

AFFECTUAL RELATIONS RECONSIDERED: THE PRIMAL BOND AS A LENS FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

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This paper posits the significance of affectual encounters with the world, rooted in the reciprocal relations originating from the primal bond. I claim that although the rational and empirical cognition of our sensible environment provided us with productive material resources, thereby furthering our spatiotemporal spaces, neglecting the emotional dimensions in life would ultimately result in a lack of meaningful progress. We have produced and contributed critique after critique, books, and articles on how to advance our lives. We relied on scientific and technological modifications and cannot ignore how these expedited our insights and understanding of the world. However, we continue to struggle in an increasingly fragmented and disorganized world. Our daily rational and cognitive encounters with the world drift towards dissonances that fortify more alienated alliances. Hence, banking on Fromm's theory of existential relations, this essay offers a reconsideration of the affectual relations that initially develop in the primal bond. I claim that it is through the primal bond that we first encounter delicate attunement, empathic communion, and fundamental reciprocal interactions with the world. Within the primal bond, considered the essential ontological thread, it permits us to have existential relations with the outside world, thus molding and defining our human nature. They are the bedrock of our slots in social solidarity, on which our psychic stability rests. Hence, I maintain that our fascination and relentless pursuit of technological innovations are manifestations of our unconscious inclinations for those values found in the primal bond. Without these existential concerns, we remain perpetually disconnected and alienated in the world we claim as our home. Thus, I propose that in our sincere resolve to foster social transformation, affectual relations could be one of the channels to achieve this.

Keywords: affectual relation, alienation, intersubjectivity, primal bond

PRELIMINARY

Undoubtedly, Fromm's departure from the Freudian libidinal drives caused a

rupture in his relationship with Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse. Fromm rejected the Freudian instincts and posited that the goal of emancipatory critique lies in the human existential need for relatedness through love (Wilde 2005, 8-10). Our human existential need, which forms the ontological framework of our place in social relations, satisfies our elemental psychic need regarding our relationship to our immediate outside environment. Funk (2014, 4) highlights that our relationship and orientation to others and our environment shape our deepest desires, impulses, and fears, guiding us toward either growth or destruction. Thus, relatedness, for Fromm (1955, 66), is a human existential need, without which we become insane. Rosa's theory of resonance implicitly echoes this thesis of Fromm. Rosa (2019, 184) suggests that relatedness speaks of our beingness in the world, which is dynamic, constituted by and through a process of evolving encounters between us and our environment. I argue then that our incessant mobilization of life and our daily undertakings in our immediate environment connote the unconscious projections of our desires (*beings-in-affects*) for those values that emanate from the primal bond. However, our current social structural arrangements have eclipsed these values, leaving us as wanderers in search of the lost *paradisaical bond* (see Fromm 1963, 167-168). To make the point of this essay clear, let us start with Fromm's anthropology, which is the basis for his theory on existential relations.

FROMM'S INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLICAL PARADISE

Fromm's Interpretation of the Biblical Paradise begins with Adam and Eve's biblical narrative.

God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.' But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (NRSV Bible, Genesis 3: 4-6).

The original state of Adam and Eve before they ate that forbidden fruit speaks of their animal nature, i.e., both are human animals. They follow physiologically the dictates of their instincts, just like other animals do. They eat, drink, and rest, following the natural flow of their animal instinctual stature. Endowed with animal instincts, both complied with the natural order of things. They do not yet possess any reason to know and understand themselves and their respective environment. They do not even know they are human, like other creatures. Nevertheless, Fromm (1999, 75) explains that Adam and Eve's eyes "become opened" and the original harmony with nature breaks after they consume the fruit of knowledge of good and evil. According to the story, "two angels with fiery swords watched the entrance, banishing them from their paradisiacal environment, and man cannot return" (Fromm 1999, 34).

