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## Is man alive? Interview with Edwin Newman

Erich Fromm  
(2012b-e)

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*Edwin Newman:* >Speaking Freely< today is Erich Fromm, who is by common consent one of the leading psychoanalysts in this country and indeed in the world, Dr. Fromm will be talking not so much about psychoanalysis per se as about a point of view that might be summed up in this way: that the relevant question today is not whether God is dead but whether man is alive. Dr. Fromm, I know that quotation is associated with you. Is man alive? What do you mean by that?

*Erich Fromm:* Well, in order to answer this question, one would really have to go into the whole problem of the trend of modern society, that is to say the trend of the industrial system between what is often called the first industrial revolution of the nineteenth century, or even part of this century, and the so-called second industrial revolution. There are some very interesting statements which foresee this development by visionary men of the nineteenth century. But a contemporary, excellent statement has been made by the great and penetrating author, Lewis Mumford, in his book, *The Myth of the Machine*, in which he speaks of the megamachine as a society which is so completely controlled so that every human being becomes part of the machine. And while he uses machines himself, the whole society as a whole is a machine, and everybody functions—you might say programmed, by the programming which is part of this machine.

*Edwin Newman:* Let me interrupt you there, Dr. Fromm, to ask you about what you call the second industrial revolution. Now what do you mean by that, the development of electronics, computers, that kind of thing?

*Erich Fromm:* Yes, one might say the first revolution is characterized by the fact that living energy was replaced by mechanical energy; that is to say, the physical energy of animals and men was replaced by steam, oil, electricity, atomic energy. Although even centuries before wind and water had been used as a source of energy.

Now the second industrial revolution is characterized by the fact that thinking, which until this point was the privilege of man, can also be done by machines, by the computers. And this opens entirely new ways of production and entirely new ways of organizing society which as some people think and I believe that is basically true might bring about a change in our society in comparison with which let us say the French and



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Russian revolutions are just ripples of history.

*Edwin Newman:* Well Dr. Fromm, you were quoting, Lewis Mumford a moment ago, *The Myth of the Machine* and the growth of what he calls the megamachine, the big machine. Does that mean that what he's writing about, the fact that we're all part of a machine and our lives are being programmed, has overtaken us without our really knowing it? Are we in this condition already?

*Erich Fromm:* Yes, I think we are. The question is, can we extricate ourselves or not? And that's a very interesting question, because it's answered in different ways. A man like Mumford believes, and I do so too, we can. Other people like an author who calls this not the megamachine but the "technotronic society," Professor Brzezinski, believes, we are in it, nothing can be changed, and therefore we have to make the best of it although this is more, as I think, soothing talk than reality.

*Edwin Newman:* Professor Brzezinski is at Columbia, he's a political scientist. Used to be with the State Department.

*Erich Fromm:* Yes, that's right. He has written a very interesting article in *Encounter* a few months ago about what he calls the "technotronic society." And he doesn't have the profundity of a man like Mumford but he is very intelligent, very intuitive, for what goes on really. And perhaps I could quote one sentence of him that gives an idea of what we are talking about here. „In the technotronic society," he said, „the trend would seem to be toward the aggregation of the individual support of millions of uncoordinated citizens, easily within the reach of magnetic and attractive personalities effectively exploiting the latest communication techniques to manipulate emotions and control reason." That is a very good definition. And it's very interesting what the programming is.

*Edwin Newman:* But you say we're in this *already*; whereas I read the Brzezinski article and he said we were on the eve of it, on the verge of it. Is there a real difference?

*Erich Fromm:* As I remember it, he says we are beginning to--and we cannot stop the development.

*Edwin Newman:* Yes.

*Erich Fromm:* You find, incidentally, on the very left, radical left, some ideas which are equally pessimistic, those who have Maoist ideas and who say American society is dead, it cannot be salvaged, and therefore there is nothing one can do within the society. The two extremes really touch each other.

*Edwin Newman:* Well Brzezinski also says that we are the first nation. to enter what he calls the "technotronic age," and we're separated from the rest of the world in this respect. Do you agree with that?

