

Fromm and Habermas: Allies for Adult Education and Democracy

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Abstract The legacy of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research has been a powerful force for critically understanding social reality. Erich Fromm was one of the early and best known members of the Institute. Fromm emphasised the centrality of culture and interpersonal relations in the construction of the psyche. The unconscious was not only the location for buried repressed matter but also for the imaginative potential of the human person. He is a forgotten and neglected contributor to the story of the Institute having been written out of this history. This retrospective of his ideas explores his work in the light of the recent work of Jürgen Habermas who is also an active but less controversial engager with the psychoanalytic tradition. The implications for adult education will be addressed. The paper outlines Fromm's radical reinterpretation of psychoanalysis emphasising the importance of social existence as distinct from the impact of instincts; key concepts of the market, commodity fetishism and automaton conformity; The implications for adult education in the tradition of radical (Freire) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow) and addressed and make connections between Habermas and Fromm that further the project of critical theory. Both attempted in different times to identify and realise the potential of (though neither used the term) of lifelong learning as part of the process of bringing about a more just and caring society and a shared attention to the importance of having free conversations about how the emancipated life might be created and sustained.

Keywords Erich Fromm · Habermas · Psychoanalysis · Adult education · Democracy

The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research has been a hugely influential group of scholars who studied and explored social problems, integrating insights from psychoanalysis and

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Marxism. That legacy is a powerful force for critically understanding social reality. Erich Fromm was one of the early members of the Institute and partly because he wrote well in English and was such an excellent media performer he became arguably the best known and most widely read member of the Institute. The intellectual fault lines of his relations with colleagues in the Institute were deep and divisive and in 1939 he was expelled. Fromm's interpretations of Freud's theory on instincts as well as divisions about the nature of left ideology contributed to the separation becoming permanent. By the mid-1930s Fromm was emphasising the centrality of culture and interpersonal relations in the construction of the psyche. Horkheimer and Adorno saw in this a revisionist threat to the Institute's understanding of instincts that undermined their critical theory of society. The unconscious was not only the location for buried repressed matter but also for the deep and imaginative potential of the human person. Historically he is a forgotten and neglected contributor to the story of the Institute having 'been written out of this history' (McLaughlin 1999, p. 109). It is timely to engage in a retrospective and his ideas will be explored in the light of the recent work of the Institute as represented by Jürgen Habermas who is also an active but less controversial engager with the psychoanalytic tradition. The implications for adult education will be addressed.

The First World War influenced Fromm's thinking and he asked critical questions about mass action, war, the destructive impact of nationalism, the Holocaust, authoritarianism, freedom and the power of the market. Habermas was influenced by a different war, one fought about, for and against national socialism and has been preoccupied with democracy, colonization of the lifeworld, the demise of the public sphere and dilemmas faced by civil society from the economy and state. Both have been active media commentators and public intellectuals and Habermas continues to contribute to public debates regularly. The implications of these insights for the theory and practice of adult education as understood in the tradition of Freire's radical pedagogy and Mezirow's transformative learning theory will be discussed. Lifelong learning has become widely accepted in public policy in the EU and indeed globally and though there are critiques of how the concept is understood and implemented (Coffield 1999) there are possibilities too that lifelong learning might realise its full potential (Fleming, in press, 2011; Murphy 2000).

Habermas (born 1929) and Fromm (1900–1980) are both informed by a common understanding that the internal world of the personality and mind is influenced profoundly by the external social reality;

This heightened sensitivity to the social nature of human beings led to those philosophical approaches that emphasise the intersubjective constitution of the human mind...inside each individual person, we find the reflection of the external social world (Habermas 2008, p. 14).

This paper will outline:

- Fromm's radical reinterpretation of psychoanalysis that emphasises the importance of social existence as distinct from the impact of instincts;
- Fromm as popular author;
- Key concepts of the market, commodity fetishism and automaton conformity;
- The implications of for adult education in the tradition of radical (Freire) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow);
- Connections between the work of Jürgen Habermas and Fromm that further the project of critical theory.

Fromm and Psychoanalysis

From his student days Fromm was attracted to psychoanalysis as Freud's concept of the unconscious led him to the understanding that "much of what we are conscious of is not real and most of what is real is not in our consciousness" (Fromm 1973, p. 14). This allowed for "a new basis for critical thinking" (p. 15) and in one of those moments that makes him sound a thoroughly contemporary figure, Fromm set out to "study the 'pathology of normalcy,' the chronic, low grade schizophrenia which is generated in the cybernated, technological society of to-day and to-morrow" (1973, p. 45).

If Freud did not radically critique capitalist society or question either its socio-economic base or its ideologies (except those that were sexual), Fromm (1955a, p. 1) did. An interest in Marx led him to assert that;

Modern psychology is little concerned with the critical analysis of needs; it accepts the laws of industrial production...by assuming that the very fact a person desires something is proof that he has a legitimate need for the desired thing.
(Fromm 1973, p. 77).

Marx had shown, as early as 1844, that there is a distinction between genuine and imagined needs (Fromm 1961, p. 54). Modern society offers freedom but it is that of the shopper/customer and only a dialectical and revolutionary psychology informed by Marx can understand and identify real needs (Fromm 1973, p. 79). As meeting learning needs is an important dimension of adult education, this already leads to a number of key questions for the adult educator: What are our real needs? How can educators understand and meet the real needs of learners? How can learning needs be articulated? Of course Habermas answered this in his exploration of discursive will formation in which people's real needs could be discovered in particular kinds of conversations. I will return to this later.

According to Marx, life and social existence determine consciousness, but Marx saw more clearly than Freud that "consciousness is the product of a particular practice of life which characterizes a given society or class" and that "man is motivated by forces behind his back of which he is not aware" (Fromm 1973, p. 82). False consciousness "gives the appearances of the rationality of his actions when, due to the contradictions of any class society, the true motivations are not rational" (p. 83). The reform of consciousness is a priority "not by dogmas but by the analysis of the mythical consciousness unclear to itself, be it religious or political" (p. 83). Therefore, the "awareness of the reality of which man is not conscious are the conditions for social change" (1973, p. 83). Or to paraphrase Marx, the demand to give up illusions is the demand to give up the conditions that require illusions. For Fromm, there is a requirement to undertake a psychoanalysis of organisations and society and this points to how a distinctive understanding of adult education might be informed by the ideas of Fromm. Adult educators familiar with Paulo Freire will know how he quoted Fromm in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972, pp. 23, 35, 43) and used these insights to inform his understanding of consciousness raising.

The kind of psychoanalysis proposed by Fromm involves seeking to "understand the instinctual apparatus of the group, its libidinous and largely unconscious behaviour, in terms of its socio-economic structure" (Fromm 1973, p. 158). The instinctual apparatus is adapted to the socio-economic situation. Fromm is here being critical of Freud who had argued that human existence is determined by instincts rather than social existence.

For Fromm, the libidinal structure is the "medium through which the economy exerts its influence on man's intellectual and mental manifestations" (Fromm 1973, p. 179). "It is an important task of social psychology to analyse the function of the whole educational

system and other systems ... in this process” (1973, p. 177) which is to form socially required attitudes in a systematic and methodical way. In bringing about personal or social change through an adult education informed by these ideas one is engaged with an in-depth analysis of the problem and a consequential deep understanding of the system changes required. Problems with society are not caused by instincts or the drive to be greedy and avaricious but by the socialization processes of a society and a market oriented economy. The process of adult development and adult education may involve a process of desocialization if it is informed by this analysis. This is firmly in the adult education tradition of Chris Argyris, Victoria Marsick and Jack Mezirow.

If the id is socially constructed by capitalist markets then the parts of us from which our creative energies arise is also socially constructed and distorted. Of course this raises important questions for an approach to adult education based on Fromm (or Habermas). They understand how the capitalist system influences more than economics or politics by asserting that there is no part of the psyche that can escape the impact of alienation or oppression and underline how difficult it is to tap into the creative and imaginative energies that emancipation requires. An adult education that aims to be emancipatory (as that of Freire and Mezirow) understands how the psyche and society interact at the level of both understanding the world and taking action to change it. This is at the core of what is meant by critical in critical theory. This is of immense importance for the important task of critically understanding the economy of today in its neo-liberal manifestation.

Fromm as Popular Author

Erich Fromm was a well known popular author and source of ideas on a wide range of topics. In his *The Art of Loving* (1962) he eloquently articulated the requirements for loving but then went on to declare that capitalism is not conducive to loving. Indeed, love has been replaced by a number of forms of “pseudo-love which are in reality so many forms of the disintegration of love” (p. 62). What Fromm is saying about love is articulated in a different way by Habermas in his highly rational theory of communicative action—to which we will return later.