Although the biblical story is just a myth, Fromm used it to portray the process, the movements, and the struggles toward human individuation. After they had eaten the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve's eyes "became open," and now they were aware,

for the first time, that they were humans possessing reason, self-awareness, and imagination, human faculties that disrupt the original harmony they once had in paradise (Fromm 1947, 45-47). Left for themselves, they need to cultivate their human faculties, charting all their desires, passions, dreams, wishes, and expectancies in life. However, Fromm (1966, 58) quickly stresses that the expulsion from the paradisiacal habitat plunged Adam and Eve into an unfamiliar world, rendering them vulnerable and powerless before the forces of nature. In this context, the dialectics of human history began to unfold, with the alienation of the human being becoming ingrained in the historical processes of human development (Fromm 1966, 71). Moreover, estrangement and alienation sever our harmonious relationship with the world, which should be our home yet feels so foreign to us (Fromm 1957, 7-8). Consequently, this disaffection leads to what Fromm calls *insanity*.

Nevertheless, using the paradisiacal story, Fromm (1941, 31) directs us to the importance of the harmonious and dialectical relation between the individual and Mother Earth. Through the immanence of nature, blood, and soil (Mother Earth), we emerged as human beings. *Phylogenetically*, our transition from a quadrupedal to a bipedal posture, symbolized by our connection to nature and the earth (represented by the mother earth symbol), reflects our adaptation to the challenges of survival in an unstable environment. Further, pivotal in this phylogenetic history is the evolution of the human brain. Although we are essentially animals, the development and changes in the structure and complexity of our brains throughout evolutionary history resulted in the advancement of reason and intelligence (Cf. Fromm 1947, 39). Bischof (1964, 606) reiterates this observation of Fromm, suggesting that an increasingly developed human brain leads to a decrease in instinctual behavior and an increase in one's rational capacity. Hofman (2014, 17) thus postulates that armed with these human faculties; we can now create better tools and techniques that would carry us toward the betterment of our spatiotemporal conditions. With these, we surpass our animal instincts and are better off than the rest of the animal kingdom. We could now satisfy and enrich ourselves by acting and reproducing our resources towards a harmonious environment. While this evolutionary history has given us greater capabilities in life, Fromm cautions that we often feel helpless in our own natural habitat. He (1969, 2) then explains that at the basis of this insoluble existential dichotomy lies an evolutionary, biologically given fact: man emerges from animal evolution at the point where determination by instincts has reached a minimum, while at the same time, the development of that part of the brain which is the basis for thinking and imagination has developed far beyond the order of size which is found among the primates. This fact makes man, on the one hand, more helpless than the animal and gives him, on the other, the possibility for a new, even though entirely different, kind of strength.

THE PRIMAL BOND

Ontogenetically, Fromm interprets the paradisiacal story as an allusion to the individual mother—"the nature, blood, and soil," so to speak, of the infant. In the intrauterine stages of life, the womb serves as the paradisiacal environment. It is in the womb that the fetus instinctively follows the dictates of nature. The fetus naturally

adapts itself to survive in the blissful surroundings of the womb. For Fromm, the womb is a haven where the fetus first encounters a particular type of relatedness, which, like the story of Adam and Eve, represents the harmonious connection, i.e., mutual exchanges within the natural processes (Cf. Fromm, 1941). Fromm also quickly adds that this instinctive rapport even extends to the extrauterine world. Right after birth, the infant is still dependent upon this inherent capacity to survive. S/he needs to adapt and cling to the natural world—mother—for survival. Fromm (1955, 25) says “in many respects, the infant after birth is not different from the infant before birth; it cannot perceive things outside, cannot feed itself; it is completely dependent on the mother, and would perish without her help.” In *The Art of Loving* (1957, 30, and 51, italics mine), he lucidly expounds these mutual exchanges and says,

The infant, at the moment of birth, would feel the fear of dying, if a gracious fate did not preserve it from any awareness of the anxiety involved in the separation from the mother, and from the intrauterine existence...

It [infant] only feels the positive stimulation of warmth and food, and it does not yet differentiate warmth and food from its source: Mother

Mother is warmth, the mother is food, the mother is the euphoric state of satisfaction and security

The love of the mother gives the infant a sense of bliss; its absence produces anxiety and despair...