*Erich Fromm:* Wells yes, in a way. Although he has some very peculiar ideas about our relationship to the rest of the world, that if it cannot be handled otherwise we might defend ourselves against the rest of the world by thermonuclear weapons or even more lethal weapons, but he says it would be preferable if it could be in other ways. Now, this is of course in many ways the peak of the idea that our relationship to the rest of the world can be guided by sheer force, and by deterrents.



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*Edwin Newman:* I think that is not in the article--the article we are immediately discussing--that point of view. Perhaps that's beside the point which article it's in. You agree with Mumford, that the United States and American society has become a vast machine, a megamachine, and we're all parts in it.

*Erich Fromm:* Yes, I would have some points to add, perhaps. One refers to what we are programmed with. Now I would mention two main points of programming. One is that that which is technically possible ought to be done, in other words, that the norm follows from the technical possibility. If it is possible to travel into space, then we ought to travel into space. If it's possible to make the most devastating weapons, we should do so. Technical progress in itself, or the logic of technical progress, becomes the highest authority for norms, in contrast to our tradition in which one ought to do that which is helpful to man's development, to his growth, to his life, what is true, what is beautiful. All this of course is dethroned, if we accept the norm that that which is possible technically ought to be done. This is one programming point.

The second one is that of maximum efficiency, and that as a logical consequence carries with it minimal individuality. Because if you have as your supreme principle maximum efficiency then of course any organization--in work, in hospital, in school, in university--is the more efficient it is or it seems so, the more efficient it cuts people into numbers, into ciphers, makes them alike, comparable; the more it cuts out individuality. Then you can deal with people in masses without the friction which individuality creates. Actually I have doubts whether that is so. Our organizations are not as efficient as we claim. It's in many ways quite inefficient. And it is inefficient precisely because by our bureaucratic spirit a good deal of energy which the individual could put in his work, he doesn't, because he's bored. And because he doesn't really like his work.

*Edwin Newman:* Dr. Fromm, may I go back a bit now. If one accept, the idea that we are already being programmed in these two respects you mentioned, maximum efficiency which carries with it minimal individuality, and the first that if something is technically possible it should be done--if in fact we are being programmed in that way, are we being consciously programmed in that way by somebody?

*Erich Fromm:* No, I think--

*Edwin Newman:* This is the machine doing it.

*Erich Fromm:* This is a machine. There is an interesting comparison which Lewis Mumford makes between our megamachine and the old megamachines of Egypt and Babylonia. The great technical achievements of these cultures were done by the complete coordination of all people in one direction--their brains, their feelings, their thinking--and so they could build the pyramids without hardly any tools, without any technique which would make it explicable. But there the elite knew what they wanted. They had a plan and a vision, A beautiful, artistic plan of these pyramids--there were certain metaphysical and religious concepts connected with it, but even after 4,000 years we still enjoy the result of their programming.

Our elite, I think, has no plan and no vision, That is to say, it is not that this is all program for an aim, but the programming follows already from the very logic of the machine in which we live: And the question is, can we change the programming. Because this is the question, and here I think we come to the important problem: Are we so pro-



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grammed that the process is unstoppable? Are there reactions in people of such a nature that the majority of people can decide they want a different kind of programming and that is to say really no programming at all, but ideas?

*Edwin Newman:* Well, what is your answer to this?

*Erich Fromm:* Well, I think in the first place we can see the results of this industrial life, of this bureaucratic way of life, in ways which many people are aware of and many people are not aware of, but which in some ways constitutes what I once called the “pathology of normalcy.” Many people in America are profoundly bored, feel lonely, feel anxious, feel isolated; they don’t dare to be aware of it because in order to be a good job prospect you’re not supposed to be bored nor anxious nor anything else; so everybody whistles and thinks If everybody else whistles he’s kind of a participant in a pop concert. But if you scratch the surface, you find that we live by pills in many ways to excite and to calm down, and we live by thrills, and every minute has to be filled out because we save all the time we can and we don’t know what to do with it. You might say most people get more and more in a state of complete passiveness. They become completely consumers, they consume everything, they take in everything. Now, one has to consume, of course, some things--we eat and we drink. But the activeness really goes out of life and general inner laziness occurs.