The Fear of Freedom (1941) applied psychoanalytic insights to social problems in a psychoanalysis of society. Much later in *To Have Or to Be* (Fromm 1976) he outlined the impact of the market economy. He moved Marxist thinking forward going beyond the utility value of a product seeing the marketing of the product as more important. As an example, we can see today how influential branding has become in marketing. With consumer goods, demand is manipulated through the marketing of a lifestyle. Houses, for instance, are sold emphasising that the purchaser is not so much buying a house as buying a particular lifestyle. By buying a particular item we become more attractive, interesting, more alive and loving. This view is no simple ‘buy your way to the top’ but much more about basing one’s identity on what one possesses. It is this way of being that underpins the desire to possess, not just the owning or having of possessions. It is in Habermas’s language a colonization of the lifeworld by the market.

Fromm on the Market, Commodity Fetishism and Automaton Conformity

Fromm uses Marx’s concept of commodity fetishism to explain alienation (or distorted communication according to Habermas) in the modern world.

The love of exchange has replaced the love of possession. One buys a car or house, intending to sell it at the first opportunity. But more important is the fact that the drive for exchange operates in the realm of interpersonal relations. Love is often nothing but a favourable exchange between two people who get the most of what they can expect, considering their value on the personality market. Each person is a “package” in which several aspects of his exchange value are blended into one: his “personality,” by which is meant those qualities which make him a good salesman of himself (Fromm 1955b, p. 134).

The idea of automaton conformity was described by Fromm in *The Fear of Freedom* (1941) as the process of becoming the same as what we imagine others to be. Automaton conformity is about becoming a cog in a wheel. If I am like all others I am saved. It is a homogenised personality. Automaton conformity involves developing the kind of personality offered by cultural patterns (1941, p. 208). It prevents self-directed learning, critical thinking and autonomy in action and any possibility of individual moral action. It is antithetical to both critical theory and the adult education of Freire or Mezirow.

To the degree to which a person conforms he cannot hear the voice of his conscience, much less act upon it. Conscience exists only when man experiences himself as a man, not as a thing, as a commodity. (Fromm 1955b, p. 155).

Automaton conformity is of particular relevance for adult educators because of its impact on critical thinking—and certainly the version that informs critical theory. It prevents critical thinking and encourages disconnected knowing. It prevents one from seeing how individual decisions are influenced by broader social structures and forces.

The solution offered by Fromm is participatory democracy. In this he acts as a precursor to the ideas of Habermas on communicative action and its democratic imperative. Fromm outlines the details of what participatory democracy would look like in the context of a factory. The worker needs not only technical knowledge (how to do the job he is actually doing) but also needs to know “the economic function of the enterprise he is working for, and its relationship to the economic needs and problems of the community as a whole” (Fromm 1955b, pp. 280–281). Even this is not yet sufficient.

The worker can become an active, interested and responsible participant only if he can have influence on the whole enterprise....The principle point here is not *ownership of the means of production*, but *participation in management and decision making* (Fromm 1955b, p. 281).

It is difficult not to be reminded by this of Habermas’s participatory democracy, particularly when we look at Fromm and see how he too, lays down rules for engaging in participatory democracy. He says what is required is access to information. The decisions that are made must matter, it must be real access to change. The rules for discourse as a precondition for democratic participation and those laid down by Mezirow for transformative learning are similar. So what is true for industrial democracy (Fromm) and for communicative action (Habermas) are the same or closely related to the processes of transformative learning (Mezirow).

Fromm and Adult Education

At the present time it could be argued that adult education under the influence of the market is liable to be concerned more with creating the right product for the market and

producing a self or ego that is appropriate for that market. One is in danger of becoming the self that is sold as having the right profile, the most useful to the market and the right personality profile. In his time, our Western society, according to Fromm, developed a low grade schizophrenia (or in Habermas's language a pathology). The learning supported by an adult education that becomes overly influenced by the needs of the economy is to teach people to obey, to work and under any no circumstances to feel (Funk 2000, p. 159). Though it is easier to say it than to achieve it, the solution (according to Fromm) is to redeem the internal, the creative side of the person, to eliminate capitalist alienation and create democratic socialism. This can be done through adult education which he explicitly and actively supports in *The Sane Society* (1955b, p. 301).

In *The Sane Society* the way forward for each citizen is "to take back into himself his role as a participant in the life of the community" (Fromm 1955b, p. 298). Here Fromm registers again his religious convictions and addresses the question as to how the values of the Judaeo-Christian tradition cannot be realised in a culture where success is centered on production, consumption and the market. It is the task of educators to "impress on students" these values. However, as he saw it the goal of education (in 1955) was;

primarily to give the individual the knowledge he needs in order to function in an industrialized civilization, and to form his character into the mold which is needed: ambitious and competitive, yet co-operative within certain limits; respectful of authority, yet 'desirably independent,' as some report cards have it; friendly yet not deeply attached to anybody or anything (Fromm 1955b, p. 299).

In addition to these ideas of Fromm it is worthwhile (in this retrospective) to look at the research work of Fromm and identify some of the implications of this for adult educators. Fromm was an active researcher and explored worker alienation and went beyond this to include alienation in politics, leisure and relationships. His ideas on the commodification of language, though not really anticipating the linguistic turn of Habermas, was a new concept at the time (Fromm 1976, p. 146). His 1929 study of German Workers (Fromm 1984) informed the later and hugely influential *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al. 1969). This research is instructive for adult education researchers. It is noted for its flawed design, unrepresentative data sets, low response rate, fears that the subjects would be perceived as fascist (McLaughlin 1999, p. 116), yet it usefully highlights the theoretical and ideological contests the can engulf a research project and the obvious weaknesses of an otherwise seminal research project.

As Fromm was for all his working life a practicing psychoanalyst his insights are informed by this work. In addition he also allows us illuminate the process of research interviewing and in particular the collecting of narratives in narrative research. A recent research project has been looking at the narratives of non-traditional students in the EU. Collecting data, in the form of narratives is not an abstract impersonal collection of stories as if one were listening (in a Freudian pose) with the narrator on the couch being asked to narrate. Narration is not a monologue and is interpersonally constructed and inherently dialogical (Fleming 2011).

In his insightful work on critical theory Brookfield (2005) and Brookfield (2011) emphasises the connections between Fromm and Marx from an adult education perspective. But he unfortunately contributes to the misunderstanding of Fromm by ignoring the influence of Freud. Fromm positioned himself against a sociology that did not take into account the importance of drives and against a psychology that did not take account of the social. For him, psychoanalysis alone was not a means of understanding and accessing answers to social problems when these answers were more accessible through the social

sciences. In understanding people's psyche it was important not to concentrate on either the socio-cultural environment or on drive theory. Drives operate as appearing to be biological, innate, given, fixed but are in fact socially constructed—a kind of unalterable set of human expectations and assumptions that, because drives appear to be biologically based are beyond being changed. It is the inability to see that the social, political and economic system 'determine' consciousness that leads Brookfield not to recognise the radical psychoanalytic reconstruction that is undertaken by Fromm on Freud's theory of instincts. In valorizing and highlighting the Marxist and socialist understanding of adult education built on Fromm he misses a complete avenue of access to understanding adult education informed by the depth hermeneutics of psychoanalysis.

As discussed earlier, according to Fromm the market requires flexible human beings who have possessions and who have these possessions as part of their way of being. It involves everybody at all levels, conscious and especially unconsciously marching to the same ideological tune. The solution is: humanistic, psychoanalytic communitarian socialism through adult education (Fromm) as an antidote to human relations that have become an exchange commodity. If we equate Habermas communicative action with love it is clear that Fromm is articulating the barriers to that ideal speech situation that is key for Habermas and transformative adult education processes (Mezirow).

He went on to critique the theory and practice of educating adults (and children) without paying attention to critical thought. He saw this as a powerful antidote to the demand for a particular character on the personality market of 1950s capitalism. "Why should society feel responsible only for the education of children, and not for the education of adults of all ages" (Fromm 1955b, p. 300). Only in adulthood can one have the life experience and the ability to understand the problems being studied. In *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961) that includes a translation of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* Fromm sees the "individual sink to the level of a commodity" (p. 93). One could extrapolate from this and suggest that there are implications for the commodification of learning and adult education. In this situation, for instance, teachers would become fund raisers and managers become marketing executives more in tune with the market value of their pedagogy than its educational values with learning becoming a product and a property to be bought and sold as the alienated work of educators. He as addressing 1950s society but was in ways closely allied to Illich and Freire mapping an agenda for adult education that is surprisingly relevant today.

