

The authoritarian orientation in liberal democracies: Labor market and workplace authoritarianism

Takamichi Sakurai

Keio Research Institute, Keio University, Tokyo, Japan

Correspondence

Takamichi Sakurai, Keio University, Keio Research Institute at SFC, 5322 Endo, Fujisawa, Kanagawa 252-0882, Japan.

Email: tsakurai@sfc.keio.ac.jp

1 | INTRODUCTION

Authoritarianism is of growing interest to liberal democracies despite being a traditional concept. To be sure, many dictatorial societies are characterized by authoritarian features, not least by those of their leaders. The concept of authoritarianism, however, does not confine its scope to those societies but has also been applied to analyses of the West, and discussion at the latter level is indeed much more important for us in self-critical terms. In addition, issues involving the political pathology have not been discussed sufficiently at the level of everyday life in liberal democracies. It appears that some pivotal aspects of authoritarianism have long been overlooked and even underappreciated. In fact, while scholars have spotlighted the concept in relation to political structures chiefly in the Second and Third World (Albertus & Menaldo, 2018; Bieber, 2019; Bunce et al., 2010; Collier, 1979; Diamond et al., 2016; Frankenberg, 2020; Frantz, 2018; Heydemann, 1999; Jalal, 1995; Karakoç, 2015; Levitsky & Way, 2010; Marquez, 2017; O'Donnell, 1988; Smith, 1989; Tang, 2016), they have not paid enough attention to its conceptual relevance in relation to those in the First World (Berberoglu, 2021; Brown et al., 2018; Canterbury, 2019).¹ This seems due to the lack of a deeper appreciation of the meaning of the concept in the dimensions of capitalism and market economy, in which authoritarianism emerges as market mechanisms, especially as labor market and workplace authoritarianism.

Erich Fromm (1900–1980) is an archetypal scholar who best illuminates issues of market economy in terms of authoritarianism and does so by combining his distinctive characterological theories. According to Fromm, narcissism is functioning in market society and becomes a negative factor in democracy (Fromm, 1964, 1971 [1947]; see Sakurai, 2018a, 2020, 2021). In addition, it is, says Fromm (2004 [1961]), intertwined with the free market capitalist function of alienation, a pathological social phenomenon wherein human beings are made objects of a system and the latter thereby turns into a subject called “capital” (Marx, 2004 [1844]; see Sakurai, 2018b, 2021).² In order to observe the depth of some connotations of authoritarianism in liberal democracies, it is necessary to look into the mechanisms of narcissism and alienation, and thereby identify the main implications of the authoritarian orientation, a pathological character structure that has been applied primarily to outline the Nazi orientation, particularly with the aid of Fromm's

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2024 The Authors. *Constellations* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

contributions (Fromm, 1941, 1984; see McLaughlin, 1996). On the basis of this research concern, this article attempts to fathom out the key elements of the social pathologies of liberal democracy in terms of the concept, thereby detecting the essence of what has not yet been deciphered with respect to Fromm's issues of narcissism and alienation: economic and political narcissism. It then seeks to reveal labor market authoritarianism and workplace authoritarianism.

First, I will seek the essence of Fromm's conceptions of narcissism and alienation in socio-pathological terms. Second, I will put forward the two concepts of economic narcissism and political narcissism, thereby exposing the nature of authoritarianism in light of the market mechanism. Finally, I will, referring to Fromm's basic theoretical framework of authoritarianism, attempt to define the possible theoretical impact of economic and political narcissism on economic life.

2 | A FROMMIAN THEORY OF NARCISSISM IN AN AUTHORITARIAN DIMENSION

In Fromm's (1971 [1947]) social theory, narcissism is a "character structure" that seeks to indulge one's narcissistic desires as a matter of first priority in a way that takes advantage of others, therefore seen in the same line as "selfishness" (pp. 119–133). The focal point of Fromm's (1971 [1947]) conception of narcissism is that, based on this character feature, it comes into being as "social narcissism," the functions of which pertain to society and its socio-economic structure on a socio-pathological level (see Sakurai, 2021, pp. 8–9). The conception, therefore, incorporates a character structure in a social dimension, that is to say society's "narcissistic character structure" (Sakurai, 2021, p. 21; see Fromm, 1971 [1947], pp. 69–88). Social narcissism works in conjunction with the "marketing orientation" in a free market society (Fromm, 1980 [1979]; see Sakurai, 2021, pp. 8–13)—this concept will be explained below.