Now this is something which bothers many people, you find today an increasing number of people and I think--well we have no figures but I would think--half the population in the United States certain who are dimly aware of the fact that there is something wrong that “to live in plenty without joy.” That is actually a quotation from the Bible, referring to the grievous sin of the Hebrews in the fifth book of the Bible--to live in the midst of plenty without joy, is something which one should not do, something which makes one feel guilty.

*Edwin Newman:* Why do you think that so many Americans feel this way, Dr. Fromm? Is there some evidence or is it an intuitive feeling that you have? Or can you tell it from your patients perhaps?

*Erich Fromm:* Well, I wouldn’t draw too many conclusions from patients because it’s small numbers statistically speaking, it’s not so good. But I have been lecturing all over the country for many years to large bodies of students and also of adult persons. And I’ve talked about these things. I get many letters and I get many responses to my lectures. And especially I look at the people while I speak, look at their faces and watch what they feel. I have to say, I see people rather than listen so much to what they have to say, try to see what do they really feel. And I’ve come to the conviction that this is really the case for a large number of Americans.

But I still would have said this is my personal observation, had it not been for the miraculous effect of the McCarthy campaign in the last few months. Because here is the proof, as far as I am concerned. Because what drew people and draws people to McCarthy was not so much just the programming, but was that here somebody stood for life, for peace, against bureaucratic method, against the use of words, but that somebody was believable, that somebody could be trusted. I think the McCarthy movement, whatever the outcome of it will be, has already proven that there’s a large sector of Americans who are thirsty for life, who want another society in which they are not bored and in which life is interesting.



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Well then, there's another proof, and this is a student movement which goes on all over the Western world, whether the states are capitalist or communist or half-communist, it doesn't make any difference. And if one asks what do the students really want, I think one can say they are hungry for life. And they want something more--closer to life than the kind of education they get, which is essentially one of concepts, thoughts, but nothing which is really transformed into living experience or touches upon living experience.

*Edwin Newman:* Dr. Fromm, if one accepts the point of view you've set out, that we are already in the grip of the machine, your hope is to change that--as you say, to extricate us from that grip. Now, does it not involve a reversal of the entire trend of the last few centuries. Has anything like that ever happened?

*Erich Fromm:* Well I wouldn't say over the last few centuries. I would say over the last fifty years. Because nobody wants to get rid of the machine, nobody wants to be rid of the computers. They have been and can be most helpful to give the basis for a better material life, and to give men the possibility of a more human life. I think the problem is to change something in the spirit of our culture; for instance, to change the principle that what matters is without question greater efficiency, rather than a kind of procedure which is most conducive to man's happiness. I don't so much like the word happiness here because it's so misused, and in fact it isn't the best of words anyway. I would rather speak of interest, joy, participation, that life has a meaning.

Then we would have to change the direction of production consumption. We could think we would have a food and drug act not only with regard to physical things but with regard to many other things in our culture. We could for instance consider to study at least what are needs conducive to men's growth and what are needs really poisonous or harmful to men's growth; what increases men's activeness and participation, what paralyzes him. This all would hardly require change in our Constitution. It would require a different spirit, a different direction. There are many other things. I think, for instance, and many people have suggested that and it has already occurred: the great importance of forming face-to-face groups. We have become such anonymous masses of people who are completely isolated. So we have lost all cohesion. The great French sociologist of the last century, Durkheim, has already seen that. He said our society's is characterized by its *ennui*, by its lack of common norm.

Now I think we could experiment very well with face-to-face groups which could replace the old town meeting, for instance, in which we have no demagogic speakers, in which people meet each other, in which people are informed about facts, and we can see even today we have the means to give objective information, and in which people after discussion, after debate, after information, vote and decide. And with our computers today this vote for instance could be counted within a day.

