

5: *Sado-Masochistic Religion*

THE BASIS of Fromm's criticism of Reformation theology is a psychological elaboration of Weber's conception of worldly asceticism. Beginning where Weber ended, together with what appears to be a significant legacy from Nietzsche, Fromm provides a psychological interpretation of what presumably happens in the inner life of a Puritan or a like-minded individual who succumbs to such asceticism. Weber indicated in a partial way what he thought the main psychological factors were— isolation, loneliness, suspicion, hatred, and contempt, but he did not develop them into a theory of the dynamics of motivation. Nietzsche in his essay on the meaning of ascetic ideals had illuminated them, but he did not set for himself the problem with which Weber began. It remained for Fromm with a grasp of both the sociological and psychological dimensions of the problem to provide the elaboration. This he accomplished by means of his concept of sado-masochism. It provided the explanation of the ascetic basis of the authoritarianism that he attributes to Reformation Protestantism as its most important characteristic.

Again the presupposition is the "God everything—man nothing" formula with its inversely proportional relationship. But now it is understood in its original meaning as a description of the power structure that so generally obtains in human society. In this capacity, it defines one of the commonest patterns of social control. There are many examples: the greater the power of the ruler, the less the power of the citizen; the greater the

power of the teacher, the less the power of the pupil; the greater the power of the parent, the less the power of the child. What Fromm rightly sees is the frequency with which social relationships exemplify this power structure as the expression of both physical and psychological power. His problem is the use of impersonal power by persons in their interpersonal relationships. Thus the most representative example of this problem is the master-slave relationship, or perhaps the more extreme despot-robot relationship.

Each of these relationships presupposes a fundamental difference that is rigid, permanent, and unnegotiable. The slave cannot change or negotiate the difference which obtains between himself and his master, and dare not call it into question. His master is only interested in maintaining the difference and suppressing all attempts that would abolish it. The difference between them is a firmly defined line with respect to which the power possessed by the one is inversely proportional to that possessed by the other. It is irrational and authoritarian because it is the basis of fixed, castelike social structures which in every period of history blindly resist change and wholesome scrutiny. The motivation that maintains such social structures, according to Fromm, is sado-masochistic.

His illustration of the opposite kind of relationship is that of the teacher and the pupil in which the difference that distinguishes them is flexible and temporary and always negotiable to some extent. The greater knowledge and experience of the teacher is only relative to the fact that he is older and has had more time and opportunity to learn. As the pupil grows older, advances in his learning, chooses a vocation and specializes in it, he eventually surpasses his teacher. The difference between them disappears. Instead of the teacher seeking to maintain the difference as a rigid, permanent distinction, he rejoices in the fact that his pupil has overcome it because this is a sign of the pupil's development and of the realization of his potentialities. In this respect, it is the opposite of the master-slave relationship, in which there would be no possibility of such development of

the slave or of the realization of his potentialities.¹

It is because Fromm sees the master-slave relationship as the prototype of so much in modern society that presupposes this rigid and permanent differential that he can speak of authoritarianism as a widespread social problem. It is the extent to which social relationships tend to become power structures of an impersonal nature in which one force is confronted with another force, as is seen so often in economic and political life and, through the influence of these, in personal and domestic life. Under these circumstances, growth and creative achievement are thwarted because of the restrictions imposed upon the individual which reduce him to a status of less than that of a person and sometimes less than human.

It is the ascetic motivation implicit in these power structures and related to the differential which defines them that Fromm regards as sado-masochistic. In adopting sado-masochism as an explanatory concept which throws light on such motivation, he is not primarily concerned with its perverted form in which satisfaction is derived from the infliction of pain on others or from suffering pain at the hands of others. This perverted form is sexually conditioned so that the infliction of pain on others or the suffering of it at the hands of others induces sexual excitement. He is concerned, rather, with a moral type of sado-masochism that is devoid of sexual conditioning. Superficially the masochistic, or passive, phase of this pattern of motivation is the distinguishing feature for the simple reason that it is socially more acceptable. Dependency, passivity, willingness to comply, and similar characteristics that pass for genuine goodness are generally acceptable to others. The sadistic, or active, phase which is likely to be harmful and dangerous and therefore less acceptable is concealed by all the psychological "mechanisms" that serve this purpose. It is less conscious, frequently rationalized, and hidden under a compensatory cover of overgoodness or overconcern for others.

As implied in the foregoing description, both phases—the sadistic and the masochistic—characterize the motivational pat-

tern of the same person. It is not a question of his pattern being purely the one or the other. It is always both. The situation in which he finds himself largely determines whether his behavior will be predominantly sadistic or masochistic. A common illustration is the extent to which a man will demean himself to please his employer, yet at home domineer his wife and his family. Applied more widely to the social structure, such a contradictory pattern of behavior has serious implications. At a given level of status in the social structure, the same man will find satisfaction in submitting to his superiors and an equal satisfaction in dominating his inferiors. In its extreme form, it becomes a love for the authority of the superiors and hatred for the weakness of the inferiors which, according to Fromm, is typical of the authoritarian character. It contributes to a rigidly hierarchical form of social structure.

In this sado-masochistic behavior it will be evident that the inversely proportional relationship, of which we have previously spoken, clearly obtains between the one phase and the other. It is implied in the polarity of dominance and submission according to which the greater the power of the superior, the less the power of the inferior. But it must not be interpreted too literally, as if it were strictly mathematical. For whatever else the inversely proportional relationship might be, its psychological aspect prevents it from being regarded as strictly mathematical. Over the range of variation that generally obtains between the one extreme and the other, as we see in most examples of sado-masochistic behavior, it holds true. But at the point where a further increase of the one would mean the destruction of the other, it breaks down. It no longer holds true. The reason for this is the strange interdependence that binds the two together. The sadistic and the masochistic phase of behavior are implicitly interdependent just as in a society the overtly sadistic and overtly masochistic are interdependent. Returning to the master-slave relationship to illustrate the interdependence, we see that the master depends on the slave for work, the slave on the master for security. If the master reduced the slave to a mathematical

zero, he would deprive himself of the work which the slave provided. If the slave reduced the master to a mathematical zero, he would no longer have the food and shelter which the master provided. Such a relation of interdependence Fromm describes as symbiotic, having in mind the biological phenomenon of the close association of dissimilar organisms for their mutual benefit.

It is important to observe that Fromm bases his interpretation of sado-masochism in all its forms upon the isolation of the individual as a fundamental problem. This is the problem which, among others, he postulates as peculiar to man because it pertains to life becoming aware of itself as life, and the individual becoming aware of himself as a self. Such awareness is not possible without a feeling of isolation, which itself becomes a problem. If the individual does not find the answer to this problem in the realization of that creative freedom which for Fromm is definitive of his humanity, he may develop sado-masochistic strivings in an attempt to escape from his problem and at the same time from himself and his freedom. The stated reason for these strivings is that they tend to help the individual to escape his unbearable feeling of aloneness and powerlessness. This is supported by an extended remark that "psychoanalytic and other empirical observations" of such a person show that he is "filled with a terror of aloneness and insignificance." The remark adds that "frequently this feeling is not conscious; often it is covered by compensatory feelings of eminence and perfection. However, if one penetrates deeply enough into the unconscious dynamics of such a person, one finds these feelings without fail."²

It may seem puzzling that two such opposite tendencies as sadism and masochism should arise from the inability to bear such isolation and loneliness. In his explanation of this peculiarity, Fromm contends that the aim which is at the bottom of both tendencies is *symbiosis*. In saying this, he adds to the definition of the term given above. "Symbiosis, in this psychological sense, means the union of one individual self with another self (or any other power outside of the own self) in such a way as to make

each lose the integrity of its own self and to make them completely dependent on each other."³ The difference between the sadistic and the masochistic person concerns the respective way in which each achieves this aim. Since no person is wholly one or the other, but in his oscillations from one to the other shows a preference for one more than for the other, he will find the way that corresponds to it. With this qualification, Fromm's explanation of the sadistic achievement of such a union is that of a man enlarging himself by making another part of himself and thereby gaining the strength and significance that he lacked as an individual self. In this way, he succeeds in dominating another and gaining complete mastery over him. The masochistic achievement of such a union is the reverse. It is that of a man surrendering himself to another or to a powerful whole outside himself, and by his becoming part of it, gaining the strength and significance that he lacked as an individual self. In this way, he loses his burden and acquires in return what he regards as a new self. For these reasons, Fromm does not believe that suffering is the real aim of masochism or that the infliction of suffering is the real aim of sadism. In both cases, suffering is only a means to an end — that of overcoming isolation and loneliness, and of acquiring strength and significance for the self.

It is not surprising that the sado-masochistic complex as thus outlined has the effect of seriously distorting social relationships. It has this effect because the symbiotic nature of the relationship that it produces is essentially unstable. In a marriage, a sadistic-minded partner is incapable of loving because he confuses domination with love. He "loves" only because he dominates. Similarly a masochistic-minded partner is incapable of loving because he confuses submission with love. But the more he submits, the less respect the sadistic partner has for him. As further evidence of Fromm's concern for the social significance of sado-masochism, another illustration will suffice. This pertains to his primary interest in the economic basis of social life and the type of character that it produces. Generally speaking, the sado-masochistic complex produces a nonproductive character who is

concerned only with receiving or only with exploiting. With no positive, creative interest in his work that would provide a wholesome goal, he is either passively dependent on what others give him or aggressively dependent on them as the objects of manipulation.

Turning to what Fromm describes as the authoritarian conscience, we have the interiorized equivalent of the master-slave relationship or of any other relationship approximating to it.⁴ In this sense the authoritarian conscience is sado-masochistic and an interpretation of the asceticism of which both Weber and Nietzsche wrote. It is an incorporation of the dominant, outside power or authority into the individual so that the inversely proportional symbiotic relationship between it and him has now become intrapsychical. His inner life is so structured that he is transformed into his own master and slave. The interiorized authority as the master within him makes exorbitant demands upon him and continually drives and disciplines him. At the same time a desire to submit and obey seems equally necessary and satisfying because it relieves the inward tension. But the demands are renewed and the vicious circle begins again so that the individual is inwardly restless and enslaved. He is without that inward freedom and spontaneity to be himself. Such a simplified version of the authoritarian conscience is complicated by the desire "to admire, to have some ideal, to strive for some perfection" so that the outside power or authority is idealized without regard to fact. This idealization is again interiorized. Added to this complication are the feelings of guilt and hostility which, according to Fromm, are reactions arising out of the failure of the individual to be himself and are thus not instinctual. He is particularly emphatic about the authoritarian character of feelings of guilt: "Not only do guilt feelings result from dependence on irrational authority but the guilt feeling in turn reinforces dependence. Guilt feelings have proved to be the most effective means of forming and increasing dependency and herein lies one of the social functions of authoritarian ethics throughout history."⁵

With this outline of Fromm's conception of sado-masochism before us, we can proceed to his conception of sado-masochistic religion, or what he prefers to call authoritarian religion.⁶ Since sufficient attention has already been given to the example which in his judgment best qualifies for this distinction — namely, Reformation Protestantism, and in particular Calvinism — we can concentrate on what he seems to regard as the prototype of such religion. This takes us back to the patriarchal period of the Old Testament with its emphasis on the patriarchal concept in its understanding both of the social order and of religion. In his *The Art of Loving*, Fromm is particularly caustic about what he believes to have been the earliest representation of God in this period — "a despotic, jealous God, who considers man whom he has created as his property and is entitled to do with him as he pleases." To emphasize the cruelty of such a God, he cites examples of his ruthless action. He is the God who "drives man out of paradise, lest he eat from the tree of knowledge" and thus become God himself. He is the God who "decides to destroy the human race by the flood, because none of them pleases him, with the exception of the favourite son Noah." He is the God who "demands from Abraham that he kill his only, his beloved son, Isaac to prove his love for God by the act of ultimate obedience."⁷ In these illustrations, Fromm could hardly have provided a more vivid sketch of a sadistic God. As a God who drives men out of paradise, destroys the human race by the flood, demands that Abraham kill his son, he has the appearance of deriving satisfaction from the infliction of suffering on others and of acting arbitrarily only on the basis of what may happen to please him. Since he is also represented as creating man to be his property (slave), as having Noah as a favorite son and desiring Abraham to prove his obedience, he exhibits the typical sadistic dependence upon those whom he dominates. Fromm does not consider, of course, the original purpose of these stories or the theological significance that each possessed. In the case of Abraham offering Isaac, for example, it was the opposite of what he represents it to be. It was not that of a jealous God

wanting him to prove his obedience to the point of sacrificing his son, but an apologetic *against* the contemporary heathen practice of human sacrifice. The main point of the story and therefore the will of God was that the ram caught in the thicket should be substituted for Isaac.

