



Toward a Spiritual Humanism: A Philosophical Exploration of Love and Personality in Erich Fromm's Thought

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Abstract: This study aims to critically examine Erich Fromm's conception of love and its intrinsic relationship to his theory of personality, while situating his ideas within a broader philosophical dialogue that includes the perspectives of classical Muslim thinkers. Love has long occupied a central place in both Islamic and Western intellectual traditions. Muslim philosophers typically understand love as a metaphysical and spiritual reality oriented toward the Divine, whereas Western philosophers and psychologists—among them Erich Fromm—often approach love as a humanistic, psychological, and socio-ethical phenomenon. As a leading figure in humanistic psychoanalysis, Fromm conceptualizes love as an active capacity that enables individuals to overcome alienation, actualize their humanity, and cultivate meaningful relatedness, as articulated in *The Art of Loving*. Employing a philosophical and analytical method, this research explores the epistemic foundations, assumptions, and implications of Fromm's thought in order to assess its coherence and relevance within wider spiritual and ethical frameworks. The findings reveal that Fromm's philosophy of love is grounded in humanistic psychoanalysis, emphasizing autonomy, social responsibility, and the productive orientation of the self. This stands in contrast to Islamic philosophical and mystical understandings of love, which center on spiritual purification, metaphysical purpose, and the quest for closeness to Allah Swt. The study concludes that while Fromm's theory offers valuable insights into the psychological dimensions of love and personality, it remains limited when evaluated through the lens of Islamic spirituality. Consequently, a more comprehensive articulation of love—especially for Muslim readers—may be achieved by integrating Fromm's humanistic insights with the spiritual and metaphysical perspectives of classical Muslim philosophers, thereby moving toward a richer form of spiritual humanism.

Keywords: Erich Fromm; Love; Islamic Spirituality; Humanistic Psychoanalysis; Critical Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Love has been an enduring aspect of human existence, essential for psychological well-being, personal growth, and happiness. Throughout human civilization, love has been celebrated as a source of affection, meaning, and fulfillment.(Bagir, 2013, p. 4) However, as history has progressed, the concept of love has undergone significant shifts, shaped by cultural contexts, philosophical traditions, and socio-historical developments. In the modern era, particularly under



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the influence of Western secular thought, love is increasingly interpreted through pragmatic and materialistic lenses, emphasizing measurable outcomes, physical attraction, and emotional gratification.(Fiqron & Parawati, 2023) This shift reflects broader social dynamics marked by a crisis of meaning, alienation, and increasingly superficial human relationships. One notable figure in the discussion of love is Erich Fromm, a psychoanalyst whose philosophy emphasizes the art of loving as a learned skill. Fromm's perspective, while insightful, may not fully align with religious values, particularly from the Islamic *worldview*.

Amid these challenges, Erich Fromm stands out as an influential thinker whose humanistic psychoanalysis seeks to restore the ethical, rational, and spiritual dimensions of human life. Fromm argues that love is not a passive emotion but a learned art that requires discipline, knowledge, responsibility, and active engagement. He views love as a conscious practice through which individuals cultivate meaningful relationships, develop moral awareness, and enhance their humanity. Such an approach offers a relevant response to contemporary issues of alienation and emotional disconnection.

Nonetheless, a deeper philosophical perspective remains necessary to comprehend love not merely as an emotion, but as what Fromm refers to as the art of being—a mode of existence grounded in authenticity, productivity, and spiritual maturity. This perspective opens opportunities for further inquiry into the interconnectedness of love, spirituality, and personality formation within the broader framework of spiritual humanism. While Fromm's ideas provide valuable insights into interpersonal relations and ethical self-development, certain aspects—especially his conception of God—stand in tension with religious perspectives, particularly the Islamic worldview. In *The Art of Loving*, Fromm describes God as a historically constructed symbol that expresses humanity's longing for truth and transcendence. From an Islamic standpoint, this view is problematic because God is not merely a symbolic construct but the ultimate reality and the true source of love itself.

The evolving understanding of love has led to various interpretations and analyses, posing intriguing questions about its nature and implications. In exploring the philosophy of love, particularly as articulated by Erich Fromm, it becomes essential to delve into its core principles and evaluate its compatibility with different religious perspectives. As a well known modern



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philosopher in the concept of love, Fromm's emphasis on the humanistic and rationalistic aspects of love offers valuable insights into interpersonal relationships and self-awareness. He indoctrinates that humans advance their thinking power to understand themselves and other people to achieve the experience of living life with fellow humans and their creatures. His thought is widely used by most people. As he says in his book *The Art of Loving* that God is only a historically formed concept about the expression of feelings for a higher power, about longing for truth.(Fromm, 1956, p. 72) he was wrong in the basic concept of love itself, namely about God because God is the basis of everything. However, when viewed through the lens of Islam, certain aspects of Fromm's philosophy may raise questions regarding its alignment with religious teachings.

The researcher do this research based on previous research. There are Apriantika discusses the essential nature of love and role the preventing dating violence, drawing on Fromm's concept of love as a transformative force. However, Apriantika's study lacks a deep analysis of Fromm's philosophy from based on Islamic perspective, prompting the need for further analysis.(Apriantika, 2021, p. 44) Nururohim explores the concept of self-love in the Qur'an and its psychological implications, but does not specifically address Fromm's philosophy of love from an Islamic standpoint.(Nurrohim, 2022, p. 114) Loka provides a comparative analysis of love from psychological and Sufism perspectives, including Fromm's views, but does not thoroughly critique Fromm's philosophy from an Islamic worldview.(Loka & Yulianti, 2019)

This research aims to shed light on Erich Fromm's Philosophy of Love and its deep analysis based on the perspective of Muslim philosophers. By analysis Fromm's ideas and comparing them with Islamic principles, we seek to enrich our understanding of love and its role in human life. Through this analysis, we hope to contribute to the ongoing discourse on love, providing both theoretical insights and practical recommendations for fostering healthy relationships grounded in Islamic values.