Or we could think of something like another lower house which would not have the disadvantage of a referendum which permits a great deal of demagogic influence, but which is based on the thinking of people and which is a constant educational process. The same thing would hold true for factories, for schools, for universities. That is to say; we could reestablish the intimacy of human contact and participation in many things.

*Edwin Newman:* What I'm wondering about as you're saying this, Dr. Fromm, is in the first place the population explosion--to what extent that is responsible for the circumstances that have come about and which people tend to become anonymous simply



because there are so many people.

The second thing I wonder about as I hear you saying this, is the amount of information that now exists, and the amount of abstruse information that now exists, so that people feel they don't have any idea of what a great deal of what goes on is about--scientific matters, physics for example. And people feel completely left out of it. The immediate consequence of these two things appears to be that people don't think they have much influence on anything, and can't have. That as a unit the person is just too small to matter any more.

*Erich Fromm:* Let me first answer the first question: the population explosion. Of course the size of the population in America makes a difference but I don't think it's such an essential factor, because it can really break down the size by establishing smaller units. You could establish by the formation of smaller units small towns and town meetings down the level of 50 or 100 people.

Now the other question which you mention, namely to what extent is simply the specialization in knowledge a hindrance for individual participation--I should like to say this: In the first place, in the most developed field--let us say in physics, in chemistry--you find today that only maybe 50 people or sometimes 10 people, colleagues of an author, understand what he's writing about. The other physicists, the other chemists who are somewhat in different branches may not already be fully ready to follow him. Obviously the individual does not have to be familiar with the very latest discovery in physics or chemistry or biology and so on, in order to have some say about his life.

But take another example, let's say foreign policy: I'm convinced that anyone who reads the paper which gives sufficient information, let's say *New York Times*, *St. Louis Dispatch*, knows about as much as the leading members of the State Department do, maybe even a little more because they don't get some misinformation which turns out later to have led to wrong decisions. I think the information on foreign policy is relatively simple. The problems are by no means so difficult technically.

It seems to me the main problem here is that the individual in our society is more and more accustomed to think that only the top gorillas, the bureaucracy, only the specialists, can think; and the individual feels impotent and powerless with regard to anything. And that, I think, is really the end to democracy. But it can be changed; it's not necessarily so. In other words, I think the field in which the individual cannot know too much is a relatively small field of technical knowledge, while vast problems in which an individual can get enough information for his decision-making do not really offer this problem that they are not understandable.

*Edwin Newman:* The point has been made that the more secret information there is, the more those who have that secret information at their disposal have the opportunity to control events and people. So it is in the interest of democracy, I suppose, to spread information around as much as possible.

*Erich Fromm:* That's true, and besides that, some trends are possible to read for anyone who is really reading between the lines, who analyzes things--I don't mean psychoanalyzes them--and then he will know a great deal for which he does not need any secret information. There's a great deal of misinformation too, of course.

*Edwin Newman:* But do you accept, then, that we are on the verge of an enormous



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transformation but that it can be dealt with in a way that you think is desirable, but in any case we are on the verge of an enormous transformation? Which will be telescoped into a very short period?

*Erich Fromm:* I think we are. I would compare us with a patient on the critical list. In other words, there is the possibility, and if I let only my thinking speak, perhaps even the probability that we are headed for the megamachine or for the technotronic society, and for the extinction of individuality, and that means for culture as we have renown it. But I also believe there's a great probability that we're headed for thermonuclear war. But I think all this is not a necessity. That there is so much in a protest longing for life, awareness of what's going on, that there is a possibility to change our course. And what I mean is, it doesn't matter so much whether we go 10 miles or 100 miles in another direction; what really matters is whether we change the direction. The faster one goes in the wrong direction the faster one gets into catastrophe.

*Edwin Newman:* Dr. Fromm, you have some hope, then, about --

*Erich Fromm:* I have a great deal of hope. In fact, I think in these matters of life and death one cannot think in terms of betting on a horse. And I'm afraid many people think still in politics in terms of betting on a horse. If it's likely that the horse will win they bet on it, and if not they better not.