Fromm supported adult education as a way of achieving the sane society that "must provide possibilities for adult education..." (1955b, p. 299). While living in Cuernavaca in Mexico, Fromm had important discussions with both Illich and Freire. Freire quotes Fromm frequently and as a clear consequence of their discussions Freire asserted that educational practice is a kind of historico-cultural, political psychoanalysis (Freire 1994, pp. 55 and 105). In outlining a version of socialism that encourages particular kinds of discussions about peoples' real needs and how this kind of democracy might be brought about Fromm is a genuine precursor of Habermas.

Habermas and Learning

Habermas too advocates adult learning, placing it at the centre of the tasks for a modern society and sees it as central to achieving democracy. In some adult education theory (Mezirow et al. 1990; Mezirow 1999) the realisation of the conditions for democracy are the same conditions necessary for transformative adult learning. There are a number of studies that outline the impact of Habermas on the project of education and adult education

(Brookfield 2005; Brookfield 2011; Murphy and Fleming 2010). Underpinning his ideas is the assertion that learning how to reason has become distorted under capitalism and the reclaiming of reason from this distortion is an adult learning project. This is in contrast to his colleagues Horkheimer and Adorno who believed reason was so reduced to instrumental reason by capitalism that it was beyond redemption. For Habermas critique is alive and not dead and is assumed in all communication. The redemption of reason is essential for democracy and freedom. For Habermas the main adult learning project is to study how a democratic society might organize itself so that the most complete and free form of communication and discussion is possible and in which real needs of people can be identified. The earlier reference to the ways in which Habermas might build on Fromm concerning the identification of real needs gets further elaborated by Habermas as real needs are, according to him, identified in the free discourse of communicative action.

In contrast to Fromm's view that the instincts are socially constructed Habermas takes a different approach. Drives can become, in his communicative discourse, the object of rational transformation. This is in contrast to Fromm who remained locked in the debate about whether biological drives or socialization determined our psyche. In one discursive jump Habermas moves beyond the Freudian idea that there is an internal almost ungetable territory, unalterable by rationality. Freud's therapy is reinterpreted by Habermas as a theory of corrupted or distorted communication (Habermas 1971, p. 217) and in the process he escapes the accusation of revisionism and expulsion from the Frankfurt Institute as experienced by Fromm.

For an author to be so steeped in Kantian philosophy and German idealism, as Habermas is, it is a surprise to see psychoanalysis figure so prominently in his philosophy from the beginning. Psychoanalysis has two roles in his work. Firstly, it states the limits to hermeneutics by establishing a framework for interpretation and secondly, it is an example of a science in which knowledge is equivalent to self-enlightenment, i.e. knowledge serves an interest in emancipation (Habermas 1971, p. 15). Habermas argues that psychoanalysis is an example of knowledge that helps us discover processes by which speech is systematically distorted and made unintelligent to itself or a framework for distorted communicative action that allows the conceptualization of the origins of institutions and the role and function of illusions, that is of power and ideology (Habermas 1971, p. 282).

Psychoanalysis is a science that explains man's production of meaning and behaviour which are unintelligible to himself: "a subject deceives itself about itself" (Habermas 1971, p. 218). The unintelligibility is explained by splitting off of the symbols attached to censored desires from which the ego flees (Habermas 1971, p. 241). The ego which is constituted through mutual recognition and repression has excluded symbols from public language and they thus become incomprehensible to the ego, i.e. they become unconscious. For Habermas the process of psychoanalysis is the process of reintegrating the excommunicated symbols back into ordinary speech. The part that gets split off is the id and "the self's identity with this defended-against part of the psyche is denied (1971, p. 240). But the process of denial does not work, as the part that is so denied is still me and contributes to distorted meaning making because what is prompted (in the search for meaning) by such repressed meanings appears as "second nature" (1971, p. 256). Habermas's appropriation of Freud in this task is akin and indeed a more serious drift from the core and fundamental purity of Freud's ideas but not attracting the same reaction as Fromm got from the Institute.

For the insight to which analysis is to lead is indeed only this: that the ego of the patient recognizes itself in its other, represented by its illness, as *its* own alienated *self* and identify with it. (Habermas 1971, pp. 235–236).

In attempting to reconstruct the relationship between knowledge and interests Habermas is determined to see that interests are not only a source of error in theory but as a source of error for knowledge. Knowledge is not disinterested, ever. Habermas asserts the special interest in a language which generates mutual understanding and in spite of it becoming systematically distorted, there is an interest in removing these distortions (Habermas 1971).

Psychoanalysis and critique of ideology are the sciences that exemplify the ability to critique and are the only tangible examples of a science incorporating methodical self-reflection (Habermas 1971, p. 214).

In self-reflection, knowledge for the sake of knowledge comes to coincide with the interest in autonomy and responsibility (*Mündigkeit*). For the pursuit of reflection knows itself as a movement of emancipation. Reason is at the same time subject to the interest in reason....Indeed, the category of cognitive interest is authenticated only by the interest in reason itself (Habermas 1971, pp. 197–198).

Psychoanalysis depends on the ability of the patient to recognise itself in the other (1971, pp. 235–236). We are constituted by the other and this implies that autonomy can only be conceived through mutual recognition.

Psychoanalysis is a form of ideal speech situation that creates a non-hierarchical relationship (egalitarian, democratic, force of the better argument) between interlocutors having conversations in unconstrained conditions. Habermas seems to resolve a problem (of the relationship between drives/instincts and society) that was in Freud and that was detrimental to the career of Fromm in the Institute.

Fromm is responsible for a major shift in psychoanalytic theory, away from the centralised authoritarian patriarch of the Freudian therapist to a more interactive and caring role in “an exchange of loving care” (Funk 2000, p. 112). Psychoanalysis ought to be a non-alienated relationship as its goal is to de-repress (desocialise) and de-alienate in the therapeutic dyad in which neither can hide from the other. The major problem (for Habermas) is that of the power balance in the analytic tradition “which leaves the analyst in charge of the interaction, interpretations and possible emancipation of the patient” (Madison 2005, p. 208). In addition, an inadvertent consequence of psychoanalysis would be to adjust the patient to society rather than their emancipation. In unearthing how subjects deceive themselves about themselves, according to Habermas, the therapeutic text both expresses and conceals the deceptions of the author (Habermas 1971, p. 219). The experience of reflection is the act that frees one from being an object to ones self (Madison 2005, p. 212). Madison asserts that in psychoanalysis one is “far removed from the non-critical, democratic atmosphere of hermeneutic inquiry” (p. 215). Psychoanalysis is not an appropriate model for Habermas’ critical theory but neither can he offer (on his own admission) a positive answer as to whether a revamped psychoanalysis can achieve the emancipatory task. This forces adult educators to confront the seriousness of learning tasks that aim to be critical.

Habermas uses the concept of the colonization of the lifeworld to describe an important effect of capitalism in late modernity. The lifeworld is the vast stock of taken-for-granted definitions and understandings of the world that give coherence and direction to our lives (Habermas 1987, 131). It is the intuitively present “web of presuppositions that have to be satisfied if an actual utterance is to be at all meaningful” (Habermas 1987, 131).

Problems arise when the system invades the lifeworld and intervenes in the processes of meaning making among individuals and communities. The system world of the state administrative apparatus (steered by power) and the economy (steered by money) set their own imperatives over those of the lifeworld. Habermas develops the concept of

colonization to describe the relationship between system and lifeworld in capitalist society. If the lifeworld is controlled by money and power, then our real needs and wishes are not identifiable. Instead, the needs of the system prevail. The lifeworld is colonized by the functional imperatives of the state and economy, characterized by the cult of efficiency and the inappropriate deployment of technology (Habermas 1984, 12). This is the crisis of late capitalism. As a result individuals and groups increasingly define themselves and their aspirations in system terms and see themselves as consumers and clients (Habermas 1987, 356). This is at least reminiscent of Fromm's automaton conformity. When systems function in this way, situations are perceived to be natural and common sense, indifferent and beyond one's control, and not subject to democratic accountability. The colonized lifeworld sees whatever is supportive of and consistent with the imperatives of the economy as common sense. Useful knowledge is often framed exclusively as technical and instrumental. The danger is that adult education will see students as customers and teachers as service providers. The price of everything is measured and students become unit costs and full-time equivalents. Power and money are not the imperatives of the lifeworld whose solidarities can neither be coerced nor bought (Fleming 2010). This is a Habermasian take on the ways in which the market has infiltrated all our discussions and consciousness.

In adult education it is worth wondering whether the scrutiny and level of control offered by e-learning and the constant ability of the tutor through the computer system to monitor, measure and mark the interactions of students on-line are examples of the dangers of the system imperatives invading pedagogic practices. We may be in danger of training counsellors by e-learning and teachers by distance learning.