This form of relatedness portrays the dialectical and dyadic bond between the infant and the mother that speaks of the affectual moments that are entirely non-verbal which, according to Schore (2003, 23), constitutes the basis for authentic human relations. From the intrauterine world to the extrauterine one, a mutual and affective relationship oscillates between the two, forming a symbiotic union. Considering Panksepp's (1998, 247-249) clinical experiments, along with those of many other intellectuals and neuroscientists, suggest that the affective relations between mother and child serve as the foundation for our future social relationships. According to Mitchell (1988, 2-3), this interactive movement is the relational matrix that provides the intrapsychic connection, resulting in interpersonal relations. Thus, the dialectic relation between the mother and the child materializes the affectual relation as a "special place"—a paradise that shields, protects, and cares for the child (Cf. Koenigsberg 1977, 3-5). This affectual union is what we call, the *primal bond*.

The primal bond is a symbiotic attunement. The infant immerses, unites, and harmonizes with its mother, its natural habitat, in this arena or space. In this habitat, the infant feels attached, rooted, belonged, and embedded. Wired to receive all the possible nutrients and care needed for survival, the primal bond serves as the location where the primacy of maternal desire is put in place in the encounter with the other—the infant. Chevalérias (2011, 180-187) eloquently outlines the trajectory of this union, suggesting that the mother, in recognition of her child's uniqueness, encourages the child to transcend his world and engage in this "human relationship," thereby fostering the growth and development of the "human framework." Bowlby (1969/1982, 154), who also studied this form of relation, noted in 1969 that this symbiotic relation is a

natural and universal human process, found not only among humans but also in the rest of the animal kingdom. According to him, every infant has the propensity for sucking, clinging, and “womb-craving, and hence a deep-rooted attachment towards the mother. This enigmatic form of connection imbues affectual attunement with love, care, respect, and recognition. In fact, within this interactive field, the mother's sound, touch, smile, and other bodily figures and rhythms “bathe” the infant with these accentuating ingredients, to which the infant reacts and eventually responds (Mitchell 2000, 4–8). Thompson (1958, 5-7) also explains that it is in these instances that both mother-child relationships “feel” and “hear” each other pre-verbally. The infant/child, through affectual expressions, perceives the mother's care, love, and recognition through bodily gestures, moods, and actions. Therefore, when infants experience touch, smiles, and other pre-verbal forms of human affection in the interactional field, they react and respond accordingly (see Mitchell 2000, 8). Further, Mitchell notes the findings of DeCasper and Fifer to substantiate Leowald’s perspective. Specifically, he cites their study which establishes that

...pregnant women, during the last trimester, read aloud the Dr. Seuss classic *The Cat in the Hat* to their fetuses. Shortly after birth, the babies preferred a tape recording of their mother's voice reading that story to hearing her read another Dr. Seuss story (Mitchell, 2000, 8)

Reacting to these mutual exchanges of affection, the infant wants to establish, first and foremost, emotional/affectual contact with the world. Emotional cues are crucial because it is through this emphatic attunement that the mother-child dyad reveals meaningful transactions (Bornstein 2012, 113). Moreover, the clinging, wooing, touching, caressing, sound, rhythms, bodily gestures, and other non-verbal predispositions, which serve as their “first language,” permeate the inner core of the mother and her child (Mitchell 2000, 7-9; see also Bornstein, 2012, 113; Cf. Barrett, 2017, 41). Consequently, this emphatic union culminates in an embodied intersubjectivity, implying that human beings possess an innate ability to connect with others at a pre-verbal, bodily level (Mills 2005, ix). Fuchs (2018, 177), in his studies of the human brain, reveals that the transactional relation between the mother and the child in the early stages of life is a primal intersubjectivity, characterized by embodied, affective, and intuitive forms of mutual exchanges that precede symbolic and verbally mediated communication. Thus, experiences in the primal bond are human attachments that specifically radiate social-emotional communications embedded in the affect-regulating relationship between the infant and the mother (Schoore 2003, 24). To put it in another way, the primal bond is an extralinguistic realm where two entities experience the primacy of ontological relations at a level only they can understand.