It seems to me another example would be much more conducive to seize political thinking: If a person is sick, the person suffers from a severe illness, and the doctors say there's only 15 percent chance that he might be saved, nobody will say, „Oh well, 15 percent, what is that, we just don't do anything any more.“ Everything is done to make use of this 15 percent. And I feel the same thing about our situation. Therefore I feel as long as there is life there is hope, and it depends on us, and on the enlightenment of every person, to see the problem clearly. Most people just shut their eyes because it's uncomfortable. Just as many people don't go to the doctor because they're afraid of getting a bad diagnosis.

*Edwin Newman:* Well Doctor, does religion have any part to play, still, in either eventuality--the one you oppose or the one you favor?

*Erich Fromm:* Well I'm very glad you raise this question, because that seems to me a crucial point. Religion was a system of orientation and devotion which was unquestioned for centuries, until not so recently. But more and more religion has lost its attraction, its power to a large number of people, especially to the young. On the other hand, the fact that the majority of Americans say they believe in God means very little, because as we can see their actions are not motivated by the values they profess. In fact, if I may say this just in passing, it seems to me that's one of the reasons for the guilty conscience we have. The constant conflict between what we profess and the motives by which we are motivated, it makes most people feel very uneasy. We profess the values of the Judeo-Christian tradition of love of men, of love of enemies even, of humility, of unselfishness, and we practice and are motivated exactly by the opposite values.

So what happens is that more and more people don't know what they live for. As long as they believed in religion, and as long as they were serious in their belief in religious values, there was a clear hierarchy of values. They may not have fulfilled them or real-



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ized them, but at least there were norms which directed their lives and towards which they could orient themselves.

Now, these values are more and disappearing. They are nothing to many people but words to which they pay lip-service because it's good policy and because it's one of the conventional things to do. It seems to me the crucial question for our century, how can we find an equivalent of that which religion, traditional religion, offered, I'm not saying that traditional religion is finished; I think for instance what we find in the humanist renewal in the Catholic Church after Pope John is an amazing phenomenon, incidentally something very similar to what happened in the United States in the youth movement, that old ideas suddenly found an expression and a rather drastic one, and people had enough of the old formulas and of the bureaucracy of the church and wanted living ideas and wanted action, and wanted to change life.

I am not saying religion has no more place; those who belong to this kind of religion have a living religion and certainly I wouldn't dream of wanting to argue about that, But those who are not born into a religion or who have lost the faith in these concepts must have another system of devotion, another frame of reference and of devotion, to give them the hierarchy of values. Perhaps one could say this hierarchy of values could be in the first place basically the same as those of the great traditional religions--of Buddhism, of Christianity, of Judaism--namely, overcoming selfishness, transcending the narrow prison of one's ego, of this all I am, or rather all I have, all I own, all the power I have to be open to the world, to be related to the world, and to be interested in the world--which really only means to be in the world and not cut off from the world.

*Edwin Newman:* What would be the practical means, Dr. Fromm, of educating people to this, in your view? Besides let us say reading your books and articles and those of people who are in agreement with you.

*Erich Fromm:* I think there are many people who will, once they get out of the confusion in which they find themselves--it's either religion or it's nothing--come to similar conclusions and find various expressions. You find it in the youth movement.

*Edwin Newman:* Some of it is spontaneous, then.

*Erich Fromm:* Some of it is very spontaneous; I think where there is a really felt need among people, they find expression. We have, after all, inherited a culture of 3,000 years, in which then have developed these ideas, these values. These values are not dead. They have made life worthwhile, and they have really made Western society given it its vitality.

*Edwin Newman:* What I was really trying to say was this. Obviously people who believe as you do must propagate their views. It's a duty you have, a responsibility.

*Erich Fromm:* Yes.

*Edwin Newman:* But it is also true that if things have gone as far as you say they have, if we are in the grip of a megamachine, then it seems to me that something of enormous size and consequence would have to come about to make the change that you consider desirable.