Previous studies have explored Erich Fromm's thought from various perspectives—ranging from his critique of Freudian psychoanalysis, his social psychology model, his theory of love, to basic human needs and character orientations. However, these studies remain fragmented and do not yet provide a holistic understanding of how Fromm's concept of love connects with the



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personality structures and socio-psychological dynamics he formulated. This research seeks to offer novelty by integrating these dimensions and positioning Fromm's concept of love as the central axis of analysis.

The study titled "*Erich Fromm's Critical Theory*" by Ansam Bassem Fadel and Raniah Salam Mohammed Alabd, for example, highlights Fromm's critique of Freud concerning morality, religion, and society, yet it does not explain the genealogical link between this critique and the emergence of Fromm's idea of love as an active and productive human capacity.(Fadel & Alabd, 2024) The connection between Fromm's rejection of Freud's sexual determinism and his development of the theory of productive love remains largely unexplored. Similarly, Erich Fromm's Social Psychological Models by Sheldon Solomon discusses human adaptation to social institutions but does not address the role of love as a productive orientation that shapes a free, creative, and responsible social character.

Marcus Schulzke, in his study titled "*Evaluating Fromm's Theory of Love and Its Pedagogical Significance*," elaborates on the educational relevance of Fromm's theory of love; however, his analysis remains limited to the teacher-student relationship.(Schulzke, 2014) To date, no research has expanded this pedagogical significance into broader social contexts—such as community relations, political structures, or institutional life—which are central themes in Fromm's ethical humanism. Meanwhile, Kendra Cherry's work, "*Understanding Erich Fromm's Theory of Personality: Basic Human Needs and Their Impact on Character Orientations*," outlines Fromm's classification of human needs and character types but does not explore how these needs shape the capacity to love or how particular character orientations may foster or hinder the development of productive love.(Cherry, 2023)

Taken together, these four studies indicate that research on Fromm remains divided into isolated themes: psychoanalytic critique, social psychology, pedagogy, and personality theory. No research has yet positioned the concept of love as an integrative core for understanding the interplay between human needs, personality structures, social relations, and ethical functions within society. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, connecting Fromm's theory of love with his broader theoretical framework—including humanistic psychoanalysis, social psychology, and character orientations—to present a comprehensive



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understanding of love as a productive human orientation in both personal and social life. This novelty opens new analytical space to view love not merely as an emotional phenomenon but as an ethical and social foundation for shaping personality and fostering a more humane social order.

METHOD

Employing a philosophical and analytical method, this research explores the epistemic foundations, assumptions, and implications of Fromm's thought in order to assess its coherence and relevance within wider spiritual and ethical frameworks. The findings reveal that Fromm's philosophy of love is grounded in humanistic psychoanalysis, emphasizing autonomy, social responsibility, and the productive orientation of the self. This stands in contrast to Islamic philosophical and mystical understandings of love, which center on spiritual purification, metaphysical purpose, and the quest for closeness to Allah Swt. The study concludes that while Fromm's theory offers valuable insights into the psychological dimensions of love and personality, it remains limited when evaluated through the lens of Islamic spirituality. Consequently, a more comprehensive articulation of love—especially for Muslim readers—may be achieved by integrating Fromm's humanistic insights with the spiritual and metaphysical perspectives of classical Muslim philosophers, thereby moving toward a richer form of spiritual humanism.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Definition of Love

Love has been defined in various ways from the perspectives of several philosophers. Among them, Erich Fromm—a prominent psychoanalyst—describes love as an art that requires both knowledge and effort. According to Fromm, love is not merely a feeling of comfort; rather, it is a theory and a practice that must be learned, much like music, painting, medicine, and other disciplines.(Fromm, 1956) Therefore, humans must exert conscious effort to study love through proper theories and methods in order to practice it effectively. In this sense, Fromm's concept of the art of love stands in contrast to the views of many other philosophers.

Erich Fromm defines love with several definitions, *the first* Love is an active force in human beings that becomes a link between separated humans, a force that unites humans with



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other humans. Love would not be appropriate if it is called an activity because activities are ambiguous, have different purposes, and sometimes go beyond the main motivation. *The second* is that love is defined by being active rather than passive, and is most commonly described as giving rather than receiving.(Fromm, 1956) *The third*, love is also defined as a concern for the lives of those we love. So that the essence of love is interpreted as a form of labor for something because people will work for what they love and love what they work for.(Fromm, 1956) So someone who feels love will have an active role, namely by feeling caring, giving attention and expressing their feelings through the behavior shown. By looking at Erich Fromm's definition of love, he has defined love as the power that exists in human beings, caring for someone so that it can unite different people. However, he does not explain the main elements that cannot be separated from love, namely where love comes from and who brings love should be a concern in his expression.

