

«The House That Fromm Built» — The Sabbath Cornerstone

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*[Because] airlines have shortened distances and electronic information and the Internet have progressed even further to make distance disappear, all places, all people, all things are simultaneous and contemporary. There is no «tradition», nor any care to have one, hence no modernity that even stands in opposition to tradition.*¹

Gan Yang



The following remarks on Erich Fromm's 1922 doctoral dissertation «The Jewish Law» form the conclusion to a short book I wrote on what happened to be the centenary of this intellectual event.² *The House That Fromm Built* (2022) is the third volume in a loose trilogy also comprising *Peking Eulogy* (2020), an exploration of the «spiritual humanism» of Confucian philosopher Tu Weiming, and *From Global Ethic to World Ethos?* (2018), which begins its journey with the work of Catholic theologian Hans Küng. The overarching theme of this trilogy is that tradition matters; Fromm, Tu and Küng all emerge from specific (Jewish, Confucian and Catholic respectively) cultural backgrounds onto a plane of intercivilisational dialogue which is greater than the sum of its parts, and which they themselves have strengthened for us. And yet, as the Chinese Straussian Gan Yang reminds us in the epigraph I chose for this concluding chapter, we also live in an age where tradition and respect for tradition are threatened as never before. *The House That Fromm Built* aims to sketch a living (if imagined) transgenerational and

1 Gan Yang, in Matthew Dean, «Reading Leo Strauss in China», www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/leo-strauss-china, 1/2/2022 (accessed 2/3/2022).

2 See Jonathan Keir, *The House That Fromm Built*, <https://opus4.kobv.de/opus4-Fromm/frontdoor/index/index/docId/36528> (accessed 28/9/2022) for the full text.

transnational community, not only of those influenced by Fromm, but also of other like-minded spirits from the last century.

The sheer ubiquity of Erich Fromm, especially for a certain generation of central European intellectual among whose children I now live, made me cautious about saying too much on *The Art of Loving*, *To Have or to Be* or any other Fromm bestseller; it seems as if almost everyone here grew up with these books in the home. Fromm is not quite Shakespeare or Goethe, but a certain anxiety of influence nevertheless prevails; any new book about him really ought to be written from a quirky kind of angle. As I circled Fromm's 12-volume *Gesamtwerke* corpus, pondering how creatively to attack it, an English-language copy of Fromm's obscure 1922 doctoral dissertation landed on my desk courtesy of the Erich Fromm Stiftung. Rainer Funk's blurb drew me in:

«Both Fromm's socio-psychological thinking and his humanism are already observable in his dissertation. Until now, these origins have received little acknowledgement in English-language Fromm research; with the present translation of the dissertation into English by Miranda Siegel — 100 years after it was written — this deficiency should finally be remedied. Fromm's [thesis] is an illuminating document for anyone who seriously studies Fromm's later writings and the sources of his thought.» (Funk 2022, p. 130.)

The reader is soon reminded of David Hume, John Stuart Mill and other prodigies who gallingly produced some of their best work in their early twenties. As Funk suggests, it's all already there, in a style owing partly to the quality of Siegel's translation and partly to a youthful exuberance that the later Fromm might have sought better to preserve. In short, I decided to read *The Jewish Law* as a lively microcosm of the best of the whole Frommian body of work; those familiar with the later bestsellers can enjoy something new here, and those discovering Fromm for the first time can follow on to *Escape from Freedom* and go from there.

As intimated in our title, it is the idea of the *Sabbath* on which Fromm creatively seizes in *The Jewish Law*, thereby providing a helpful lens through which to view the humanist kaleidoscope of his subsequent output. As a sociology student writing under the supervision of Max Weber's brother Alfred³, Fromm is naturally interested in exploring the effect on Diaspora Judaism of «the loss of state, territory, and a profane language»; somehow, Jews have survived «as a

3 For more on the influence of Alfred Weber and others on the content of Fromm's dissertation, see Funk 2022, pp. 128-132.

unified and continuous group» by «saturating the social body with the religious idea immanent to it» (Fromm 1989b, p. 6). It is the biophilic core of this «religious idea», namely the individual liberation offered by paradoxical adherence to the «Jewish law», which Fromm seeks to trace from its original roots down to the present day by contrasting Karaism and Reform Judaism (bad) with Hasidism (good). Funk frames the dissertation in the following terms:

«When it came to the formulation of Fromm’s research question and the actual composition of his dissertation, [...] the strongest influence was undoubtedly his second Talmud teacher, Salman Baruch Rabinkow. Nearly every day between 1920 and 1925, Fromm visited Rabinkow’s apartment at Rahmengasse 34 [Heidelberg] not only to study the Talmud and Jewish history, but also to work through sociological and cultural-historical questions. Rabinkow sympathised with a more intellectual form of Hasidism, Chabad Hasidism, which was founded by Shneur Zalman in Lithuania at the end of the 18th century. But despite the influence of Rabinkow’s personality and way of thinking on the dissertation’s subject matter and realisation — which should not be underestimated — the work above all reflects the adoption of [sociological] terms and concepts devised by Alfred Weber.» (Funk 2022, p. 129.)

Fromm begins by contrasting the sociology of Judaism and Catholicism, with far-reaching consequences for his theories of freedom and equality:

«Due to the independently existing [Jewish] ethnic body, «religion» was relieved of the task that the Catholic Church, for instance, had to take on: namely, ensuring the preservation and expansion of the social group through which religion is sustained. In Judaism, the religious content alone does not have to create the social conditions that guarantee the preservation of a group. Rather, the continued existence of the group was ensured by the fact of its autonomous, consanguineous, and ethnic ties. No dogmatic teachings and no church were needed to ensure group behaviour. Religious content could by its very nature remain an individual category.» (Fromm 1989b, p. 8.)

The «anti-dogmatic» Jewish Law, in short, was «capable of safeguarding religious individuality» (Ibid., p. 9); the whole purpose of Jewish education was to carve out a space in which individuals themselves could creatively redefine the meaning of the tradition passed down to them:

«Throughout history, we observe repeatedly that when the most sacred contents are presented to the masses without veils, they gradually lose their sacredness and ultimately end up as platitudes found only in the mouths of the ignorant. It is only safe to utter the sacred at the moment of consecration or in the privacy of intimate human communities. This is the deeper meaning of the Jewish prohibition of pronouncing the name of God. [...] The form protects the sacred content contained within it, but it also protects the individuality of the person filled with this content. It is true that language, insofar as it is the form in which a content is expressed, already allows the individuality of the individual a certain freedom to understand and recreate content as he alone can and must — but how much greater is the freedom when the unspoken content remains veiled in form! Only then can the individual shape this content entirely in accordance with his own particularity without [...] losing the connection with the people of his generation, with the people as a whole, and with the generations before him and after him; that is, the connection with history. [...] The form does not provide the content as such; it merely adumbrates it. The individual must fill it with content, and fill it again and again. He himself must create content, must be creative, must be an artist. The form educates people, educates a people to creativity. And only a creative people can live these forms meaningfully. When a people is not creative, then the system of forms becomes formalism. If the people no longer understand that the form is only a penultimate, the form becomes its own content — and new prophets must come to awaken it.» (Fromm 1989b, pp. 15 f.)

This is the «God Is Not Great» Judaism of Christopher Hitchens, a humanist remythologising of post-Axial spirituality fit for 20th- and 21st-century cosmopolitan purposes. Fromm could equally be talking about the Confucian *Dao* here:

«The [Jewish] Law aims to create opportunities to reach the goal, but it is not itself the goal. It is, as the word *halacha* (from *haloch* = to go) indicates, a path. This also means that one can reach the knowledge of God without it; it is certainly not the goal itself. [...] The Law seeks to change the environment, not the people directly. This is arguably clearest in the Sabbath law. It is not prescribed in the law — which would be quite conceivable — what mood the Jew should be in on the Sabbath, what spirit should animate him, and what kind of joy and rest he should have. [...] The Law changes the environment of the Jew on the Sabbath: it radically separates him from the working-day world that otherwise surrounds him, and aims to give him the opportunity for inner

creative peace. The Law seeks to change the environment in order to give man the opportunity to change himself.» (Ibid., p. 17.)

Fromm wishes to stress that this freedom for individual spirituality belongs equally to all members of the human community; this means that both the drudgery of the working week and the freedom of the Sabbath should in principle be fairly distributed:

«Rabbinic Judaism rejects the idea that one class should work in order to enable another class to devote itself to culture. All are called to knowledge. The idea that God makes the whole people a people of prophets — which had already found its classical formulation in the Bible — runs through all Rabbinic Judaism. This also means that no one can escape the work that is necessary. [...] Although the individual may be capable of evil, the mass, the community, is sacred, because the people, by the fact of sharing what is most sacred, have a profound respect for one another. They also do not pass responsibility on to others; rather, their own responsibility is considerably strengthened by the presence of what is most sacred. [...] All are equal before [the Law]; it is the expression of a substantive democracy, not a formal one. Judaism rejects on principle a culture that is possible or designated exclusively for only one social class.» (Fromm 1989b, pp. 16 f., 29.)