*Erich Fromm:* Yes, well I have hope. Or I do hope.



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*Edwin Newman:* You always go back to that word.

*Erich Fromm:* Yes, maybe I do because I'm just writing a book on the topic of hope, a short book. And to me hope is indeed one of the crucial experiences. I think without hope we are paralyzed in our energy, and eventually without hope we become destructive.

*Edwin Newman:* Dr. Fromm, let's bring this question that I was telling you a minute ago down to something concrete and immediate. This country's very concerned, it appears, about violence. Violence in American life, violence in American society. People want to know whether violence is peculiar to us, whether other countries have the same thing, whether we have had the same thing in the past, and in any case what can be done about it. Is there any cause-and-effect relationship between the machine, the megamachine, the grip that you think the machine has on us, and what we talk about now, this violence in American life?

*Erich Fromm:* I think so. There is at present a tendency, in books like *The Naked Ape* [by Desmond Morris] which is now for quite some time the best-seller in America, or in Konrad Lorenz' book *On Aggression*--to describe or to explain human aggressiveness as a result of instincts, of animal inheritance.

Well, actually Freud already had this theory when he spoke about the death instinct. But this side of Freud never became as popular as what he said about sexuality and the Oedipus complex and all that. But now, the books become very popular who say man is born violent and it's hard to control and so on and so on. This is simply not true, It doesn't stand up to all observation material. For instance, if the human race were as violent as the primates, we would have nothing to worry about, because the primates are relatively very unviolent and peaceful society. In fact there is hardly any animal species which is as violent and destructive as man can be, So I believe it follows that the sources of human destructiveness lie in specific conditions of human existence.

It is a large topic, I want only to mention one of these specific conditions, that is, that if man is alive, physically, and yet not alive psychically, that is to say if he is bored, if he feels like dice thrown out of a cup, there is a deep resentment, there develops a deep hate against life, because he cannot participate, and he has a tendency to destroy which is only the second miracle after creating. To create is a miracle and requires a great deal of talent, of efforts of responsibility and so on. But to destroy life is also a miracle, although it requires nothing but a pistol. What develops is a hate against life, Once man is not able to enjoy life, to participate in it, what develops is an ever-increasing attraction to things which are purely mechanical.

It's very interesting, in 1907 one of the leading futurists of the time in Italy, Marinetti, wrote a poem or manifesto—it's a poem--in which he praised violence and destructiveness and war and hate, and automobiles and speed and machines, as a new ideal of mankind. He was, as one can see, a very visionary man. Because this has become much more frequent in our time, although people are not so aware of it. We are paying lip-service to art. For instance, we have a great art consumption. And these figures of the number of people who visit museums and concerts are very impressive, And the people who can buy a pocket edition of Plato and of Spinoza and so on--I don't think the facts are as impressive as these figures. This is also mass culture; you buy it, you read a little bit in it, and you have consumed the great cultural works. But you are not



rally filled with a sense of art, of drama, And actually, what we find is that the natural sense in man to be related to the basic dramatic elements of life finds in our culture its lowest expression in our interest in crime and death and accidents. Why do newspapers, not to speak of other media, carry so many reports of dying and of accidents? Because this is the little bit of most archaic and primitive drama which modern man is looking for to satisfy this wish which--let us say--in the Greek culture was satisfied by Greek tragedy, by works of the highest level of art, which expressed basic human experiences to which life and death belong too.

Well, it seems to me something must happen which is not in the direction of more museums and more concerts, but in the direction of changing art consumption, into a new form of participation in a new form of activeness with regard to basic problems of life.

*Edwin Newman:* Well Dr. Fromm, if one goes back: to what you were saying a minute ago about violence, which led into the point you made about contrast between us and the Greeks, for your theory to be correct, would it not have to be the case that this violence that we're so concerned with now was a recent development? If we found it went very far back in the history of mankind, that would tend to destroy your argument, would it not, because if this has been going on for long time one would have to assume that it occurred in all the different ways in which mankind has been organized.