Nonetheless, research in developmental psychology suggests that the quality of the mother-child relationship during infancy and early childhood sets the foundation for the child's social and emotional development later in life. Banking on Stern’s findings, Frie and Reis (2005, 13) explain that this affectual attunement in the primal bond is critical in the child's development because it is where adult intersubjective notions are integrated. Any disruption in this emotional foundation leads to future social problems that shake social-human relations (Panksepp 1998, 247). Mill (2005,

xiv) reiterates this, explaining that the quality of human interactions during these mutual attractions can influence a child's future relationships with others and the world. Thus, implicit in De Waal (2009, 11), the primal bond and its corresponding quality relations that arise from it provide the "evolutionary template for all other human attachments, including those among adults." It is in these contexts that the quality of relationships in early childhood contributes to a positive, constructive, adaptive, and flexible approach to life (Howe 2011, 79). In other words, the quality of relationships that the infant experiences in the early stages of life could affect how s/he later interprets reality. As Mitchell (1988, 2-3) points out, it is precisely in the affectual union (primal bond) that the child struggles to contact and articulate himself within his horizons. Touching, holding, feeding, caring for, caressing, recognizing, and loving the infant awakens the characteristic features of human interactions, namely the primal density where two beings unfold their human framework (Mitchell 2000, 4). It is in these pre-verbal attachments that Chevalérias (2001, 186) emphasizes that the primal bond serves as the fundamental basis for building the child's human framework. Fromm (1957, 31-34) already posits in the late 50s that if a child receives love and recognition during their upbringing, they will eventually express and reciprocate that love as adults. As an adult, s/he sees and acts on the world through love and respect, just like what s/he received in early childhood.

Nevertheless, as Fromm mentions, we can no longer go back to that original attachment to nature and mother. Phylogenetically and ontogenetically, we have grown, developed, and matured. There is no way for us to return to the original state of nature. We have irretrievably lost "Paradise," barred by "two angels with fiery swords watching the entrance, and man cannot return (Fromm 1999, 75)." We find ourselves thrust into an uncertain, fragmented, and broken world (Fromm 1955, 24). However, it was Fromm himself who said that beyond our concerns for our instinctual survival, we are beings who want to satisfy our existential needs. All of us yearn for a sense of belongingness and rootedness. We also crave love, recognition, care, and respect from others. These are not just ordinary qualities of becoming human. These are the fundamental existential requirements for human dignity (Fromm 1955, 28). The affective relationships observed in the primal bonding between a mother and her infant mirror the same qualities of human relationships we strive to attain. As Szanto and Landweer (2020, 9) put it, "Our very being-in-the-world is always and already a way of being affectively attuned to oneself, others, and the world." Our encounters with the world and with others are always laden with emotional expectations (Cf. Damasio 1994, 173). The quality of relationships we experience in the primal bond is exactly the emotional extent we project onto the world. How we see, approach, and interpret our environment are emotionally charged dimensions of our experiences. Values such as love, care, respect, and recognition, are all emotionally loaded conditions of human existence. These are all tied with how we see and encounter the world as a mothering figure—care, love, concern, recognition, relatedness, rootedness, belongingness—all of which are the primal experiences of the mother and the child in the initial stages of life. Right from the start, we always want to be touched and moved (Rosa 2021, 123). We want to resonate with our immediate surrounding environment. Our connection to the outside world immerses us in our collective experiences, like religious rituals or sports events that evoke deep emotional bonds (Forgas 2022, 4).

