from political and moral philosophy (Touraine, 2000, p. 300), and in recent years there have been indications that such a renewal may be happening around cosmopolitan theory (Linklater, 1998; Hutchings, 1999; Jones, 2001; Vertovec and Cohen, 2002; Pogge, 2002; Archibugi, 2003). Radical humanism offers a contribution to cosmopolitan theory and in two important respects it takes a critical but constructive perspective on Touraine's project. First, in promoting a robust universalistic ethics it provides a much clearer picture of what might be involved in the projected move from politics to ethics. Second, it rejects the pragmatic resort to the nation as a vehicle for the development of greater human solidarity, moving our attention instead to the social and political interventions that can develop a cosmopolitan consciousness. Touraine is sceptical of the idea of global citizenship, describing it as 'far removed from observable reality' and 'nothing more than the soft ideology of the promoters of global spectacles' (Touraine, 2000, p. 3), yet in practice so much that we do in terms of effective support for people and the environment

has little to do with the nation-state. For sure we are experiencing a democratic deficit in which global politics lags behind global economics, but those who speak of the 'death of politics' are guilty of an outdated and over-restrictive conception of the nature of politics. The struggles for the realisation of the potentials outlined above operate continuously at a range of levels of political activity, from the social processes of everyday life to the ongoing struggles against the neo-liberal dictates of the WTO, IMF and World Bank. The articulation of these struggles presents a formidable challenge to political activists and progressive social scientists alike, but their significance lies in signalling the forms of social action which would have to be involved in Touraine's final step, the move from ethics back to politics.

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