We cannot ignore, abandon or destroy the system, after all it has a function and use. But it is possible to insert lifeworld values, caring behaviours, ethical concerns and principles into the system and so resist and reverse colonization. Habermas provides a critique and theoretical support for those who continue to hope for and work for a more rational society. Adult education has a role to play in this according to Mezirow;

The social goal toward which adult education strives is one in which all members of society may engage freely and fully in rational discourse and action without this process being subverted by the system (Mezirow 1995, p. 57).

What action is required as a response to colonization, the collapse of the public sphere, the decline of civil society and the invasion of the lifeworld (themes from Habermas)? The response is democracy or the holding of particular kinds of discussions (communicative action) in which there is a right for all to participate on an equal basis. It is certainly imaginable that these kinds of discussion, though rational in Habermas's presentation, might be characterized as love if one were more informed by the work of Fromm. It is these same rules that Mezirow adopts and proposes as the ground rules for engaging in the discussions that support transformative learning.

This is the way Habermas proposes rescuing reason from being co-opted by money and power and how adults can use reason to build a more participatory democracy. The adult learning project of Habermas aims to resist a decline in social solidarity by becoming aware of and developing democratic processes that are always already inherent and implied in all interpersonal communication.

Since 1962, Habermas had been emphasizing the crucial role of public discussion and debate in the formation of the needs, interests and aspirations of individuals (Habermas 1989). The core of Habermas' critique of capitalism is that the public sphere or public discussion has been reduced by the activities of politicians, advertisers, public relations and

the media in general. This theme has emerged again in his more recent work where he links the concept of a public sphere with that of civil society to provide an account of how control can be exercised over markets and bureaucracies (Habermas 1996, pp. 266–268). In a complex modern society the quality of democracy ultimately depends not on politicians but on the existence of this public sphere, on people's intelligent involvement in politics and on organisations and associations which help form opinion through discourse. A vibrant civil society is essential for democracy. The conviction that free, open, public discussion has a transformative function is central to Habermas' thinking. But as Habermas asserts, adults have 'an automatic inability not to learn' (Habermas 1975, p. 15). In proposing a form of reflexive learning Habermas is talking about the ability to question, challenge everyday practices and critique the way society is organised in discussion with others.

Adult educators such as Mezirow and Brookfield who have appropriated the ideas of Habermas have emphasized that redeeming validity claims involves a highly significant kind of adult learning. Its significance and importance rest on the possibility of identifying and understanding one's real needs and taking action arrived at in agreement, i.e. discursive will-formation. Unfortunately, in a society dominated by money and power, there are too many opportunities for and experiences of discourses and communications that are the opposite of communicative action. These adult educators who appropriate these ideas in pursuit of a grounding for the discipline are involved in the learning project of reviving civil society and protecting its democratic impulses from colonization by the system. The best prospects for democracy are to create these kinds of conversations in which validity claims are redeemed. The very existence of democratic society depends on adults learning how to do this. For Habermas learning is an essential part of bringing about the good life and this links clearly with the way in which Fromm proposed a crucial role for adult education in society. In the proposing of new ways of being (rather than having) both Habermas and Fromm agree that this involves new ways of imagining and creating communities. As Brookfield expresses it; "it is hard to imagine a more profound example of transformative learning" (Brookfield 2011, p. 34).

For Habermas, discourse requires freedom and justice—freedom to reach agreement on the basis of the better argument alone and justice based on mutual respect. This discourse is both rational and emancipatory in its intention because the process of reaching agreement is accompanied by revealing the ideological, coercive and non-democratic structures, which hinder a genuinely democratic process (Collins 1991, p. 10). This kind of discourse is the foundation for a democratic society as it points to freedom, equality and care. It is also now well established that it is the foundation for a particular kind of learning—transformative learning (Mezirow 1995, p. 67). Democratic participation and discourse are essential elements of the learning process.

Civil society, democracy and adult education (as understood by Mezirow) have in common the ambition to create opportunities and places for discourse. The commitment is to a form of living together in which we attempt to reach agreement about difficult matters in a discussion that is free from domination. A teacher in this transformative mode attempts to create the identical process, i.e. a learning society. In order to have full free participation in discourse there must be freedom, equality, tolerance, justice and a valuing of rationality. The learning community implied in discourse is precisely that required for transformative learning; the recreation of the life-world; the development of civil society and the emergence of truly democratic systems and society. A democratised civil society *is* a learning society.

Discussion and Conclusion

It is suggested to me by this study that the role of the transformative adult educator then becomes one of encouraging and creating situations and classrooms that encourage the fullest participation in discourse, assisting adults critically assess the validity of their ways of making meaning and exploring perspectives that are more open to change. Too much adult education has been about work, skills, instrumental learning and how to do things. It has been preoccupied with defining learning tasks and outcomes, behavioural objectives and measurable competence. Too much has been about the system, the formal state sector, the economy and training. These are important and need support but a different kind of learning is being proposed by as a result of this study of Fromm and Habermas. It involves a critical reflection on assumptions that underpin our beliefs, a discourse to justify what we believe and taking action on the basis of new agreed understandings. Then needs assessment, learning objectives, teaching methods, research methodologies and evaluation are defined and identified in a different way (Mezirow 1994, p. 226). They are formed in the discourse.

There is a radical and transformative tradition in adult education that understands that it is the lifeworld that gets transformed (Wildemeersch and Leirman 1988). The task of the left and of a democratic civil society and of education is one of de-colonizing the lifeworld. Welton, as an adult educator, writes about the defense of the lifeworld as reappropriating the learning processes in “the family, the public sphere, community life, and cultural expressions” from the grasp and control of technical reason and putting them back in the hands of citizens engaged in democratic consensual dialogue (Welton 1995, p. 28). Effective learners in an emancipatory, participative, democratic society—a learning society—become a community of cultural critics and social activists, and the dichotomy of individual and society is transcended by understanding knowledge (and learning) as intersubjective (Mezirow 1995, pp. 68–70). Critical theory holds out the promise of enabling us to think of all society as a vast school and that, as argued in this paper, Fromm and Habermas are important allies in explaining what is involved in this.

It could be argued that there is a danger that too many adult education courses will focus on the utilitarian, that there will be too many vocational courses to the detriment of courses and programmes that may be of benefit to one self and society rather than the economy. Too many courses may focus on instrumental learning rather than communicative praxis. There may be too much emphasis on career and not enough on one’s role in society. This is supported by Welton who outlined a ‘critical turn in adult education theory’ (Welton 1995, pp. 11–38).

One would be entirely justified in asking how such a communicative adult education would work (inspired by Fromm and Habermas)? There would be less emphasis on hierarchical authority and more on participatory decision making; the elimination of corporate culture and the nourishing of self-government; a clear priority given to social justice, social analysis, critical reflection, and reconstructing the teacher-student relationship where both become co-investigators of reality. Such an adult education would be redefined as an exercise in democracy, that teaches democracy and aims to reproduce more democracy in classrooms, communities, society and the work place.

The antidote to the alienation so well understood by Fromm is unity and collaboration with others. This is linked with Habermas’s idea of discourses about how to live together in a participatory democracy. This is different to the cultural change so often promised in the lifelong learning mantra of the modern society. It is about real needs identified in adult education (for Fromm) and in the learning society (Habermas).

The success of Fromm is to have written a collection of hugely successful and popular books that introduced a generation of American and other readers to critical theory. In contrast Habermas has introduced the reconstruction of many of the same authors but in contrast, to a largely academic audience and indeed fewer educators. Fromm's focus on the emotions can be a corrective to the highly rationalistic view of critical theory as developed and promoted by Habermas.

Fromm is the perfect antidote to neoliberal thinking;

The assumption that individual freedoms are guaranteed by freedom of the market and of trade is a cardinal feature of neoliberal thinking, and it has long dominated the US stance towards the rest of the world (Harvey 2005, p. 7).

It (neoliberalism) tries to impose “a state apparatus whose fundamental mission was to facilitate conditions for profitable capital accumulation” (Harvey 2005, p. 7). In outlining the “attractions” of neoliberalism (it must be at least superficially attractive in order to attract through promising material gains) Harvey echoes Fromm by identifying the rewards of neoliberalism as ‘I shop therefore I am’ (p. 170) constructing in this way “a world of pseudo-satisfactions that is superficially exciting but hollow at its core” (p. 170). This is all a “cruel joke”. Neither Habermas nor Fromm would be surprised by the conclusion of Harvey that neoliberalism leads to the decline of civil society (Harvey 2005, p. 170). All would agree with Brookfield's assertion that they were interested in the political nature of critical pedagogy (Brookfield 2011, p. 59).

If any enduring and serious connection is to be identified between Fromm and Habermas it might be that both attempted in different times to identify and realise the potential of (though neither used the term) of lifelong learning as part of the process of bringing about a more just and caring society. The most enduring link between Erich Fromm and Jürgen Habermas is the shared attention to the importance of having free conversations about how the emancipated life might be created and sustained.