Martin Heidegger also argued that our relationships in the world explicitly guide us toward interacting with others. It is not just an ontic-experiential relationship, but an existential one (Atwood and Stolorow 2014, 16). Thus, in *The Good Life and Beyond*, Rosa (2018, 103) writes, “our desires to increase our physical, material, and social ranges are driven by the hope that we can find the right place for us, that we meet the people we want to live with, the job that satisfies us, the religion or worldview that is truly ours, the books that talk to us and the music that speaks to us, etc. Thus, in the end, we hope, we will arrive at a form of life that turns the world into a living, breathing, speaking, responsive, ‘enchanted’ world” (Rosa 2018, 103). After all, argues Bornstein (2012, 113), our daily endeavors are all tied up from the angle of emotional attunements, which then serve as the foundation for all our social relations and attachments. To put it another way, as animals obligated to care for their mothers, we instinctively form bonds and relate, with empathy serving as our automatic reaction (De Waal 2009, 28). All our creative and productive outputs are not without emotional touch. Affectual qualities inseparably link our understanding, interpretation, action, and reaction to our spatiotemporal slots (Cf. Fromm 1941, 211). The opposites or contradictions we face, like universal vs. singular, necessary vs. contingent, moral vs. immoral, immanent vs. transcendent, legal vs. illegal, and so on, are caused by structural complexities that have grown over the years and act as a layer on top of how we are emotionally charged to understand our own spatiotemporal environment. However, these structural complexities exist alongside our original experience, our primal bond. Mills (2005, Introduction, xi) asserts that the “contextuality, emotional transmutation, meaning construction, mutual yet asymmetrical connectedness, and recognition” that we take on the world are laden with the nuances of emotional subjective life, empathic attunement, and responsiveness, as well as the interdependency of relational attachment. Similarly, Tenhouten (2007, 3-4) argues that understanding our spatiotemporal contexts necessitates our actions and movements. However, to make these actions meaningful, emotions play a crucial role by “activating” our actions and revealing meaningful experiences (Cf. Ahmed 2014, 4). The Freudian Oedipal rivalry between the son and the father is not solely about sexual desires towards the mother, but rather a yearning for maternal care and love. The same qualities we experience in the primal bond—love and care—are the affirmation of life and freedom of the human individual (Fromm 1955, 41-43). Thus, our own philosophies and cultural history serve as reflections of our inherent desire to find the existentially suited niche for ourselves. We create values, react to life's challenges, and act on our immediate situations because, at the end of the day, we want to belong and be rooted on the deepest level of human existence, and that, therefore, fits naturally into our doings in real life (Cf. Hvidt, Assing, & Cour 2022, 21). We are on a quest or journey in search of a vanishing paradise where our subjective experiential receptivity consistently influences us (Szanto & Landweer 2020, 10). The quality of the relationship we experience in the primal bond aids our sense of self—of who we are, our security, and our understanding of social relationships. The emotional qualities such as love, care, and validation we experience in the early stages of life can indeed influence lifelong patterns of seeking similar qualities in various relationships and societal contexts.