Another important point concerning Fromm's (1962 [1956]) social theory of narcissism is that in his psychoanalytic theory, its character feature is deemed the antonym of "self-love" in line with selfishness (p. 60). Self-love therein denotes a character orientation that enables one to love oneself (Fromm, 1941, p. 116, 1962 [1956], pp. 57–63, 1964, pp. 97–101). In this regard, these two psychoanalytic concepts have their respective political functions: self-love leads a society to be democratic on the one hand, but narcissism can rather be a factor in instigating a fascist politics on the other (Sakurai, 2018a, p. 193, 2020, p. 184, 2021, pp. 16–17). In addition, the two social psychologies, narcissism and fascism, evolve dialectically in contemporary narcissistic society (Sakurai, 2018a, p. 193, 2021, pp. 18–19). This indicates that human beings achieve a genuine democracy only when succeeding in inaugurating political change based on self-love, while they end up falling into fascism when failing to successfully overcome narcissism and cultivate self-love, and instead develop authoritarian needs. However, it is extremely difficult for contemporary people to undergo the former path in Frommian terms since contemporary society, their living place, pivots on narcissism. Indeed, a narcissistic character structure reinforces the capitalist economy underpinning the free market mechanism and bringing about the social pathology of alienation, a socio-pathological phenomenon wherein human beings come into existence as objects of products in the capitalist system when it evolves its own mechanism. In Fromm's (1962 [1956]) social theory, narcissism contributes to the mechanisms of alienation, and these social pathologies therefore operate in conjunction with each other; this is indeed why Fromm requires human beings to curb and surmount their own desires resting on narcissism (pp. 118–121; Fromm, 1964, p. 90).

Fromm's conception of alienation, an idea that he absorbed exclusively from Marx (Fromm, 2004 [1961]; see Lio, 1989; Marx, 1992 [1867], 2004 [1844]), is associated particularly with his unique concept of "marketing orientation" in a social dimension (Fromm, 1971 [1947]; see Sakurai, 2018, Chap. 6, sect. 6.3.2.3; Sakurai, 2021, pp. 14–16). The concept denotes a character structure in which one experiences "oneself as a commodity and ... one's value as exchange value," and which arises under a free market economic system (Fromm, 1971 [1947], p. 68). In this orientation, one finds it most important to sell oneself as a commodity at the highest possible price through undertaking the role that "I am as you desire me" (Fromm, 1971 [1947], pp. 72–73). It is contemporary people's essential attitude, necessary to live in contemporary society built on a free market mechanism, that enables their society to function under the mechanism. In the society, which is run by the orientation, everything is determined by people's preferences evinced by the free market; the character structure and the market mechanism functionally affect, and are affected by, each other.

TABLE 1 The character structure of economic narcissism in Frommian terms (modified tab. 6.1, Sakurai, 2018a, p. 191).

Negative forms of humanity and system	Orientations	Semantic meanings of the orientations
Humanity in the sense of narcissism	Narcissistic orientation	Exploitation of others
Humanity in the sense of self-love	Self-love orientation	Productive work (working together with others)
Liberal democracy	Marketing orientation	Alienation (human beings as labor power and their dependence on machines and products)

In Fromm's theoretical framework, the socio-pathological phenomenon of alienation is stimulated by the marketing orientation, which buttresses the functions of a free market society in which people's way of life is characterized by the "having mode," the individual's and society's character feature that drives itself to increase "property" as a matter of first priority (Fromm, 2011 [1976]), p. 58), whereby they are allowed to focus particular attention on increasing property. In addition, the marketing orientation works together with the free market economic system founded on capitalism, a socioeconomic mechanism that induces the pathological social phenomenon. The most salient characteristic of the orientation is depicted by one's burning desires to be liked by others and thereby to take a passive position that determines one's decisions and actions according to others' preferences, which is due to the fact that one's own value depends heavily upon the desires, and also by those to put a lot of energies into having private property and thereby to try to satisfy oneself in the dimension of private life (Fromm, 1971 [1947], pp. 72–82, 2011 [1976], pp. 57–63; see Sakurai, 2018a, pp. 171–176, 2021, pp. 14–16). This is precisely what Fromm's conception of alienation signifies on the level of actual life.

2.1 | Economic narcissism

In Fromm's social theory, especially in terms of the fusion of narcissism and alienation, it is possible to discern the socio-pathological functions of narcissism in an economic sense. This is a sure sign of the existence of a narcissistic character structure that plays an important role in selling oneself at the highest possible price through taking advantage of others so that one may be liked by others under the systems of a free market economy, that is to say *economic narcissism* (Sakurai, 2018b, p. 150, 2021, p. 185, 189). Fromm argues that the free market itself depends heavily upon narcissism, people's desire to justify the free market mechanism, and upon alienation, a social pathology induced by the free market system based on capitalism. Under these conditions, narcissism socio-pathologically functions in favor of alienation.

