

analysts if their training is considered adequate.

In 1942 Fromm published his first book in English, Escape from Freedom.<sup>1</sup> He had previously done several articles, mostly for the magazine Psychiatry. This book immediately showed him to be one of the leading theoretical workers of psychoanalysis, and in thoughtful circles gained him a national reputation. The immediate question to which the book gave an answer was the psychology of Nazism. How could the Germans have followed Hitler? To give his answer, Fromm discussed the whole development of western civilization in terms of its achievement of freedom from certain kinds of ancient tyrannies, but with a growing sense of isolation and depersonalization which made man prone to "escape from freedom." This too was social-psychological analysis focused on the problem of authority. By the time of this book Fromm made much less use of the Freudian concepts, had developed more of his own, and was explicitly critical of Freud's point of view on social matters.

Fromm then began work on what was apparently regarded as a large book on ethics in the light of psychoanalysis. For reasons which I do not know, he apparently decided to write a shorter volume on this subject, which was published with the title, Man for Himself, in 1947.<sup>2</sup> It may be that the reception afforded his

<sup>1</sup>(New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1941). This book will hereafter be referred to as EFF.

<sup>2</sup>Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics (New York: Rinehart and Co., Inc., 1947). This book will hereafter be referred to as MFH. James Luther Adams has called my attention to certain changes revealed in Fromm's thought in this volume, in contrast with the previous one, notably the disappearance

previous book, plus his discovery of his unusual gift for writing clear English, and his sense of the need to communicate to a wider audience, all influenced his decision to write this instead of the more compendious book first planned. This volume will serve as the major source of our discussion of his views on ethics. It may be noted at this point, however, that the focus continues to be on the problem of authority.

In 1950 he published his most recent volume, Psychoanalysis and Religion, which had been presented as the Terry Lectures at Yale.<sup>1</sup> This small book adds nothing to his ethical theory or his psychoanalytic thought, but elaborates his views on religion (and by implication the relation of religion to ethics) more than did the previous works. This volume also is focused around the problem of authority, drawing the distinction between a humanistic religious interest which he favors and an authoritarian religious interest which he does not. Reviewing this volume, Paul Tillich wrote, "What Fromm fights against is an heteronomous, supernaturalistic theism. And this fight is a genuine theological concern. It is the fight against idolatry in which theology and psychotherapy are allies."<sup>2</sup>

of the emphasis on primal ties. Although I acknowledge the fact of this and other changes, and have noted some in the text, they do not seem to be basic at any point. All such changes would appear to me to reflect a trend away from Freudian literalism and merely negative statement in the direction of more positive statement and more frankly symbolic interpretation.

<sup>1</sup>(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950). This book will hereafter be referred to as PAR.

<sup>2</sup>Pastoral Psychology, June, 1951, p. 66.

We indicated in the introduction that both Fromm and Tillich have made a thorough amalgamation of German and American elements and tendencies in their thought. We may spell this out a little for the better understanding of Fromm.

His German heritage includes his humanism, the existential element in his thought (though not so called by him), his knowledge of and interest in ethical history, and his general philosophical understanding of the ethical problem. In general, the German heritage manifests itself in the interest in the humanities and in the philosophical studies, as against merely scientific or pragmatic types of interest.

The American heritage, it would seem, lies first in the clarity, simplicity and even popularity of his thinking and writing, which in these respects has altered from a rather involved form found in his German writings. It is not without significance that he has hardly a trace left of German accent. Further, although he had used the traditional Freudian thought-forms less and less while in Germany, he broke with them more and more when he came to America. The radical character (in relation to traditional psychoanalysis) of his therapeutic method, while implicit in his German period, came to flower in the American setting. There is still, as we shall see, a large element of positivism and pragmatism in his thought; and it is interesting that he has found John Dewey congenial, something which few scholars from Europe in any field have been able to do.

In terms of sociological method, which is also important for his ethical thinking, he found the American tendency toward

statistics without philosophy, and data without generalization,  
uncongenial.