And yet, as Fromm stresses in his vital dissertation excursus «Work and Vocation in Rabbinic Judaism», there is a certain premodern or «traditionalist» element to such economic thinking: whereas devotees of the «Protestant ethic» imbue their day-jobs with transcendental meaning and thereby come to embody, on Max Weber's famous thesis, the «spirit of capitalism», Fromm takes the *Sabbath* as the true fount of unalienated human «productivity». Fromm's quotation from the second volume of Salomon Funk's *Die Juden in Babylonien, 200–500* (1908) expresses the night-and-day difference: «Rava was even forced to ask his students [because of their thirst for knowledge] not to visit the house of learning during the months of Nisan and Tishrei, but to devote themselves to field work so they would not be tormented all year long by worries over food.» (Fromm 1989b, p. 29.) And yet the ideal of human freedom represented by the Sabbath stands:

«Under the [Jewish Law], the Sabbath is far more than, and something completely different from, a day of not working. It is a day of maximum spiritual creative activity on the part of the individual. [...] The intention of releasing man from the bondage of the working-day world and

giving him the opportunity for religious creation is expressed no less clearly in the law regarding the Sabbath year. It commands that every seventh year, the land be left uncultivated and the wildly growing crops be made available to the poor. Usually, the Sabbath year is viewed only from a social welfare and agricultural point of view. The function of the law of the Sabbath year, however, is that it intervenes in life for longer periods of time, only to commandeer a relatively large period of time entirely for religious creation.» (Ibid., p. 21.)

Fromm is exploring Jewish tradition from the privilege of a post-industrial modern economy built, or so it would seem, on the Protestant opposite of the traditional Abrahamic separation between work and prayer. Whereas the Sabbath and the imposition of other fixed rhythms of worship represent an «active sanctification of the world» in which the individual «is forced to interrupt his daily work, again and again, to «create» the mental attitude in which prayer is possible» (Fromm 1989b, p. 22), the Puritan is constantly «tormented» by a need to «gain proof of the grace of God [...] in the haste of his daily work and in the success of his work. The work itself is the absolute commandment of God. It is sacred and becomes an end in itself. [As Max Weber writes], St. Paul's «he who will not work will not eat» holds unconditionally for everyone. Unwillingness to work is symptomatic of the lack of grace» (ibid., p. 24). Rather than trusting the spiritually self-cultivating individual to feed back into the community on her own responsible and productive terms, the «spirit of capitalism» mandates both a concern for outward appearances of success («marketing mentality») and a sacralisation of one's own nine-to-five (or nine-to-nine). For the Jewish ideal, meanwhile, «the supreme purpose of life is knowledge, and work is necessary for the preservation of life; it is a necessary evil. It must therefore be done only to meet needs, not to amass wealth. The business ethics of Judaism is — in the language of Max Weber — «traditionalistic». In the biblical telling of the expulsion from paradise, work is portrayed as a curse, while rest is the crowning glory and sanctification of work. The children of Israel are forbidden from collecting manna beyond their immediate needs. In the Kohelet [Book of Ecclesiastes] in particular, the favouring of economic traditionalism over Puritanism becomes clear. Here, we read that God gives the sinner «the task to gather and to heap up» (Ecclesiastes 2:26) and that one handful with tranquility is better than two handfuls with toil, etc. [...] It is also quite telling that the Jewish tradition, which otherwise counts with utmost precision every command contained or even mentioned in the Bible, has not included the phrase «Six days you shall work!» among the commandments.» (Fromm 1989b, pp. 25–27.)