Thus, deep within our earnest desires to reconnect with others and the world, we yearn for affectual relations—existential alliances that the routine demands of modern life eclipse. Our social relations unconsciously desire and project values entrenched in the primal bond. In fact, in our actions and reactions to our immediate needs in life, we anticipate outcomes with bodily feelings, and it is in this process that we forecast affectual stances, which serve as pivotal factors for our rational decisions (Mellers et al. 2002, 263). In our daily encounters with others and with the world, what fascinates us, attracts us, motivates us, moves us, or frightens or disdains us are judgments that we bring upon the world. What we find valuable, what we fear, or what we desire shapes how we gauge our spatiotemporal situations and thereby, make rational decisions. In analyzing our conditions, our emotional responses help determine what matters most and what goals we prioritize. We surmise then that all of these are wrapped up primarily by emotional dimensions from which we cognize our surrounding environment. Affective relations then are what motivate or move us to respond to act or react to our immediate needs in life. Further, even our beliefs, ideologies, or dispositions are not without emotional presuppositions, which legitimize the rightness or wrongness of our unique perceptions. How we understand and interpret our world, and how we approach it, are anchored on “emotional presuppositions as they are given with the character structure” (Fromm 2010, 60). Thus, it is by our very nature that we are wired to seek these affectual relations (De Waal, 2009, 41). As animals, we yearn for attunement, a sense of touch and movement that invigorates us through life's daily transactions (Schiermer 2020, 4). Affectual relations give our experience of the world an animated quality (Tenhouten 2007, Preface, xi). Because we are animals wired to obligatory maternal care, we do not decide on these affectual relations. Before we take any active cognitive, epistemic, or reactive stance, our perceptual environment already exerts a certain “affective allure,” which makes objects salient and motivates our attentional modifications (Szanto & Landweer 2020, 8). Accordingly, our adaptive, cognitive mappings and reactive assimilations do not materialize without the aid of affectual states. According to Garces and Finkle (2019, 2-8), our affections assist our rational capacities as human beings, acting as an “innate contingency program” to effectively resolve a particular environmental stimulus. In other words, the value we derive from our experiences of our surrounding environment allows us to feel our world and thus grants us to appraise these situations, whether they are desirable or undesirable, negative or positive (Tenhouten 2007, 8). Pham (2007, 156–157) asserts the same argument, maintaining that cognitive reactions in our immediate environment are always laden with affection. Emotions or feelings about the object of our experiences integrate with our responses or reactions to life. The feeling of *sensing* what we experience either maximizes or decreases our capacity to exist in the world. We are simply affective animals because it is as instinctual as our needs for physiological survival (De Waal 2009, 11–12). On this note, emotional and mental expressions are important factors in solving human existence problems (Fromm 1955, 13).

Just like the infant who is affectively attuned to the mother in the primal bond, our cogitations and value judgments are manifestations that we want to reclaim a home, i.e., a world, a haven where we resonate with ourselves and with others. The ways we struggle and grapple with our immediate surroundings tell what interests us,

what fascinates us, what frustrates us, what moves us, or what angers us. Our passions, dreams, wishes, hopes, and goals reveal our unconscious projections of what we truly desire most in life (Solomon 2006, *Introduction*, 1). In our mundane competitions to make both ends meet, all that we are searching deep within are the qualities of relationships we experienced in the primal bond. According to De Waal (2009, 76), this is a significant issue because we instinctively connect with animals from an early age. Thus, our daily encounters, experiences, and struggles are in search of the lost harmony with nature, as initially pointed out by Fromm. We can only progress in life by not only honing our own rational and creative abilities but also by acknowledging our emotional nature, which forms the foundation of our psychic stability. We cannot only be defined by our rational capacities to master things around us. More than these, we desire most of the qualities found in the primal bond that underpin our social relations. The values of love, care, recognition, and respect are existential needs, considered as the groundwork of our mental and emotional (psychic dimensions) stabilities (Cf. Fromm 1955, 13 & 41). Through our family, peers, community, and work-related affairs, we are in constant search for new harmony—affectual relationships with the world where the values we share reveal significance or meaning, and thus, sociorelational experiences (Cf. Tenhouten 2007, 4-5). In other words, all the scientific advances we discovered and all the technological innovations we have so far built to alter our situations are geared toward human progress, i.e., for our growth and happiness. However, these are manifestations of our unquenchable desires to be affectively rooted and to belong, essentially a search for the human qualities found in the primal bond (Cf. Fromm 1955, 76). These imply human affinities that are deep-seated and affectual—moments where we form harmonious connections with others. Our innate desire to connect and relate to others stems from the recognition, affirmation, and validation we receive as human beings. In fact, according to Major (2018, 2), our physical touch, eye contact, vocal acoustics, gestures, bodily movements, and even our synchrony of autonomic physiology tell us about these yearnings through our relationships with the world. To thrive as social beings, we require meaningful connections with others. Our relationships, as beings in the world, are characterized by mutual understanding, empathy, and a shared sense of purpose or meaning. After satisfying our instinctual needs, such as hunger and thirst, and satisfying all of our desires, we still crave for more, i.e., inner satisfaction and equilibrium (Fromm 1955, 27). Despite the demands of a highly fragmented and alienated world, driven by science and technology, we strive to satisfy our human existential needs such as love, respect, affirmation, and validation. After all, as our psychic constitution dictates, we truly desire that harmony—that paradisaical world—the mother’s love, the emotional foundation molded in the “soil, blood, and nature” (Fromm 1955, 41).