Previously in his *Escape from Freedom*, Fromm left no doubt in our minds that sado-masochism defined the relationship of man with an authoritarian God. This was clearly evident in his accusation against Luther and Calvin that submission to God meant acceptance of individual insignificance and powerlessness in exchange for which identification with the all-powerful God meant salvation. This is just the masochistic surrender to an all-powerful whole outside of oneself and the gaining of strength on becoming part of it. The point need not be labored. The all-powerful God of Luther and Calvin is certainly represented by Fromm as a sadistic God. His description of Calvin's God as having "all the features of a tyrant without any quality of love or even of justice" could be laid alongside his description of the God of the early patriarchal period of the Old Testament as equally sadistic in his cruelty. If the one is represented as destroying the human race with the flood, the other is represented as predestining part of mankind, through no fault of his own, to eternal damnation. Fromm seems to be disturbed by what he regards as a connection between Reformation Protestantism and Old Testament patriarchalism, and which suggests that the latter is representative of his real and original religious problem. A statement in *The Sane Society* suggests as much: "The most drastic and most far reaching effect upon European and world development was that of the Reformation." The next line tells us what this most drastic and most far reaching effect was: "Protestantism and Calvinism went back to the purely patriarchal spirit of the Old Testament and eliminated the mother element from the religious concept. Man was not any more enveloped by the motherly love of the church and the Virgin; he was alone, facing a severe and strict God whose mercy he could obtain only by an act of complete surrender."⁸ It is evident here that what disturbs Fromm in Protestantism and particularly in Calvinism

is its apparent reemphasis of certain aspects of Judaism which he has found particularly offensive. This could mean that he is sensitive to what Sombart regards as certain affinities between Puritanism and Judaism which are related to the esteem with which the Puritans held the Hebrew Scriptures in the seventeenth century.⁹

For a summary of the characteristics of the authoritarian and therefore the sado-masochistic God we turn to a passage in *Man for Himself* where it is only necessary to substitute the term "God" for each instance of the term "authority" to see the real significance of the passage:

"In authoritarian systems the authority [God] is made out to be fundamentally different from his subjects. He [God] has powers not attainable by anyone else: magic, wisdom, strength, which can never be matched by his subjects. Whatever the authority's [God's] prerogatives are, whether he is the master of the universe or a unique leader sent by fate, the fundamental inequality between him [God] and man is the basic tenet of the authoritarian conscience. One particularly important aspect of the uniqueness of the authority [God] is the privilege of being the only one who does not follow another's will, but who himself wills; who is not a means but an end in himself; who creates and is not created. . . . Those subject to him are means to his end and consequently his property and used by him for his own purposes."¹⁰

This passage makes it clear that Fromm is by no means restricting himself to the early patriarchalism of the Old Testament but is implicitly denying the fundamental conception of God common to the Old Testament and the New Testament and to Judaism and Christianity. Reduced to its essentials, the passage is a repudiation of the Biblical doctrine of God the Creator, which in the Apostles' Creed of the early Christian church belongs to the first article of faith. It is no longer a question of the patriarchs, but of the prophets and the apostles, all of whom implicitly or explicitly affirmed their faith in God the Creator.

As it pertains to God the Creator, the passage represents the

difference between him and man to be the same as that between master and slave. The difference is fundamental. He has powers that man does not have and cannot have. He is unique and an end in himself. He wills and is not subject to the will of another. The picture is undoubtedly that of a despotic master of slaves—whose will is as arbitrary as the blindness of fate. As the Creator who is not created—a clear reference to the Biblical Creator—he is presumably the owner of those whom he has created and who therefore regards them merely as the means to his own ends. They are described as his property.

Fromm has no appreciation of the substance of the doctrine of God the Creator and particularly of it as an indication of the grace of God. He has apparently not discovered the plainly discernible theme in the first chapter of Genesis which repeatedly affirms that what God did was good. He has not discovered how this theme is supplemented in the first chapter of the Gospel of John by the affirmation that all things were made through the Logos of God in whom was life and light and who in particularized form is described in the same chapter as full of grace and truth. In the various references to the Creator in the prophets and psalms of the Old Testament, God's creative action is regarded with wonder and gratitude and always as gracious. It is never conceived as arbitrary or whimsical or exploitative or as the equivalent of fate or as that which merely "uses" man as an instrument for its own end. Nor is the difference that distinguishes God from the created order conceived in a facile manner as if it were merely the literal reflection of a significant difference inherent in the social structure, such as that distinguishing master from slave or king from citizen. The conception of the Creator is associated with the conception of the providence of God whose goodness is continually attested to by the prophets and the apostles.

It is true that the difference between God the Creator and man is fundamental, permanent, rigid, and unnegotiable. But is such a definition of difference necessarily a sign of authoritarianism? Could it not also be a sign of freedom, both for God

and for man? Does not the particularity of God, to which the Bible attests but which Fromm denies, require such a definition of difference? The particularity of a person, for instance, is only conceivable on the basis of a definitive privacy and uniqueness of which solipsism is an extreme representation and around which a peculiar limit, or line, is drawn. Such a limit, or line, is fundamental, permanent, rigid, and unnegotiable because it could not be removed without destroying the person. Indeed, it is indicative of the possibility of his freedom. His freedom *from* others as defined by this line of distinction from them is the only condition on which he can be free *for* them.

An illustration of such paradoxical freedom appears in I Cor. 9:19, where the apostle Paul says that although he is free from all men, he has made himself a slave to all. The context shows that the only way in which he could be a slave or servant to them without compromising his integrity was to be free *from* them: "There is a curious similarity between such freedom and that required for good relations between parent and child, teacher and pupil, counselor and client. . . . A counselor, for instance, must be emotionally free *from* his client to be clinically free *for* him; otherwise the objectivity necessary for therapy will be obstructed. And the same pertains to the parent and child, the teacher and pupil, in a somewhat different context."¹¹

And the same is true of God's difference from the created order. Only as he remains fundamentally and permanently different—only as he remains himself as he knows himself to be—can he be free for this order, as the Bible everywhere testifies that he is. The same conception of paradoxical freedom is implicit in the line of separation indicated by the root meaning of "holiness." A holy or separated people or individual (chosen) is not separated *from* in the authoritarian sense of being *against* others but separated from, so that he might be *for* them. This is basic to the Biblical understanding of election as it defines the meaning of the covenanted community, both in the Old and in the New Testament. The doctrine of creation is only a particular instance of the same conception.¹²

It may be that Fromm is too much influenced by Hegel's conception of creation to be open to the Biblical idea of the fundamental distinction between God and the created order as a sign of his freedom for it. In Hegel's conception of creation, Absolute Spirit estranges itself from itself and becomes nature and history. In its objectification of itself, a dichotomy is introduced between itself and its object which is indicative of an alienation between them. There is a continuity between them, but it is disrupted by such alienation. On this basis, God as Absolute Spirit is not free for the created order, but estranged from it. The line of distinction between them is not a sign of freedom, but of estrangement. It is similar to what we will see later in Fromm's interpretation of the human predicament — the split between subject and object in man's psychical life as an indication of his alienation from himself. Applied to Genesis, it would yield the conclusion that God is only able to treat man as an object and as one separated from him by an unfortunate split.¹³

If the fundamental difference between God and man is a sign of God's freedom for man, the interiorization of such a relationship will not yield an authoritarian conscience, but its opposite. It will make man free. This is what Daim claims in contrast to Fromm in his *Depth Psychology and Salvation*.¹⁴ He argues that only a false absolute enslaves an individual to itself in a relationship denoted psychologically as a fixation. A true absolute liberates him. A true absolute frees him to be himself. The same idea has been put in a decisive manner by Kierkegaard in a brief paragraph in his journals, which provides a further description of paradoxical freedom.

Referring to the omnipotence of God, by which he means the grace of God, Kierkegaard emphasizes that omnipotence is necessary to make men free. "This will sound curious," he says, "since omnipotence of all things, it would seem, should make him dependent. But omnipotence rightly considered has the quality of so taking itself back in the manifestation of its all-powerfulness that it makes the recipient free. This is why one man cannot make another man really free, because the one who

has the power is imprisoned in it and is thus in a false relation to the one he wishes to free. It is only a miserable and worldly picture of the dialectic of power to say that it becomes greater in proportion as it can compel and make things dependent."¹⁵

It was not, of course, possible for Kierkegaard to have seen how miserable and worldly a picture of the same dialectic of power made possible the sado-masochistic conception of man and God that we have been considering. But it suggests to us that the conception is as much a product of philosophy as it is of psychology. The way in which it gives expression to fundamental presuppositions creates this impression. This is probably why it is so strikingly different from that of other authorities who have dealt with the same human problem. As an example, Theodor Reik's conception of sado-masochism is so complex and thoroughly supported by clinical evidence that one would scarcely believe that he and Fromm were dealing with the same problem. In sharp contrast to Fromm, Reik does not represent the masochist as one who gives up, or surrenders, his authentic self to have it submerged in an outside power as the solution of his insignificance and loneliness. He does not claim that the strivings contributing to his masochism help the individual to escape his unbearable feelings of loneliness and powerlessness. Indeed, it is not at all from such feelings that the individual acts. His aim, according to Reik, is to maintain his ego. It is to enforce his will.

"The masochist," says Reik, "is a revolutionist of self surrender. The lambskin he wears hides a wolf. His yielding includes defiance, his submissiveness, opposition. Beneath his softness there is hardness; behind his obsequiousness, rebellion is concealed."¹⁶ In a word, the masochist does not give himself up to or lose himself in a power outside himself. Reik is critical of the description of "the masochistic character as weak, dependent, easily influenced, helpless." In his criticism of Horney's emphasis on the dependence of masochistic characters and their tendency to cling to the loved person, he says that she overlooks the fact that one can draw somebody down by clinging to him. He says

that she (as Fromm) has permitted herself to be deceived by the external aspect of masochistic lamentations. The weakness is but appearance and the dependence serves the purpose eventually to humiliate the protector and rule the person on whom he depends.¹⁷

"Under the mask of the constant 'yes man,' the masochist "remains the spirit of eternal negation. By fully submitting he remains independent. Humiliated a thousand times he is inflexible and invincible. Defeated again and again, he stands to his rights. Quoting the English poet he could say: 'My head is bloody but unbowed.'" ¹⁸

In these words, Reik represents the masochist as one who is basically defiant: "He has an inexhaustible capacity for taking a beating and yet knows unconsciously that he is never lied." His defiance derives from the effort of the ego to maintain itself against superior forces, to rehabilitate itself, and in this sense to reinforce its will "even at the risk of disgrace, failure, poverty."¹⁹

It is evident that Reik adopts a more pessimistic view of the individual than Fromm, but one that accords him a greater freedom — not restricting it solely to the choice of the good as a fundamental premise. Hostility and rebellion may emerge from the inner core of spontaneity which Fromm regards as the humanistic conscience. Fromm, of course, recognizes hostility as a component of the sado-masochistic complex. But he contends that such hostility and the destructiveness which may derive from it is rooted in individual loneliness and powerlessness. It is not instinctual, not an inclination native to man, not a product of man's essential freedom, but a product of the thwarting of life, an outcome of the un-lived life. To repeat, Fromm conceives of loneliness as the basic component of sado-masochism with the emphasis on passivity. Reik, on the other hand, conceives of rebellion as the basic component with the emphasis on man's activity and the responsibility of the authentic self. The responsibility is not shifted to the outside power as contributing originally to the condition.²⁰

What Fromm really implies by his emphasis on the masochistic surrender of freedom as a consequence of loneliness, insignificance, and powerlessness is that man's only "sin" in the last analysis is weakness. This is underlined even in his analysis of the dominant sadistic roles of the outside power which he likewise conceives as essentially a form of weakness. Even though responsibility is shifted to the outside power, it is not to be taken as seriously, because even here we are not dealing with a fully active decision of man. And since neither in the case of masochism nor of sadism does Fromm take the responsibility of man seriously, we cannot say that he takes the freedom of man seriously. The escape from freedom is less of a responsible act than of a surrender to weakness. The conclusion which is therefore unavoidable is that for Fromm the basic predicament of man is the despair of finitude. This means that the principal "sin" of man is to feel small, insignificant, powerless, lonely, fearful, and anxious and therefore, as a result, to feel frustrated, angry, and rebellious. In contrast to this, it is right to feel strong, vital, fully self-expressive, and creative. In the former, one despairs of oneself as finite; in the latter, one rejoices in oneself as infinite.