In Islam we know that love is a gift from Allah Swt. given to each of His servants so that it can provide happiness, tranquility, and serenity in human life. So, as we know in the discussion of love according to several Muslim philosophers, such as Ibn Miskawayh who explains love as a feeling that arises in fellow human beings naturally created by God to maintain human survival.(Rahayu, 2017, p. 3) Similarly, Ibn Hazm El-Andalusy defined that love is something that arises from the heart and the human heart is governed by Allah Swt. He has fundamentally explained that love belongs to Allah Almighty and is bestowed upon His creatures. Ibn Sina, a Muslim philosopher, also explained that love is the driving force towards the perfection of life. Love plays a role in uniting humans with God. With human love for others and based on belief in God, the owner of love will result in that the more a human loves his God, the more he will love the people around him. This is how Islam views love as a glory that is a gift from God that creates security and comfort in human life.(Ibn Hazm El-Andalusy, 2009)

In love, Erich Fromm divides into two processes to learn what love is. The process is known as theory and practice. So, humans must master the theory and practice of love to arrive at true love.(Fromm, 1956) Theories in love as recognized by many people include theories that study humans because humans are the main object of love.(Fromm, 1956) What is essential in the existence of man is the fact that he has emerged from the animal kingdom, from instinctive



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adaptation, that he has transcended nature—although he never leaves it; he is a part of it—and yet once torn away from nature, he cannot return to it; once thrown out of paradise—a state of original oneness with nature—cherubim with flaming swords block his way if he should try to return.(Fromm, 1956)

From his understanding of human existence, it can be inferred that for him humans are creatures that came out of the animal kingdom, which has transcended nature so that the exit of the Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) from heaven is a cause for the creation of humans with the existence that we see today. Paradise for him is not a place for humans because of the cherubim.¹ will prevent him from returning to heaven.

One other thing that is inseparable from Erich Fromm's philosophy of love is practice. He often mentions the practice of love as the art of loving. However, he forgets that the process will not succeed without God's intervention. The process that humans go through must be with effort so that it produces the best thing in its achievement. The Art of Loving is referred to as something that must be done by humans so that humans do not make mistakes in loving. The art of loving has several conditions that must be implemented, namely *the first* is discipline. A person will not be good at doing everything if he lacks discipline if he only does the work according to his wishes. *Second*, the art of loving requires concentration, which is a condition that is very necessary when learning anything to be maximized. *The third* is patience which is very important if you want something that works quickly, it is not an art because art requires patience.

However, In Islam, we recognize several things that are important in love because love is not only judged from the outside, but the essence of love is in the fruit produced which will make humans more devoted to their Lord. As in Islam, people who love must always maintain and care for the intentions that are in their hearts, so that the only love aimed at anyone is intended to achieve the pleasure of Allah Swt. *The second* requirement in Islam is love must be proportional. That is, in loving, humans are not allowed to be excessive in loving someone or something else because it could be that something that is loved is not good for oneself and something that is hated

¹ Cherubim is etymologically derived from the Hebrew language which means to benefit or bless. In old Judaism, it was a term used to express a large winged creature that guarded the paradise of Paradise. But in early Israelite history, the term was often used to refer to the Divine chariot. (www.jewishencyclopedia.com)



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is good for oneself. Because Allah Swt. is the All-Knowing of everything. As in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 216 which explains this. *The third* is prayer which is an important requirement in love. Moreover, in desiring everything, including desiring something desired, prayer is very important in human life. Humans cannot reach love without prayer. Because the link between humans and the owner of love, namely Allah Swt., is prayer.

The well-known Muslim philosopher Ibn Sina revealed that love is the result of God's emanation process. Love is defined as the driving force towards the perfection of life towards what is intended. Without love, a struggle to achieve the goal will cease.(Sina, 2020, p. 7) Love plays a role in uniting humans with God through human desires and actions at various levels. Ibn Sina explained that everything created on this earth tends to perfection, this perfection is a goodness that is influenced by the existence of innate love (*Ishq al-gharizi*) in every person.(Sina, 2020) Muhammad Iqbal also a well-known muslim philosopher called by *Mujaddid alfa sani*, says that love is not only interpreted as Platonic Love, which is just feeling love. Love according to him is to be gentle to anyone but still firm when needed. And he says that love is from God. So, this is where love is referred to as the basis of human life and not a level that must be achieved.(Iqbal, 1976, p. 43)

Based on the definition of love according to Ibnu Sina and Muhammad Iqbal, Erich Fromm has the different definition perspective. Erich Fromm defines love as abandoning the element of God. He emphasized that true love does not depend on divine existence or intervention. He argued that authentic and deep love is the result of conscious human actions and ethical decisions made without taking into account expectations of reward from divine entities then, Fromm's thought of love is different from Ibn Sina and Muhammad Iqbal perspective who recognized the transcendent aspect of love.

The Foundation of Love

Erich Fromm has the background life was a Jew and then converted to Zen Buddhism, his thinking was slightly religious. But in reality, his thoughts on love are more psychic. As well as his background as a social psychoanalyst, he drew heavily on the social materialist ideas of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. However, he did not take all the thoughts of these two figures. Thus, he



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is known as the father of psychoanalysis who is famous for his analysis of human psychological problems.

When viewed from his work entitled *The Art of Loving*, he explains that the cause of love is due to separation, loneliness, alienation, making humans need love to complete their lives.(Fromm, 1956) Erich Fromm based his love on the same basis as his foundation for happiness. As he says in *The Art of Loving*: *“If I am like everyone else, if I have no feelings or thoughts that make me different, if I conform in habits, in dress, in ideas, to the patterns of the group, I am saved; saved from the fearful experience of aloneness.”* (Fromm, 1956)

Based on this data, the basis of happiness for Erich Fromm is other humans. For him, humans will feel safe if they do not feel alone, which is different from a group in terms of clothing, customs, and even ideas other groups. Likewise, the foundation of his love is based on the happiness of alienation from humans. So happiness is very important to humans. Human happiness will certainly be related to other humans, in other words, humans are the basis for the happiness of others and the basis for the emergence of love.