The economic sense of narcissism can be depicted as seen in Table 1. Humanity in a negative sense, meaning narcissism, possesses its own character structure. Narcissism as a character structure essentially performs its functions in a way that exploits others. Humanity in the opposite sense of narcissism is self-love, a "productive orientation" that makes one work productively and constructively with others, meaning "productive work," as Fromm calls it (See, e.g., Fromm, 1941, p. 23, 1971 [1947], p. 45). "Productive activity" enables one to interact with others on the basis of one's capacity to relate oneself to others (love) and "reach to the essence of things and processes" (reason) (Fromm, 1971 [1947], p. 102, 2011 [1976], p. 74). Society, however, does not undergo this productive process so long as its character structure hinges upon the narcissistic orientation. Indeed, liberal democracy is structured by the orientation and therefore supports, and is supported by, alienation—whereby human beings become objects of capital called labor power through coming to depend upon machines and products—by way of the exploitation of others.

TABLE 2 The character structure of political narcissism in Frommian terms (modified tab. 6.1, Sakurai, 2018a, p. 191).

Negative forms of politics	Orientations	Semantic meanings of the orientations
Chauvinism	Narcissistic orientation	Exploitation of others
Fascism	Authoritarian orientation	Sadomasochistic symbiosis (dependence on others) Necrophilia (destructiveness)

With regard to the reasons for the emergence of a political system underpinning the character structure of economic narcissism, Fromm (1956 [1955]) articulates the characterological transformation from the “hoarding orientation” into the “receptive orientation” in the 20th century (Chap. 5). The central pillar of his discussion is that, while the former orientation had been intertwined with the “exploitive orientation” in the 19th century, the latter orientation rather became intertwined with the “marketing orientation” in the 20th century. Quite interestingly, Fromm (1956 [1955]) herein sheds light on the fact that, when capitalism burgeoned, it became more sophisticated through transferring people’s way of living from hoarding things on a simple exploitive level to “receiv[ing] ... drink[ing] in ... [and] hav[ing] something new all the time” on a marketing level (p. 136). This shows precisely that people evolved narcissism to a large extent between the 19th and 20th centuries, and society has thereby come to rest firmly on its character structure, which has allowed them to be devoted to having new things, for which purpose they have needed market society as well as the marketing orientation.

2.2 | Political narcissism

In Fromm’s social theory, it is also possible to discern the political functions of narcissism, in which people pathologically depend upon each other in order to gratify their own sadomasochistic desires. This sense of narcissism is called *political narcissism* (Sakurai, 2018b, p. 150, 2020, p. 185, 189). In a political structure buttressed by narcissism, that is in a political society resting on a political form of narcissism, people capitalize on each other’s strengths by being pathologically related to one another solely for exploitative purposes, thereby gratifying their own needs and inducing a pathological politics. Under these conditions, people are allowed to care exclusively about themselves and indeed act so as to be liked by others through taking advantage of others, and social narcissism thereby adversely affects the political functions of democracy. On this basis, society foments malignant narcissism as people thereunder do essentially want to think of themselves as being somehow better than others. This pathological desire emerges as an extension of their narcissistic needs. Moreover, it can occasionally become related to an authoritarian politics that masochistically relies upon a charismatic political leader who promises life satisfaction to people under conditions wherein they lost “primary bonds” (Fromm, 1941, p. 36; see Sakurai, 2021, pp. 18–19). In short, the society is bound to develop an authoritarian social structure by means of malignant narcissism and also by means of sadomasochistic symbiosis and necrophilia bolstering authoritarianism (Fromm, 1964, 1973).³

Political narcissism is structured as can be seen in Table 2. It comes into existence and becomes visible in the political arena while most often inciting chauvinistic political movements that are later to be related to a fascist politics. Political narcissism, however, does not necessarily thrive as chauvinism or provoke fascism, or rather, it does always lodge in politics in ordinary forms, thereby taking invisible shapes, but those political movements nowadays rely essentially upon the narcissistic orientation. This type of narcissism is generally obscured by democratic practice built on the free market mechanism, especially in liberal democracies. In other words, this kind of democratic politics immanently internalizes the narcissistic orientation, which means that fascism is nowadays functionally backed up by the orientation bracing liberal democracy. Our politics keeps being predicated upon the social conditions of a free market economy

TABLE 3 The two-dimensional character structure of economic and political narcissism in Frommian terms (modified tab. 6.1, Sakurai, 2018a, p. 191).