At this point, the resemblance that Fromm's conception of sado-masochism bears to Hegelian philosophy seems evident. In principle it is only his version of Hegel's conception of the spirit of man in bondage to finitude. This is why he criticizes particularism as the absolutizing of some partial function or quality in man or society, and why he so thoroughly rejects it. The individual only discovers himself when he experiences, not his particularity, but his humanity or that within himself which Fromm describes as his infinity. This is only Hegel's infinity of the spirit of man or the unbounded freedom of pure spirit or being without limit. A recent study puts it clearly. In Hegel's quite unique conception of it, freedom means the consciousness of the self as unbounded; it is the absence of a limiting object or nonself. As he states in his *Logic*: "Freedom means that the object with which you deal is a second self. . . . For freedom it is necessary that we should feel no presence of something which is not ourselves. The

conception of something which is not ourselves is imprisonment in finitude. The transformation of it into a 'second self' through the act of knowing, which divests the object of its illusory objectivity and shows it to be selbstisch in nature, is release from finitude. It yields a consciousness of self as unbounded as any object, hence as infinite in extent."²¹

With these qualifications of Fromm's conception of sado-masochism which indicate that it was probably derived as much from philosophy as it was from psychology and clinical observation, we are now in a position to consider its relevance to the problem that emerged at the end of the previous chapter. In theological language, this was the problem of the law taking its place alongside the gospel undefined by the gospel. The fact that it was undefined by the gospel meant that it was defined by something else — invariably the prevailing moral milieu or the mores or the ideological context of everyday life. It was the kind of law that represented the increasing secularization of Protestantism and that gave it a characteristic ascetic moralism. Fromm, of course, saw nothing else but this in Old Testament patriarchalism, Reformation Protestantism, and generally in the Biblical conception of the Creator God. He saw nothing else but the religion of law, in which law as the equivalent of arbitrary, irrational power was imposed upon man to enslave him inwardly and psychologically.

The law taking its place alongside the gospel could therefore only mean to Fromm such law appropriated as inner discipline (duty) designed for worldly success and taking its place alongside the spirit of man. This would mean a form of law regarded as an evil and unnecessary finitude taking its place alongside the spirit of man to deprive it of its freedom. In this sense, the law would be regarded as weakness or as contributing to weakness and robbing man of his strength. Or to put it in another way, the law would be sadistic and by robbing man of his strength contribute to his masochism. To understand such an interpretation on the larger background of interest that motivates it, we have to keep in mind Fromm's major concern with the problem of man exercising power over man. It is that problem which plagues the

mind of all serious Marxists. In this sense, it is an interpretation of the way in which such power presumably operates psychologically within the context of Protestantism to enslave and weaken man and to dehumanize him.

In theological language, the main point of the interpretation, as far as the law is concerned, is the power of legalism seen in the light of its deep, inward psychological effects and in the light of the social system or ideological structure that invariably defines it. It is the power of a law that has no inner connection with love, human concern, order, or justice, and that derives from what can only be regarded in New Testament language as the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4). It is the law which kills and which, as Barth says, "has never yet led man to conversion, even by killing him, let alone making him alive." In our assessment of Fromm's sado-masochistic conception of religion, our critical concern has only been to deny that this god and law define the essential nature of the message and teaching of Reformation Protestantism, the New Testament and early Christianity, and the Old Testament including its patriarchalism. It has not been to deny that this god and law always try to enter into these and, at certain periods more than others, find a place alongside the gospel obviously undefined by the gospel.

What makes the problem difficult is the deceptive form that such god and law assume. Under the form of legalism described by Fromm as sado-masochistic religion or moral masochism, they are socially acceptable. This can be understood from the fact that within the Christian tradition of sacrificial living the masochistic phase would be particularly acceptable, unless its inward and secret nature were exposed. In a word, negative legalism finds an easier entry into the Christian faith under the guise of the sacrifice and passive virtues associated with such faith than positive legalism. The selflessness of negative legalism arouses less suspicion of its real identity and danger than does the selfishness of positive legalism which is readily condemned as sinful. Yet under the category of selflessness, which a surprising number of hymn writers praise, the greatest variety of emptiness, docility, in-

eptitude, and deadness can find a way into the Christian faith under cover of piety.

It is at this point that Fromm makes a significant contribution to our thinking and more particularly to our conception of sin even though the conception finds no place within his system. For his contention is that selflessness is equally or more dangerous than selfishness and is increasingly becoming the "sin" of mass society. Paralleling the Nietzschean claim that God is dead, his claim is that man is dead. Whether this could in some respect be understood within the New Testament meaning of dead through trespasses and sins should probably be left an open question. "Man is dead" means that he is selfless or has lost his self or lost touch with his self. Insofar as this is accepted as a virtue by the Christian faith, it conceals something that is fundamentally contrary to the faith. What it conceals, according to Fromm, is a lonely awareness of insignificance and powerlessness with a loss of self-identity. It could probably be described in Biblical terminology as "lostness." It is "lostness" under the form of negative legalism or sacrificial piety. As such, it can push its way into a place alongside the gospel, so that when the believer negates himself out of faith in the gospel, he contributes to his lostness and thus in effect denies the gospel.

If we take Reik's interpretation of sado-masochism and what is concealed under selflessness, we have a different and yet a surprisingly complementary version of the problem of the law finding a place alongside the gospel undefined by it. Selflessness would conceal a defiance that never yields, no matter what happens to it. It would thus be open to the Biblical description of "hardness of heart." But whichever it is — "lostness" or "hardness of heart" — it is legalism. It is a pious form of life lived under an irrational, arbitrary law and the ultimate power it represents, and this under the guise of a life lived under the gospel of grace.

What these possibilities strongly suggest to us is the need for a deeper and more discriminating appreciation of the dangerous potentialities of sacrificial living and of the passive virtues so

widely associated with the Christian faith. This is all the more important in view of the indiscriminate emphasis on these matters in the church and its ministry. The emphasis may be so blind as to waste talent and opportunity and be obstructive of genuine development. What needs to be realized is that self-denial and self-sacrifice are not necessarily of themselves good. They may be motivated by a contempt for the self, a desire to be rid of an unwanted self and by an inability either to love or to accept love which in essence is suicidal. The apostle Paul seemed to have this dangerous possibility in mind when he warned, "If I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing" (I Cor. 13:3). Under these circumstances the denial of the self is no longer liberating except as some regard self-annihilation as liberating.

This makes it all the more important to emphasize that self-denial in the New Testament is defined within the context of the gospel or within the meaning of grace. When Christ said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me," he meant his followers to do it out of love. An accurate appraisal of the New Testament understanding of self-denial indicates that the special quality of love denoted by the Greek word *agapē* is definitive of such denial. This means that the denial is for a positive and creative purpose. A comparable illustration in daily life would be a poor mother denying herself food to feed her hungry children. In such an example, self-denial is at the same time self-liberating. The love motivating it carries the self out into the lives of others so that it lives in them.

Similarly the law in the proper Biblical understanding of the term is defined within the context of the gospel or the meaning of grace. To put it in the simplest terms, the law of God is the negative aspect of his love (Deut. 6:5; Luke 10:27; Gal. 6:14). Only when the law is separated from such love and derived from a source that is implicitly arbitrary and therefore hateful can it be regarded as authoritarian. As the negative aspect of God's love, law is that ordering of existence which is preventative of chaos. It is God's discipline against self-destruction. It is his upholding

of truth, goodness, beauty, and holiness so that they remain what they are and do not change. It means, as Calvin emphasized, God sustaining all things in their existence without which they would revert to nothingness. In this sense, God's law is the transcendent ground of being.

6: *The Feuerbachian Formula*

FROMM's criticism of sado-masochistic religion, which he prefers to call authoritarian religion, comes to a climax in his appropriation of Feuerbach's theory of projection. At this point, he supplements his criticism with Feuerbach's contention that the God of the Christian religion is only an illusory product of the psychological function of projection. To put his criticism in simple terms, he is saying that the act of sado-masochistic surrender to such a God is at the same time a projection by which such a God is created. As the individual reduces himself to insignificance and powerlessness in such an act, he projects the alienated part of himself outward to form an image or idol which he then calls God. Since the process is largely unconscious, he is unaware of the projection or the illusory nature of the God to which he has surrendered.

As thus described, Fromm's appropriation of Feuerbach's theory means that he derives his atheism from the modern father of illusionistic theories of religion who was mainly responsible for Marx's view of religion as an opiate of the people.¹ He is affirming that he is an opponent of the theistic conception of God as a particularized being distinguishable from the created order as held not only by Reformation Protestantism but by Catholicism and Judaism. He is contending that the doctrine of transcendence which characterizes it presupposes the same kind of arbitrary, permanent difference between God and man as the authoritarian presupposes between master and slave. This applies to all

derivative doctrines with their respective principles of difference — creation, holiness, and redemption — and the line that distinguishes the people of God from the world and the Word of God from the word of man.

In his denial of the doctrine of transcendence with its principle of difference, his attitude is the same as it is to all theology. He is not interested in it as an objective truth that interprets revelation. He is interested in it only as a reflection of the social order mirrored in the subjective life of man. In this sense he regards its principle of difference as a reflection of a social order whose authority is defined by a similar conception of difference — the authority of kings and priests and austere parents. By their identification with such a God, they distinguish themselves from their inferiors and thereby maintain a permanent and unquestionable authority over them.

In his more recently published writings, Fromm leaves no doubt of his view. In *The Art of Loving*, for instance, he says that he wants to make it clear that he does not think in terms of a theistic concept of God. For him 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 period.² In *The Sane Society*, published in the same year (1956) as *The Art of Loving*, he predicts that the theistic concepts of God will disappear in the future development of humanity. With this he predicts the triumph of a new form of religion that will embrace the humanistic teachings of all the great religions of the East and the West. His assumption is that it will be in line with the kind of atheistic, humanistic religion which he himself espouses. The similarity with Feuerbach's humanistic religion is, of course, obvious.³

Actually there is no essential difference between Fromm's theory of sado-masochism and Feuerbach's theory of projection. This is why he can use the one to supplement the other in rejecting the theistic position of Christianity and Judaism. Common to both of the theories is the "God everything — man nothing" formula with its inversely proportional relationship between God

and man. This fact is sufficient to raise the question of the extent to which Fromm derived his theory of sado-masochism from clinical evidence or from Feuerbach's theory of projection. To this it may be added that nowhere does he acknowledge his indebtedness to Feuerbach. It is only with reference to the teachings of Marx that he mentions him, and this only for the purpose of showing Marx's indebtedness to him.⁴ In his Terry Lectures, published under the title of *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (1950), he makes use of Feuerbach's formula without indication of its source.

His version of the formula reads as follows: "The more perfect God becomes, the more imperfect man becomes. He *projects* the best he has onto God and thus impoverishes himself. Now God has all love, all wisdom, all justice — and man is deprived of these qualities, he is empty and poor. . . . Everything he has is now God's and nothing is left in him. *His only access to himself is through God.* In worshiping God he tries to get in touch with that part of himself which he has lost through projection. . . . He necessarily feels like a 'sinner' since he has deprived himself of everything that is good and it is only through God's mercy or grace that he can regain that which alone makes him human."⁵

The original statement of the formula by Feuerbach leaves no doubt of Fromm's indebtedness to him. "To enrich God, man must become poor; that God may be all, man must be nothing. But he desires to be nothing in himself, because what he takes from himself is not lost to him since it is preserved in God. . . . In brief, man in relation to God denies his knowledge, his own thoughts that he may place them in God. Man gives up his personality. . . . He denies human dignity, the human ego; but in return God is to him a selfish, egotistical being, who in all things seeks only himself, his own honour, his own ends. . . . His God is the very beginning of egotism."⁶

In order to understand the significance of the formula, we have to see it as a developing principle of modern left-wing atheism involving three distinguished nineteenth-century German

thinkers: Hegel (1770–1831), Feuerbach (1804–1872), and Marx (1818–1883). It is implicit in Hegel's philosophy of idealism; revised by Feuerbach into a materialistic denial of the God of the Christian faith and revised further by Marx into a denial of the pattern of exploitation in the capitalistic economy. With these facts in mind, we can now examine the way in which Feuerbach appropriated it from Hegel and Marx from Feuerbach.