From the description of Erich Fromm in his work, *The Art of Loving*, about the foundation of love, Imam Al-Ghazali as the Muslim philosopher also explained in the chapter of Love, Longing, and Ridha in the book of *Ihya Ulumuddin* that the highest peak of love is loving Allah Swt. because humans cannot love everything else before loving Allah Swt. and His messenger. And only then can someone be said to have faith if he has loved Allah Swt. and His Messenger.(Al-Ghazali, 2011, p. 400) So humans in terms of love must also prioritize love for God because this love is the strength in other loves. Muhammad Iqbal in his Philosophy of Love also often refers to love as *isyq*, just like Ibn Sina and Suhrawardi. Muhammad Iqbal's Philosophy of Love follows the concept of love brought by the Prophet Muhammad, where the Prophet Muhammad who loved Allah hoped to enter heaven and get his mercy. It is not true that love makes oneself arrogant towards the beloved, especially Allah Swt.(Suprapto, 2016, p. 8)

In this case, his opinion has the truth as well as the story of Prophet Adam who was alone when in heaven, and the creation of Eve to accompany Prophet Adam as. so that he did not live alone in heaven. But this foundation is still inaccurate. Love cannot only be based on lust or beauty or one particular goal as Erich Fromm says. In Islam, the foundation of love is faith in God. With



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faith, human love will last until heaven. So that the purpose of love is not only to be reunited in the world. But in the ultimate life, humans are reunited with love.(Fromm, 1956)

Muslim philosophers also based love on faith in God Almighty. True love is not generated by the eyes or seeing the beauty of the face only, or the desire not to live alone, but Allah Swt. who determines the human heart so that love must be based on faith because without faith love will easily fade and wither. It is said that a very lucky man is a man who is loved by a pious person because if a pious person loves someone, then he will make that person happy, but if he does not love that person then he will not hurt him. That is the beauty of love in Islam which is based on faith in Allah Swt.(Rahayu, 2017)

Erich Fromm in this background of his life, he tends to be a person who is oriented towards human needs even though he had a good religious foundation from his family when he was little. Drawing concluding, Erich Fromm has based love on humans. Whereas humans do not have the absolute power to make other humans happy or suffer. As we know from Al-Ghazali happiness is achieved with two dimensions of existence, namely the world and the hereafter. Happiness for him is a calm and peaceful condition of the soul. And has a peak that is up to makrifatullah. This indicates that their thoughts on happiness and the foundation of love differ, while Al-Ghazali emphasizes the attainment of happiness through the purification of the soul and submission to the divine will, Fromm focuses on inner fulfillment derived from self-awareness and authentic living.

The concept of love is also often related to the concept of man. Likewise, he has researched a lot about humans. Erich Fromm states humans with two aspects, firstly humans are animals, but human instincts are imperfect and cannot guarantee the survival of human life. *Secondly*, humans have mental qualities or intelligence so that they realize their future and past. Humans who are the main object of love, are judged based on the physical, and he also rejects the definition of humans that is metaphysical and not empirical.(Fromm, 1956)

Thus, Erich Fromm views humans only from the physical and psychological dimensions. He also says that humans are animals but with imperfect instincts. This statement is not true because humans are creatures created by God who have reason that distinguishes them from animals. Whereas Erich Fromm understands that humans have reason and with reason humans have consciousness within themselves. In addition, humans have other aspects like other creatures,



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namely spirit soul, and heart. So knowledge of the mind and knowledge of the heart are two different pieces of human knowledge because they different in the way they are obtained. But between the mind and the heart are both the power to think.(Nurmadiyah, 2019, pp. 29–43)

While, the foundation of love according to Erich Fromm and Muslim philosophers is different. Erich Fromm revolves around the concept of humanism, where the essence of love is rooted in the connection between individuals. In contrast, Muslim philosophers like Al-Ghazali emphasize the centrality of faith in Allah as the basis of love. This fundamental distinction highlights the vast difference in the philosophical underpinnings of love between humanistic perspectives, such as Fromm's, and Islamic philosophy, where faith in the divine serves as the cornerstone of love and spiritual fulfillment.

The Purpose of Love

In this world, humans are born as creatures that have many advantages over other creatures. Humans are endowed with a mind that enables them to think about themselves, others, and their future. Click or tap here to enter text. According to Erich Fromm's view, this reason, humans have awareness within themselves. Aware that he is a separate being, that human existence on earth and his departure is not the will of man himself. Many humans realize that in this world they will experience solitude, separation, and even alienation from other creatures. Click or tap here to enter text. However, amidst these existential realities, the capacity for love, as understood by Fromm and other philosophical traditions, offers a profound pathway towards connection, meaning, and fulfillment in the human.

The existence of humans on this earth is not the will of humans themselves as Erich Fromm says before. However, this opinion cannot be justified as in *Surah Al-Ahzab* verse 72 which explains that humans are the only creatures who are willing to accept the mandate from SWT to be caliph on earth. Allah Swt. has offered a mandate to the heavens, mountains, and earth, but they are all reluctant to accept the mandate for fear of not being able to carry it, so the mandate is taken by humans and humans feel able to accept the mandate that Allah Swt. gives. So, it cannot be said that the presence of humans on this earth is a coercion and not the will of humans.



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Thus, Erich Fromm also says that the isolation and separation of humans will cause distress and anxiety in humans. Loneliness and isolation, if left untreated, will lead to a decline in human mentality that can lead to psychiatric disorders. This can be seen from several phenomena that occur among individuals who are limited in their movements by their families or by their surroundings, making it difficult for them to get along and mentally decline. Click or tap here to enter text. So, it can be concluded that this alienation and loneliness for Erich Fromm has a huge impact on human life and it is very important for humans to be able to overcome their loneliness and separation.