Critical theory seeks to uncover and critique the underlying power structures and social systems that perpetuate inequality and oppression. Philosophers, sociologists, economists, historians, and other public intellectuals concentrate on issues such as poverty, injustice, and alienation, and strive to reveal how these social controversies stem from broader structural issues. In short, critical theory questions the social standardization of life under advanced capitalism (Cf. Jay 1973, 46). While they can certainly shed light on the social and economic factors that contribute to feelings

of isolation, disconnection, and alienated existence, they may not fully address the deeper emotional and psychological needs that underlie our desire for authentic human relatedness. I contend that beneath the surface level of these social disputes that confront our society today, there lies a deep-seated desire for recognition, care, concern, respect, and love—qualities towards affective attunement in a tumultuous world. It is from these that Fromm (1955, 76; 1937/1992, 59) points out that what makes society move and achieve its goals depends upon the emotional attachments of its members, and the same emotional drives are tapped and manipulated to maintain the status quo. Despite the spilling, thrilling, and inner contradictions brought about by the fluidity and contradictions of the world today (Frosh 1991, 6-7), what we truly desire within is to come into communion with others, to be intimately and affectually related. Our psychic substratum, from which our mental sanity depends, is to be related, rooted, and belonged affectually (Fromm 1955, 29). Thus, while it is true that disconnection and alienation are underlying concerns in a rapidly changing world, I surmised that to be affectually in touch, i.e., existentially related, is a fundamental element in rebuilding a just and equitable society. Care, respect, recognition, and love, which symbolize mutual exchanges, are now becoming manifest in different movements around the world. For instance, *Black Lives Matter*, *Me Too*, *LGBTQ+*, *Extinction Rebellion*, and others express deep-seated needs for human connection, respect, and recognition. The rational demands of these groups are tinged with a deep-seated longing for attachment bonds in a world so fragmented and insensitive to their plight. Their protests are not solely political or socioeconomic. Theirs is a voice that needs to be heard and recognized. It is a voice demanding affection, relatedness, roots, and belongingness. As Ferry and Kingston (2008, 3) explain, in politics, all our hopes and fears for our country, for ourselves, and our families “ebb and flow in a complex set of reactions to the events unfolding around [us], and emotions and passions sometimes spur [us] to political actions.” Hence, as *being-in-and-with* the world, an existential relationship is a must since, as Panksepp (1998, 247) clearly says, “it runs into our affective nature as biological creatures. Fromm (1955, 27-28) then further reiterates this and says,

Man cannot live statically because his inner contradictions drive him to seek for an equilibrium, for a new harmony instead of the lost animal harmony with nature. After he has satisfied his animal needs, he is driven by his human needs. While his body tells him what to eat and what to avoid—his conscience ought to tell him which needs to cultivate and satisfy... He could not face this state of being for a second if he could not find new ties with his fellow man which replace the old ones, regulated by instincts. Even if all his physiological needs were satisfied, he would experience his state of aloneness and individuation as a prison from which he had to break out in order to retain his sanity... the insane person is the one who has completely failed to establish any kind of union, and is imprisoned, even if he is not behind barred windows. The necessity to unite with other living beings, to be related to them, is an imperative need on the fulfillment of which man's sanity depends.