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Fromm and Habermas: Allies for Adult Education and Democracy

Ted Fleming

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Abstract The legacy of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research has been a powerful force for critically understanding social reality. Erich Fromm was one of the early and best known members of the Institute. Fromm emphasised the centrality of culture and interpersonal relations in the construction of the psyche. The unconscious was not only the location for buried repressed matter but also for the imaginative potential of the human person. He is a forgotten and neglected contributor to the story of the Institute having been written out of this history. This retrospective of his ideas explores his work in the light of the recent work of Jürgen Habermas who is also an active but less controversial engager with the psychoanalytic tradition. The implications for adult education will be addressed. The paper outlines Fromm's radical reinterpretation of psychoanalysis emphasising the importance of social existence as distinct from the impact of instincts; key concepts of the market, commodity fetishism and automaton conformity; The implications for adult education in the tradition of radical (Freire) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow) and addressed and make connections between Habermas and Fromm that further the project of critical theory. Both attempted in different times to identify and realise the potential of (though neither used the term) of lifelong learning as part of the process of bringing about a more just and caring society and a shared attention to the importance of having free conversations about how the emancipated life might be created and sustained.

Keywords Erich Fromm · Habermas · Psychoanalysis · Adult education · Democracy

The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research has been a hugely influential group of scholars who studied and explored social problems, integrating insights from psychoanalysis and

Marxism. That legacy is a powerful force for critically understanding social reality. Erich Fromm was one of the early members of the Institute and partly because he wrote well in English and was such an excellent media performer he became arguably the best known and most widely read member of the Institute. The intellectual fault lines of his relations with colleagues in the Institute were deep and divisive and in 1939 he was expelled. Fromm's interpretations of Freud's theory on instincts as well as divisions about the nature of left ideology contributed to the separation becoming permanent. By the mid-1930s Fromm was emphasising the centrality of culture and interpersonal relations in the construction of the psyche. Horkheimer and Adorno saw in this a revisionist threat to the Institute's understanding of instincts that undermined their critical theory of society. The unconscious was not only the location for buried repressed matter but also for the deep and imaginative potential of the human person. Historically he is a forgotten and neglected contributor to the story of the Institute having 'been written out of this history' (McLaughlin 1999, p. 109). It is timely to engage in a retrospective and his ideas will be explored in the light of the recent work of the Institute as represented by Jürgen Habermas who is also an active but less controversial engager with the psychoanalytic tradition. The implications for adult education will be addressed.

The First World War influenced Fromm's thinking and he asked critical questions about mass action, war, the destructive impact of nationalism, the Holocaust, authoritarianism, freedom and the power of the market. Habermas was influenced by a different war, one fought about, for and against national socialism and has been preoccupied with democracy, colonization of the lifeworld, the demise of the public sphere and dilemmas faced by civil society from the economy and state. Both have been active media commentators and public intellectuals and Habermas continues to contribute to public debates regularly. The implications of these insights for the theory and practice of adult education as understood in the tradition of Freire's radical pedagogy and Mezirow's transformative learning theory will be discussed. Lifelong learning has become widely accepted in public policy in the EU and indeed globally and though there are critiques of how the concept is understood and implemented (Coffield 1999) there are possibilities too that lifelong learning might realise its full potential (Fleming, in press, 2011; Murphy 2000).

Habermas (born 1929) and Fromm (1900–1980) are both informed by a common understanding that the internal world of the personality and mind is influenced profoundly by the external social reality;

This heightened sensitivity to the social nature of human beings led to those philosophical approaches that emphasise the intersubjective constitution of the human mind...inside each individual person, we find the reflection of the external social world (Habermas 2008, p. 14).

This paper will outline:

- Fromm's radical reinterpretation of psychoanalysis that emphasises the importance of social existence as distinct from the impact of instincts;
- Fromm as popular author;
- Key concepts of the market, commodity fetishism and automaton conformity;
- The implications of for adult education in the tradition of radical (Freire) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow);
- Connections between the work of Jürgen Habermas and Fromm that further the project of critical theory.

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Fromm and Psychoanalysis

From his student days Fromm was attracted to psychoanalysis as Freud's concept of the unconscious led him to the understanding that "much of what we are conscious of is not real and most of what is real is not in our consciousness" (Fromm 1973, p. 14). This allowed for "a new basis for critical thinking" (p. 15) and in one of those moments that makes him sound a thoroughly contemporary figure, Fromm set out to "study the 'pathology of normalcy,' the chronic, low grade schizophrenia which is generated in the cybernated, technological society of to-day and to-morrow" (1973, p. 45).

If Freud did not radically critique capitalist society or question either its socio-economic base or its ideologies (except those that were sexual), Fromm (1955a, p. 1) did. An interest in Marx led him to assert that;

Modern psychology is little concerned with the critical analysis of needs; it accepts the laws of industrial production...by assuming that the very fact a person desires something is proof that he has a legitimate need for the desired thing. (Fromm 1973, p. 77).

Marx had shown, as early as 1844, that there is a distinction between genuine and imagined needs (Fromm 1961, p. 54). Modern society offers freedom but it is that of the shopper/customer and only a dialectical and revolutionary psychology informed by Marx can understand and identify real needs (Fromm 1973, p. 79). As meeting learning needs is an important dimension of adult education, this already leads to a number of key questions for the adult educator: What are our real needs? How can educators understand and meet the real needs of learners? How can learning needs be articulated? Of course Habermas answered this in his exploration of discursive will formation in which people's real needs could be discovered in particular kinds of conversations. I will return to this later.

According to Marx, life and social existence determine consciousness, but Marx saw more clearly than Freud that "consciousness is the product of a particular practice of life which characterizes a given society or class" and that "man is motivated by forces behind his back of which he is not aware" (Fromm 1973, p. 82). False consciousness "gives the appearances of the rationality of his actions when, due to the contradictions of any class society, the true motivations are not rational" (p. 83). The reform of consciousness is a priority "not by dogmas but by the analysis of the mythical consciousness unclear to itself, be it religious or political" (p. 83). Therefore, the "awareness of the reality of which man is not conscious are the conditions for social change" (1973, p. 83). Or to paraphrase Marx, the demand to give up illusions is the demand to give up the conditions that require illusions. For Fromm, there is a requirement to undertake a psychoanalysis of organisations and society and this points to how a distinctive understanding of adult education might be informed by the ideas of Fromm. Adult educators familiar with Paulo Freire will know how he quoted Fromm in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972, pp. 23, 35, 43) and used these insights to inform his understanding of consciousness raising.

The kind of psychoanalysis proposed by Fromm involves seeking to "understand the instinctual apparatus of the group, its libidinous and largely unconscious behaviour, in terms of its socio-economic structure" (Fromm 1973, p. 158). The instinctual apparatus is adapted to the socio-economic situation. Fromm is here being critical of Freud who had argued that human existence is determined by instincts rather than social existence.

For Fromm, the libidinal structure is the "medium through which the economy exerts its influence on man's intellectual and mental manifestations" (Fromm 1973, p. 179). "It is an important task of social psychology to analyse the function of the whole educational

system and other systems ... in this process" (1973, p. 177) which is to form socially required attitudes in a systematic and methodical way. In bringing about personal or social change through an adult education informed by these ideas one is engaged with an in-depth analysis of the problem and a consequential deep understanding of the system changes required. Problems with society are not caused by instincts or the drive to be greedy and avaricious but by the socialization processes of a society and a market oriented economy. The process of adult development and adult education may involve a process of desocialization if it is informed by this analysis. This is firmly in the adult education tradition of Chris Argyris, Victoria Marsick and Jack Mezirow.

If the id is socially constructed by capitalist markets then the parts of us from which our creative energies arise is also socially constructed and distorted. Of course this raises important questions for an approach to adult education based on Fromm (or Habermas). They understand how the capitalist system influences more than economics or politics by asserting that there is no part of the psyche that can escape the impact of alienation or oppression and underline how difficult it is to tap into the creative and imaginative energies that emancipation requires. An adult education that aims to be emancipatory (as that of Freire and Mezirow) understands how the psyche and society interact at the level of both understanding the world and taking action to change it. This is at the core of what is meant by critical in critical theory. This is of immense importance for the important task of critically understanding the economy of today in its neo-liberal manifestation.

Fromm as Popular Author

Erich Fromm was a well known popular author and source of ideas on a wide range of topics. In his *The Art of Loving* (1962) he eloquently articulated the requirements for loving but then went on to declare that capitalism is not conducive to loving. Indeed, love has been replaced by a number of forms of "pseudo-love which are in reality so many forms of the disintegration of love" (p. 62). What Fromm is saying about love is articulated in a different way by Habermas in his highly rational theory of communicative action—to which we will return later.