In Islam, eliminating isolation and loneliness in human life is not the main purpose of love. Click or tap here to enter text. It is proven that many previous people, religious experts, scholars in Islam, and even other religious leaders who secluded themselves to get closer to God, gained peace and as a result, could gain peace. Because tranquillity is given by God not by other humans. Click or tap here to enter text. They isolate themselves from other humans but they do not feel isolated. They do not feel lonely even though they are not in the company of other humans. With this, human happiness can not only be obtained by being with others, but by being alone, humans can also obtain true happiness.

We also often hear the saying that what comes will go, and what it will be no more. Click or tap here to enter text. If the purpose of love is to eliminate alienation while humans are created aliens on this earth, it is not appropriate. So it is not correct to say that alienation and separation will cause anxiety and distress in man. A strong man equips himself with true faith so that he is not afraid of isolation. Man must be able to think that he will die alone, he will be buried alone, and he will face the angels' questions in the grave in his condition. So the loneliness that results in human mental decline is due to mental and faith that is not strong. Humans only need to put great hope in God so that they will get peace in their hearts. Click or tap here to enter text.

Imam Al-Ghazali explained that love is giving peace, breaking down pride, giving goodness, and training individuals to continue to be better servants and devoted to Allah Swt, so that love will only produce goodness to the lover and the beloved. Click or tap here to enter text. Like a mother's love for her child which will result in affection, a feeling to always protect and



point the child to a good path and pleased by Allah Swt.(Bagir, 2013) So Love is synonymous with goodness and will not lead to misguidance or ugliness. When someone loves their lover, what they will do is invite them to the path of goodness. And that goodness is the way to the God. Love has goal to reach the highest perfection as he defines love as a driving force to reach the highest perfection. And the highest purpose of love is to get the God's love. This part that different between love in Erich Fromm perspective and Islam perspective.

The Classification of Love

In *The Art of Loving*, Erich Fromm divides love into several forms according to the objects of love because the orientation of love still has differences according to the differences in the objects of love. Click or tap here to enter text. *The First*, Brotherly Love is the simplest type of love. According to him, brotherly love is manifested by a sense of responsibility, respect, care, and a desire to improve and enhance one's potential. Brotherly love is a love for all human beings that is based on a feeling of oneness with other human beings and eliminates the differences that exist in human beings. Click or tap here to enter text. Ultimately, Fromm's classification underscores the diverse nature of love and its capacity to bridge the gaps between individuals.

In this sense of brotherly love, Erich Fromm also explains that love between people is not necessarily equal, exemplified by love for the helpless, love for the underprivileged, love of children to their parents because people feel in need, love of campers to their employers and even love for strangers. Click or tap here to enter text. So Brotherly Love is considered to be a love that exists as a whole, especially love for the weak.

Erich Fromm sees humans as brothers and sisters as Islam also sees it. Ibn Miskawayh also sees it this way, namely the existence of love that arises because of togetherness, and mutual attention between fellow human beings. Click or tap here to enter text. In Brotherly Love, Erich Fromm also views that all humans who embody this brotherly love will eliminate the differences that exist in human life. As in Islam, brotherly love in Erich Fromm's perspective does not require equality. Brotherly love can occur between humans who are empowered and powerless, the love of parents to their children, even the love of a person to his employer, and vice versa. Click or tap



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here to enter text. So brotherly love according to Erich Fromm's perspective does not have much difference with brotherly love in Islam.

The second, Motherly Love is a love that focuses on the object of a child who is deeply loved. Motherly Love fulfills two aspects, *the first aspect* is a attention and responsibility for the survival of the child and *the second aspect* is an attitude to instill a love for life in the child. According to Erich Fromm, a mother is someone who must be able to give milk and honey to her child. Milk is a symbol of love and affection which is the first aspect needed by a child. Honey is a symbol of goodness and comfort in life. Almost all mothers can give milk to their children, but not all mothers can give honey to their children. In the sense that most mothers can give their love and affection but not many can guarantee the happiness and comfort of their children's lives. Click or tap here to enter text.

Motherly Love is uniquely described by Erich Fromm in the book *The Art of Loving*. Motherly Love is stated as the highest type of love because it does not imply a sense of selfishness in humans. When a mother loves her child, she will not want anything back from the child except the child's happiness. Click or tap here to enter text. Motherly love is also described differently from father's love. Because a father's love is just, demanding that the child become what he wants, and a father's love depends on the child's compliance with the father's demands. Click or tap here to enter text. In contrast to erotic love, which Erich Fromm describes as a love that desires unity between two human beings, maternal love desires the growth of the child and the success of the child so that the mother desires separation from her child. Click or tap here to enter text. Thus, Motherly Love is referred to as the highest love because the mother must be willing to experience separation from the child she loves.

However, in Islam, the Motherly Love is much broader than Erich Fromm's opinion. Mothers have an unending love for their children. From before he was born in the world he has poured out his affection to the child, accepting his child's shortcomings and strengths. She always provides nourishment, love, and other positive energies. Likewise, the mother always motivates the child to be able to live life in this world well, and as a provision for life in the hereafter. Click or tap here to enter text.

Erich Fromm has mentioned the aspects of Motherly Love that include care and responsibility and the desire for the child to love life in the world. Click or tap here to enter text. His explanation is based on his psychological analysis. The most important aspect of parents is to make their children have the world in their hands and not in their hearts. To make the world something that is nothing more than a gift that will disappear so there is no need to love the world. The world is only a bridge to the eternal afterlife so loving the world will only make humans feel disappointment at the end of their lives. Click or tap here to enter text. Thus, a mother wants her child to be a good and useful child for others and become a lucky human being in this world and the hereafter. Such is a mother's deep love for her child even though a child has grown up for a mother, a child is still a child who always needs the mother's attention.

