

A Good Read: The Art of Loving

16th April 2020

The lockdown due to the COVID-19 crisis has given us the opportunity to read some of those books we have always been meaning to.

Here, ECP coach John describes one he has read.

The Art of Loving by Erich Fromm, in which the social philosopher explores love in all its aspects—not only romantic love, **steeped** in false conceptions and **lofty** expectations, but also brotherly love, erotic love, self-love, the love of God, and the love of parents for their children.

This international bestseller has shown millions of readers how to achieve rich, productive lives by developing their hidden capacities for love.

Fromm starts from the **premise** that in capitalist society, love is treated like any other commodity:

“Most people see the problem of love primarily as that of being loved, rather than that of loving, of one's capacity to love. **Hence** the problem to them is how to be loved, how to be lovable. In pursuit of this aim they follow several paths. One, which is especially used by men, is to be successful, to be as powerful and rich as the social margin of one's position permits. Another, used especially by women, is to make oneself attractive, by cultivating one's body, dress, etc. Many of the ways to make oneself lovable are the same as those used to make oneself successful, 'to win friends and influence people'. As a matter of fact, what most people in our culture mean by being lovable is essentially a mixture between being popular and having sex appeal.”

According to Fromm, most people are unable to love on the only level that truly matters: love that is

Before you read the article, find this vocabulary in the text:

steeped: filled with, influenced by

lofty: of a noble or exalted nature

premise: previous statement or proposition

Hence: as a consequence, for this reason

insight: ability to gain an accurate and deep understanding of something

to mould: to change or influence someone

to enable: to allow, permit, give authority

sane: of sound mind, not mad

to perish: to suffer death, to die, disappear

compounded of maturity, self-knowledge, and courage. As with every art, love demands practice and concentration, as well as genuine **insight** and understanding.

“Love is a decision, it is a judgment, it is a promise. If love were only a feeling, there would be no basis for the promise to love each other forever. A feeling comes and it may go. How can I judge that it will stay forever, when my act does not involve judgment and decision?”

Fromm raises the question of

whether it is possible for love to really exist in a society which is based on inequality and individualism.

“The main condition for the achievement of love is the overcoming of one's narcissism. The opposite pole to narcissism is objectivity; it is the faculty to see other people and things as they are, objectively, and to be able to separate this objective picture from a picture which is formed by one's desires and fears.”

The book was written over 50 years ago, yet speaks to us directly in our 'isolation' in 2020.

“Modern man thinks he loses something—time—when he does not do things quickly. Yet he does not know what to do with the time he gains—except kill it.”

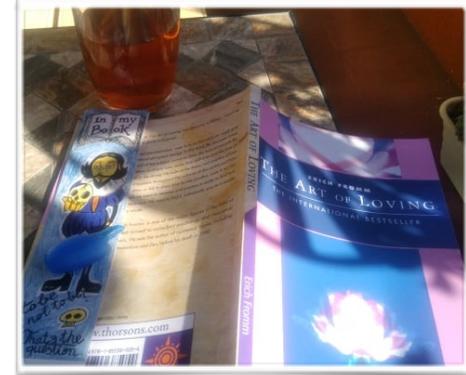
“The task we must set for ourselves is not to feel secure, but to be able to tolerate insecurity.”

Is this not the situation we are all in now? 'Official' society and the politicians are talking about getting back to 'normal' but will that be possible and was not 'normal' the problem before?

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Let's chat about that!

Write your opinions in an email and send them to your ECP coach!

Have you read or heard about the Art of Loving?

According to the text, what does Fromm think about love?

Why does Fromm call loving an art? What does he mean?

What do you love? And are you loved?

What are you reading, watching and listening to during the lockdown?

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Come to ECP's online

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Join us on **Thursday**
16th April at 19.00

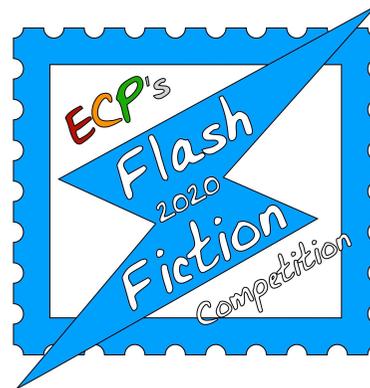
Join ECP coach John for a beer and a wine and a pintxo and a chat in English this Thursday!

The link will be sent out via ECP WhatsApp groups 👍

Alternatively, you can email John at john@englishcoachingcoachingprojects.net



Cheers!!



Don't forget to enter **ECP's Flash Fiction competition!** 🖱️



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At the end of the book, Fromm answers his own question of whether it is possible to experience real love in capitalist society. The book explains that although our present society **moulds** our characters to a certain extent, humans in reality are loving, social animals, and we rebel against conformity and repression, whether it be in society or in our personal relationships.

"If man is to be able to love, he must be put in his supreme place. The economic machine must serve him, rather than he serve it. He must be **enabled** to share experience, to share work, rather than, at best, share in profits. Society must be organised in such a way that man's social, loving nature is not separated from his social existence, but becomes one with it. If it is true, as I have tried to show, that love is the only **sane** and satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence, then any society which excludes, relatively, the development of love, must in the long run **perish** of its own contradiction with the basic necessities of human nature."

Fromm concludes that real love must include the conscious act of loving humanity as a whole, and recognising the struggle to create a better world is part of that act.

✍️ *Written by ECP coach John Andrew Hird*

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