Fromm does not seek a return to pre-industrial economic misery for the great mass of mankind here; he simply seeks to identify a form of free productivity beyond pathological «devotion to vocational work, which is so irrational from the standpoint of eudaimonistic self-interest» (ibid., p. 32). By so doing, Fromm also hoped to undo the work of early 20th-century anti-Semites like Werner Sombart, who in *The Jews and Modern Capitalism* (1911) claimed to have established a firm link between Judaism and greed:

«The overall unselfconscious appreciation for life in ancient Judaism is far removed from [...] the business ethics of medieval and modern Judaism, which played an important role in the development of the capitalist ethos. Specifically, this Judaism sided with the politically and speculatively oriented adventurous capitalism. Its ethos was that of «pariah capitalism». [...] Clearly, Sombart is concerned with proving the thoroughly traditionalistic character of Judaism and its inherent tendency to take pleasure in possession. But he disregards precisely what Max Weber considers typical of the «spirit of capitalism»: the time-is-money haste, the careerist ethic, the non-contemplation. [...] That [medieval European] Jews were involved primarily in monetary transactions was essentially due to the fact that they were all but denied any other professional options. [...] Many Rabbinic scholars, moreover, engaged in monetary transactions because this cost the least amount of time and thus left them leisure for study and prayer.» (Fromm 1989b, pp. 23 and 32.⁴)

This last sentence is crucial for understanding Fromm's economics: the goal of modern economic policy should be a shorter working week and a longer Sabbath for *everyone*, but this in no way means a return to feudal underdevelopment. Leisure is expensive: a future world culture without slaves will require a degree of material plenty unimaginable to our Axial Age ancestors. Even here, however, ancient Judaism provides an admirable model:

«In the time of the Second Temple, there were no Hebrew slaves at all. When the celebration of the Jubilee became impossible after the destruction of the First Temple, it was no longer [legal] to buy or sell a Hebrew slave, even if for only six years. Herod had to sell the thieves into foreign slavery, because the sale of Hebrew slaves in Palestine was

4 I have veered slightly from Siegel's translation here (in which the «spirit of capitalism» is defined as «the spirit of time is money, haste, professional ethics, non-contemplation»).

considered an unlawful act. Even the quasi-slavery that existed when the First Temple in Palestine was destroyed was later frowned upon.» (Fromm 1989b, pp. 30 f.)

Fromm wants to avoid confusing means and ends in the «American» fashion; the entire atmosphere or «environment» of modern post-industrial society ought to be conducive to productive individual contemplation. This will not mean permanent inaction, only self-determined labour and rhythms; the radical Jewish separation between «this-worldly» work and the «otherworldly» business of the Sabbath simply helped to create the conditions in which modern selfhood — which requires freedom from constant slavery and prescribed functionality within the tribe — could emerge. Fromm wagers that a gradual extension of the freedoms of the Sabbath over more and more of the week, far from leading to economic and social collapse, will actually be better — for society and the individuals composing it — than the consumerism, careerist self-help culture and brutal attention economy he began diagnosing a century ago. Though a certain «right to laziness» must be preserved, human beings are not «lazy by nature» (see Fromm 1992h): given the right kind of humanistic education they will, like Plato's philosopher, return regularly to the cave of human society and seek to contribute in constructive ways. The challenge for a global democratic socialism is how to ensure this freedom from compulsory work for all, not only for an oligarchic few. Any purely drudgerous work that *must* still be done in our century of robots is to be shared equally — not, as it is now, simply dished out to the begging losers of a shout-the-loudest «pariah globalisation».

Such democratic socialism, in short, will require far more than *laissez-faire* cultural policy: modern humanistic education must shape the individual's «environment» in such ways as to allow her to transcend all dogmatisms and formalisms — and thereby to define the development of her own personality without a trace of gratuitous exploitation from the tribe (e.g. from a modern business sector keen to turn her into a certain type of «useful» worker in a «knowledge economy»). Though the details of Fromm's academic thesis on the historical differences between Karaism, Reform Judaism and Hasidism will not interest us here, the following passages transcend their academic sociological context:

«In contrast to dogmas, [healthy spiritual] formulations do not contain statements about God that must be believed. [...] Of course, every Jew and especially every spiritual leader of the people had his own individual worldview, and it is thus unsurprising that some [laid] claim to

imposing theirs on the people. [... But the call] to dogmatic professions of faith — with one exception perhaps — was only raised in the Middle Ages, and precisely for apologetic and political reasons in connection with the rejection of foreign religions and cultures. [...] It is extraordinarily significant that Karaism and the Reform movement wanted to abolish the Law. [...] The Law has the task of paving the way to the knowledge of God for every member of the people. It does not propose an «inner-worldly asceticism», but rather an «active sanctification of the world». On what the knowledge of God itself is supposed to be, the Law is silent: beyond the rather elementary belief in the uniqueness of God, nothing is formulated in the Law that is binding for the whole.» (Fromm 1989b, pp. 13 and 22.)