In this case, mothers and fathers do have different ways of loving children because of the different attitudes, feelings, and logic in fathers and mothers. It is no wonder that fathers are more strict and mothers are more gentle and caring. But it is not entirely true if Erich Fromm says that father's love is fair and harsh. fathers always demand the child to be what he wants. However, fathers also they tend to feel gentle even though their tendency is to be firm. Fathers always try to give the best for their children and do not always demand what they want. Click or tap here to enter text. As we find in the story of our Prophet Muhammad SAW who never demanded Fatimah to be the way he wanted her to be.

The third, Erotic Love is a love with a desire to be fully united with the person they love. This love is characterized by the feeling of falling in love with a stranger who does not have any previous ties. The situation is often described by a person's desire to eliminate their separation from their loved one physically, for example by being together, intimacy, and even sexual intercourse between the two. Click or tap here to enter text. So love is good for humans physically as well as psychologically, namely calm and comfortable feelings.

Erich Fromm says in his work, *The Art of Loving*: “*If the desire for physical union is not stimulated by love, if erotic love is not also brotherly love, it never leads to the union in more than an orgiastic, transitory sens.*” Click or tap here to enter text. This is what Erich Fromm explained, that the relationship that occurs between men and women cannot only be interpreted by sexual



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desire because sexual desire without love cannot unite two humans. Sexual attraction creates a union, but this union of two humans does not make them closer because it will make them hate each other. Erich Fromm also states that affection is born from brotherly love and cannot be born from sexual instinct.

In this erotic love, Erich Fromm reveals that there is an element of exclusivity that cannot be found in maternal love and brotherly love. This exclusivity is often misinterpreted as meaningful possessiveness. Whereas love should be directed towards all human beings, not just one person. Click or tap here to enter text. Erich Fromm also brings in two premises that are usually espoused by the West and ancient traditions. The Western premise says that love is expected to arise from emotional, spontaneous reactions, and from irresistible feelings that overwhelm the individual. Whereas the ancient view says that love is voluntary. It is the willingness to entrust one's life to a person, even one who is not loved but only chosen by one's parents. Click or tap here to enter text. So according to Erich Fromm, these two premises are true: love is an individual attraction between two specific people and love is a willingness to accept.

Based on the Erich Fromm explanation before, that is true, but in Islam, these two premises are not enough to justify the existence of erotic love in human life. It has been explained earlier that love in Islam is a gift given by God to all humans. The human attitude must be willing and sincere to accept the gift and what God has given him, but humans must also believe that all this willingness is not just a custom from ancient times but the willingness is based on God's command. Click or tap here to enter text.

And Al-Ghazali also say in *Ihya' Ulumuddin* that Love to the beauty is permitted on condition that it is not shackled to lust which is not permitted, namely before marriage. Click or tap here to enter text. Erich Fromm is different because he does not reject relationships outside of marriage. Nowhere does he say that erotic love is permissible for people who are already married.

The fourth is self-love. Self-love according to Erich Fromm is kindness just like love for other humans. Self-love is not narcissism or egoism because we are also human beings who must



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be loved. Even self-love can be found in loving others. A person cannot be said to love if he can only love others without loving himself. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#) In a related concept, Erich Fromm was not in favor of narcissism in humans. He considers that people with narcissistic personalities will achieve security by holding tightly to the belief that their personal qualities are of primary importance to them. A person's sense of worth depends on themselves and not their achievements. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

However, in Islam based on Al-Ghazali perspective, self-love, which is often referred to as self-love, is good if we still prioritize the interests of the group or other people without forgetting our interests and happiness because the person who is patient and gives the things he loves to others is the luckiest person among humanity. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#) The Qur'an has also explained the concept of self-love. In the Qur'an, self-love is described with gratitude. Gratitude is essentially feeling satisfied and pleased with something even if it is a little. By being grateful for what is given by Allah, Allah will add to the favor. With that, man has loved himself with gratitude that will reassure his heart. This gratitude is also close in meaning to *qana'ah*, which is being satisfied with the gifts of others so that a person will be awake and maraca enough and secure with what he has. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

In addition, In Islam self-love is also depicted with *taqwa*. *Taqwa* is an effort made by humans to protect themselves from the punishment and wrath of Allah Swt. The concept of *taqwa* teaches kindness and a sense of responsibility to carry out the mandate of Allah Swt. so that people who have *taqwa* will distance themselves from injustice and hostility. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

The fifth is the love of God. According to Erich Fromm, the love of God has many different characteristics and aspects from human love, but in some cases, there are also similarities and differences between the two. He explains that the first aspect of God's love is the patriarchal aspect, which makes a person love God like a father who is fair and harsh, punishing sins and giving rewards. And the second is the matriarchal aspect where loving God is like a mother who embraces God. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)



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The matriarchal aspect is shown in a feeling of love that is based on a fair and strict attitude. In this case, Erich Fromm describes that God is a father who demands, punishes mistakes and rewards his children so that they become favorite children, just as he chose Ishaq, Ya'qub as the chosen people. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Erich Fromm explained that in the development of love in ancient times, God was very cruel and jealous. God considers that humans are his property and he has the right to do anything to humans. God expelled humans from heaven so that humans would not remain in heaven, God destroyed his people with a flood and only saved one of his favorite children; Nuh. Then God made a covenant with Noah, promising not to destroy humanity. This covenant is considered a covenant that binds God to mankind. Then Erich Fromm explained that after this phase, God changed into a God who had compassion. He must also be bound by His own principles of justice. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Erich Fromm also mentioned the patriarchal aspect shown by love and affection. He said that God is truth, God is most loving. Man loves God as an embracing mother. Because mother's love is eternal love and without expecting anything in return. So that God's love and human love cannot be separated. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#) However, scholars of the Qur'an and Sunnah understand Allah's love for His servants as an abundance of His Mercy and grace. The abundance of His mercy and grace is unlimited according to the level of human love for Him, which is manifested in obedience to Allah Swt. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Allah has the power to give punishment and reward to all mankind. But this Allah gives after more abundance of mercy and grace that has been given to His creatures. Starting from the pleasures that Allah gives in the form of health, reason, material, heart, and so on. So it cannot be said that the love of Allah is matriarchal and patriarchal like the love of mother and father. Allah's love is much broader than these two aspects. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#) Without God's will, it would be impossible for humans to exist in this world. Without God's will, it would not be possible for a human being to be born to a mother and father who care for him now.