In this formula, Feuerbach inverts Hegel's philosophical conception of alienation so that what originally applied to God now applies to man. He represents man as generating God out of himself by means of an unconscious process of self-alienation and giving the name God to his image of his self-objectification and absolutization. The inversion follows from Feuerbach's materialistic assumption that "mind" derives from "matter" and not "matter" from "mind" provided we understand in this instance that the derivation involves alienation. To understand the inversion, it is necessary to recall that in his *Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel had developed his conception of alienation in its mature and final form. God as Absolute Spirit is conceived as estranging himself from himself and becoming nature and history. The differentiation (dialectical) within the process resulting in their objectification signifies the alienation. The alienation may be defined as: "the separation of what should be united through the externalization of what should be internal."⁷ This meant that nature and history were really God but in an alienated form. It also meant that they retained a hidden tendency to be reunited (synthesis) with him and to recover their original deification. Since man is part of nature and history, the same applied to him. God as Absolute Spirit estranged himself from himself in becoming man. The differentiation by which man emanated from God and became objectified in the process signified his alienation from God. It meant that man was God in an alienated form and retained within himself a tendency to be reunited with him and to recover his original deification. The formulation of the relationship was only Hegel's way of expressing the cardinal principle of the philosophy of idealism. We can best express this prin-

ciple as Perry puts it in his *Present Philosophical Tendencies*: "Man's spiritual nature is a revelation of the *principle* of reality and his ideals an intimation of the *perfect* and *eternal* reality. So that, but for his limitations, man would be God and taken together with the balance of spiritual life, which compensates for these limitations, he is God."⁸

It is simple to see that the reversal of these presuppositions would yield the conclusion that God is really man. Instead of a way of saying that man is God (idealism), it is a way of saying that God is man (materialism). The assumption is that man is unconscious of the process by which this happens so that he does not realize that God is really only a projection of himself. The psychological deduction is that the projection of a portion of his psyche outward in this deified form is symptomatic of a pathological condition. On this basis, religious faith in God is conceived as "sickness." The alternative is that the projected portion of the psyche be reunited with the rest of the psyche (integration) so that, in the interests of materialistic mental hygiene, faith in God should disappear. In its most general connotation this means that spirit and matter, soul and body, theoretical and practical, be integrated so that no alienation exists between them. It is not a question of reconciling man to God, but of integrating God with man, society, and nature so that he disappears, and they become all in all.

As one who was deeply influenced by Feuerbach's critical disposal of Christian doctrine, Marx came to the conclusion that the theory of man generating God out of himself by an unconscious process of self-alienation was a more appropriate interpretation of what happens in economics rather than in religion. It was not so much for him an interpretation of religious alienation as of economic alienation. The religious form of it was only a reflection of the economic form. In his judgment, Feuerbach had not gone to the root of the problem. If men were compelled to project part of themselves outwardly to form a god alien to themselves, this was only a reflection of what they were compelled to do under the economic circumstances of life. It was what they

were compelled to do under capitalism. Thus by restating Feuerbach's theory, Marx contended that under capitalism the workers are compelled to generate wealth out of themselves which though belonging to them is alienated from them in the accumulation of capital. In other words, Marx substituted money for God and saw the accumulation of money in the hands of the few as the projection into their hands of what did not rightfully belong to them. "The worker becomes poorer," says Marx, "the more wealth he produces and the more his production increases in power and extent."

To expand on Marx's meaning of this and how he adapts the Feuerbachian formula to interpret it, we can use the same quotations as Fromm: "The worker becomes poorer," writes Marx, "the more wealth he produces and the more his production increases in power and extent. . . . All these consequences follow from the fact that the worker is related to the product of his labour as to an alien object. For it is clear on this presupposition that the more the worker expends himself in work, the more powerful becomes the world of objects which he creates in face of himself, the poorer he becomes in his inner life and the less he belongs to himself; it is just the same in religion. The more of himself man attributes to God the less he has left for himself. The worker puts life into the object and his life then belongs no longer to himself but to the object. The greater his activity, therefore, the less he possesses. . . . The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, assumes an external existence, but that it exists independently, outside himself, that it stands opposed to him as an alien power. The life which he has given to the object sets itself against him as an alien and hostile force."⁹

It is clear from such an interpretation that Marx is convinced that the relationship between God and man is inversely proportional. Since the implicit assumption is that God is *against* man, the preposition "against" is enough to suggest the alienation. It is also clear that he is convinced that the relationship is a reflection of the way in which the power of money accumulates over

against the worker at his expense. He sees money power as a god produced in the same manner as Feuerbach believes the gods of religion are produced — by a process of production in which the worker is alienated from himself. As Marx explains it, the worker "does not experience himself as the subject of his own acts as a thinking, feeling, loving person, but experiences himself only in the things he has created, as the object of the externalized manifestations of his powers. He is in touch with himself only by surrendering himself to the products of his creation."¹⁰ Expressed in personal symbolism, this conception of alienation means that the capitalist takes the place of the projected God who is in possession of the projected wealth of the worker. By the alienation of the worker from what is rightfully his own, the capitalist becomes richer and richer as the worker becomes poorer and poorer.

It will now be clearer why Fromm and others have been so deeply influenced by Weber's correlation of Protestantism with capitalism. They were prepared for it by Marx's correlation of religion with capitalism by means of the Feuerbachian formula. Since the religion Marx had in mind was for practical purposes Protestantism, it really amounted to the same thing even though in his thinking the formula applied to any religious faith in an "objective" God. Weber, of course, was not a Marxian. But his essay provided what seemed to be a sociological confirmation of the correlation as Marx had defined it. It seemed to indicate that in the case of Protestantism the correlation was closer.

Fromm's criticism of Protestantism goes farther than this. By means of a psychological elaboration of the arguments of Feuerbach, Marx, and Weber, he contends that with the gospel of grace the correlation is closer still. Conceiving the gospel to mean God everything and man nothing, it is indicative to him of the most extreme confirmation of the Feuerbachian formula as Marx interpreted it. It is indicative of an evangelical form of Protestantism in which man has projected everything out of himself to produce God and has so impoverished himself in the process that he has reduced himself to nothingness. The implication is that such a gospel is correlated with the worst-form of capitalistic ex-

ploitation and prepares the worker to accept it without complaint. With German Nazism conceived as a product of capitalism, Fromm really interprets it as a political evidence of what this gospel can do. In this sense the gospel of grace becomes the most deadly form of religion as an opiate of the people.

It was Freud who largely provided Fromm with the psychological means of reinterpreting the Feuerbachian formula upon this Marxian conception of its economic base and of applying it to the gospel in this manner. Freud's conception of religious faith in God is essentially a version of Feuerbach's view, as we see for instance in his *The Future of an Illusion*. But his conception of the alienation that allegedly produces such faith is distinctively his own. In some respects it is a simpler version, with the alienation conceived in terms of a theory of neurosis in which a certain infantile relationship is what predisposes the individual to have faith in God. The projection is that of a father-image with the emphasis upon the idea of escaping into him. It presupposes that the individual is sensitive to his helplessness in confronting the forces of nature within and outside of himself. And it concludes that religion as a social phenomenon is a collective neurosis.

Fromm is deeply influenced by Freud's view of religion, particularly by its emphasis upon an infantile origin. He accepts the dangers that, on this basis, Freud sees in religion and he affirms just as strongly as Freud that in the interests of health and maturity religion must be overcome. Thus he says that "if man gives up his illusion of a fatherly God, if he faces his aloneness and insignificance in the universe, he will be like a child that has left his father's house. . . . If he knows he has nothing to rely on except his own powers he will learn to use them properly." But he conceives of the father-image as evidence that the kind of religion about which Freud is speaking is authoritarian religion.

The main point of difference is that Fromm rejects Freud's conception of instincts as contributing to the neurotic condition. He is convinced that the social and economic environment as it is brought to bear upon the child through parental authority is a

sufficient explanation. There is no necessity of appealing to instincts. It is obvious, of course, that if Fromm were to accept Freud's view of instincts, it would posit in effect a source of alienation within man himself which is not the result of social or economic circumstances and which cannot be changed by them. Needless to say, one does not wish to imply that Freud believed that man is by nature neurotic — only that he takes seriously instinctual factors among others as contributing to the condition.

Consequently, Freud's conception of alienation is more pessimistic than that of Hegel, Marx, or Fromm; they believed in progress — he cannot believe in progress. He cannot believe in it because his conception of the predicament of man interpreted as neurosis involves an abnormal clinging to the past. Thus, it is understandable why Freud would be accused of having reactionary tendencies and his view of man as having affinities with that of Augustine and the Protestant Reformers. The difference that therefore obtains between Freud and Marx is brilliantly epitomized by Rieff: "If for Marx the past is pregnant with the future with the proletariat as the midwife of history, for Freud the future is pregnant with the past with the psychoanalyst as the abortionist of history."¹¹

As we begin now to assess the significance of such radical criticism of religious faith in God as we have in the several versions of the Feuerbachian formula, we must recognize an important fact. Projection as such is normal to human experience. It enters into a variety of psychological functions. No one, for example, could interest himself in anything without projecting his ideas and anticipations into it. No one would be capable of empathy with another person or of identifying with him without the ability of projecting adequately his own feeling and understanding into him. Both perception and intuition at all levels involve a degree of projection which contributes to the insight that comes of them. All language involves projection inasmuch as the labeling of a thing or person with a name or epithet means the attachment of something projected from the one who uses the language. Imagination at its best in creative theory and achieve-

ment is, to a large extent, a matter of projection.

It is important therefore to realize that what is projected is not necessarily false or the object it presupposes necessarily nonexistent. To assume otherwise is to open the door to a fallacy that would threaten the validity of the projection that enters into these various psychological functions normal to human experience. To put it simply: things are not necessarily unreal or nonexistent because we happen to desire them. Or to put it in the words of E. von Hartmann: "It is plain that things do not exist because we desire them but from this it does not in the least follow that because we desire them things do not exist." Freud's view of religious faith in God as the projection of a father-image due to an infantile fear of internal and external dangers will illustrate the point. He assumed that the father-image was for this reason illusory. At the risk of oversimplification, his argument seems to amount to this: fear of death (total insecurity) is the cause of religion, therefore religion is false. But this is no truer than to say: fear of disease is the cause of sanitation, therefore sanitation is false.

However, in calling attention to such a fallacy, we must understand the Feuerbachian criticism at its strongest rather than its weakest point. Accordingly, we have to see that its criticism of religion presupposes abnormal projection and that this in turn presupposes a condition of alienation. To be fair to Freud, his idea was that the neurotic condition signified such alienation and that the father-image for this reason was probably illusory. He does not put it this way, but he seems to imply it in his argument. It is similar with the other versions of the Feuerbachian criticism. The validity of religious projection is called into question because it is believed to involve the alienation of man from himself. The crucial point in the criticism is its conception of alienation. This is not to deny the epistemological problem involved in all forms of projection. It is only to emphasize the practical distinction between normal and abnormal forms of projection that the conception of alienation requires.

But having recognized that the basic presupposition of the criti-

cism is a conception of alienation, we are in a position to appreciate its basic difficulty. It is that of defining and demonstrating the alienation that is believed to give rise to religious faith in God. Enough variation exists among the several versions of the Feuerbachian formula to suggest that the problem of defining and demonstrating the alienation is not as easily answered as originally assumed. One of the main weaknesses, it would seem, in Feuerbach's interpretation is just at this point. He assumes some kind of alienation, but he describes it generally as speculation and sophistry and specifically as imagination and egotism. He believes there is something inhuman about religion and particularly in its failure to think in terms of the real man. There is a touch of Comtian positivism in his opinion that scientific development gradually leaves philosophy and religion behind. But he never really tells us why men project an object of faith as he believes they do. He has much to say on what they project but not on why they project.

Marx was confident that he had identified the alienation which presumably gave rise to the projection of an object of devotion called God. Man was compelled to internalize the best of himself because inwardly he was divided against himself. It was the effect upon him of capitalistic exploitation which was mainly the result of the institution of private ownership. The assumption was that a socialistic society and economy would gradually overcome the alienation and with it the need for faith in God.

