

To have or to be by erich fromm

Philosophy



College: "Having" and "Being" Erich Fromm has brought out two distinct states of man. These he deemed as "having" and "being". The two states are a contrast of each other. In the mode of "having", Fromm critically analyses how man is obsessed with the materialistic things of the world. In this mode, the human beings are in a constant state of wanting more possessions and money. The society has become very selfish; every individual is for himself. Every effort made is geared towards having some material thing in return. The people want to "have" good education so as to "have" good jobs and salary. The problem with the "having" mode is that the greed for money and possession can never be satisfied no matter how much has acquired. People will always use dubious means to get more; including the exploitation of fellow human beings. "The ordinary man with extraordinary power is the chief danger for mankind" Fromm, (67). There is always a cut-throat competition among members of society in getting more possession. And when one has acquired a certain amount of riches, he is struck by paranoia. He or she is in a constant state of fear that the property may be stolen or that death may come so soon.

Unlike the "having" mode, the "being" mode is quite a stationary state in life. Here, man does not really seem to toil for money and other materialistic things of the world. Man is satisfied with the intangible aspects of life such as peace and harmony. He adores love as the only source of joy: "Love is the only sane and satisfactory answer to the problems of human" (Fromm, 70). He can get pleasure without using money. In fact, everything is a source of his happiness, depending on the perception. The individuals in this state are selfless and can freely share whatever little they have. To them, all the worldly things are meaningless and perishable. Therefore, they see no great

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deal in investing in material things. The problem with the “being” mode is that an individual may be isolated from the modern society whose most members are in the “having” mode. Since the pleasure of the people in this mode is free, they may sometimes misuse this freedom.

The problem with “industrial religion” is that it is economic oriented and enslaves its followers by work. According the ancient religion was viewed as matriarchal where; the church was full of unconditional love and mercy.

However, the modern churches are viewed as patriarchal; justice is the order of the day. Fromm states, “The deepest desire of the human beings looks like a constellation in which these two poles are connected in a synthesis” (Fromm 87). Before, the Roman Catholic religion was matriarchal. During the protestant revolution, an industrial religion emerged that was entirely patriarchal. “Behind the Christian façade, arose a secret religion, ‘industrial religion’ that is rooted in the character structure but not recognised as religion” (Fromm 88). This religion had problems such as fear and submission to very powerful authorities as well as guilt of disobedience. Fromm emphasised that “It is absolutely incompatible with the genuine Christianity. It reduces its subjects to servants of the economy and enslaves to machinery that their own hands made” (90).

Work Cited

Fromm, Erich. To Have or To Be. London. Continuum International Publishing Group. 2005. Print