Negative forms of humanity and political system	Orientations	Semantic meanings of the orientations
Humanity in the sense of narcissism	Narcissistic orientation	Exploitation of others
Liberal democracy	Marketing orientation	Alienation (human beings as labor power and their dependence on machines and products)
Fascism	Authoritarian orientation	Sadomasochistic symbiosis (dependence on others) Necrophilia (destructiveness)

unless transforming its own character structure from a narcissistic orientation to a self-love orientation, as the marketing orientation, on which liberal democracy is resting, is always formed from the narcissistic character structure. Fascist movements in liberal democracies emanate from those social conditions. In a Frommian theory of political narcissism, authoritarian movements therefore arise as combined with the marketing orientation and a difference between the authoritarian and marketing character structures is made solely in the sense that the former depends largely upon human beings, while the latter depends to a large extent upon things—primarily upon machines and products. To put it differently, these are completely the same in the functional sense of their pathological dependence and purpose of achieving objectives by exploiting environments, that is in the semantic meaning of narcissism. For these reasons, liberal-democratic fascism is indeed structurally intertwined with the narcissistic character structure.

2.3 | The two-dimensional character structure of economic narcissism and political narcissism

If we see both the character structures of economic and political narcissism from a dual perspective, then we can expect things to emerge as in Table 3. In terms of the narcissistic character structure, liberal democracy and fascism are herein construed in the same line. The marketing orientation partakes of some essential aspects of authoritarianism, since in liberal democracies the authoritarian and marketing characters are both founded on the narcissistic orientation.

In this light, liberal democracy internalizes the fascist, authoritarian orientation, though it is essentially separate from fascist types of political systems. Or, more accurately, in those societies, the authoritarian and marketing orientations cannot work without the character structure of narcissism, an orientation at the individual and social levels that drives itself to take advantage of others for the purpose of achieving objectives. If this is true, then the sadomasochistic orientation is inevitably involved in exploiting others in liberal democracies, in which people are all forced to care exclusively about their own market value on which they subsist. For this reason, in liberal democracy, sadomasochism emerges from the social conditions of alienation, even though the latter does not originate in the authoritarian orientation.⁴

3 | THE THEORETICAL IMPACT OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL NARCISSISM

What inferences does a Frommian theory of economic narcissism suggest from a socio-theoretical perspective? What theoretical impact does the theory make on social and political theory? One of the most remarkable socio-pathological features that is discernible in the theory is the fact that fascism pertains to the social conditions of contemporary

free market society. In a mechanism in which a fascist politics is expected to emerge under the conditions of free market capitalism, narcissism works in conjunction with alienation while inducing authoritarian needs entailing sadomasochistic symbiosis and necrophilia. In liberal democracies, however, this type of pathological politics does not simply betoken the political form of a state or a government as a result of political mobilization. In the systems of liberal democracy, it signifies instead everyday-life lessons disciplined by time and property, namely “contemporary disciplined, workaday daily life” (Sakurai, 2018a, p. 192). Under this social condition, fascist movements therefore thrive as *labor market authoritarianism*, in which human beings as labor power are completely operated by its sadomasochistic political power in conjunction with the functions of alienation, and as *workplace authoritarianism*, by which they are confined to disciplined, workaday daily life. They thereby become more and more dependent on machines and products while fostering narcissism as people’s unconscious desires to underpin the free market and its essential mechanisms.

3.1 | Labor market authoritarianism

Labor market authoritarianism can be discerned in the labor market in terms of a “Frommian social theory of narcissism” (Sakurai, 2020, 2021), specifically in terms of economic and political narcissism. This is developed by the market’s arbitrary desire to satisfy its own economic narcissism in an authoritarian manner. People are herein quite narcissistic and seeking to take advantage of others unconsciously while contributing to maintaining the framework of the market, and they can only thereby live properly. This is because their society’s systems of liberal democracy require them to subsist on the marketing orientation through hinging on machines and products, that is to become labor power. In this social condition, the labor market comes to exhibit its own arbitrary needs, built on the unconscious sadomasochistic desires to wrest control of others and to feel powerful by transferring one’s weakness to authority. It thereby displays authoritarian character features according to its own sadomasochistic needs. As such, the labor market is inherently authoritarian and reveals its own *raison d’être* solely by way of authoritarianism, or rather, the *raison d’être* of the market is showcased by its authoritarian mechanism per se. In short, the labor market is an exemplar of socioeconomic mechanisms that are operating by means of the two-dimensional character structure of economic and political narcissism, wherein the market absorbs and exploits people’s discipline for its own advantage, while the labor works by taking advantage of others in order to sell oneself at the highest possible price in the market. Meanwhile, both sides are sadomasochistically turning on each other, thereby strengthening the relation between them in functional terms.