We seek out social relationships based on mutual respect and care, driven by our existential needs for connection and recognition, and strive to create a more just and humane society that values and treats everyone with dignity and respect. I believe that being affectively attuned with our actions signifies our connection to the world, without which we risk disassociation, separation, and alienation from our immediate social locations (See Pacquing, 2023, 276). Although the cognitive mappings of our immediate surroundings have resulted in productive instances, discounting our emotional baggage would lead us nowhere. Critique after critique, books, and articles on immanent vs. transcendent, the one vs. the many, rational vs. emotional, and local vs. universal led us to a more fragmented and disorganized world (See Schiermer, 2020, 6-7). Without focusing and understanding the deep-seated emotions we invest in our relations with others and the world, our experience of dissonance, disharmony, and alienation intensifies. As a matter of fact, it is our emotions, our psychic equilibrium, that help and govern our well-being (Fromm, 1955, 13).

Perhaps then, affectual relations could be the starting point, i.e., to understand and emphatically attune ourselves to the plight of the *other*. It is to feel what they feel, to hear and internalize how they see and interpret *their* worlds. It is to feel their narratives, for they too are searchers for that lost harmony that Fromm expressly described. It is to listen to their voices, and from there, we know their plans, dreams, and aspirations in life. Our criticisms, reactions, and protests on different socio-political and economic issues that beset us are manifestations of our deep-seated desires for understanding and recognition of our slots in social relations. We want deep within to reclaim our shares from which we call the world our home (See Pacquing, 2023, 276). Thus, I believe that in reconstructing our socio-political and economic landscapes, we start from the premise that deep within, we all want to be affectively attuned, with others and with the world. Through these affectual relationships, we can build a better home. After all, the world is seen as a mothering figure, and we expect that in our daily transactions, we find quality relationships such as love, care, respect, recognition, and validation. And accordingly, it is here that our inter-subjective capacities, i.e. beings coming forth and sharing the world, rest (Cf. De Waal 2005, 23).

CONCLUSION

It is undeniable that we, as individuals, are social animals. We have an inherent proclivity towards social interactions and interpersonal connections, thereby imbuing life with purpose and significance. In a world marked by rapid technological innovations, the prevalence of disconnected relations becomes more salient. The pain and struggles to make both ends meet are assuaged by our sublimated actions. To bridge the gap, we resort to the pleasures of technological means. We utilize social media platforms, online forums, and artificial intelligence to relieve the anxieties and tensions brought on by our relations with the world.

While technological means are critical to our current set-up, they surely cannot guarantee us authentic or existential encounters with the world. It falls short of meeting our immense emotional and psychological yearnings for human connections. Those quality relations exemplified in the mother-infant relationship remain indispensable

for the development of healthy interpersonal connections across the lifespan. To effectively traverse our social lives, we need to cultivate more profound relationships beyond what technological advances may provide. Put simply, mechanical channels cannot replace the values of love, care, respect, recognition, or validation, as they can only offer a superficial understanding of our spatiotemporal landscapes.

Interpersonal relationships play a pivotal role in shaping individual identities. The immanent values of the primal bond are fundamental exchanges in navigating the complexities of social reality. However, commercial forces in the market world amplify external influences, overshadowing them. Our structural social foundations have eclipsed our inherent need for social harmony. Originally, the early stages of life imbued us with the essential qualities of love, care, and recognition, and we adults expect the same qualities to pervade our social relations. However, the surge of high-speed social forces has disrupted or inhibited these fundamental human values. Nevertheless, we project these inner desires into our social patterns. We unconsciously mirror them in how we act, react, produce, and reproduce material necessities in order to live good and meaningful lives.

Our fundamental desire to form harmonious relations exists inherently within us. Despite the social challenges we face, we naturally form connections that reflect a common set of human traits, which form the basis of our psychological, cognitive, and emotional abilities. Existential relationships that stem from the primal bond exhibit a steadfast dedication to embrace openness with others and with the world. Despite the potential challenges, reconsidering those emotional instances can yield significant benefits, including a sense of inclusion, direction, and emotional satisfaction. These affectual relations can serve as a lens or a framework for social transformation. Looking at it in a different light, all that we probably need and yearn for is love, recognition, and validation, which are all emotional attunements to the world. After all, phylogenetically and ontogenetically, we all originate from that paradisiacal world where the mother, literally and symbolically, represents the euphoric state of satisfaction and security.

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