But while it is important to see how many modern elements existed in the late Middle Ages and how many medieval elements continue to exist in modern society, it blocks any theoretical understanding of the historical process if by emphasizing continuity one tries to minimize the fundamental differences between medieval and modern society, or to reject such concepts as "medieval society" and "capitalistic society" for being unscientific constructions. Such attempts, under the guise of scientific objectivity and accuracy, actually reduce social research to the gathering of countless details, and block any understanding of the structure of society and its dynamics.<sup>1</sup>

If democracy be understood as transcending political forms and having to do with respect for personal integrity of all, then Fromm is deeply interested in it. But unlike most American psychotherapists, Fromm would be inclined to see this in terms of a longer heritage; hence he speaks more of "humanism" than of "democracy." Except in sociological terms, he has not written much about methodology even the method of psychoanalysis as such.<sup>2</sup> But it seems a clear implication from his writings that he is in no way on the defensive about being "scientific," either in therapy or sociology. This is presumably not at all because he considers himself anti-scientific, but because he would consider that the proper use of scientific method is possible only by adaptation to the nature of the material and to the current state of knowledge. Few social or psychological scientists trained only in the American

<sup>1</sup> Fromm, EFF, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> For statements on sociological method, see "Über Methode und Aufgabe einer analytischen Sozialpsychologie," Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, I (1932), 28-54; and "Die psychoanalytische Charakterologie und ihre Bedeutung für die Sozialpsychologie," ibid., pp. 253-273.

tradition having been able to take such a point of view so far, although the number is increasing.

We may turn now to Fromm's ethical thought. In contrast to our treatment of Flugel, we shall organize Fromm's thought in our categories rather than his. With Flugel there was danger, by failing to use his categories, of not seeing some of the profundity hidden in traditional Freudian modes of thought. There is little of such danger with Fromm.

Fromm has a system of psycho-social thought, and we shall be indicating most of the elements in it. But we have selected for discussion those points which are basic to an understanding of his theory of ethics. We shall consider first his views on character, its structure and pattern, the various types of basic structure, and the emphasis on a dynamic holism. We shall then turn to conscience. Our third heading is what may be called the direction and movement of psychic forces or energies, intrapsychically and interpersonally. Fourth will come Fromm's criteria of moral growth and realization. The fifth heading will concern the concepts of reason and emotion in ethics. The sixth will deal with his ontology, his views on the structure of good and evil. Finally, we shall consider his views on religion, God, Christianity and Protestantism, in their relation to ethics.

### Character and Ethics

In our account of the development of psychotherapy, we noted how important was the shift from an interest in symptom and cause to that in character patterns. Such a move is basic

In Fromm's thought. Even the understanding of a neurotic symptom is possible, he indicates, "only by understanding the character structure in which it is embedded."<sup>1</sup>

In Fromm's sense,

... character can be defined as the (relatively permanent) form in which human energy is canalized in the process of assimilation and socialization. . . . The character system can be considered the human substitute for the instinctive apparatus of the animal.<sup>2</sup>

Character as used by Fromm should not be confused with temperament, which refers to the constitutionally given "mode of reaction."<sup>3</sup> When this confusion has occurred, it has led to the condemnation of entire races, and has also tended toward a relativism "by the assumption that differences in character are as much differences in taste as those of temperament."<sup>4</sup>

To Freud goes the credit for development of "not only the first but also the most consistent and penetrating theory of character as a system of strivings which underlie, but are not identical with, behavior."<sup>5</sup> Behavior and behavior traits are not the same as character and character traits; the former "are observable by a third person," while the latter may not be.<sup>6</sup> A theory of character, therefore, is always more than a behaviorism.

But Freud, while transcending a behaviorism and moving into a dynamic characterology, assumed, Fromm believes, that the key problem of psychology deals with the "satisfaction or frustra-

<sup>1</sup> Fromm, MFH, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

tion of this or that instinctual need per se . . . <sup>1</sup> Furthermore, we assumed that the psychological forces with which he dealt were not in themselves "socially conditioned."<sup>2</sup> Fromm believes, in contrast, that the psychological forces themselves are socially conditioned, and that the key problem of psychology "is that of the specific kind of relatedness of the individual towards the world . . ."<sup>3</sup> Thus, it is the kind of relatedness a man has to the world which is his character. This is what psychology should study, rather than seeing any set inner patterns working out in an environment which accords with them or does not. The latter type of view is static, as Fromm sees it. The crucial point, as Fromm rightly notes, is whether inner psychological forces are conceived to be "socially conditioned" or not.

The relation of cultural patterns or social institutions, on the one hand, and the individual, on the other hand, can not be considered merely as the "influence" of the former on the latter.

The interaction goes much deeper; the whole personality of the average individual is molded by the way people relate to each other, and it is determined by the socio-economic and political structure of society to such an extent that, in principle, one can infer from the analysis of one individual the totality of the social structure in which he lives.<sup>4</sup>

This explains why the character or character structure may be considered as a man's characteristic mode of relatedness to the world, and yet not be properly stated as what distinguishes him from his fellows. For his most characteristic mode of relatedness to the

<sup>1</sup>Fromm, EFF, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>4</sup>Fromm, MFH, p. 79.

world may be so deeply conditioned by the "character pattern" of his society or group that it would go unnoticed in a study concentrating on differences among individuals.