With regard to the quality of the contemporary market, it is believed that almost everywhere in liberal societies, especially in neoliberal ones, the market itself is in effect under the control of major world and international corporate groups—transnational corporations (TNCs) or multinational companies—particularly of major world fund and investment banking groups (Carroll, 2010; Hathaway, 2020; Plehwe et al., 2006; Robinson, 2014; Robinson & Sprague-Silgado, 2018).⁵ This indicates that the vast majority of workers in liberal democracies as the global workforce belong in some way to these corporations and are necessarily entangled in their corporate governance, whether consciously or unconsciously, thereby masochistically holding up those companies and their governance. This reveals the important fact that the market is in reality not operated by the law of demand and supply, but rather by TNCs’ needs and preferences (Robinson, 2004, 2014; Robinson & Sprague-Silgado, 2018). It is presumed that under this arbitrary market condition, liberal democracy becomes oligarchic rather than democratic, that is to say, it transforms itself from democracy, a political rule of people’s power (democrats), to oligarchy, a rule of certain groups’ (TNCs’) power (oligarchs) (Gottfried, 2019; Pabst, 2019; Paić, 2020). Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to resist this kind of oligarchic politics because many/most of the contemporary workers as insiders are associated to a certain extent with TNCs’ corporate governance while asymmetrically positioned within the international territory of their politics (Carroll, 2010; Robinson, 2004, 2014). Significantly, these facts illustrate precisely why it is possible to observe some authoritarian, pathological functions even in the contemporary market mechanism. As such, it is assumed that the labor market is also running oligarchically in the same way.

3.2 | Workplace authoritarianism

The above analysis demonstrates that the labor market is intrinsically authoritarian. It is presumed, therefore, that the workplace functions in the same way. Contemporary people are constrained, particularly by the labor market, to live in the same rhythm everyday, for the free market, anchored in capital, calls for their strong discipline in order that they may keep working in a specific rhythm of time that the market demands. Fromm says:

In industrial society time rules supreme. The current mode of production demands that every action be exactly “timed,” that not only the endless assembly line conveyor belt but, in a less crude sense, most of our activities be ruled by time. In addition, time not only is time, “time is money.” The machine must be used maximally; therefore the machine forces its own rhythm upon the worker (Fromm, 2011 [1976], p. 104).

Under this social condition, people attempt to discipline themselves in accordance with what “time” requires. Everything in the workplace is transformed according to what the “mode of production” demands based on the mechanisms of time. As mentioned above, the labor market functions in evincing its authoritarian needs which emanate from TNCs’ and the labor force’s sadomasochistic desires. From this point of view, the mechanism of workplace is immensely affected by labor market authoritarianism, particularly in a way that slakes its economic–narcissistic desires. In this context, people’s lives are largely standardized in the sense of their daily working quality in light of discipline, regardless of the genres of “jobs.”⁶ In this way, in a liberal democracy, their lives become intensively disciplined by time and property, thus giving rise to “contemporary disciplined, workaday daily life.” For this reason, they are compelled to predicate their own lives exclusively upon the workplace, the base of their lives, as well as upon the labor market, the place to define their total value in a way that fulfils the authoritarian needs, and they can never be free from this kind of life determined by the workplace as their superior. The people are therefore bound to become masochistic and satiate their own narcissistic needs solely by satisfying the desiderata of workplace authoritarianism. Unfortunately, however, they are largely oblivious to what the workplace requires them to do on a social level, despite the fact that it unexpectedly brings them to destruction.

As such, the political form of liberal democracy rather consists of an authoritarian character structure in which people sadomasochistically depend upon each other in the mechanisms of narcissistic exploitation and of the labor market. The political system thereby works more rationally in the capitalist free market mechanism. In other words, in a liberal democracy, authoritarianism thrives not only in a political dimension but also in economic and everyday-life dimensions, especially in the labor market and workplace. On the latter level, however, it is difficult to discern authoritarian social elements; as on a social level people generally live under democratic conditions that are simply deemed the opposite of authoritarian/fascist types of political conditions. In the social context of liberal democracy, the main problem is therefore that authoritarian orientations are indiscernible in society’s and people’s liberal democratic practice. For this reason, it is enormously important to attempt to detect the sources of the orientations under social conditions of liberal democracy.