In the book *The Art of Loving*, he states:



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“Having spoken of the Love of God, I want to make it clear that I myself do not think in terms of a theistic concept, and that to me the concept of God is only a historically conditioned one, in which man has expressed his experience of his higher powers, his longing for truth and for unity at a given historical period. But I believe also that the consequences of strict monotheism and a non-theistic ultimate concern with the spiritual reality are two views which, though different, need not fight each other.

From his thoughts above, he reveals the foundation of the concept of God that he believes in. Erich Fromm does not have a theological perspective on the concept of God because what he believes is that the concept of God is only a historically formed concept about the expression of feelings for a higher power, about longing for truth.

This is different from Al-Ghazali who stated in the book *Ihya' Ulumuddin* that love for God is the highest love. Love for God is love that is manifested by faith within a person. Love for God encourages humans to do good because love for God includes all types of love. In essence, if we love God we will love his creation, love others with good deeds, love all the goodness that exists in this world because that is part of devotion to Allah Swt. Click or tap here to enter text. However, in terms of the aspect of God's love, Erich Fromm only explains love for God, even though God's love has a very broad meaning. There is no element of devotion to God because Erich Fromm did not base his thinking on a religious basis. He only views the concept of God from a historical perspective regarding the existence of higher powers.

The concept presented about Love of God also has huge misunderstandings. This misunderstanding exists in his explanation of the concept of God which is very different from Islam. He explained that in ancient times God was a cruel God, killing human children, drowning them in floods. However, the essence of this concept in Islam is very different. In Islam, Allah Swt. never gives punishment beyond human error itself. Allah Swt. Punished the people of Prophet Nuh by drowning them in a flood because of their disobedience to Allah's commands conveyed by Prophet Nuh. Then, in the concept of God between Erich Fromm and Muslim philosophers there are significant differences. The difference lies in the belief in the nature of God, which according to Erich Fromm, God was once a very cruel God and had an agreement with the Prophet and was a merciful God. In contrast to Muslim philosophers who emphasize that God is most merciful and merciful. God cannot be influenced by creatures.

The Benefit of Love

Erich Fromm says that one of the benefits of love is to fulfill human needs, namely the need for self-happiness and happiness with loved ones. Likewise, the alienation that exists in human life can be treated with love. Love is useful for eliminating alienation in human life. Because with love humans have a place to pour out their feelings, eliminate loneliness, and arrive at happiness. Click or tap here to enter text. So it can be concluded that the benefits of love in Erich Fromm's perspective are for happiness in humans by eliminating existing alienations.

And this is different with Islam concept. Based on the Ibnu Hazm El-Andalusy perspective, this is considered incomplete because he always looks at the spiritual or inner aspect of everything, especially in love. With love, man can get closer to his God. God's love for someone depends on how much that person loves God. Love can motivate humans to become better individuals because a person believes that nothing is in vain if everything is intended to achieve the pleasure of Allah Swt. That is how love in Islam will have many benefits if it is intended for Allah SWT alone. Click or tap here to enter text. Ibnu Sina in *ar-Risalah Fi Mahiyati Al- 'Isyq* explain that humans can be closer to God so that this has a good impact on spiritual, psychological, and health which makes humans calm and their bodies become better. (Sina, 2020)

Erich Fromm always talks about happiness being the benefit of love. But in terms of happiness itself, he is still not precise in defining it. Happiness can not only be assessed materially or psychologically. Humans cannot be psychologically happy if there is still a poor relationship with God. A good relationship with the creator is the main factor that is very important to happiness as one of the benefits of love. So, the relationship between humans and God greatly influences the love relationships between humans. And this is the different between Erich Fromm and Muslim Philosophers Perspective in the benefits of love.

Humanistic Psychoanalysis and Fromm's Ontology of the Human Being

Erich Fromm's humanistic psychoanalysis arises as a profound reconfiguration of classical psychoanalysis and a response to the moral and existential dilemmas of modern capitalist society. Fromm argues that Sigmund Freud, despite his groundbreaking contributions, ultimately reduces human nature to the workings of instinctual drives and biological determinism. Freud's model,



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according to Fromm, overlooks the ethical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions that fundamentally shape human existence. Fromm writes that “*man is the only animal for whom his own existence is a problem which he has to solve,*”(Fromm, 1947, p. 41) emphasizing that human life cannot be fully understood through libido theory alone. In this critique, Fromm positions himself as both a disciple and a reformer of Freud: he retains the analytical depth of psychoanalysis while expanding its scope to include human freedom, meaning, and moral agency.