Freud, as we have seen, generally ignores the social and economic interpretation of alienation. His theory of neurosis puts the emphasis mainly upon the way in which the individual has come to terms with his instincts. It focuses upon the relatively helpless condition of human infancy and provides evidence that there is a source of alienation within man's nature itself. The perpetuation of infantile fear is the predisposing cause of religious projection.

Fromm combines the views of both Freud and Marx, but only by the elimination of anything that would attribute a source of alienation to man's nature itself. He explains the alienation as

the sado-masochistic effects upon man of irrational power or authority characteristic of capitalistic and mass society. This in his judgment is what gives rise to a projected (particularized) object of religious devotion.

But there is a question that none of these interpretations answers. Why do they always assume that man projects the *best* out of himself to produce the god (or gods) he worships and as a result *impoverishes* himself? If it is a matter of accepting the Feuerbachian projection theory, is there not enough in the history of religion to suggest the opposite possibility? Was not the conduct of some of the ancient gods of Greece scandalous enough to discourage any thought that only the best in man is ever projected out of him as an object of devotion? Indeed, the assumption that man worships only the best of himself in its projected form seems to be a legacy of idealistic philosophy that not even Marx has seen fit to eliminate from his conception of the alienation that contributes to religion.

Instead, man may project the worst of himself out of himself in order to produce the god he worships, and this with an opposite result. Instead of impoverishing himself, he preserves the *best* of himself within himself. If it be questioned whether the projection involves alienation, the answer would be that the alienation consists of an unwillingness to accept the worst in himself. It would also consist of an overwillingness to concentrate on the best in himself. If it be questioned whether he actually worships such a god, the answer would be consistent with the nature of the projection. He worships the god whom his burden produces because of the impression that the burden has been accepted by the god. In this sense he is relieved. But he is not forgiven in the Biblical sense of the term because this would involve a radically honest repentance of the alienation itself that would end the god. If it is a question of forgiveness, he is badly "pardoned."

Turning to a more positive appraisal of these several versions of the Feuerbachian formula, we find that it is often acknowledged with considerable justification that what they describe is

the process by which idols are produced. They indicate how man contrives to worship his own image or to fashion gods out of his own functions or out of the interests of the society in which he lives. They also indicate how he deceives himself in the process so that the idol becomes essentially a "lie." If we consider the manner in which the deceptive process or the alienation is conceived, we should probably add that it describes the idol-making potentialities of Western society. The type of man and socioeconomic situation presupposed and the one-sided emphasis on the projection only of the best in man favor this qualification. They indicate the depth and subtlety with which idolatry enters into our socioeconomic life and into our religion. In principle, however, it is not so different from idolatry in other periods of history. In every age, men have tended to make their gods in their own image, and in such gods to have unconsciously portrayed the kind of society and level of civilization to which they have belonged. Their anthropomorphism and in its more refined sense their analogies of God have been often transformed into idolatry.

The Bible is deeply sensitive to this problem, as its persistent concern over the danger of idolatry so clearly indicates. This is why it is so concerned about the identity of the God who is worshiped and served. This is why it emphasizes the importance of knowing his name and of reverencing it. This is why the Ten Commandments include the prohibition of taking the sacred name in vain (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11), and it is why the Lord's Prayer bids us hallow the sacred name. Indeed, a point was reached in the Hebrew tradition that the sacred name was not even pronounced, so great was the fear of taking it in vain.

Yet it is significant that the Bible does not resort to abstract language to avoid anthropomorphism and the possible danger of reading something into the name of God that does not properly belong to it. The Bible does not assume that one can escape the problem implicit in anthropomorphism in this manner. One would still incur the risk of reading something into the name of God even with the most abstract concepts or even with no con-

cepts at all. Instead, the Bible uses such a variety of anthropomorphic language, names, and analogies that the impression is created that it is coping with the problem by this very means. The impression is created that no one of them by itself is adequate and that even all of them taken together are not adequate enough to identify God. God is like a father. Yet there are important respects in which he is not like a father. So the analogy at this point breaks down. God is like a king. Yet there are important respects in which he is not like a king. Again the analogy breaks down. And so with each of the other analogies: husband, farmer, shepherd, lord, servant, judge, creator, redeemer, advocate — each is inadequate and breaks down. This means that what each of them does is to point or witness to the identity of God without naming him in a “pin-pointed” fashion — that is, without describing him as if he were a physical object.

To take any of them literally as if they named God in this fashion — as if he were exactly like a human father or a political king — would be idolatry. It would only be a projection of the contemporary meaning of father or king into him. God would then be only a reflection of the kind of father or king typical of the society and in this respect only an apotheosis of the society. In this sense literalism would mean idolatry. But just because the Bible uses a great variety of analogies that are intended to point or witness instead of describing, all of which break down because of their inadequacy, it signifies that God has to name himself if he is to be really named. We can exhaust the whole range and richness of our language and fail to name him if he does not break through our language and independently and objectively from his side name himself. From our side he is really nameless because of the inadequacy of our language. Thus when Fromm says that God is nameless we can agree with him to this extent. We can say that no man is able really to name God. Or as the New Testament says, “No man has ever seen God.” Indeed, all attempts to name him literally and in the strict sense of the term end in idolatry. To this extent we can agree with Fromm when he says that for God to have a name signifies idolatry.¹²

But we cannot agree with him when he insists that the theory of projection as a theory of idolatry eliminates the particularity of God as a being, entity, or person. We cannot agree with him because it rules out the possibility of God naming himself in the Biblical significance of making himself known. It rules out the Biblical conception of God acting and thus particularizing himself. If we may select a text to express this idea, Ps. 103:7 seems appropriate: “He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.” For the same reason we have to reject Fromm’s essentially pantheistic idea that God is “the symbol of the principle of unity behind the manifoldness of nature.”¹³ Similarly we have to reject his assertion that God as the inconceivable ultimate reality is the nameless Oriental Tao and the “absolute nothing” of the European medieval mystic Meister Eckhart. Neither the principle of unity, nor the Tao, nor the “absolute nothing” can be equated with the Biblical conception of God. Accordingly it is quite unjustifiable as Fromm does in his interpretation of Ps. 135 virtually to make a Marxian out of the psalmist and in his interpretation of Ex. 3:13-14 to make of Moses an atheistic mystic, if not a Freudian. His reference to monotheism prohibiting the particularity of God, as if particularity as such were idolatry, is not a reference to monotheism at all. It is a reference to philosophical monism. Since he has already so clearly renounced theism, there should be no doubt in our minds that when he speaks of monotheism he really means monism.

Moreover, we have to question his assumption that increasing abstractness in conceptions of God means that there is less likelihood of projection and therefore of idolatry. The assumption is implied in his argument as it appears in *The Art of Loving*. Beginning with totemism, followed by functional gods, then by anthropomorphic gods both male and female, and finally god as a symbol of abstract principles and beyond this as the unity of being, we have a concept of development in religion that illustrates this assumption. The development is conceived as proceeding from gods that are highly particularized through stages in which they are less particularized until a final nonparticularized stage

of pure abstraction is reached. Paralleling this development from high particularity to that of pure abstraction is the assumption that the extent to which psychological projection operates in the production of gods decreases with decreasing particularity. Presumably in the final stage there is no projection.

But projection is not eliminated in the final stage. The relativity of the conception of God to history and society, which the assumption presupposes, cannot be forgotten in the final stage as if Fromm could say to us, "Now we have arrived at the truth about God." He cannot relax his critical method at this stage as if he had left all possibility of idolatry behind by entering the nonparticular, nonprojective realm of atheistic mysticism. God as the symbol of truth, justice, and love is also a projection. There is a great variation in what individuals and societies mean by these abstract terms. The awareness and expression of each is always concrete and particular. No one ever finds truth as such. He only finds truths. In relating himself to such a god, he projects into the symbol those truths, loves, and justices which are most meaningful to him at the moment.

We are now in a position to offer three somewhat basic criticisms of the Feuerbachian formula or the theory of projection which it contains. Each pertains to its presupposition that the relationship between God and man is inversely proportional — not, of course, in a strictly mathematical sense, but as a matter of principle.

The first concerns the resemblance of the theory to the old legalistic conception of a man laying up a store of merit in heaven and sacrificing himself to accumulate it. The history of religion provides a great variety of examples of this common conception. God is pictured as weighing in some manner the accumulated merit against the accumulated sin or as having an accounting system by which he records the accumulation of the one or the other. Whatever the picture, the assumption is the same — a continuity between God and man by which man is able to contribute something of himself into the possession of God. In the case of what may be described as positive legalism in which the indi-

vidual thinks more of the positive good that he is achieving for himself and others the inversely proportional relationship is not as apparent. It appears in the fact that his sacrificing of himself for this purpose is more incidental to his action. His attitude to himself is somewhat more positive. But in the case of negative legalism in which the individual thinks as much or more of negating himself as of the positive good he is achieving it is very apparent. The more he negates himself, the more he believes he is laying up a store of merit in heaven.

Ordinarily most individuals assume that their store of merit laid up in heaven outweighs their store of sin laid up in the same place. Because they trust in their merit rather than in God, who is only a kind of receptacle or recorder of their treasure, it is in actuality their God. This positive contribution of something of themselves, this treasure out of themselves, is in truth their real God. Interpreted in this manner, the old idea of laying up a store of merit in heaven differs little in meaning from the Feuerbachian theory of projection. It seems, of course, to be more of a conscious process than projection inasmuch as the individual is aware of the merit as his own. But do we know enough of legalism to say that this conscious aspect is the only aspect and that there is no unconscious aspect corresponding to it? The persistence of legalism in the history of religion strongly suggests there is this unconscious aspect.

As the real object of trust, the laying up of merit in heaven is in effect laying up God in heaven. Or if it be preferable to assume that the will of God is determined by the merit laid up by man in heaven, it is no great step to claim that by this indirect means God is laid up in heaven. This is really all that Feuerbach, Marx, and Fromm are saying. They are reminding us in a somewhat startling manner that all the theistic religion they have ever seen is legalistic and that legalism is idolatry. They are telling us nothing essentially new. They are only exposing the implicit logic of legalism by their argument that it involves a projection which in theological language means that it issues in idolatry. At the ordinary, economic level of life, the negative effect that the

legalistic attitude has upon man in his concern for money instead of heavenly merit was a problem of particular interest to Marx. Naturally, he did not speak of it as legalistic, but the claim that a man with money makes upon others is comparable to the claim that a legalist with merit makes upon God. His money, like his merit, comes between him and others and between him and the intrinsic value of his work. He is alienated from them and his work as a legalist is alienated from God and the intrinsic quality of his ethical life.

If the concept of legalism seems to restrict the meaning of projection to the ethical aspect of religious life, it should be remembered that legalism can enter just as much into other aspects of religious life. It can enter into the ceremonial aspect so that the correct performance of a ritual is assumed to be meritorious. It can enter into the intellectual aspect so that the correct formulation of a doctrine is assumed to be meritorious. In a comparable manner it can enter into the psychological aspect of religious life so that the correct feeling or attitude or aesthetic quality is assumed to be meritorious. The individual wants to "feel" right and has a certain norm or standard by which he decides when this has happened.

In saying this, we are returning to the problem of law that underlies Fromm's conception of authoritarian religion and that we have recognized as the problem of the law taking its place alongside the gospel undefined by the gospel. If the Feuerbachian projection theory be correctly understood as revealing the inherent idolatry of legalism and probably at the deeper level of its unconscious source, then what takes its place alongside the gospel is idolatry. It is the best of himself that the individual projects into this position, or if we accept the opposite interpretation, it is the worst of himself. Indeed, it could be that he projects the worst of himself into a position anterior to the gospel as his condition of hearing it and the best of himself into a position subsequent to the gospel as his response to hearing it. In either position he is merely succeeding in resisting it. He has not begun with the real source of his alienation and has not with a radical honesty re-

pented of the projection itself. This means that he has not repented, first, of the fallacious manner in which he has conceived of his sin and then of the fallacious manner in which he has conceived of his goodness.