4 | CONCLUSION

As we saw above, Fromm’s conception of narcissism inherently internalizes the philosophical and socio-theoretical concept of alienation, therefore fulfilling its functions in a socio-theoretical dimension rather than in a simple psycho-analytic dimension. From this perspective, it is possible to define two kinds of narcissism on a socio-theoretical level: economic narcissism, predicated upon the marketing orientation; and political narcissism, built on the authoritarian orientation. These two social pathologies are inextricably interwoven with each other in the way in which authoritarian needs are rather provoked by a marketing character structure, from which perspective it is possible to perceive

authoritarianism even in the free market economic sphere. In this respect, liberal democracy is associated to a greater or lesser degree with authoritarian/fascist movements, that is with authoritarian character structures that can be a solid basis for fascism (Fromm, 1941, 1964; see Sakurai, 2020).

The cardinal socio-theoretical meaning of fascism in liberal democracy is precisely workplace authoritarianism resting on labor market authoritarianism, an authoritarian character structure that forces human beings as labor power to discipline themselves in a sadomasochistic way that compels them to accept whatever the free market mechanism demands, of which structure it is extremely difficult for them to get rid. Perhaps one of the most effective solutions to those pathologies of liberal democracy is to offer resistance to these kinds of authoritarian oppressions in seemingly democratic practice.⁷ In this light, democracy rather comes into being as a “rebellious act” (Pausch, 2017, 2019), particularly as a continual effort to break free from authoritarian constraints that warrant the pathological mechanisms of workplace and labor market authoritarianism in the name of democracy.

ENDNOTES

¹ Interestingly, attention to First-World countries in terms of the concept of authoritarianism is almost entirely about neoliberalism.

² Fromm is adequately considered a theorist of “alienation” when the scholarly aspect of his being a social theorist is emphasized, for his social theory in the tradition of Karl Marx is characterized entirely by the theoretical ingredient (Lio, 1989; Musto, 2010). This is depicted precisely by his assertion that, “[i]n the nineteenth century the problem was that God is dead; in the twentieth century the problem is that man is dead” (Fromm, 1956 [1955], p. 360), which captures the essence of the semantic scope of alienation, a socio-pathological concept that is derived from the disciplines of philosophy and social theory, particularly from Marx (Fromm, 2004 [1961]; see Lio, 1989). Socio-theoretical works that seek to illuminate and renew our understanding of Fromm’s Marxist tradition have gradually appeared, particularly since the mid-2010s (Braune, 2014; Braune & Durkin, 2020; Durkin, 2014; Lio, 1989; Peters, 2016; Sakurai, 2018a, 2020, 2021; Thorpe, 2016; Wilde, 2004). In addition, it is possible to discern a certain number of publications that tackle Fromm’s philosophical and socio-theoretical topic of alienation from any other perspectives (e.g., Brookfield, 2002; Fessen, 1993; Funk, 2008; Smith, 2002; Wozniak, 2000). It is noteworthy that, especially since the mid-2010s, issues of the critical theorist Fromm have gradually been spotlighted (Braune, 2014; Deguchi, 2015; Durkin, 2014; Sakurai, 2018a, 2020).

³ I stress that authoritarianism is not just a matter of “orientation,” but rather that of political needs (see Sakurai, 2021, p. 13). In this respect, too, a modification of Fromm’s theory is necessary to analyze our society and its actual issues accurately by means of its application—it goes without saying that this is because he theorized about mid-20th-century phenomena, and therefore because the theory does not work properly for 21st century phenomena per se.

⁴ In reality, sadomasochism is not solely a matter of orientation, but also that of need which appears everywhere, according to individual and social necessity. In this light, it is a matter of degree and our focus should therefore be on how to avoid developing that, rather than on fixed character structures as such, and there exists no exception to this rule—hence, this is similarly applicable to authoritarianism and fascism, but the core issues will be the proportion of orientation to need in the concept and the way in which they work together. Unarguably, extreme inflexibility that autistically rejects such a serious critical call, which is tangibly discernible in the mainstream of Fromm research, does unwittingly undermine its *raison d’être*.

⁵ The “transnational capitalist class” (TCC) is of particular interest in this issue (Carroll, 2010; Robinson, 2004; Robinson and Sprague-Silgado, 2018; Sklair, 2001).

⁶ On this, it is worth noting that the term “job” signifies “piece of work,” which delineates the modern phenomenon of “division of labor,” particularly in manufacturing processes, wherein workers do respectively different jobs, while they all work in the same rhythm. This may illuminate our understanding of Fromm’s issue of time.

⁷ It seems to me that the idea of “workplace democracy” is not at all sufficient for this objective in the sense that it confines issues to the “workplace” in the literal sense of the word and is vaguely aware that the authoritarian force is a structural problem that emanates from international bonds between TNCs (Beirne & Ramsay, 2018 [1992]; Nightingale, 1982; Yeoman, 2014).