Who among Fromm's psychoanalytic descendants could be said to be continuing this legacy of respect for tradition in the name of individual freedom? Sophie Ratcliffe identifies Adam Phillips, who like Fromm goes after

«the pay-per-hour shrink — and, by association, the self-help author. For when «help» is seen as a bookable commodity, it's clear that something vital has got lost at sea. [...] I read Phillips's early essay «On Success», a compelling narrative that spoke vividly to me of the dangers of living life according to one kind of story, of the obsession with «getting better», of the virtues of finding things difficult. «It is particularly difficult», Phillips writes, «to entertain alternatives in a culture so bewitched both by the idea of success and by such a limited definition of what it entails. Because the idea of the enviable life has now replaced that of the good life, it may be difficult to hear, or listen to, the parts of our patients [...] that are not interested in success. [...] We police ourselves with purposes».

Known as «Britain's foremost psychoanalytic writer», Phillips has written over 20 books — and in admitting that I have found much of his writing personally transformative, I risk sounding like one of those Insta-influencers promoting soap-free shampoo or facial yoga. To note that Phillips's way of looking at the world has changed mine for the better feels risky, too. [...] Nothing in [Phillips] feels as if it has been written with the idea of a «market» in mind.

[...] One of Phillips's concerns [is] to correct a historic oversimplification of his own vocation as a neoliberal luxury — as well as his critique of those who have framed the psychoanalytic project as one which can indeed help anyone to «get better», or ahead. For in «presenting the

aims of psychoanalysis, their concepts of cure», he asks, «are analysts doing anything more than adding to the culture's image-repertoire of the good life [...] stocking the supermarket shelves with new products, new ideals for ourselves?» [...] Giving the side-eye, then, to the self-help shelf, *On Getting Better* works more like a pamphlet for unselfing — attempting an emphatic collective politics. Phillips's writing has always been political. In 1996 he wrote, taking his lead from Erich Fromm, that to see «psychoanalysis as a refuge from politics» is «a contradiction in terms», [...] «How can we talk differently about how we might want to change», Phillips writes, «knowing that all life is group life?» Such a dialogue, he indicates, will be testing. [...] The texts he refers to in this essay — Algernon Sidney's 17th-century *Discourses*, Calvin, *Paradise Lost*, set against Freud and Lacan — are complex as well as unforgiving. In this sense, the piece — «Unsatisfying Pleasures» — lives up to its title. [...] Phillips's politics have been marked by an abiding commitment to complexity. We must, he writes elsewhere, retain «a genuinely political and psychic vigilance in the face of the insidious violence of over-simplification». Reading this latest work requires, and elicits, that vigilance. [...] This] chimes with the volume's send off — a reflection on the importance of resisting «dogmatic» conclusions, via the work of William James and Diogenes. [...] As we end the book, it is hard to put aside our belief in some kind of economics of reading — that time merely spent will yield some sort of capital gain for the self. In keeping with this awkward, important, admonishing book, that exchange is held at bay. *On Getting Better* leaves you, instead, with a feeling of something half-grasped — a rediscovered coin in one's pocket lining, just irritatingly out of reach. Getting the better of our instincts, Phillips teasingly elicits — and frustrates — that human desire for a hack or a tip, for things to pay off, for something to go on.» (Ratcliffe 2022.)

This aversion to life-hacks and respect, instead, for tradition for tradition's sake is arguably Fromm's most enduring message to his 21st-century global audience. The very idea of the Sabbath — a place where spiritual communion with «the best that has been thought and said in the world» can take place outside the sphere of workaday instrumental rationality — is a kind of anachronism everywhere now: educational curricula the world over (and the media technologies underpinning them) are designed ever more explicitly and insidiously to prepare young people for a gig-centred «knowledge economy» and «attention economy» where the pressure to cultivate and promote one's own personal brand (the apotheosis of Fromm's «marketing mentality») is

essentially permanent. Even week-long monastic retreats are valued in terms of their power to refresh us for the ratrace.

