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Fromm, E. (1947/2003). *Man for himself: An inquiry into the psychology of ethics*. Routledge.

1. Humanistic ethics, in contrast to authoritarian ethics, may likewise be distinguished by formal and material criteria. Formally, it is based on the principle that only man himself can determine the criterion for virtue and sin, and not an authority transcending him. Materially, it is based on the principle that “good” is what good for man and “evil” what is detrimental to man; the sole criterion of ethical value being man’s welfare.
2. Humanistic ethics is anthropocentric; not, of course, in the sense that man is the center of the universe but in the sense that his value judgments, like all other judgments and even perceptions, are rooted in the peculiarities of his existence and are meaningful only with reference to it; man, indeed, is the “measure of all things.” The humanistic position is that there is nothing higher and nothing more dignified than human existence. Against this position it has been argued that it is in the very nature of ethical behavior to be related to something transcending man, and hence that a system which recognizes man and his interest alone cannot be truly moral, that its object would be merely the isolated, egotistical individual.
3. As many advocates of humanistic ethics have suggested, it is one of the characteristics of human nature that man finds his fulfillment and happiness only in relatedness to and solidarity with his fellow men. However, to love one’s neighbor is not a phenomenon transcending man; it is something inherent in and radiating from him. Love is not a higher power which descends upon man nor a duty which is imposed upon him; it is his own power by which he relates himself to the world and makes it truly his.
4. Humanistic ethics, for which “good” is synonymous with good for man and “bad” with bad for man, proposes that in order to know what is good for man we have to know his nature. Humanistic ethics is the applied science of the “art of living” based upon the theoretical “science of man.” The drive to live is inherent in every organism, and man can not help wanting to live regardless of what he would like to think about it. The choice between life and death is more apparent than real; man’s real choice is that between a good life and a bad life.
5. Modern society, in spite of all the emphasis it puts upon happiness, individuality, and self-interest, has taught man to feel that not his happiness is the aim of life, but the fulfillment of his duty to work, or his success. Money, prestige, and power

have become his incentives and ends. He acts under the illusion that his actions benefit his self-interest, though he actually serves everything else but the interests of his real self. Everything is important to him except his life and the art of living.

6. "To be alive" is a dynamic, not a static, concept. Existence and the unfolding of the specific powers of an organism are one and the same. All organisms have an inherent tendency to actualize their specific potentialities. The aim of man's life, therefore, is to be understood as the unfolding of his power according to the laws of his nature. Man, however, does not exist "in general." While sharing the core of human qualities with all members of his species, he is always an individual, a unique entity, different from everybody else. He differs by his particular blending of character, temperament, talents, dispositions, just as he differs at his fingertips. He can affirm his human potentialities only by realizing his individuality. The duty to be alive is the same as the duty to become oneself, to develop into the individual one potentially is.
7. To sum up, good in humanistic ethics is the affirmation of life, the unfolding of man's power. Virtue is responsibility toward his own existence. Evil constitutes the crippling of man's powers; vice is irresponsibility toward himself.
8. Human existence is different in this respect from that of all other organisms; it is in a state of constant and unavoidable disequilibrium. Man is the only animal for whom his own existence is a problem which he has to solve and from which he cannot escape. He cannot go back to the prehuman state of harmony with nature; he must proceed to develop his reason until he becomes the master of nature, and of himself.
9. The most fundamental existential dichotomy is that between life and death. The fact that we have to die is unalterable for man. Man is aware of this fact, and this very awareness profoundly influences his life. That man is mortal results in another dichotomy: while even human being is the bearer of all human potentialities; the short span of his life does not permit their full realization under even the most favorable circumstances. Only if the life span of the individual were identical with that of mankind could he participate in the human development which occurs in the historical process. Man's life, beginning and ending at one accidental point in the evolutionary process of the race, conflicts tragically with the individual's claim for the realization of all of his potentialities.
10. Man is alone and he is related at the same time. He is alone inasmuch as he is a unique entity, not identical with anyone else, and aware of his self as a separate entity. He must be alone when he has to judge or to make decisions solely by the power of his reason. And yet he cannot bear to be alone, to be unrelated to his fellow men. His happiness depends on the solidarity he feels with his fellow men,

with past and future generations.