REFERENCES

- Albertus, M., & Menaldo, V. (2018). *Authoritarianism and the elite origins of democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Beirne, M., & Ramsay, H. (Eds.). (2018 [1992]). *Information technology and workplace democracy*. Routledge.
- Berberoglu, B. (Ed.). (2021). *The global rise of authoritarianism in the 21st century crisis of neoliberal globalization and the nationalist response*. Routledge.
- Bieber, F. (2019). *The rise of authoritarianism in the Western Balkans*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Braune, J. (2014). *Erich Fromm’s revolutionary hope: Prophetic messianism as a critical theory of the future*. Sense Publishers.

- Braune, J., & Durkin, K. (Eds.). (2020). *Erich Fromm's critical theory: Hope, humanism, and the future*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Brookfield, S. (2002). Overcoming alienation as the practice of adult education: The contribution of Erich Fromm to a critical theory of adult learning and education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 52(2), 96–111.
- Brown, W., Gordon, P. E., & Pensky, M. (2018). *Authoritarianism: Three inquiries in critical theory*. University of Chicago Press.
- Bunce, V., McFaul, M., & Stoner-Weiss, K. (2010). *Democracy and authoritarianism in the postcommunist world*. Cambridge University Press.
- Canterbury, D. C. (2019). *Neoliberal democratization and new authoritarianism*. Routledge.
- Carroll, W. K. (2010). *The making of a transnational capitalist class: Corporate power in the 21st century*. Zed Books.
- Collier, D. (Ed.). (1979). *The new authoritarianism in Latin America*. Princeton University Press.
- Deguchi, T. (2015). Erich Fromm and critical theory in post-war Japanese social theory: Its past, present, and future. In R. Funk & N. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Towards a human science: The relevance of Erich Fromm for today* (pp. 219–232). Psychosozial-Verlag.
- Diamond, L., Plattner M. F., & Walker, C. (Eds.). (2016). *Authoritarianism goes global: The challenge to democracy*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Durkin, K. (2014). *The radical humanism of Erich Fromm*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fessen, B. (1993). Erich Fromms kritische Psychologie der Entfremdung. *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 41(1), 101–118.
- Frankenberg, G. (2020). *Authoritarianism: Constitutional perspectives*. Edward Elgar.
- Frantz, E. (2018). *Authoritarianism: What everyone needs to know*. Oxford University Press.
- Fromm, E. (1941). *Escape from freedom*. Rinehart & Company.
- Fromm, E. (1956 [1955]). *The sane society*. Henry Holt & Company.
- Fromm, E. (1962 [1956]). *The art of loving*. Harper & Row.
- Fromm, E. (1964). *The heart of man: Its genius for good and evil*. Harper & Row.
- Fromm, E. (1971 [1947]). *Man for himself: An inquiry into the psychology of ethics*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Fromm, E. (1973). *The anatomy of human destructiveness*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Fromm, E. (1980 [1979]). *Greatness and limitations of Freud's thought*. Jonathan Cape.
- Fromm, E. (1984). *The working class in Weimar Germany: A psychological and sociological study*. Harvard University Press.
- Fromm, E. (2004 [1961]). *Marx's concept of man*. Continuum.
- Fromm, E. (2011 [1976]). *To have or to be?* Continuum.
- Funk, R. (2008). Entfremdung heute Zur gegenwärtigen Gesellschafts-Charakterorientierung. *Fromm Forum*, 12, 55–66.
- Gottfried, S. (2019). *Contemporary oligarchies in developed democracies*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hathaway, T. (2020). Neoliberalism as corporate power. *Competition & Change*, 24(3–4), 315–337.
- Heydemann, S. (1999). *Authoritarianism in Syria: Institutions and social conflict, 1946–1970*. Cornell University Press.
- Jalal, A. (1995). *Democracy and authoritarianism in South Asia: A comparative and historical perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
- Karakoç, J. (Ed.) (2015). *Authoritarianism in the Middle East before and after the Arab uprisings*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2010). *Competitive authoritarianism hybrid regimes after the Cold War*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lio, E. (1989, February 17–19). *Alienation as a central concept in Marxist and Frommian humanism* [Conference presentation]. German-Italian Seminar about Die Marx-Rezeption Erich Fromms, Bologna, Italy. http://www.fromm-gesellschaft.eu/images/pdf-Dateien/Lio_E_1989b.pdf
- Marquez, X. (2017). *Non-democratic politics: Authoritarianism, dictatorship and democratization*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Marx, K. (1992 [1867]). *Capital, vol. 1: A critique of political economy* (B. Fowkes, Trans.). Penguin Classics.
- Marx, K. (2004 [1844]). Economic and philosophical manuscripts. (T. B. Bottomore, Trans.). In E. Fromm (Ed.), *Marx's concept of man* (pp. 85–196). Continuum.
- McLaughlin, N. (1996). Nazism, nationalism, and the sociology of emotions: Escape from freedom revised. *Sociological Theory*, 14(3), 241–261.
- Musto, M. (2010). Revisiting Marx's concept of alienation. *Socialism and Democracy*, 24(3), 79–101.
- Nightingale, D. V. (1982). *Workplace democracy: An inquiry into employee participation in Canadian work organizations*. University of Toronto Press.
- O'Donnell, G. (1988). *Bureaucratic authoritarianism: Argentina 1966–1973 in comparative perspective*. University of California Press.
- Pabst, A. (2019). *The demons of liberal democracy*. Polity.
- Paić, Z. (2020). *Neoliberalism, oligarchy and politics of the event: At the edge of chaos*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Pausch, M. (2017). *Demokratie als Revolte: Zwischen Alltagsdiktatur und Globalisierung*. Nomos.
- Pausch, M. (2019). Democracy needs rebellion: A democratic theory inspired by Albert Camus. *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, 66(161), 91–107.
- Peters, M. (2016). Erich Fromm on resonance and alienation. *Fromm Forum (English Edition)*, 20, 24–34.
- Plehwé, D., Walpen, B. J. A., & Neunhöffer, G. (2006). *Neoliberal hegemony: A global critique*. Routledge.