Resistance to this mode of existence, however, is destined to remain limited as long as most people remain preoccupied with acquiring what they regard as sufficient material wealth for themselves. Fromm obviously diagnoses the ills and excesses of modern consumerism, but we are each free to ask how much income and asset wealth we think we would need to «retire» comfortably and enjoy the spiritual pleasures and responsibilities of the Sabbath seven days a week. A «traditionalistic», pre-industrial business ethics cannot fathom the material bounty necessary for such generalised ease, but *we* now can: a global GDP per capita reachable if not tomorrow, then at least in a foreseeable future where ever more of our collective wealth is generated by machines. At the very least, the Sabbath ideal might now begin to be stretched over more and more of the «working» week — if the political will to do so exists. The first echoes of this post-drudgery consciousness are heard in demands, chiefly audible in affluent Western societies, for a Guaranteed Basic Income (or as Yanis Varoufakis calls it, a «Basic Dividend» for membership of the human community). The inhabitants of Switzerland or Finland, however, do not generally foresee fiscal union with India and Burkina Faso, even though this is what Fromm's cosmopolitan Jewish humanism ultimately envisages: not a globalisation where the lucky few can enjoy a longer Sabbath at the expense of wage-enslaved subaltern masses in euphemistically labelled «developing» countries, but a fair distribution of the drudgery remaining to be done before the robots really take over.

Fromm's global reception is hence destined to remain uneven in the short- to medium-term, as different countries find themselves in radically different stages of economic and social development. The long-term relevance of Fromm's humanism as a «real utopia», however, is unlikely to be lost on anyone in the end: a modicum of fairly distributed wealth is necessary but not sufficient for it. In the Epilogue of *The House That Fromm Built*, I turn to Orwell's «Looking Back on the Spanish War», and in particular to a passage I was surprised to find in him: «The major problem of our time is the decay of the belief in personal immortality,» Orwell writes in 1943, «and it cannot be dealt with while the average human being is either drudging like an ox or shivering in fear of the secret police.» Fromm makes explicit the connection between Orwell's religiosity and the necessity of contact with tradition:

«Man, at the beginning of the industrial age, when in reality he did not possess the means for a world in which the table was set for all who wanted to eat, when he lived in a world in which there were economic reasons for slavery, war, and exploitation, in which man only sensed the possibilities of his new science and of its application to technique and

to production — nevertheless man at the *beginning* of modern development was full of hope. [...] Man can produce enough for everybody, when war has become unnecessary because technical progress can give any country more wealth than can territorial conquest. [...] None of the three [dystopian authors like Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell] can be accused of the thought that the destruction of the humanity within man is easy. Yet all three arrive at the same conclusion: that it is possible, with means and techniques which are common knowledge today. [...]

Alan Harrington offered a subtle and accurate picture of life in a large American company in his book *Life in the Crystal Palace* (1959). Harrington's concept of «mobile truth» could not be more contemporary. [...] If I work for a big corporation which claims that its product is better than that of all competitors, the question whether this claim is justified or not in terms of ascertainable reality becomes irrelevant. What matters is that as long as I serve this particular corporation, this claim becomes «my» truth, and I decline to examine whether it is an objectively valid truth. [...] It is one of the most characteristic and destructive developments of our own society that man, becoming more and more of an instrument, transforms reality more and more into something relative to his own interests and functions. [...]

It is precisely the unconscious aspect of doublethink which will seduce many a reader of *1984* into believing that the method of doublethink is employed by the Russians and the Chinese, while it is something quite foreign to himself. [...] In this respect Orwell quite obviously refers to the falsification of socialism by Russian communism, but it must be added that the West is also guilty of a similar falsification. We present our society as being one of free initiative, individualism and idealism, when in reality these are mostly words. We are a centralized managerial industrial society, of an essentially bureaucratic nature, and motivated by a materialism which is only slightly mitigated by truly spiritual or religious concerns. [...] [Orwell's] intention is to sound a warning by showing where we are headed for unless we succeed in a renaissance of the spirit of humanism and dignity which is at the very roots of Occidental culture.» (Fromm 1961c.)

The insights of «global dialogue» pioneers like Hans Küng and Tu Weiming, as well as the later Fromm himself, all remind us that «our cultural tradition» today means the collective heritage of humanity, not only a Christian, Confucian, Jewish or other discrete religious inheritance. «Immortality» in our time, in other words, is achieved in the act of dialogue with these various traditions,

which naturally presupposes the Sabbath freedom to read oneself into them. I was lucky enough to enjoy a taste of this freedom in the course of compiling the book, and hope not only to have *described*, but also to have *conveyed* some of the flavour of this freedom in it.

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