The second criticism concerns the presupposition of a place where the merit is accumulated but is not itself part of the accumulation. This has reference to God as a receptacle or recorder of merit independent of the merit. Interpreting these older metaphors in terms of the more recent metaphor of projection, it concerns the presupposition of a screen or background upon which the projection is made.¹⁴ There can be no projection without this condition. It is the same with perception as a psychological function. If, in seeing, there were no screen or background to catch or obstruct the vision, if everything were transparent, there would be no vision. If in looking through the window one could look through the trees and buildings of the landscape, one would see nothing. The only reason one can see is that something catches or obstructs one's vision.¹⁵ In a comparable way, projection of any kind presupposes a screen or something already there — if only a here-there structure — which makes the projection possible. The same is true of imagination and fantasy with their here-there structuring on the basis of sense experience. There is an implicit recognition of something beyond or out there which is other than projection and which cannot be eliminated. There could be no projection without this spatial analogy with its here-there limits. The problem is that the limit defined by "there" cannot be wholly illusory, otherwise the spatial analogy breaks down and the experience of projection dissolves. In this sense the way is left open, as it were, for the concept of "otherness" or the transcendence of God to which Fromm has been so unequivocally opposed. It allows for the possibility of what Tillich has called the God above God even though it may be necessary to qualify his interpretation of what this means.¹⁶ It allows for the possibility of the one God above the many gods (idols). The Feuerbachian formula, of course, ignored this possibility. The tacit assumption was that everything is projected out of the inner life of man, including

the here-there structuring of experience with the screen or background as the outer limit.

What we are suggesting is that the transcendence of God is the doctrine that serves the purpose of denying that any projected God is a valid deity. To understand why the doctrine serves this purpose, we have to understand that we do not mean by transcendence a quality of otherness on the part of God that is the equivalence of arbitrariness or which in principle is opposite to man. It is not something against man, as the Feuerbachian formula implies by its inversely proportional relationship between God and man. It is not legalistic, as the formula seems to be — with God always depicted in the role of a judge (i.e., an authority figure). It is not other or different from man as the logical opposite (Hegel's thesis-antithesis) to him, as could be claimed, for instance, even of the devil or of the abyss of nonbeing.

Instead, it is the kind of transcendence that we have already defined sufficiently without need of further elaboration. It signifies that God is different *from* man in order to be free *for* man. It is a transcendence that is understood not in terms of man's self-movement toward God (projection) but in terms of God's self-movement toward man. The way in which it invalidates any projected deity is that the latter movement invalidates the former. The self-movement of God toward man (Biblical concept of revelation) exposes the projective (idolatrous) character of man's self-movement toward him. This is why genuine transcendence, so far from being a product of projection, invalidates it.

But if it invalidates projected idols, it also invalidates nonprojected idols. It invalidates any atheistic self-sufficient man whose absolutizing of something within himself thereby constitutes a nonprojective idolatry. It denies both forms of idolatry because both falsify the actuality of the total situation in which the human being finds himself. The one attempts to find security in the projected self, while the other attempts to find it in the strength internal to the self.

As an idol, the strength internal to the self is usually conceived as some absolutized essence, potency, or principle within man or

some absolutized freedom to create himself. It is presumed to have many, if not most, of the normative qualities that the Bible attributes to the transcendent God. On this basis, man becomes the measure of things. The god within him makes him normative. But there is such a variety of possible gods within man that the question of which god becomes acute for any serious choice: reason, will to power, productivity, love, sex, creative unconscious, aesthetic intuition, and even the Freudian id. The problem is that no single one or combination of these is satisfactory because a force or a function or a combination of them is subordinate to the personal agent that makes the choice. Each, moreover, is subject to the same fundamental problems, dislocations, changes, disintegration, and death as he. Nor is it a solution to redefine them as common factors to humanity and in this sense give them an enduring quality. For man, the species is subject to similar problems on a larger scale and could become extinct.

The more serious the choice, therefore, the more it involves what some describe as man's search for himself or man's search for a center within himself. Described in this manner, it seems to become a matter of projection in reverse to which we could probably give the name injection. The individual would not be seeking if, in some respect, he did not know in advance what he was looking for. He cannot find it in himself, yet he is prompted to look for it in the depths within himself which in this dimension transcend himself. It is the outward search for a god in reverse that becomes an inward search for a god in the depths — an absolute in the depths rather than an absolute in the heights. If in the end he only finds what he is looking for, how is this different in principle from projection?

If, therefore, the doctrine of transcendence serves the purpose of denying a god projected out of man to what we may call the *zenith* of his life — using an astronomical metaphor — it serves the opposite purpose. It denies a god injected into man to what we may call the *nadir* of his life. This follows from the fact that the transcendence of God is not only a concept of a boundary *out there beyond us* but a concept of a boundary *in here deep*

within us. It denies the nadir idols of men as well as the zenith idols of men. The argument of the screen applies to both ends of the here-there structure.

The third criticism of the Feuerbachian formula concerns its failure to recognize that in the Bible, and more explicitly in the New Testament and in all forms of Evangelical Christianity, the orientation or movement is in the opposite direction from what the formula represents. It is thus not a question of man's movement toward God, as the formula implies, but a question of man's movement away from God. It is not, as we have it in Freud's version of the formula, a question of man escaping *into* God but a question of man escaping *from* God. The emphasis is not upon man's helplessness in confronting the powers of nature inside and outside himself. Indeed, the picture of the frail, weak, timid, lonely little man quivering in fear of the big, booming world around him and of the forces of nature that add to the threat of the world has been overdone in psychological criticisms of religion. Instead, the emphasis is upon the strength of man, or more correctly, upon what he presumes his strength to be and can accomplish. It concerns his presumption respecting his gifts, powers, achievements, and ambitions—his glory in himself and in his world. The emphasis is not so much upon the childish world as upon the adult world; not so much upon the primitive world as upon the civilized, sophisticated world. The problem is undoubtedly that of man's movement *away* from God—his *escape from God*.

This is why the Bible consistently portrays God as taking the initiative and therefore as acting, sending, seeking, pleading, and loving. It is in contrast to man who is consistently portrayed as dull of hearing, turning away, wandering astray, and losing himself. The assumption is that man does not naturally turn to what the Bible means by the real God. He attempts to escape from him in the sense of escaping from ultimate reality. He makes a genuine attempt to put as much distance between himself and God as possible—symbolized by the prodigal son who went away into the far country to get away from his father. It is an escape

into idolatry, including both projective and nonprojective forms. In the final analysis, there is no difference between an escape into a zenith idol and into a nadir idol. The only consideration is the fact of the escape. In this sense the idol signifies security; God, insecurity. At the crucial point in the New Testament understanding of this theme, when men are confronted with the real God, he is so different from their idolatrous conceptions of him that they judge him to be a criminal and execute him. Their execution of him is only another way of putting distance between themselves and him. He signifies such insecurity for them that to sustain their security they have to destroy him.

The reason for this emphasis on man escaping from God brings us back again to the Biblical recognition of genuine guilt as a fundamental human problem. Escaping, hiding, getting lost, wishing to be small and insignificant are reactions as typical of a guilty man as they are of a weak man. As we have previously emphasized, this is a matter of objective guilt as distinguished from feelings of guilt. Although in practice not inseparable from feelings of guilt whether conscious or unconscious, it is anterior to them as a culpable act.

The solution is not that of providing the security which he wants and into which he tries to escape. For such security would only protect his guilt, and in the idiom of the street, "let him get away with it." It would be essentially dishonest and therefore not according to the truth. It would only compound his guilt. Instead, the solution is a "forgiveness" that is as objective and as genuine as his guilt.

Even when he turns or returns in response to such forgiveness, it would be a serious error to conceive of this phase of his action as a projection. His turning or returning is in no sense a Feuerbachian self-movement of man toward his god. It is not as if he were escaping back into a god of his own making. The import of the Biblical metaphors pertaining to this return phase of his action should not be overlooked. He is brought back or drawn back as is represented by the metaphor of the shepherd bringing the lost sheep back to the fold. He is not pushed from within as

much as pulled from without — not by force but by the merciful love of God. This love is represented as a costly undertaking by God, who sacrifices much to recover one lost individual. Yet it issues in joy to both. It is thus a question not of finding a security comparable to an infantile return to the father, mother, or womb but an ability to accept life and human existence in a positive way. In contrast to infantility, it is a question of maturity.

7: *The External Source of Alienation*

LIKE MOST persons who are influenced by naturalistic philosophy, Fromm holds that society is the great corrupter of the individual who by nature is good.¹ As the great outside power that takes advantage of the individual from the time of his childhood, before he knows what is happening to him, it structures him in a deep and pervasive manner throughout the whole of his life. In doing this, it invariably prevents him from becoming himself and realizing his potentialities. It thwarts the expression of the truly natural within him which by definition is the truly human. Therefore, insofar as he is socially determined he is invariably corrupted, and insofar as he is self-determined he is invariably good. In his development of such a conception, Fromm is concerned mainly with the effect of capitalistic society upon the individual and more particularly with the effect of mass society. The corrupting influence is generally described as authoritarianism and psychologically analyzed as sado-masochism. But it is essentially a Marxian interpretation of the alienating effect upon the individual of the economic circumstances of his life.

It will be recognized that such a conception corresponds with the practical observation that there always seems to be something from the outside to make things difficult for the individual. There always seems to be some organization, group, or representative that monopolizes, exploits, controls, inspects, or makes demands upon him without regard to his genuine interests. All the way from big government, big business and labor organiza-

tions to the local authorities, there seems to be more and more of an encroachment upon the individual and his liberties. If he is aware of the situation, he has to be continually on the watch to preserve what little of himself and his possessions still remains distinctively his own. In economic and social affairs as well as in world politics this is a familiar picture. The individual becomes convinced of the justice of his cause for no other reason than the disproportion of power against him and the poverty from which he so often suffers. It seems only right to him that justice should be on the side of the insignificant and powerless.

In Fromm's conception of the adverse effects of society upon the individual, the threat to his integrity begins most frequently with arbitrary parental demands. The authoritarian parent is a demanding parent who expects unquestionable obedience from his child. This tends to break his will and to destroy his spontaneity and independence. If the child fights back successfully, he may escape these consequences; but if he fails, he will suffer from them. At this point Fromm differs from Freud in his interpretation of the origin of neurosis. He agrees that the oedipus complex is at the center of the neurosis but rejects the sexual interpretation in favor of one that stresses conflict with parental authority. A neurosis in his judgment is the intraphysical consequence of a failure to resolve such a conflict.²

Beyond the sphere of arbitrary parental demands, Fromm calls attention to other and more subtle ways in which society as an outside power imposes its will upon the individual with harmful effects on him. Through anonymous authority, disguised as common sense, science, psychic health, normality, or public opinion, society is able to impose its will upon the individual more effectively than by direct demand. This is because no one detects the imperative connotation of these terms or finds any overt authority against which to fight back. An atmosphere of subtle suggestion, typical of that created by the advertisers, is associated with these terms which compels the individual to do what he would not otherwise do. He obeys without suspecting that he is being ordered.

By a still more persuasive and subtle means of imposing its will upon the individual, society compels him to adopt the role or type of personality that goes with his particular cultural status. By automaton conformity he "ceases to be himself" and "becomes exactly as all others are or as they expect him to be." Even though he has his thoughts and feelings, they are not his thoughts and feelings but those which belong to the role or personality he has adopted. In a chameleon-like manner he merely takes upon himself the color of his surroundings. He "becomes an automaton," says Fromm, "identical with millions of other automatons around him. . . . But the price he pays is . . . high; it is the loss of his self."³

The marketing orientation best exemplifies this process as well as Fromm's analytical skill. We can do no better than quote his powerful description of its effect upon the individual. "Man does not only sell commodities, he sells himself and feels himself to be a commodity. The manual laborer sells his physical energy; the business man, the physician, the clerical employee, sell their 'personality.' They have to have a 'personality' if they are to sell their products or services. . . . As with any other commodity it is the market which decides the value of these human qualities, yes, even their very existence. . . . Thus, the self-confidence, the 'feeling of self,' is merely an indication of what others think of the person. . . . If he is sought after, he is somebody; if he is not popular he is simply nobody. This dependence of self-esteem on the success of the 'personality' is the reason why for modern man popularity has this tremendous importance."⁴

The alienating effect upon the individual of arbitrary parental demands, anonymous authority, the imposition of a role or personality that to a large extent is economically determined extends beyond his private personal life, as we see from the fact that he feels he can sell his personality. It enters into his relationships with others, into his relationships with things, and with the natural order of life. He is artificially related to himself, to everyone, and everything. As a stranger to his true and essential self who therefore does not know himself or does not experience himself

as the creator of his own acts, he is equally a stranger to others. He knows them in the alienated context of daily life as one automaton knows another, but he does not really know or trust them. He and his world and they and their world have become depersonalized. There are few things experienced of themselves for their own intrinsic value. Most things are given a money value which is another sign of alienation. On this basis, society is organized from one level to another in what tends to become more and more of a bureaucratic structure. Its members are "organization men" who manipulate people as they manipulate things and money.