*Erich Fromm:* Well I think this question can only be answered by a more detailed analysis: Which periods were violent and which periods were not? Let us say you find a number of primitive tribes and there is almost no violence; you find others which are destructive, violent, sadistic. Now we know too little about it; for instance, anthropologists have paid hardly any attention to the why's of this; there is not even a book in anthropology which is a thematic book on the incidence of violence or destructiveness among primitive people.

If you take for instance certain phenomena of the Crusades, if you take certain phenomena of Roman soldiers conquering a city, then you have exceedingly violent acts. But if you take other periods of the Middle Ages or take certain periods of the 19th century, and you don't find this kind of violence, you have also to consider whether the violence conditioned by let us say needs to conquer other territory in order to get food or raw materials, and then in this process violence is developed.

Or whether you find in a society which is so affluent as ours we find a degree of violence which finds more explanation in the social economic situation of this society. So really, while I think your remark is very much apropos, it seems it leads to more concrete study of the complexity of violence in each given society and each time,

*Edwin Newman:* Are we in a particularly violent periods would you think? Or are we in a particularly aimlessly violent period?

*Erich Fromm:* I think we are ready for violence; because we became indifferent to life. Actually, as far as I can see, the average American is not violent. The average American is one of the most tolerant and friendly people in the world. And I think our soldiers in Vietnam are not violent people and are not filled with violence when they are doing what they feel it is their duty to do, because they're called upon to do it. But I think there is the indifference to life which permits indifference to violence.

Perhaps I could mention some other aspect of this. It seems to me, from a psycho-



pathologic standpoint, that we are getting into a kind of chronic low-grade schizophrenia. Now by schizophrenia I mean here a split between thought and effect, fashion and truth, or if you like, mind and heart. For instance, there are certain authors who write about human affairs, about 80 million Americans being killed being acceptable, and 100 million perhaps not acceptable. All depending on whether our economy can be built as new after this catastrophe, Well there is a certain mind of madness in this. If one speaks about human affairs with complete absence of an emotional involvement, as if one was talking about things about coal, about oil, about anything which one manages, which one completely and intentionally eliminates all emotional relationship to the subject matter.

Now it's a peculiar thing, low-grade schizophrenia, in contrast to schizophrenia which goes beyond a certain threshold, does not prevent anyone from functioning socially, And therefore if it's shared by many millions, nobody has a feeling that he is sick; in fact, only those who do not suffer from it are considered to be crazy. So a psychiatric diagnosis really is not only a psychiatric problem but it's also a social problem as far as low-grade forms of all psychoses are concerned.

*Edwin Newman:* Now Dr. Fromm, is there a connection between what you call this low-grade schizophrenia that is so widespread, you think, and the machine again? Is there some relationship there?

*Erich Fromm:* Yes, I think so. I think that Marinetti has seen it. I have described it myself in a book, *The Heart of Man*, in which I try to differentiate between biophilic and necrophilic people. Biophilic people are people who really love life, all that grows, whether it's a person or a plant or an idea or an organization. And necrophilic people-- and I use the word following the philosopher Unamuno who once used it in Spain under Franco-- necrophilic people are primarily attracted to death, to destruction, or to the purely technical; also to violence, to law and order as not just law and order but as something sacred, for whom things are more important than life. You can indeed find both by observation and by tests a very clear distinction between the two types of people, at least the more outspoken ones--and there are many mixtures where it is more difficult.

Necrophilic people are attracted by the overemphasis on things, on quantification. We quantify everything: this is the hottest state, this is the greatest accident, everything's in terms of quantity. Naturally this is in contrast to the quality of life, which is not precisely not quantifiable, but where you deal with the unexpected, with that which grows spontaneously. And the person of law and order, or the person in courts of law and order, and the person who is attracted to the non-living, is afraid of life and often hates life, because he's afraid of that spontaneity with which he cannot manage. He is kind of incapable of responding to the world, directly.

