

Two Worlds Of Social Activity: The Perspectives Of Ibn Sina And Erich Fromm

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Abstract: Comparing the philosophical ideas of Ibn Sina and Erich Fromm on social activity is a highly intriguing topic, as these two thinkers, despite belonging to different eras, cultures, and philosophical traditions, share certain commonalities and differences in their views on social activity, human nature, and the role of individuals in society. Ibn Sina operated within the framework of medieval Eastern peripatetic philosophy and Islamic enlightenment, while Erich Fromm worked within the context of 20th-century humanistic psychology and existential philosophy.

Keywords: Social being, rational soul (natoqa nafs), justice, ethical activity, division of labor, political governance, philosopher-king, societal harmony, religion and moral order, self-realization, freedom, productive love, alienation, creative activity, healthy society, individual autonomy, education and self-awareness, humanistic role of religion, authoritarian societal structures.

Introduction: Ibn Sina (980–1037) and Erich Fromm (1900–1980) are thinkers from different eras and cultural contexts who left significant marks on the understanding of an individual's role and social activity within society. Ibn Sina, rooted in medieval Eastern philosophy and Aristotelian traditions, interprets social activity as a rational, ethical, and systematic order aimed at ensuring justice, division of labor, and societal harmony through religion. His ideas are reflected in works such as “Kitab ash-Shifa”, “Siyasat” and “Danishnama”, where he emphasizes the duties of individuals in society and the role of the rational soul (natoqa nafs) in serving the common good. In contrast, Erich Fromm approaches social activity from the perspective of individual autonomy and critical analysis of modern societal structures. This comparative analysis aims to juxtapose Ibn Sina's collectivist and hierarchical worldview with Fromm's individualistic and critical approach. Through key concepts such as justice, ethics, education, governance, and religion, the commonalities and differences in their perspectives on social activity are elucidated. The goal of this analysis is to highlight how these two thinkers, within their respective philosophical traditions, interpreted the relationship between society and individuals and to

evaluate the contemporary relevance of their ideas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lenn E. Goodman [1] provides a detailed analysis of Ibn Sina's philosophical system, particularly his social and political views. Goodman connects Ibn Sina's concepts of justice, ethics, and governance in “Kitab ash-Shifa” and “Siyasat” to the traditions waterfall traditions of Aristotle and Al-Farabi. Seyyed Hossein Nasr [2] explores the history and development of Islamic philosophy, focusing on Ibn Sina's metaphysics, ethics, and social views. Nasr emphasizes Ibn Sina's view of religion and philosophy as complementary tools for societal order, as articulated in “Kitab ash-Shifa”. Deborah L. Black [3] examines Ibn Sina's concept of the soul (nafs), particularly the rational soul (natoqa nafs) and its role in social activity. Drawing on “Kitab an-Najat” and “Kitab ash-Shifa”, Black analyzes Ibn Sina's view of the rational soul as a guiding force for an individual's ethical and social responsibilities in society. Rainer Funk [4], a scholar of Fromm, provides a comprehensive analysis of Fromm's humanistic psychology and social philosophy. In his book, Funk interprets Fromm's concepts of self-realization, productive love, and alienation based on works such as “The Sane Society” and “The Art of Loving”. Funk

highlights Fromm's critique of modern societal structures for restricting human creative freedom and his call for establishing a "healthy society." Michael Maccoby [5] examines Fromm's dual approach as both a prophetic critic and an analytical psychologist. Analyzing Fromm's "Escape from Freedom" and "The Sane Society", Maccoby discusses Fromm's concepts of alienation, productive love, and education, emphasizing his opposition to authoritarian governance and advocacy for egalitarian societal structures. Daniel Burston [6] provides a detailed analysis of Fromm's contributions to humanistic psychology and social theory. In works such as "Psychoanalysis and Religion" and "The Sane Society", Burston explores Fromm's concepts of alienation, self-realization, and education, emphasizing that social activity should be realized through creativity and mutual respect. Burston also highlights Fromm's humanistic view of religion, interpreting it as a force that can either liberate or enslave, depending on its application, in contrast to dogmatic interpretations.

These sources provide a robust foundation for a comparative analysis of Ibn Sina and Fromm's philosophies on social activity. Goodman, Nasr, and Black elucidate Ibn Sina's collectivist, rational, and hierarchical system, focusing on the roles of justice, governance, and the rational soul in society. Funk, Maccoby, and Burston highlight Fromm's individualistic and critical approach, emphasizing self-realization, alienation, and freedom. Together, these sources reveal the commonalities and differences in the two thinkers' views on justice, ethics, governance, education, and religion.

RESULTS

Ibn Sina considers humans to be inherently social beings, a view rooted in Aristotle's thesis that "man is a political animal." According to Ibn Sina, individuals can achieve their goals only through cooperation and the division of labor within society. In "Kitab ash-Shifa", he writes: "Human nature is not self-sufficient; it thrives in collaboration with others, relying on mutual dependence. This need forms the basis of social activity" [7, 456]. Ibn Sina links social activity to the rational aspect of the human soul (natoqa nafs). In "Kitab an-Najat", he states: "The rational soul directs individuals toward fulfilling their societal duties. Through reason and justice, it regulates human activity" [7, 359]. Ibn Sina likens society to an organism, where each individual performs their role to ensure overall harmony.