The Fear of Freedom (1941) applied psychoanalytic insights to social problems in a psychoanalysis of society. Much later in *To Have Or to Be* (Fromm 1976) he outlined the impact of the market economy. He moved Marxist thinking forward going beyond the utility value of a product seeing the marketing of the product as more important. As an example, we can see today how influential branding has become in marketing. With consumer goods, demand is manipulated through the marketing of a lifestyle. Houses, for instance, are sold emphasising that the purchaser is not so much buying a house as buying a particular lifestyle. By buying a particular item we become more attractive, interesting, more alive and loving. This view is no simple 'buy your way to the top' but much more about basing one's identity on what one possesses. It is this way of being that underpins the desire to possess, not just the owning or having of possessions. It is in Habermas's language a colonization of the lifeworld by the market.

Fromm on the Market, Commodity Fetishism and Automaton Conformity

Fromm uses Marx's concept of commodity fetishism to explain alienation (or distorted communication according to Habermas) in the modern world.

The love of exchange has replaced the love of possession. One buys a car or house, intending to sell it at the first opportunity. But more important is the fact that the drive for exchange operates in the realm of interpersonal relations. Love is often nothing but a favourable exchange between two people who get the most of what they can expect, considering their value on the personality market. Each person is a “package” in which several aspects of his exchange value are blended into one: his “personality,” by which is meant those qualities which make him a good salesman of himself (Fromm 1955b, p. 134).

The idea of automaton conformity was described by Fromm in *The Fear of Freedom* (1941) as the process of becoming the same as what we imagine others to be. Automaton conformity is about becoming a cog in a wheel. If I am like all others I am saved. It is a homogenised personality. Automaton conformity involves developing the kind of personality offered by cultural patterns (1941, p. 208). It prevents self-directed learning, critical thinking and autonomy in action and any possibility of individual moral action. It is antithetical to both critical theory and the adult education of Freire or Mezirow.

To the degree to which a person conforms he cannot hear the voice of his conscience, much less act upon it. Conscience exists only when man experiences himself as a man, not as a thing, as a commodity. (Fromm 1955b, p. 155).

Automaton conformity is of particular relevance for adult educators because of its impact on critical thinking—and certainly the version that informs critical theory. It prevents critical thinking and encourages disconnected knowing. It prevents one from seeing how individual decisions are influenced by broader social structures and forces.

The solution offered by Fromm is participatory democracy. In this he acts as a precursor to the ideas of Habermas on communicative action and its democratic imperative. Fromm outlines the details of what participatory democracy would look like in the context of a factory. The worker needs not only technical knowledge (how to do the job he is actually doing) but also needs to know “the economic function of the enterprise he is working for, and its relationship to the economic needs and problems of the community as a whole” (Fromm 1955b, pp. 280–281). Even this is not yet sufficient.

The worker can become an active, interested and responsible participant only if he can have influence on the whole enterprise....The principle point here is not *ownership of the means of production*, but *participation in management and decision making* (Fromm 1955b, p. 281).

It is difficult not to be reminded by this of Habermas’s participatory democracy, particularly when we look at Fromm and see how he too, lays down rules for engaging in participatory democracy. He says what is required is access to information. The decisions that are made must matter; it must be real access to change. The rules for discourse as a precondition for democratic participation and those laid down by Mezirow for transformative learning are similar. So what is true for industrial democracy (Fromm) and for communicative action (Habermas) are the same or closely related to the processes of transformative learning (Mezirow).

Fromm and Adult Education

At the present time it could be argued that adult education under the influence of the market is liable to be concerned more with creating the right product for the market and

producing a self or ego that is appropriate for that market. One is in danger of becoming the self that is sold as having the right profile, the most useful to the market and the right personality profile. In his time, our Western society, according to Fromm, developed a low grade schizophrenia (or in Habermas’s language a pathology). The learning supported by an adult education that becomes overly influenced by the needs of the economy is to teach people to obey, to work and under any no circumstances to feel (Funk 2000, p. 159). Though it is easier to say it than to achieve it, the solution (according to Fromm) is to redeem the internal, the creative side of the person, to eliminate capitalist alienation and create democratic socialism. This can be done through adult education which he explicitly and actively supports in *The Sane Society* (1955b, p. 301).

In *The Sane Society* the way forward for each citizen is “to take back into himself his role as a participant in the life of the community” (Fromm 1955b, p. 298). Here Fromm registers again his religious convictions and addresses the question as to how the values of the Judeo-Christian tradition cannot be realised in a culture where success is centered on production, consumption and the market. It is the task of educators to “impress on students” these values. However, as he saw it the goal of education (in 1955) was;

primarily to give the individual the knowledge he needs in order to function in an industrialized civilization, and to form his character into the mold which is needed: ambitious and competitive, yet co-operative within certain limits; respectful of authority, yet ‘desirably independent,’ as some report cards have it; friendly yet not deeply attached to anybody or anything (Fromm 1955b, p. 299).

In addition to these ideas of Fromm it is worthwhile (in this retrospective) to look at the research work of Fromm and identify some of the implications of this for adult educators. Fromm was an active researcher and explored worker alienation and went beyond this to include alienation in politics, leisure and relationships. His ideas on the commodification of language, though not really anticipating the linguistic turn of Habermas, was a new concept at the time (Fromm 1976, p. 146). His 1929 study of German Workers (Fromm 1984) informed the later and hugely influential *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al. 1969). This research is instructive for adult education researchers. It is noted for its flawed design, unrepresentative data sets, low response rate, fears that the subjects would be perceived as fascist (McLaughlin 1999, p. 116), yet it usefully highlights the theoretical and ideological contests the can engulf a research project and the obvious weaknesses of an otherwise seminal research project.

As Fromm was for all his working life a practicing psychoanalyst his insights are informed by this work. In addition he also allows us illuminate the process of research interviewing and in particular the collecting of narratives in narrative research. A recent research project has been looking at the narratives of non-traditional students in the EU. Collecting data, in the form of narratives is not an abstract impersonal collection of stories as if one were listening (in a Freudian pose) with the narrator on the couch being asked to narrate. Narration is not a monologue and is interpersonally constructed and inherently dialogical (Fleming 2011).

In his insightful work on critical theory Brookfield (2005) and Brookfield (2011) emphasises the connections between Fromm and Marx from an adult education perspective. But he unfortunately contributes to the misunderstanding of Fromm by ignoring the influence of Freud. Fromm positioned himself against a sociology that did not take into account the importance of drives and against a psychology that did not take account of the social. For him, psychoanalysis alone was not a means of understanding and accessing answers to social problems when these answers were more accessible through the social

sciences. In understanding people's psyche it was important not to concentrate on either the socio-cultural environment or on drive theory. Drives operate as appearing to be biological, innate, given, fixed but are in fact socially constructed—a kind of unalterable set of human expectations and assumptions that, because drives appear to be biologically based are beyond being changed. It is the inability to see that the social, political and economic system 'determine' consciousness that leads Brookfield not to recognise the radical psychoanalytic reconstruction that is undertaken by Fromm on Freud's theory of instincts. In valorizing and highlighting the Marxist and socialist understanding of adult education built on Fromm he misses a complete avenue of access to understanding adult education informed by the depth hermeneutics of psychoanalysis.

As discussed earlier, according to Fromm the market requires flexible human beings who have possessions and who have these possessions as part of their way of being. It involves everybody at all levels, conscious and especially unconsciously marching to the same ideological tune. The solution is: humanistic, psychoanalytic, communitarian socialism through adult education (Fromm) as an antidote to human relations that have become an exchange commodity. If we equate Habermas communicative action with love it is clear that Fromm is articulating the barriers to that ideal speech situation that is key for Habermas and transformative adult education processes (Mezirow).

He went on to critique the theory and practice of educating adults (and children) without paying attention to critical thought. He saw this as a powerful antidote to the demand for a particular character on the personality market of 1950s capitalism. "Why should society feel responsible only for the education of children, and not for the education of adults of all ages" (Fromm 1955b, p. 300). Only in adulthood can one have the life experience and the ability to understand the problems being studied. In *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961) that includes a translation of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* Fromm sees the "individual sink to the level of a commodity" (p. 93). One could extrapolate from this and suggest that there are implications for the commodification of learning and adult education. In this situation, for instance, teachers would become fund raisers and managers become marketing executives more in tune with the market value of their pedagogy than its educational values with learning becoming a product and a property to be bought and sold as the alienated work of educators. He as addressing 1950s society but was in ways closely allied to Illich and Freire mapping an agenda for adult education that is surprisingly relevant today.