- Robinson, W. I. (2004). *A theory of global capitalism: Production, class, and state in a transnational world*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Robinson, W. I. (2014). *Global capitalism and the crisis of humanity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Robinson, W. I., & Sprague-Silgado, J. (2018). The transnational capitalist class. In M. Juergensmeyer, S. Sassen, M. B. Steger, & V. Faessel (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of global studies* (pp. 309–327). Oxford University Press.
- Sakurai, T. (2018a). *Political theories of narcissism: Towards self-reflections on knowledge and politics from the psychoanalytic perspectives of Erich Fromm and Fujita Shōzō*. LIT Verlag.
- Sakurai, T. (2018b). The socio-psychological base of contemporary fascism in the world of liberal democracy: The theoretical scope of Erich Fromm's socio-pathological theory of alienation. *Fromm Forum (English Edition)*, 22, 143–155.
- Sakurai, T. (2020). A Frommian perspective on the socio-psychological structure of post-fascism in liberal democracies. *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory*, 21(2), 178–194.
- Sakurai, T. (2021). The socio-theoretical relevance of Erich Fromm's psychoanalytic conception of narcissism: Towards a Frommian critical social theory of narcissism. *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, 68(166), 1–30.
- Sklair, L. (2001). *The transnational capitalist class*. Blackwell.
- Smith, M. K. (2002). Erich Fromm: Alienation, being and education. In *The encyclopedia of informal education*. <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/fromm.htm>
- Smith, W. C. (1989). *Authoritarianism and the crisis of the Argentine political economy*. Stanford University Press.
- Tang, W. (2016). *Populist authoritarianism Chinese political culture and regime sustainability*. Oxford University Press.
- Thorpe, C. (2016). *Necroculture*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wilde, L. (2004). *Erich Fromm and the quest for solidarity*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wozniak, J. F. (2000). Alienation and crime: Lessons from Erich Fromm. In K. Anderson & R. Quinney (Eds.), *Erich Fromm and critical criminology: Beyond the punitive society* (pp. 43–58). University of Illinois Press.
- Yeoman, R. (2014). *Meaningful work and workplace democracy: A philosophy of work and a politics of meaningfulness*. Palgrave Macmillan.

How to cite this article: Sakurai, T. (2024). The authoritarian orientation in liberal democracies: Labor market and workplace authoritarianism. *Constellations*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12743>

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Takamichi Sakurai is a Senior Researcher at Keio University, Japan. Sakurai is founding co-editor-in-chief of the peer-reviewed journal *Comparative Political Theory* (Brill: <https://brill.com/cpt>) and a member of the Advisory Council of the Association for Global Political Thought (Harvard University). He is appointed to co-editor of a new Routledge book series *Political theorists beyond the canon*. The key themes Sakurai works on include authoritarianism, alienation, fascism, postfascism, and political narcissism. His articles have appeared in international high-quality journals including *Distinktion*, *Global Intellectual History*, *History of European Ideas*, *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, and *Theoria*.