*Edwin Newman:* There is in fact now a tactic it was certainly used for example by some student groups recently, to do the unexpected, to show various administrations off, precisely by doing the unexpected.

*Erich Fromm:* Yes. And since you are talking about this, I think there's a good example. One has cited the student rebellion as a sign of violence and of the wave of violence, But I think one should not forget that the students have been violent at most against things, but not against people. They haven't killed anybody. They have violated offices,



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they have violated property. But there is a great difference. I'm not entirely in agreement with some of the methods they have used, although something can be said that sometimes to draw attention to a problem, a sit-in or even the occupation of a building is not the worst way to do it. But the main point is that one must not equate violence against things with violence against people, violence against life.

*Edwin Newman:* It is also true, is it not, Dr. Fromm, that the larger our society gets and the more complex the interrelationships within it, the easier it is to throw it out of whack by doing the unexpected. Is that not so?

*Erich Fromm:* Yes. But actually that's perfectly true. A highly differentiated society like ours can be more easily thrown out of order than a much more simple society; the more complex mechanism is always more vulnerable than a simpler mechanism. But I think what these student protests really mean is not that they want--with few exceptions--to destroy the orderly process of this society; they want to call attention to some things and they want to express their protest against the boredom, against the bureaucratic methods they want to express, as I said before, their hunger for life.

They don't have the concepts very often in which they express it very clearly. So what you find is a peculiar unarticulated stammering, almost, expressed in gestures, in a song, in a way of questioning or whatever it may be, rather than clear-cut conceptualizations. Not it seems to me there is great danger that if they don't return, or if they are not capable of connecting themselves with the great tradition of our civilization, they will be rather aimless 10 or 20 years older, because one cannot recreate all that the human race has created in 3,000 years by just searching. But I think they would be quite willing to do that, if they were offered something meaningful rather than something which seems to have little relationship with their experience. And my hope is that educational reform will do that.

*Edwin Newman:* Dr. Fromm, in the very few minutes we have left I would like to return to what we were talking about at the very outset of the program and ask you a question you perhaps would rather not answer, but I'll ask it anyway: Suppose in your view the grip of the machine is not broken, what lies ahead? Suppose what you fear will happen but hope will not happen does happen. What lies ahead then?

*Erich Fromm:* What lies ahead, I'm afraid, is then either more violence, especially thermonuclear war, because people who have not more connection with life, who are bored, who are distrustful, who have no joy, for whom life has no meaning, don't have the imagination either, to do the things which could be done very simply, to avoid a catastrophe in terms of war. Or if that would not happen, I think our civilization would die out, from sheer lack of vitality. As other civilizations have died out. There is so often now the obvious comparison to the decay of Rome. Now, Rome apparently couldn't remedy the situation because it didn't have the economic means to change the economic and social problems of their society, we have. We have a tremendous possibility of changing our course, of changing the course of the world. I believe there is no country in which there is so much inner readiness for a change and so much imaginative-ness as there is in the United States.

*Edwin Newman:* Dr. Fromm, a much narrower question. Privacy tends to disappear increasingly from our lives, and it has disappeared to such an extent that there are people in this country who've never really known privacy in the old sense. Now people



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who've never known it, are they ever going to insist on it?

*Erich Fromm:* I don't know, Of course that's very difficult for me to say. I'm 68 and so I've known a lot of privacy in my life. And still do. But I think even there will be a spontaneous reaction against at least that intrusion which is an intrusion of noise, of machinery, of many of the factors which we see in the picture of [Orwell's] *1984*; of the forced feeding with news which we see in some dictatorial countries. I would expect that there would be a need for new forms, which may not be the stuffy forms of privacy in which I grew up and which to some extent I still like. But new forms of privacy which are nevertheless different from the kind of publicity in which a person becomes public property once he is newsworthy, and it doesn't matter whether he's committed a crime or whether he's invented some great thing.

*Edwin Newman:* Thank you very much, Dr. Fromm.

*Erich Fromm:* Thank you.