Fromm believes that alienation affects everything the individual sees and does. It is a total concept. It affects the way he loves, works, plays, and thinks. It affects his leisure time as it does his productivity. It is a deep sickness of the spirit, a conflict between the existence and essence of man, between man and nature, man and man. It means that "man does not experience himself as the active bearer of his own powers and richness, but as an impoverished 'thing' dependent on powers outside of himself, unto whom he has projected his living substance."⁵ As Schaar points out in his *Escape from Authority*, Fromm retains the core of Marx's concept of alienation. He retains Marx's four types of alienation: that of the worker from the process of his work, from the product of his work, from himself, and from his fellowmen. Along with this he retains Marx's treatment of commodity fetishism, worship of money, the impact of the market upon man, and the broad outlines of his discussion of work. But he has "expanded the idea at its margins" in two ways: "First he has broadened the idea to cover a greater range of phenomena. Secondly, he has given the idea more psychological depth." Schaar thinks that on the whole Fromm has gained more than he has lost by this expansion. This is mainly because his perspective is that of modern mass society rather than of class society and because it avoids Marx's narrow class solution.⁶ But with these qualifications, it conceives of capitalism as the principal source of alienation even in its newer form as mass society,

To this point we have outlined Fromm's conception of society as the external source of man's alienation from himself. Now we have to consider his conception of consciousness as the subjective medium of the alienation. This, of course, has been anticipated in the concept of the authoritarian conscience as the introjected external authority operating within the subjective life of the individual. But it goes beyond this. It concerns the whole range of consciousness as that aspect of the psychical life of the individual which relates to the external and objective world. To be conscious means to be aware of what is happening in the outside world. But since this world is predominantly social and economic, it follows that the consciousness of man will be the most vulnerable aspect of his being to the alienation which derives from these sources. This will mainly concern the ideological content of his conscious life—the mass of ideas, beliefs, and opinions that he has absorbed from his surroundings or accepted uncritically from others. In this sense the mind of man is alienated by all the indoctrination to which it has been subjected from the earliest years.

It will be understood, therefore, why Fromm is deeply suspicious of consciousness and why he says that its content is mostly fictional and delusional and does not represent reality. "Consciousness as such," he says, "is nothing desirable. Only if the hidden reality (that which is unconscious) is revealed, and hence no longer is hidden (i.e., has become conscious) has something valuable been achieved." If we ask why he is so suspicious of consciousness, we find an answer similar to that of Marx, namely, a social interpretation of its content and function. The reason for the largely fictional and delusional quality of consciousness—is that society fills it with these fictitious and unreal notions. "Consciousness represents social man, the accidental limitations set by the historical situation into which an individual is thrown."⁷ Society, according to Fromm, has its own way of conditioning the awareness of the individual so as to filter out what he will perceive or not perceive. There are three ways in particular by which it achieves this surprising result: its language, logic, and taboos. Only those experiences which can be

expressed through its language and its prevailing logic and which escape the taboos integral to its way of life are accepted into consciousness. In this way as in most societies the majority are conditioned and controlled by a ruling elite. "Most of human history," Fromm says, "is characterized by the fact that a small minority has ruled over and exploited the majority of its fellows. In order to do so, the minority has usually used force; but force is not enough. In the long run, the majority has had to accept its own exploitation voluntarily — and this is only possible if its mind has been filled with all sorts of lies and fictions, justifying and explaining the minority's rule."⁸

In sharp contrast to such a negative view of consciousness, Fromm's view of the unconscious life of man is distinctly positive. While the conscious relates to the external and objective world, the unconscious relates to the internal and subjective world. Because it is not exposed to the influence of the social and economic world, it is considered to be the source and norm of what is authentically human. In this sense it is the basis of the true and essential self. As a result of such a sharp distinction between the conscious and unconscious life of the alienated individual, Fromm conceives of him as suffering from a profound dichotomy, or split. This is the distinction between the power of the outside world (society) and that of the inside world (self) as each conflicts with the other. Although it is an old conception that has been posited in various forms — reason in conflict with desire, flesh with spirit, law with eros — it is here an interpretation of the dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity. In common with mystics and existentialists, Fromm sees the dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity in modern Western society as no longer normal but abnormal and in fact its deepest dilemma. In its original form, the dichotomy pertains to the dialectic of freedom as spirit emerges into consciousness from its primal unity with nature and is distinguished or split off from nature. In this Hegelian sense the split is inseparable from the problem of freedom. It becomes abnormal only when the individual wishes to retreat into nature or to escape from freedom

into something beyond it. When he is caught between the possibility of retreating completely into nature (thesis) or separating completely from her (antithesis), his only normal alternative is to find his solution (salvation) in an integration of the two (synthesis). Marx reinterpreted this conception of the split and designated it as the fundamental problem of capitalism. This is what we have seen in his conception of alienation interpreted in an economic context. But he never provided an explicit account of its origin and development except that he attributed it to the division of labor with particular reference to private ownership.⁹

There is a weakness, however, in Fromm's conception of the split between objectivity and subjectivity as he uses it to define the problem of alienation in capitalistic society — a weakness that he shares with Marx. It is his total silence on the possibility of science and technology as sources of alienation independently of the economic and political form of society. Everything is blamed on capitalism with no thought of the extent to which science and technology have structured capitalism independently of its concept of freedom. Even in his more recent conviction that American and Russian societies are becoming increasingly managerial and therefore increasingly similar, there is no consideration given to science and technology as factors contributing to this.¹⁰ There is no consideration of how they enter into capitalism and communism as industrial societies and define the spirit and pattern of their life. Nor is there any consideration of how they may shape the future course of society and add to the alienation which the individual presently experiences. If the individual finds it increasingly difficult to know where he is in society today, he finds himself increasingly wondering what kind of society he will wake up and see tomorrow.

The possibility of technology as a source of alienation largely concerns the change in the mode of living required to reap the benefits offered by the increasing number and complexity of modern machines. The change not only offers benefits; it restricts behavior to the pattern of use defined by the machines. It involves a point of no return in which men are so dependent upon

machines and so changed by them that there is no turning back. Once the automobile was invented, for example, it was here to stay in one form or another. It gave men freedom to ride greater distances, but it discouraged the healthy benefits of walking. Since there are thousands of machines each conditioning our lives in thousands of subtle ways to specific patterns, we find that the freedom which they give is their freedom to which we are bound. It is a machine-patterned freedom which defines a complex that more and more assumes the appearance of imprisonment. The complex is highly interesting, efficient, and dynamic, but for all its benefits it enslaves us. It gives us great power but imprisons us within the power so that we are carried along by it. In the end we are left to wonder whether we can any longer live and act and think by ourselves, with a freedom that is our own.

If we look closely at the scientific method that is the progenitor of the machines, we can see how the alienating effect begins with it. In it the observer abstracts himself from his activity in the interest of objectivity. In such an abstraction he is conforming to the concept of alienation as Marx and Fromm define it — he is no longer the subject of his action. He is abstracted from it as a spectator who is looking on. He is outside the process and he is outside the product of it. Indeed, he is the split man whose subjectivity and objectivity are strictly divorced from each other. Indeed, if he were to carry this attitude into all areas of life and become the objective man in everything — exclusively objective to his fellowmen, his wife and family, and to himself and for this reason always on the outside as a stranger looking on — he would be a thoroughly alienated man. He would not feel or experience his life and its powers as his own. He would have lost touch with others and with himself. The possibility of this happening to large numbers of people in our time arises from the fact that in the scientific age objectivity becomes more than a method. It becomes a spirit and a way of life in which other people are examined as things, cases, numbers, and no longer as persons.¹¹

But if science and technology are sources of alienation, it raises

the question of the extent to which the alienation can be traced back to nature herself. Both of them have such an intimate relationship with nature that the possibility of alienation coming from them suggests it coming from her. This brings us to a second weakness in Fromm's position — his silence on nature as a possible source of alienation. It is understandable, of course, why he would want to be silent on this possibility. To acknowledge it in nature would oblige him to acknowledge it in human nature. The one would follow from the other. If he were to doubt that mother nature was pure and undefiled, he would have to doubt that her noblest child was pure and undefiled. This he seems unprepared to do.

But in effect he actually breaks his silence when he insists that life has no meaning except the meaning which man gives it, and that man should face the fact that he is alone and insignificant in a meaningless universe. We referred to this in an earlier chapter where we suggested that there were problems peculiar to man that were other than economic problems and that required other answers than economic versions of the gospel. But now we examine it as a tacit admission that nature is a source of alienation. What he says is clear and unmistakable. Speaking of his non-theistic system in which he rejects the possibility of any spiritual realm outside of man or transcending him, he regards love, reason, and justice as arising out of nature through the process of human evolution. "In this view," Fromm continues, "there is no meaning to life, except the meaning man himself gives to it; man is utterly alone except inasmuch as he helps another."¹² Following the view of Freud which we previously quoted, Fromm says that "if man gives up his illusion of a fatherly God, if he faces his aloneness and insignificance in the universe, he will be like a child that has left his father's house. . . . Man must educate himself to face reality. If he knows he has nothing to rely on except his own powers, he will learn to use them properly."¹³

In these quotations Fromm is saying that there is no natural theology or philosophy derived from nature by scientific investigation which will give purpose to human living. In saying this,

he is closing the door against any conclusion that its design and beauty are evidence of God or that its irrationality and cruelty are evidence of the devil. Instead, he is emphasizing its complete neutrality or indifference to man except as he in his own development creates meaning and endows it with that meaning. But he is emphasizing something further which is of importance in view of his insistence that alienation comes only from society and from a certain kind of society. He is emphasizing that nature is alien to man. He is emphasizing that so far from feeling at home in nature, man feels himself to be a stranger.

This is acknowledged in another form in Fromm's *The Sane Society*. It has particular reference to man's natural development but still without any modification of his view that society is the only source of alienation. Referring to man's emergence from nature as a being conscious of his uniqueness and separateness and in this sense transcending nature, he speaks of the problem that this creates for man. "Self-awareness, reason and imagination disrupt the 'harmony' which characterizes animal existence. Their emergence has made man into an anomaly, into the freak of the universe. . . . He is set apart while being a part; he is homeless yet chained to the home he shares with all creatures."¹⁴ In such a description we have a clear acknowledgment that there is a form of alienation which arises out of the natural development of man apart from the effects of society. It is an alienation that is inseparable from man's emergence into life as a fully conscious human being aware of his self-identity. And most significantly it makes him an anomaly and a freak of the universe—the most descriptive words for his alien character that could have been used. Thus from both sides—from the meaninglessness of nature and from man's anomalous and freakish uniqueness—it is a question of natural alienation. It is clear therefore that society is not the exclusive source of alienation.

But there is a special aspect of this natural alienation which requires consideration. It concerns the meaning that man has to put into nature in order to feel at home in her. Since there is no meaning in nature, man's ability to put meaning into her defines

an important difference between them. Although the ability is a product of his development out of nature, it is he who generates the meaning and reads it into her. The tricky word is "emergence," or, as Fromm puts it, "man transcending nature," which of course is a transcendence conceived within the confines of his monistic system. In this respect, man is a being beyond the natural order and alienated from it who generates meaning out of himself and puts it into this order when by definition it is not there. The process is suspiciously similar to Feuerbach's description of projection. There is alienation as a prior condition. There is a projection of something out of man which is part of himself and does not correspond to anything in the outer world. Thus it would seem that if the natural order has no meaning except what man puts into it, no other conclusion can be drawn but that the meaning is a projection. On this basis it would be concluded that the whole fabric of meaning which man constructs to make himself feel at home in the world is illusory and idolatrous. This would include not only the false content of consciousness by which Fromm believes society distorts the inner life of the individual. It would include the meaning arising out of the authentic being of man and out of what he calls the humanistic conscience. This would also be a projection.