But his emphasis on "social conditioning" does not make Fromm a social determinist in his theory of character. "Human nature" is a product of historical and cultural evolution, but it "has certain inherent mechanisms and laws" which it is psychology's task to discover.<sup>1</sup> Fromm adds, "Human nature can never be observed as such, but only in its specific manifestations in specific situations. It is a theoretical construction which can be inferred from the empirical study of the behavior of man."<sup>2</sup> We can still speak of man and human nature, but we take care to distinguish the "inherent mechanisms and laws" from social and historical conditioning. "Inherent mechanisms and laws" are not a "biologically fixed human nature."<sup>3</sup>

We arrive therefore at the fact that, although character development is shaped by the basic conditions of life and although there is no biologically fixed human nature, human nature has a dynamism of its own that constitutes an active factor in the evolution of the social process. Even if we are not yet able to state clearly in psychological terms what the exact nature of this human dynamism is, we must recognize its existence.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of his discovery of a dynamic theory of character, Freud was mistaken in not understanding the true relation of man to society, or was not socially dynamic enough. He accepted, says Fromm, "the traditional belief in a basic dichotomy between

<sup>1</sup> Fromm, EFF, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Fromm, MFH, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Fromm, EFF, p. 289.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



man and society. . . .<sup>1</sup> He was uncritical in thinking about human nature, assuming that what he saw was it, when actually this was a reflection of the most important drives to be seen in modern man."<sup>2</sup> This blind spot has far-reaching consequences in Freud's whole theory. Freud, says Fromm, always considered the individual in relation to others, but he saw these relations as "similar to the economic relations to others which are characteristic of the individual in capitalist society."<sup>3</sup> Thus Freud's theory of character had its greatness in the discovery of the dynamic unconscious, namely, that the phenomena of the unconscious "followed certain laws and therefore could be understood rationally."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, taking over the static and biologicistic thought-forms of the nineteenth century, prevented Freud from becoming psychosocially dynamic in his theory of character.

The first problem of character investigation would be, therefore, not an exploration of different character types in individuals but of what, through culture and history, tends to be characteristic of men in the group and period with which we are concerned. This is not to say that all men in this group and period demonstrate this as the main feature of their character, but that it is widely characteristic, that it is not escaped unless other observable forces are at work against it.

Fromm has described the character of modern western man, in this sense, in several ways, although all of them have as

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

their common focus the problem of authority. In Escape from Freedom, Fromm discussed this in two ways, first in terms of freedom, second in terms of authoritarianism. In the first, modern man has gained increasing freedom from some types of tyrannies, e.g., hard physical labor; but the growing realization of "freedom from" has gone hand in hand with a growing realization of "alienation from," and this latter is so intolerable that all kinds of devices will be used to "escape from freedom." The second way of describing the character tendency of modern western man is through authoritarianism. At one time men either submitted to or rebelled against "overt authorities." But as the overt authorities declined in importance, an "anonymous" authoritarianism grew.<sup>1</sup> So the tendency is to stand fascinated in the face of power "not for any values for which a specific power may stand, but just because it is power."<sup>2</sup> Many succumb to this and become "authoritarian characters." Many others, of course, do not. But the culture puts on the pressure in this direction.

In Man for Himself, Fromm views the general characteristic tendency of modern western man chiefly as the "marketing orientation" to life; he "experiences himself both as the seller and as the commodity to be sold on the market."<sup>3</sup> When this occurs, "his self-esteem depends on conditions beyond his control."<sup>4</sup> "This situation makes him utterly dependent on the way others look at him and forces him to keep up the role in which he once had become successful."<sup>5</sup> In this situation "A person is not concerned with

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> Fromm, MFH, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

his life and happiness, but with becoming salable."<sup>1</sup> Even knowledge becomes conceived as a commodity. "Here, too, man is alienated from his own power; thinking and knowing are experienced as a tool to produce results."<sup>2</sup> The significance of all this lies in this, that ". . . its very nature is that no specific and permanent kind of relatedness is developed, but that the very changeability of attitudes is the only permanent quality of such orientation."<sup>3</sup> This is to say that the tendency of modern western man's character lies not in confusion, nor in alienation from any particular thing or standard, but that there are dynamic forces at work to keep any integrity of attitude from developing. The tendency is not toward flexibility while standing on a rock, but toward standing on a jelly--which may then result in the creation of authoritarianisms if the quivering becomes too severe to be withstood.