Erich Fromm, a representative of humanistic psychology and existential philosophy, associates social activity with an individual's self-awareness and pursuit

of freedom. In "Escape from Freedom" and "The Sane Society", he interprets human activity in society as a relationship between inner needs (love, creativity, self-expression) and societal influences: "The most important task of a human is to realize their human nature, that is, to manifest themselves as a creative and autonomous being" [9, 15]. Fromm emphasizes that authoritarian societal structures can hinder these possibilities, obstructing social activity.

Both Ibn Sina and Fromm view humans as social beings, but their approaches differ. Ibn Sina sees social activity within a rational and ethical order, while Fromm associates it with individual freedom and self-expression. Ibn Sina's perspective is normative, focused on fulfilling specific roles in an ideal society, whereas Fromm critically addresses modern society's tendency to alienate individuals. Ibn Sina's view is rooted in a medieval collectivist worldview emphasizing societal harmony, while Fromm's individualistic approach focuses on the impact of societal structures on human freedom.

Ibn Sina considers justice the foundation of societal order. In "Siyasat", he writes that justice ensures societal stability and guarantees that each individual receives what is due to them: "The foundation of society is justice. If a ruler deviates from justice, society descends into disorder" [8, 45]. For Ibn Sina, ethics is an integral part of social activity. In "Danishnama", he states: "Human ethical activity is manifested in unity with society. Striving for virtue is the fulfillment of one's duties with justice" [7, 502].

Fromm views ethics from a humanistic perspective, linking it to an individual's full self-realization. In "The Art of Loving", he describes ethical social activity as productive love: "Love is an active concern for the life and growth of that which we love" [10, 26]. For Fromm, justice is achieved through sincerity in human relationships and liberation from alienation.

Both thinkers consider justice and ethics crucial elements of social activity. However, Ibn Sina views justice as a top-down system, while Fromm sees it as emerging bottom-up through interpersonal relationships. Ibn Sina's justice is rooted in metaphysical order, whereas Fromm's is based on psychological and existential needs. Ibn Sina's justice is systemic and hierarchical, while Fromm's is relational and emphasizes equality.

Drawing inspiration from Al-Farabi's concept of the "virtuous city," Ibn Sina considers governance the foundation of societal stability. In "Siyasat", he describes the ideal ruler as a "philosopher-king" endowed with reason and justice: "A ruler must possess reason and justice. They must ensure societal

cooperation for the common good" [8, 52]. For Ibn Sina, political governance, grounded in rational and ethical principles, directs social activity toward collective harmony.

Fromm, however, takes a critical stance toward political structures. In "The Sane Society", he argues that most modern societies alienate individuals, reducing them to mere "cogs in the machine": "Modern society often turns humans into a cog in the system, depriving them of their creative potential" [9, 67]. He believes governance should support human freedom and self-realization.

While Ibn Sina idealizes governance as a rational and just system, Fromm criticizes hierarchical structures and advocates for democratic systems that support human freedom. Ibn Sina supports top-down governance, while Fromm emphasizes bottom-up active participation.

Ibn Sina views education as a tool for awakening reason and preparing individuals for socially beneficial activity. In **Kitab an-Najat**, he writes: "Education is a means to awaken human reason and direct it toward beneficial social activity" [7, 698]. For Ibn Sina, education prepares individuals for specific societal roles.

Fromm sees education as a means for self-awareness and liberation from societal pressures. In "The Sane Society", he writes: "Education should help individuals discover their potential and resist dehumanizing societal structures" [10, 120].

Both consider education a vital component of social activity, but Ibn Sina views it as a tool for preparing individuals for specific societal roles, while Fromm sees it as a means to foster individual freedom. Ibn Sina's education reinforces societal order, while Fromm's liberates individuals from societal pressures.

Ibn Sina views religion as a tool for ensuring moral order and societal harmony. In *"Kitab ash-Shifa"*, he writes: "Religion serves as a moral guide for the masses, while philosophy reveals truth to the rational elite. Both complement each other for societal order" [7, 657].

Fromm approaches religion from a humanistic perspective, focusing on its potential to either liberate or enslave individuals. In **Psychoanalysis and Religion**, he writes: "Religion can liberate through inner growth or enslave through dogmatic submission" [11, 37].

Both view religion as a factor in regulating social activity, but Ibn Sina sees it as a tool for strengthening society, while Fromm critically examines its impact on human freedom. Ibn Sina views religion as serving societal harmony, while Fromm warns of its potential

to alienate individuals.

CONCLUSION

The philosophical perspectives of Ibn Sina and Erich Fromm on social activity are shaped by their respective eras and cultural contexts, yet they share commonalities. Ibn Sina's philosophy, rooted in medieval Islamic and Aristotelian traditions, views social activity through the lens of rational, ethical, and systematic order. Fromm, from the perspective of modern psychology and existentialism, focuses on the struggle for human freedom and self-realization. Both consider humans social beings, view justice and ethics as foundational to social activity, and see education as a tool for fostering social engagement.

However, Ibn Sina emphasizes a normative, hierarchical system, while Fromm critiques structures that limit human freedom. Ibn Sina idealizes governance, whereas Fromm believes it should serve human freedom. Ibn Sina sees religion as a tool for societal cohesion, while Fromm highlights its potential to alienate. Their ideas, though distinct, offer valuable insights into the relationship between individuals and society, with enduring relevance for contemporary discussions.

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