It is Freud rather than Fromm who has a deep and discerning recognition of both nature and human nature as sources of alienation. In his emphasis upon the instability of civilization, what he calls "the eternal struggle between eros and the destructive or death instinct" is a recognition of the contradiction in nature which at all times threatens civilization. As he so clearly indicates, it is not here a question of an external, social source of danger, but an internal source. For in contrast to Fromm, who regards destructiveness as a socially induced reaction to frustration and uncreative living (unlived life), Freud sees destructiveness as an inherent tendency in man's nature. "The tendency to aggression," Freud says, "is an innate, independent, instinctual disposition in man, and . . . constitutes the most powerful obstacle to culture."¹⁵ As a description of an instinct that man shares

with nature in the larger scope of her domain, this accords with those views which balance her wonder and beauty with her coldness and cruelty. To cite familiar examples, she has been described as "red in tooth and claw with blood" (Tennyson), and again as doing every day those things for which men are hanged (Mill). The description indicates that the essential nature or core of man, which for Freud is probably the id, is not the potentially creative self devoid of these possibilities as Fromm and Horney have claimed. But it is a self in contradiction with itself (life vs. death). What Fromm describes as the dichotomy, or split, in man is not therefore the deep, radical contradiction between life and death that we have in Freud's conception of the nature of man. In this sense it is less realistic than Freud's conception and less helpful in dealing with death and destructiveness as human ontological categories. As Schaar has emphasized, Fromm's view of human nature is developed less from the findings of science than from the classics of philosophy, literature, religion, and mythology. "While he often appeals to 'science' the basic presuppositions and intentions of his work have very little to do with science. . . . In the view of Fromm, the order of knowledge achieved by the social scientist will never replace the order of knowledge which belongs to the awakened ones."¹⁶

Without claiming that Freud bases his conception upon the findings of science or that he does not have an interest in his equivalents of the awakened ones, it seems reasonable, however, to insist that he does attempt to arrive at his conclusions more specifically upon clinical evidence than does Fromm. He seems to evidence a greater power of self-criticism and a greater curiosity in deriving his conclusions inductively from a knowledge of his patients. Although not formally scientific and not beyond a variety of idiosyncrasies, it was always his aim to be scientific in spirit and derive his theories from his clinical findings. On this basis he is more original than Fromm, and his radical view of human nature in spite of its limitations is more challenging.

Turning from the problem of nature back to the problem of society as the corrupter of man, studies have shown that authoritarianism is a much broader phenomenon than Fromm's original conception of it in his *Escape from Freedom*. It is much broader than any modifications of his original conception. It is also more complex. It pertains to all points on the political spectrum from the extreme right to the extreme left. It is not exclusively associated with right-wing politics, as the *Escape from Freedom* suggests with respect to Nazism and *The Sane Society* suggests with respect to capitalism. It is less associated with a particular system of doctrine than with a particular personality structure.¹⁷ In fact, Bettelheim has made bold to say that frequently quite authoritarian Germans were the ones who stood up best to Hitler.¹⁸ They had peculiarly strong powers of resistance to Nazism and did not succumb to its influence. Fromm admits that historically, authoritarianism was a necessary stage in society before rationality and freedom had developed to the extent that made the humanistic conscience necessary. By this he means that the realization of freedom and moral responsibility was a late evolutionary development following an earlier primitive period devoid of individualism. But Ruth Benedict, the distinguished anthropologist, firmly disputes this in her review of his *Escape from Freedom*.¹⁹

It is extremely doubtful, if it ever happens, that authoritarianism is left behind by any civilization as an earlier stage in a process of development toward a nonauthoritarian society. This is too similar to the Marxian dream of a classless society to carry much weight. The existence of powerful armed forces to deal with external threats to security as well as powerful police forces to deal with internal threats is sufficient to prove that the need for authoritarianism has not been transcended. The characteristics of authoritarianism suggest that it is too close to what may be described as a typically human struggle pattern ever to be transcended. If so, whenever men fight wars or peaceful engagements against entrenched opposition or struggle for a livelihood, it is probable that they will assume the authoritarian role.

But apart from the possibility of a struggle pattern, the problem is how millions of people could realize their potentialities according to Fromm's prescription. How could they succeed in living harmoniously together without some external means of preserving order which each might well accuse of being authoritarian. It is the old problem of how order (form, gestalt, configuration) is established in an atomistic situation. Theoretically the spontaneity which he postulates as the core of individuality is devoid of any kind of order. He attempts, however, to introduce some principle of order by means of the so-called laws of human nature and the concept of a common-denominator humanity in which every individual shares. In these laws he also introduces a principle of order with respect to the outside in his insistence upon the need for relatedness and for a frame of orientation. But these attempts are too theoretical and inadequately developed and applied to provide an answer to the enormous problem of how to define and maintain order in a highly complex industrialized society.²⁰ In repudiating authoritarianism, he is virtually repudiating the problem of order as a serious problem in the social sciences. The question that has to be faced is whether there is any other answer to the problem of order in modern society than some form of authoritarianism. On this basis the important consideration is the kind of authoritarianism — not its elimination.

A good authoritarianism derives from the fact that human freedom is finite. It has to do with the boundaries of freedom which always tend to have an arbitrary connotation because as boundaries they are "against" freedom. No matter how rationally defined they may be, they always have this connotation in the actual experience of a man who in his freedom comes up against them. No matter how good the purpose they serve, they are to him irrational. Freedom to be freedom is limited because pure, unlimited freedom would be whimsical and unpredictable, and therefore chaotic. As unlimited or unbounded freedom, it would be lawless freedom and no freedom at all. In this sense it would be contradictory and tend to become self-

destructive. A society that dispensed with all forms of law, even if it were composed of men of goodwill who were striving to realize themselves, would be filled with conflict as the freedom of the one limited the freedom of the others. In this situation the limiting factor would be as chaotic and lawless as freedom itself. The function of law, limit, or boundary is to preserve freedom and therefore to fulfill the purpose of the metaphysical concept of necessity. In other words, authoritarianism is good insofar as it becomes the necessity that provides the basis of freedom. As that which in one respect will always be "against" freedom, it will in the opposite respect always be "for" freedom. For just as it is the boundary of freedom, freedom is the boundary of it. Along the line between them, a peculiar mutuality will obtain even though each is against the other.

Apart from such a paradoxical relationship to freedom, the significance of which could be further developed, the most important feature of a good form of authoritarianism is that of consistency. The importance of this particular feature in any system of government or of discipline can scarcely be over-emphasized. When rules, regulations, limits, and laws are applied consistently, the individual knows where he is. He has a clearly defined frame of reference and is better integrated within himself even though for other reasons he may be in opposition to the system. Even when parents are consistently rough, hateful, and harsh there is less likelihood of their children becoming neurotic. Their children know what to expect and accept them for what they are. They are not in the ambiguous position of not knowing whether their parents are good or bad. They are not torn between high expectations of their parents on the one hand and shameful realization of their actual behavior on the other.

But when parents are inconsistent, there is a greater likelihood of their children becoming neurotic. The inconsistency is introjected or built into their children and as a consequence is productive of internal conflict and of an ambiguous attitude toward the parents. They never quite know where they are in relation

to their parents, and for this reason experience a certain loneliness or lostness even under apparently normal circumstances. They are both attached to and rejected by their parents. In this respect the experience of sentimental pseudo love is more devastating psychologically than consistently severe parental treatment. On this whole conception of consistency and inconsistency, Rollo May's study of the origin and nature of neuroses is both typical and illuminating and provides the basis for the observations made above.²¹

It agrees with more recent studies which contend that the kernel of the neurotic condition involves a lie, genuine guilt, or some kind of malingering, whatever the manner of expressing the ethical aspect of the problem may be.²² It agrees with these because inconsistency is a broad term which can include the conflict between the ideal and the actual and various forms of dishonesty that are more deliberate. In saying this, we should remember that permissiveness may be just as much a source of inconsistency as coerciveness. The parent may be pleasantly inconsistent instead of coercively inconsistent. His lack of standards or requirements may be just as bewildering to the child. It may even be more suggestive of a lack of interest and love than some forms of harsh punishment. The child or young person may wish or look for authority, not for the reason Fromm gives—namely, to surrender his freedom—but to bring some order into his life. He may wish the kind of order that will become the basis of freedom and enable him to recover it. Or to put the same problem in another way, the kind of freedom that he wishes to surrender in the fashion Dostoevsky describes may be a false freedom: namely, the freedom denoted by inconsistency in which anything is permissible—anywhere and at any time. As a freedom the inconsistency of which is at the same time always some form of a lie involving genuine guilt, the wish to surrender it to another could be the wish to surrender guilt and in this way to find a valid freedom. This may be the explanation of the phenomenon which in the end puzzled Freud—that it is not only the children whose parents ruled them with a rod of iron who develop a severe superego, but at times chil-

dren of parents who have been gentle and kind.²³ Such parents may have been inconsistently gentle and kind. The severe superego in their children may have been a reaction to the frustrating effects of a lack of order and a desire to rid themselves of the false freedom.

The possibility of a good form of authoritarianism is further suggested by the type of therapy associated with the movement known as Alcoholics Anonymous.²⁴ This type of therapy has been successful enough to encourage some investigators in the belief that it is one of the most promising developments in psychotherapy in recent times—particularly in view of the growing skepticism with respect to other forms of psychotherapy.²⁵ In contrast to the strong and persistent objection of Fromm to any thought of the individual surrendering himself to the all-powerful God, as we have seen in his arguments against the gospel of grace, this is precisely what happens in the therapy of Alcoholics Anonymous. Along with the acknowledgment of individual powerlessness over alcohol, it requires an unconditional surrender to God, as understood by the individual, as the only hope of restoration to normality. The first of the twelve successive steps requires the admission of an unmanageable life and will power as a total liability in overcoming the habit. Indeed, there is no possibility even of a beginning of recovery without the admission of total defeat. The alcoholic must recognize his complete helplessness. The language is curiously similar to the Reformation doctrine of total depravity with its denial that free will contributes to salvation. The second of the twelve steps emphasizes the power of God and the importance of a complete surrender to him. The third step concerns the decision of the alcoholic to turn his life completely over to the care of God. In both instances the language is curiously similar to the Reformation doctrine of salvation by grace alone. It is as if the alcoholic were recognizing that only the grace of God could save him. In form at least, it seems to be thoroughly authoritarian and yet it enables a substantial number of alcoholics to overcome their disability.

How is this to be explained? Is it a sado-masochistic pattern

in which the alcoholic makes himself weak and insignificant as he identifies himself with the all-powerful God? Is it that the alcoholic has "no more pressing need than the one to find somebody to whom he can surrender, as quickly as possible, the gift of freedom which he the unfortunate creature was born with"? Is it the projection of the best of himself onto God or in such a way that he creates God? Or more specifically, is the whole therapy of Alcoholics Anonymous only a further alienation of the alcoholic from himself?

The quality of the therapy suggests otherwise. What he surrenders to God is a burden. It is the freedom of his will that has become a liability. Or more accurately, he surrenders or exchanges it for God. The one takes the place of the other. And the result is that he himself is free. What happens reminds one of Kierkegaard's observation that, instead of the omnipotence (God) enslaving a man, it makes him free. To what extent inconsistency has been responsible for the transformation of the original freedom of the alcoholic into a burden is a relevant question. As a characteristic of the neuroticism from which he so often suffers, it undoubtedly enters in. As something of which he becomes increasingly sensitive as he repeatedly says one thing and does another, it complicates itself through the generation of hostility and guilt. The release that comes through his unconditional commitment to God may be his way of experiencing forgiveness. If the acceptance of him as he actually is and knows himself to be constitutes forgiveness or an essential component of it, then the benevolent God to whom he commits himself is probably the God of grace.

In summary it can be said that alienation derives both from society and from nature. It does not derive exclusively from an outside source identified with a particular social system, as may happen under certain historical conditions. It also derives from an inside source as the expression in human nature of an underlying contradiction in nature. This is a contradiction that is indigenous to nature because it defines the phenomenon of conflict. Authoritarianism, as the principal way in which alienation

is said to derive from an outside source, is not a concept which in itself is wholly objectionable. There is reason to believe that there are good and necessary forms of it. These preserve freedom by the provision of limits that protect it from itself. There is also reason to believe that inconsistency is one of the most serious threats to freedom. With no clearly defined limits, freedom becomes an unpredictable, or lawless, freedom no different in principle from the arbitrariness of the most objectionable form of authoritarianism. Freedom is related paradoxically to necessity. Absolute freedom is just as great a source of alienation as is absolute necessity.