It should be noted that Fromm is not discussing different realities in these three modes of speaking, but is coming at what he regards as the central general problem of modern western man's character in three different ways. Nor is he saying merely that these tendencies exist in the culture and may have influence on individuals. They are problems of character because, in greater or lesser degree, they have embodied themselves in the character of individuals. As we shall see later, when they are found in more extreme form we may speak of a type of authoritarian character, or marketing orientation in character--as against other individual dominant types. Fromm is not always clear in main-

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

taining the distinction between types of individuals and general trends, but it is always implicit in his discussion.

One individual, group or nation may be more characteristic of this general trend than others. Thus Germany was more so than the United States; and Fromm believes the lower-middle-class in Germany was more so than other classes. But the United States of America has had not only Huey Long but also Mickey Mouse:

The extent to which the average person in America is filled with the same sense of fear and insignificance seems to find a telling expression in the fact of the popularity of the Mickey Mouse pictures. There the one theme--in so many variations--is always this: something little is persecuted and endangered by something overwhelmingly strong, which threatens to kill or swallow the little thing. The little thing runs away and eventually succeeds in escaping or even in harming the enemy.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps especially in America, the feeling of self-confidence very often means only that one has approval of other persons. "It is not he who is convinced of his value regardless of popularity and his success on the market. If he is sought after, he is somebody; if he is not popular, he is simply nobody."<sup>2</sup>

When we look further at the problem of character, we then consider basic types which are differentiated one from another. That is, we are now interested in differences among individuals within modern western culture. At this point Fromm has mainly reinterpreted Freud's basic types. It will be recalled that Freud spoke of the oral, anal and genital types, by which he meant that one or more of these zones develop and retain an unusual sensitivity, and this works itself out in many apparently non-

<sup>1</sup>Fromm, EFF, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

sexual areas of life. Thus stinginess, for example, according to Freud, is developed in the character of the person who had a fixation at the point of retaining his feces (through sublimation or some other Freudian mechanism). Fromm reinterprets all this:

Freud's observations are of great importance, but he gave an erroneous explanation. He saw correctly the passionate and irrational nature of these "oral" and "anal" character traits. He also saw that such desires pervade all spheres of personality, man's sexual, emotional, and intellectual life, and that they color all his activities. But he mistook the causal relation between erogeneous zones and character traits for the reverse of what they really are. The desire to receive everything one wants to obtain--love, protection, knowledge, material things--in a passive way from a source outside of oneself, develops in a child's character as a reaction to his experiences with others. If through these experiences the feeling of his own strength is weakened by fear, if his initiative and self-confidence are paralyzed, if hostility develops and is repressed, and if at the same time his father or mother offers affection or care under the condition of surrender, such a constellation leads to an attitude in which active mastery is given up and all his energies are turned in the direction of an outside source from which the fulfillment of all wishes will eventually come.<sup>1</sup>

So with the "anal" character. In other words, Fromm considers the oral and anal descriptions of Freud to be basic and accurate--but the types of character represented by these terms did not come about as Freud describes but because of the network of inter-relationships with which the child was surrounded in his rearing.

In Man for Himself Fromm retains these character types but with different names. There are three basic types of "nonproductive" orientations in character, in addition to the "marketing orientation," which may in itself become a basic type as well as a general trend. They are the "receptive orientation," the "ex-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 292.

exploitative orientation," and the "hoarding orientation." The first two are like Freud's oral character, either helpless about getting anything so forced to wait on its being brought or trying to seize because it will be taken away. The third is like Freud's anal character. "In the receptive orientation a person feels 'the source of all good' to be outside, and he believes that the only way to get what he wants . . . is to receive it from that outside source."<sup>1</sup> The "exploitative orientation" has the same attitude toward the "outside," but expects to take things "away from others by force or cunning."<sup>2</sup> In those with the "hoarding orientation,"

They have surrounded themselves, as it were, by a protective wall, and their main aim is to bring as much as possible into this fortified position and to let as little as possible out of it.<sup>3</sup>

They cannot understand the self-replenishing function of all living substance and that activity and the use of one's powers increase strength while stagnation paralyzes. The act of creation is a miracle of which they hear but in which they do not believe. Their highest values are order and security.<sup>4</sup>

All three (or four) of these basic character types (receptive, exploitative, hoarding, and marketing) are "nonproductive."