11. Man must accept the responsibility for himself and the fact that only by using his own powers can he give meaning to his life. But meaning does not imply certainty; indeed, the quest for certainty blocks the search for meaning. Uncertainty is the very conditions to impel man to unfold his powers. If he faces the truth without panic he will recognize that there is no meaning to life except the meaning man gives his life by the unfolding of his powers, by living productively; and that only constant vigilance, activity, and effort can keep us from failing in the one task that matters – the full development of our powers within the limitations set by the laws of our existence.
12. Human existence is characterized by the fact that man is alone and separated from the world; not being able to stand the separation, he is impelled to seek for relatedness and oneness. There are many ways in which he can realize this need, but only one in which he, as a unique entity, remains intact; only one in which his own powers unfold in the very process of being related. It is the paradox of human existence that man must simultaneously seek for closeness and for independence; for oneness with others and at the same time for the preservation of his uniqueness and particularity.
13. One can be productively related to the world by acting and by comprehending. Man produces things, and in the process of creation he exercises his powers over matter. Man comprehends the world, mentally and emotionally, through love and through reason. His power of reason enables him to penetrate through the surface and to grasp the essence of his object by getting into active relation with it. His power of love enables him to break through the wall which separates him from another person and to comprehend him. Although love and reason are only two different forms of comprehending the world and although neither is possible without the other, they are expressions of different powers, and that of emotion and that of thinking.
14. To love a person productively implies to care and to feel responsible for his life, not only for his physical existence but for the growth and development of all his human powers. To love productively is incompatible with being passive, with being an onlooker at the loved person's life; it implies labor and care and the responsibility for his growth.
15. But love for man cannot be separated from the love for one individual. To love one person productively means to be related to his human core, to him as representing mankind. Love for one individual, in so far as it is divorced from love for man, can refer only to the superficial and to the accidental; of necessity it remains shallow. While it may be said that love for man differs from motherly

love inasmuch as the child is helpless and our fellow men are not, it may also be said that even this difference exists only in relative terms. All men are in need of help and depend on one another. Human solidarity is the necessary condition for the unfolding of any one individual.

16. In productive thinking the subject is not indifferent to his object but is affected by and concerned with it. The object is not experienced as something dead and divorced from oneself and one's life, as something about which one thinks only in a self-isolated fashion; on the contrary, the subject is intensely interested in his object, and the more intimate this relation is, the more fruitful is his thinking.
17. In the process of productive thinking the thinker is motivated by his interest for the object; he is affected by it and reacts to it; he cares and responds. But productive thinking is also characterized by objectivity, by the respect the thinker has for his object, by his ability to see the object as it is and not as he wishes it to be. This polarity between objectivity and subjectivity is characteristic of productive thinking as it is of productiveness in general. Objectivity requires not only seeing the object as it is but also seeing oneself as one is, i.e., being aware of the particular constellation in which one finds oneself as an observer related to the object of observation. Productive thinking, then, is determined by the nature of the object and the nature of the subject who relates himself to his object in the process of thinking.
18. We can differentiate between the following kinds of interpersonal relatedness: symbiotic relatedness, withdrawal-destructiveness, love.
19. In the symbiotic relatedness the person is related to others but loses or never attains his independence; he avoids the danger of aloneness by becoming part of another person, either by being "swallowed" by that person or by "swallowing" him.
20. A second kind of relatedness is one of distance, of withdrawal and destructiveness. The feeling of individual powerlessness can be overcome by withdrawal from others who are experienced as threats. Its emotional equivalent is the feeling of indifference toward others, often accompanied by a compensatory feeling of self-inflation.
21. Love is the productive form of relatedness to others and to oneself. It implies responsibility, care, respect and knowledge, and the wish for the other person to grow and develop. It is the expression of intimacy between two human beings under the condition of the preservation of each other's integrity.
22. Before we start the discussion of the psychological aspect of selfishness and self-love, the logical fallacy in the notion that love for others and love for oneself are mutually exclusive should be stressed. If it is a virtue to love my neighbors as

a human being, it must be a virtue – and not a vice – to love myself since I am a human being too. There is no concept of man in which I myself am not included. A doctrine which proclaims such an exclusion proves itself to be intrinsically contradictory. The idea expressed in the Biblical “Love thy neighbor as thyself!” implies that respect for one’s own integrity and uniqueness, love for and understanding of one’s own self, cannot be separated from respect for and love and understanding of another individual. The love for my own self is inseparably connected with the love for any other self.

23. The affirmation of one’s own life, happiness, growth, freedom, is rooted in one’s capacity to love, i.e., in care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge. If an individual is able to love productively, he loves himself too; if he can love only others, he cannot love at all.
24. Selfishness and self-love, far from being identical, are actually opposites. The selfish person does not love himself too much but too little; in fact he hates himself. This lack of fondness and care for himself, which is only one expression of his lack of productiveness, leaves him empty and frustrated. He is necessarily unhappy and anxiously concerned to snatch from life the satisfactions which he blocks himself from attaining. He seems to care too much for himself but actually he only makes an unsuccessful attempt to cover up and compensate for his failure to care for his real self.
25. Humanistic conscience is the reaction of our total personality to its proper functioning or dysfunctioning; not a reaction to the functioning of this or that capacity but to the totality of capacities which constitute our human and our individual existence. Conscience judges our functioning as human beings; it is (as the root of the word *con-scientia* indicates) knowledge within oneself, knowledge of our respective success or failure in the art of living. But although conscience is knowledge, it is more than mere knowledge in the realm of abstract thought. It has an effective quality, for it is the reaction of our total personality and not only the reaction of our mind. In fact, we need not be aware of what our conscience says in order to be influenced by it.
26. Conscience is thus a reaction to ourselves. It is the voice of our true selves which summons us back to ourselves, to live productively, to develop fully and harmoniously – that is, to become what we potentially are. If love can be defined as the affirmation of the potentialities and the care for, and the respect of, the uniqueness of the loved person, humanistic conscience can be justly called the voice of our loving care for ourselves.