Fromm supported adult education as a way of achieving the same society that "must provide possibilities for adult education..." (1955b, p. 299). While living in Cuernavaca in Mexico, Fromm had important discussions with both Illich and Freire. Freire quotes Fromm frequently and as a clear consequence of their discussions Freire asserted that educational practice is a kind of historico-cultural, political psychoanalysis (Freire 1994, pp. 55 and 105). In outlining a version of socialism that encourages particular kinds of discussions about people's real needs and how this kind of democracy might be brought about Fromm is a genuine precursor of Habermas.

Habermas and Learning

Habermas too advocates adult learning, placing it at the centre of the tasks for a modern society and sees it as central to achieving democracy. In some adult education theory (Mezirow et al. 1990; Mezirow 1999) the realisation of the conditions for democracy are the same conditions necessary for transformative adult learning. There are a number of studies that outline the impact of Habermas on the project of education and adult education

(Brookfield 2005; Brookfield 2011; Murphy and Fleming 2010). Underpinning his ideas is the assertion that learning how to reason has become distorted under capitalism and the reclaiming of reason from this distortion is an adult learning project. This is in contrast to his colleagues Horkheimer and Adorno who believed reason was so reduced to instrumental reason by capitalism that it was beyond redemption. For Habermas critique is alive and not dead and is assumed in all communication. The redemption of reason is essential for democracy and freedom. For Habermas the main adult learning project is to study how a democratic society might organize itself so that the most complete and free form of communication and discussion is possible and in which real needs of people can be identified. The earlier reference to the ways in which Habermas might build on Fromm concerning the identification of real needs gets further elaborated by Habermas as real needs are, according to him, identified in the free discourse of communicative action.

In contrast to Fromm's view that the instincts are socially constructed Habermas takes a different approach. Drives can become, in his communicative discourse, the object of rational transformation. This is in contrast to Fromm who remained locked in the debate about whether biological drives or socialization determined our psyche. In one discursive jump Habermas moves beyond the Freudian idea that there is an internal almost ungettable territory, unalterable by rationality. Freud's therapy is reinterpreted by Habermas as a theory of corrupted or distorted communication (Habermas 1971, p. 217) and in the process he escapes the accusation of revisionism and expulsion from the Frankfurt Institute as experienced by Fromm.

For an author to be so steeped in Kantian philosophy and German idealism, as Habermas is, it is a surprise to see psychoanalysis figure so prominently in his philosophy from the beginning. Psychoanalysis has two roles in his work. Firstly, it states the limits to hermeneutics by establishing a framework for interpretation and secondly, it is an example of a science in which knowledge is equivalent to self-enlightenment, i.e. knowledge serves an interest in emancipation (Habermas 1971, p. 15). Habermas argues that psychoanalysis is an example of knowledge that helps us discover processes by which speech is systematically distorted and made unintelligent to itself or a framework for distorted communicative action that allows the conceptualization of the origins of institutions and the role and function of illusions, that is of power and ideology (Habermas 1971, p. 282).

Psychoanalysis is a science that explains man's production of meaning and behaviour which are unintelligible to himself: "a subject deceives itself about itself" (Habermas 1971, p. 218). The unintelligibility is explained by splitting off of the symbols attached to censored desires from which the ego flees (Habermas 1971, p. 241). The ego which is constituted through mutual recognition and repression has excluded symbols from public language and they thus become incomprehensible to the ego, i.e. they become unconscious. For Habermas the process of psychoanalysis is the process of reintegrating the excommunicated symbols back into ordinary speech. The part that gets split off is the id and "the self's identity with this defended-against part of the psyche is denied (1971, p. 240). But the process of denial does not work, as the part that is so denied is still me and contributes to distorted meaning making because what is prompted (in the search for meaning) by such repressed meanings appears as "second nature" (1971, p. 256). Habermas's appropriation of Freud in this task is akin and indeed a more serious drift from the core and fundamental purity of Freud's ideas but not attracting the same reaction as Fromm got from the Institute.

For the insight to which analysis is to lead is indeed only this: that the ego of the patient recognizes itself in its other, represented by its illness, as *its* own alienated *self* and identify with it. (Habermas 1971, pp. 235–236).

In attempting to reconstruct the relationship between knowledge and interests Habermas is determined to see that interests are not only a source of error in theory but as a source of error for knowledge. Knowledge is not disinterested, ever. Habermas asserts the special interest in a language which generates mutual understanding and in spite of it becoming systematically distorted, there is an interest in removing these distortions (Habermas 1971). Psychoanalysis and critique of ideology are the sciences that exemplify the ability to critique and are the only tangible examples of a science incorporating methodical self-reflection (Habermas 1971, p. 214).

In self-reflection, knowledge for the sake of knowledge comes to coincide with the interest in autonomy and responsibility (*Mündigkeit*). For the pursuit of reflection knows itself as a movement of emancipation. Reason is at the same time subject to the interest in reason... Indeed, the category of cognitive interest is authenticated only by the interest in reason itself (Habermas 1971, pp. 197–198).

Psychoanalysis depends on the ability of the patient to recognise itself in the other (1971, pp. 235–236). We are constituted by the other and this implies that autonomy can only be conceived through mutual recognition.

Psychoanalysis is a form of ideal speech situation that creates a non-hierarchical relationship (egalitarian, democratic, force of the better argument) between interlocutors having conversations in unconstrained conditions. Habermas seems to resolve a problem (of the relationship between drives/instincts and society) that was in Freud and that was detrimental to the career of Fromm in the Institute.

Fromm is responsible for a major shift in psychoanalytic theory, away from the centralised authoritarian patriarch of the Freudian therapist to a more interactive and caring role in “an exchange of loving care” (Funk 2000, p. 112). Psychoanalysis ought to be a non-alienated relationship as its goal is to de-repress (desocialise) and de-alienate in the therapeutic dyad in which neither can hide from the other. The major problem (for Habermas) is that of the power balance in the analytic tradition “which leaves the analyst in charge of the interaction, interpretations and possible emancipation of the patient” (Madison 2005, p. 208). In addition, an inadvertent consequence of psychoanalysis would be to adjust the patient to society rather than their emancipation. In unearthing how subjects deceive themselves about themselves, according to Habermas, the therapeutic text both expresses and conceals the deceptions of the author (Habermas 1971, p. 219). The experience of reflection is the act that frees one from being an object to oneself (Madison 2005, p. 212). Madison asserts that in psychoanalysis one is “far removed from the non-critical, democratic atmosphere of hermeneutic inquiry” (p. 215). Psychoanalysis is not an appropriate model for Habermas’ critical theory but neither can he offer (on his own admission) a positive answer as to whether a revamped psychoanalysis can achieve the emancipatory task. This forces adult educators to confront the seriousness of learning tasks that aim to be critical.

Habermas uses the concept of the colonization of the lifeworld to describe an important effect of capitalism in late modernity. The lifeworld is the vast stock of taken-for-granted definitions and understandings of the world that give coherence and direction to our lives (Habermas 1987, 131). It is the intuitively present “web of presuppositions that have to be satisfied if an actual utterance is to be at all meaningful” (Habermas 1987, 131).

Problems arise when the system invades the lifeworld and intervenes in the processes of meaning making among individuals and communities. The system world of the state administrative apparatus (steered by power) and the economy (steered by money) set their own imperatives over those of the lifeworld. Habermas develops the concept of

colonization to describe the relationship between system and lifeworld in capitalist society. If the lifeworld is controlled by money and power, then our real needs and wishes are not identifiable. Instead, the needs of the system prevail. The lifeworld is colonized by the functional imperatives of the state and economy, characterized by the cult of efficiency and the inappropriate deployment of technology (Habermas 1984, 12). This is the crisis of late capitalism. As a result individuals and groups increasingly define themselves and their aspirations in system terms and see themselves as consumers and clients (Habermas 1987, 356). This is at least reminiscent of Fromm’s automation conformity. When systems function in this way, situations are perceived to be natural and common sense, indifferent and beyond one’s control, and not subject to democratic accountability. The colonized lifeworld sees whatever is supportive of and consistent with the imperatives of the economy as common sense. Useful knowledge is often framed exclusively as technical and instrumental. The danger is that adult education will see students as customers and teachers as service providers. The price of everything is measured and students become unit costs and full-time equivalents. Power and money are not the imperatives of the lifeworld whose solidarities can neither be coerced nor bought (Fleming 2010). This is a Habermasian take on the ways in which the market has infiltrated all our discussions and consciousness.

In adult education it is worth wondering whether the scrutiny and level of control offered by e-learning and the constant ability of the tutor through the computer system to monitor, measure and mark the interactions of students on-line are examples of the dangers of the system imperatives invading pedagogic practices. We may be in danger of training counsellors by e-learning and teachers by distance learning.