Fromm extends his criticism beyond Freud to the broader socio-economic structure of capitalist modernity. In *The Sane Society*, he argues that capitalism has transformed human beings into commodities shaped by the logic of the market. Modern individuals, he observes, experience themselves as “an investment which must bring the maximum profit,”(Fromm, 1955, p. 72) thereby internalizing the values of commodification and competition. This socio-economic environment reinforces what Fromm describes as the having mode—a mode of existence rooted in possession, accumulation, and domination. The having mode is not merely a psychological tendency but a way of being in the world that leads to alienation, superficiality, and spiritual emptiness. Fromm argues that modern individuals, trapped in consumerist culture, lose the capacity for genuine human connection and authentic selfhood. The result is a pervasive sense of inner void, which he describes as “*the pathological state of the modern human being.*”(Fromm, 1955)

Against this pathology, Fromm proposes the being mode as an alternative ontology of human existence. The being mode emphasizes aliveness, creativity, authenticity, and inner freedom. In *To Have or To Be?*, he explains that in the being mode, “I am what I am; I am myself. My goal is to express my powers, to give, to share, not to hoard.”(Fromm, 1976, p. 27) Being is thus not a static state but an active realization of one’s human potential. Love, in this framework, becomes an art and a practice, not an emotion one passively undergoes. As Fromm famously states, “love is an activity, not a passive affect; it is a ‘standing in,’ and not a ‘falling for.’”(Fromm, 1956) For Fromm, love demands discipline, responsibility, knowledge, and care—conditions that cultivate mature personality. Love is therefore inseparable from ontology: it is a mode of being that affirms both oneself and others.

This ontological perspective is deepened through Fromm's theory of basic human needs, which he proposes as an alternative to Freud's instinct theory. These needs—relatedness, transcendence, rootedness, identity, and a frame of orientation—reflect universal existential conditions. They arise from the paradox of human nature: beings who are both part of nature and yet transcend it. When these needs are fulfilled in a healthy manner, individuals develop what Fromm calls the productive orientation, the highest expression of human maturity characterized by love, creativity, and rationality. In *Man for Himself*, Fromm notes that “the productive character is the aim of human development; it is the realization of the self in the process of living.” (Fromm, 1947) Conversely, when existential needs are distorted, individuals adopt non-productive or alienated orientations—receptive, exploitative, hoarding, or marketing—each of which is reinforced by capitalist social structures that prioritize possession over being.

The philosophical depth of Fromm's ontology finds striking parallels in the intellectual traditions of Islamic philosophy and Sufism. Muslim philosophers such as al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, and Ibn Miskawayh likewise understand the human being as a rational and spiritual agent whose flourishing depends on the cultivation of virtues and the harmonization of the soul. Ibn Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq* describes moral development as the refinement of character through moderation of faculties—an approach resonant with Fromm's idea of the productive orientation. (Miskawaih, n.d., pp. 31–35) Similarly, al-Ghazālī, in *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, emphasizes tazkiyat al-nafs (purification of the soul) as essential to spiritual maturity. The heart, according to al-Ghazālī, must be freed from the domination of desire (shahwah) and worldly distractions (dunyā) to attain closeness to God. (Al-Ghazali, 2011) This strongly echoes Fromm's critique of the having mode, which he argues leads to self-estrangement and the loss of genuine being.

Despite these parallels, the differences are equally significant. Fromm interprets transcendence not in theological terms but as a psychological need for creativity and purpose: “man has to create... in order to transcend himself.” (Fromm, 1947) In contrast, Islamic thinkers ground transcendence in metaphysics: the human soul seeks God as its ultimate source, goal, and meaning. While Fromm views God as a symbolic construct representing humanity's highest ideals—“the name for the highest value, the highest goal of man,” (Fromm, 1950, p. 34) Islamic

philosophy affirms that God is *al-Haqq*, the Real, an objective and necessary being. Thus, while both traditions emphasize inner transformation, ethical discipline, and the overcoming of egoism, their ontological frameworks diverge concerning the foundation and ultimate aim of human spiritual development.

Nevertheless, a rich dialogue emerges. Both Fromm and Islamic mysticism critique materialism, ego-centered existence, and alienation, proposing instead a path of inner liberation and moral refinement. Sufi thinkers such as Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī describe love as the essence and purpose of human life, writing, “Whatever you do, be in love,”¹¹ a sentiment that resonates with Fromm’s claim that “love is the only sane and satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence.”(Al-Rumi, 1996) Yet, while Fromm grounds love in humanistic psychology, Sufism grounds love in divine encounter—the human heart is drawn to love because it was created by Love.

Through these convergences and divergences, Fromm’s humanistic psychoanalysis and Islamic spiritual philosophy together illuminate the multi-dimensional nature of human flourishing. Both affirm that true personal development requires inner purification, ethical responsibility, and transcendence of the ego; yet they differ on whether transcendence is rooted in the human or the divine. In this interplay, a richer and more holistic vision of the human being emerges—one that integrates psychology, philosophy, and spirituality.

CONCLUSION

In this case, the researcher conducts an analysis study of some of the thoughts in Erich Fromm's Philosophy of Love based on Muslim Philosopher's Perspective. The results of the analysis show that in terms of the definition of love, the foundations of love, the goals of love, the classification of love and the benefits of love, Erich Fromm's philosophy of love is not in accordance with the philosophy of love from the perspective of Muslim philosophers. Erich Fromm interprets love as simply a feeling that connects humans with others based on a sense of humanity with the aim of eliminating alienation and sadness in humans. Meanwhile, from the perspective of Muslim Philosophers, Muslim Philosophers interpret love as a gift from Allah SWT in the form of feelings that are based on faith and aimed at achieving perfection and the pleasure and love of God. Based on Erich Fromm's thoughts, it can be concluded that he has characteristics of thinking that prioritize individual aspects or humanist needs because love is based on and aimed at things that

fulfill human needs. So, using Erich Fromm's theory of love cannot be fully justified and to the muslim people recommended to use the theory of Muslim philosophers such as Al-Ghazali, Ibnu Miskawayh, Ibnu Hazm El-Andalusy and Ibnu Sina.

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