We cannot ignore, abandon or destroy the system, after all it has a function and use. But it is possible to insert lifeworld values, caring behaviours, ethical concerns and principles into the system and so resist and reverse colonization. Habermas provides a critique and theoretical support for those who continue to hope for and work for a more rational society. Adult education has a role to play in this according to Mezirow:

The social goal toward which adult education strives is one in which all members of society may engage freely and fully in rational discourse and action without this process being subverted by the system (Mezirow 1995, p. 57).

What action is required as a response to colonization, the collapse of the public sphere, the decline of civil society and the invasion of the lifeworld (themes from Habermas)? The response is democracy or the holding of particular kinds of discussions (communicative action) in which there is a right for all to participate on an equal basis. It is certainly imaginable that these kinds of discussion, though rational in Habermas’s presentation, might be characterized as love if one were more informed by the work of Fromm. It is these same rules that Mezirow adopts and proposes as the ground rules for engaging in the discussions that support transformative learning.

This is the way Habermas proposes rescuing reason from being co-opted by money and power and how adults can use reason to build a more participatory democracy. The adult learning project of Habermas aims to resist a decline in social solidarity by becoming aware of and developing democratic processes that are always already inherent and implied in all interpersonal communication.

Since 1962, Habermas had been emphasizing the crucial role of public discussion and debate in the formation of the needs, interests and aspirations of individuals (Habermas 1989). The core of Habermas’ critique of capitalism is that the public sphere or public discussion has been reduced by the activities of politicians, advertisers, public relations and

the media in general. This theme has emerged again in his more recent work where he links the concept of a public sphere with that of civil society to provide an account of how control can be exercised over markets and bureaucracies (Habermas 1996, pp. 266–268). In a complex modern society the quality of democracy ultimately depends not on politicians but on the existence of this public sphere, on people's intelligent involvement in politics and on organisations and associations which help form opinion through discourse. A vibrant civil society is essential for democracy. The conviction that free, open, public discussion has a transformative function is central to Habermas' thinking. But as Habermas asserts, adults have 'an automatic inability not to learn' (Habermas 1975, p. 15). In proposing a form of reflexive learning Habermas is talking about the ability to question, challenge everyday practices and critique the way society is organised in discussion with others.

Adult educators such as Mezirow and Brookfield who have appropriated the ideas of Habermas have emphasized that redeeming validity claims involves a highly significant kind of adult learning. Its significance and importance rest on the possibility of identifying and understanding one's real needs and taking action arrived at in agreement, i.e. discursive will-formation. Unfortunately, in a society dominated by money and power, there are too many opportunities for and experiences of discourses and communications that are the opposite of communicative action. These adult educators who appropriate these ideas in pursuit of a grounding for the discipline are involved in the learning project of reviving civil society and protecting its democratic impulses from colonization by the system. The best prospects for democracy are to create these kinds of conversations in which validity claims are redeemed. The very existence of democratic society depends on adults learning how to do this. For Habermas learning is an essential part of bringing about the good life and this links clearly with the way in which Fromm proposed a crucial role for adult education in society. In the proposing of new ways of being (rather than having) both Habermas and Fromm agree that this involves new ways of imagining and creating communities. As Brookfield expresses it: "it is hard to imagine a more profound example of transformative learning" (Brookfield 2011, p. 34).

For Habermas, discourse requires freedom and justice—freedom to reach agreement on the basis of the better argument alone and justice based on mutual respect. This discourse is both rational and emancipatory in its intention because the process of reaching agreement is accompanied by revealing the ideological, coercive and non-democratic structures, which hinder a genuinely democratic process (Collins 1991, p. 10). This kind of discourse is the foundation for a democratic society as it points to freedom, equality and care. It is also now well established that it is the foundation for a particular kind of learning—transformative learning (Mezirow 1995, p. 67). Democratic participation and discourse are essential elements of the learning process.

Civil society, democracy and adult education (as understood by Mezirow) have in common the ambition to create opportunities and places for discourse. The commitment is to a form of living together in which we attempt to reach agreement about difficult matters in a discussion that is free from domination. A teacher in this transformative mode attempts to create the identical process, i.e. a learning society. In order to have full free participation in discourse there must be freedom, equality, tolerance, justice and a valuing of rationality. The learning community implied in discourse is precisely that required for transformative learning; the recreation of the life-world; the development of civil society and the emergence of truly democratic systems and society. A democratised civil society is a learning society.

Discussion and Conclusion

It is suggested to me by this study that the role of the transformative adult educator then becomes one of encouraging and creating situations and classrooms that encourage the fullest participation in discourse, assisting adults critically assess the validity of their ways of making meaning and exploring perspectives that are more open to change. Too much adult education has been about work, skills, instrumental learning and how to do things. It has been preoccupied with defining learning tasks and outcomes, behavioural objectives and measurable competence. Too much has been about the system, the formal state sector, the economy and training. These are important and need support but a different kind of learning is being proposed by as a result of this study of Fromm and Habermas. It involves a critical reflection on assumptions that underpin our beliefs, a discourse to justify what we believe and taking action on the basis of new agreed understandings. Then needs assessment, learning objectives, teaching methods, research methodologies and evaluation are defined and identified in a different way (Mezirow 1994, p. 226). They are formed in the discourse.

There is a radical and transformative tradition in adult education that understands that it is the lifeworld that gets transformed (Wildemeersch and Leirman 1988). The task of the left and of a democratic civil society and of education is one of de-colonizing the lifeworld. Welton, as an adult educator, writes about the defense of the lifeworld as reappropriating the learning processes in "the family, the public sphere, community life, and cultural expressions" from the grasp and control of technical reason and putting them back in the hands of citizens engaged in democratic consensual dialogue (Welton 1995, p. 28). Effective learners in an emancipatory, participative, democratic society—a learning society—become a community of cultural critics and social activists, and the dichotomy of individual and society is transcended by understanding knowledge (and learning) as intersubjective (Mezirow 1995, pp. 68–70). Critical theory holds out the promise of enabling us to think of all society as a vast school and that, as argued in this paper, Fromm and Habermas are important allies in explaining what is involved in this.

It could be argued that there is a danger that too many adult education courses will focus on the utilitarian, that there will be too many vocational courses to the detriment of courses and programmes that may be of benefit to one self and society rather than the economy. Too many courses may focus on instrumental learning rather than communicative praxis. There may be too much emphasis on career and not enough on one's role in society. This is supported by Welton who outlined a 'critical turn in adult education theory' (Welton 1995, pp. 11–38).

One would be entirely justified in asking how such a communicative adult education would work (inspired by Fromm and Habermas)? There would be less emphasis on hierarchical authority and more on participatory decision making; the elimination of corporate culture and the nourishing of self-government; a clear priority given to social justice, social analysis, critical reflection, and reconstructing the teacher-student relationship where both become co-investigators of reality. Such an adult education would be defined as an exercise in democracy, that teaches democracy and aims to reproduce more democracy in classrooms, communities, society and the work place.

The antidote to the alienation so well understood by Fromm is unity and collaboration with others. This is linked with Habermas's idea of discourses about how to live together in a participatory democracy. This is different to the cultural change so often promised in the lifelong learning mantra of the modern society. It is about real needs identified in adult education (for Fromm) and in the learning society (Habermas).

The success of Fromm is to have written a collection of hugely successful and popular books that introduced a generation of American and other readers to critical theory. In contrast Habermas has introduced the reconstruction of many of the same authors but in contrast, to a largely academic audience and indeed fewer educators. Fromm's focus on the emotions can be a corrective to the highly rationalistic view of critical theory as developed and promoted by Habermas.

Fromm is the perfect antidote to neoliberal thinking:

The assumption that individual freedoms are guaranteed by freedom of the market and of trade is a cardinal feature of neoliberal thinking, and it has long dominated the US stance towards the rest of the world (Harvey 2005, p. 7).

It (neoliberalism) tries to impose "a state apparatus whose fundamental mission was to facilitate conditions for profitable capital accumulation" (Harvey 2005, p. 7). In outlining the "attractions" of neoliberalism (it must be at least superficially attractive in order to attract through promising material gains) Harvey echoes Fromm by identifying the rewards of neoliberalism as 'I shop therefore I am' (p. 170) constructing in this way "a world of pseudo-satisfactions that is superficially exciting but hollow at its core" (p. 170). This is all a "cruel joke". Neither Habermas nor Fromm would be surprised by the conclusion of Harvey that neoliberalism leads to the decline of civil society (Harvey 2005, p. 170). All would agree with Brookfield's assertion that they were interested in the political nature of critical pedagogy (Brookfield 2011, p. 59).

If any enduring and serious connection is to be identified between Fromm and Habermas it might be that both attempted in different times to identify and realise the potential of (though neither used the term) of lifelong learning as part of the process of bringing about a more just and caring society. The most enduring link between Erich Fromm and Jürgen Habermas is the shared attention to the importance of having free conversations about how the emancipated life might be created and sustained.

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