They are also "authoritarian," for they were all defensive developments which made the effort to meet some real threat however destructively they have moved. They "may be considered as distortions of orientations which in themselves are a normal and necessary part of living."<sup>5</sup> That is to say, it is proper to have some re-

<sup>1</sup> Fromm, *MFH*, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

ceptivity, some aggressiveness, some conservatism, and some eye on the saleability of one's powers. What makes these nonproductive, in Fromm's view, would seem to be the pre-occupying obsessiveness of these orientations, which is to say their compulsive and unquestioned nature, which developed in response to a certain kind of imposed authority.

Parenthetically, we may be struck at this point with the similarity of Fromm's view to Freud's, the sympathy for the "underdog" of psychic life. Whereas it was Id or impulses beaten down by culture through Super-Ego in Freud, in Fromm it is sympathy for the human qualities which are beaten down by a particular culture. There is gulf of difference between the two conceptions, but a marked similarity as well.

Fromm sees another point of similarity here between himself and Freud, which has obvious bearing on ethics.

Although Freud did not refer to ethical values explicitly, there is an implicit connection: the pre-genital orientation, characteristic of the dependent, greedy and stingy attitudes, are ethically inferior to the genital, that is, productive mature character. Freud's characterology thus implies that virtue is the natural aim of man's development.<sup>1</sup>

If true of Freud, this is certainly true of Fromm. And it leads into the main reason why a discussion of character must come first in considering Fromm's ethics--because there are no virtues or vices apart from "the virtuous or the vicious character."<sup>2</sup> It is the nature of the virtuous or vicious character which is "the true subject of ethical inquiry."<sup>3</sup> We can go further and say:

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

All the virtues and vices with which traditional ethics deals must remain ambiguous because they often signify by the same word different and partly contradictory human attitudes; they lose their ambiguity only if they are understood in connection with the character structure of the person of whom a virtue or vice is predicated.<sup>1</sup>

[ take this to mean that the traditional type of thinking would be abstracting from the whole process of movement toward virtue or toward vice at the wrong point and in addition forgetting that it had abstracted from a process. Whether it also means that Fromm has completely deserted substantive philosophy is a questionable point, not clearly answered in his writings thus far. But his point on the nature of virtue and vice, when taken in conjunction with his dynamic psychosocial view of character, is clearly of great significance for ethics--especially for the content of what is ethical. It prevents any virtue-vice discussion from being considered in a merely utilitarian sense, for example, and implicitly if not explicitly it makes impossible any purely substantive approach to ethics. It also alters the nature of will and of alternatives in ethics.

The will is not an abstract power of man which he possesses apart from his character. On the contrary, the will is nothing but the expression of his character.<sup>2</sup>

If we base our moral judgment of a person on the decision as to whether or not he could have willed differently, no moral judgment can be made.<sup>3</sup>

his last is not to say that no judgment can be made; but since the judgment will be on something other than act as expressive of character, it will not be moral in nature. This raises the question whether Fromm's is an ethics entirely of results, or of in-

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 234.



tion. Although he does not discuss the problem in those terms, the answer seems to be that it involves both but sees them in a relation different from the usual, i.e., where intention is the will or action of the whole character, and results are the actual effect in human interrelatedness. That is to say, the old problem of intention-results is seen as false.

We should not leave this section on character without indicating explicitly how "prophetic" Fromm is in regard to the "non-productive orientations" or the "authoritarian character" tendencies in modern western culture. He is existentially concerned. There is a modern idolatry, and calmly but clearly he loves devastatingly against it. "The feature common to all authoritarian thinking is the conviction that life is determined by forces outside of man's own self, his interest, his wishes. The only possible happiness lies in the submission to these forces. Even reliance on "fate" may be a rationalized bit of authoritarian thinking. "Fate may be rationalized philosophically as 'natural law' or as 'destiny of man,' religiously as the 'will of the Lord,' ethically as 'duty'--for the authoritarian character it is always a higher power outside of the individual, toward which the individual can do nothing but submit."<sup>2</sup> He is indignant that psychology itself has been utterly misused.

Knowledge of man himself, psychology, which in the great tradition of western thought was held to be the condition for virtue, for right living, for happiness, has degenerated into an instrument to be used for better manipulation of others

<sup>1</sup> Fromm, *EFF*, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.



and oneself, in market research, in political propaganda, in advertising, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

man has been untrue to himself. His whole character has deceived him. If we are to understand what is right or good for man, we must first see his character as it is; then we may be able to infer what it is of which these expressions (or "orientations") are distortions.<sup>2</sup>

### Conscience

We turn now to our second category of Fromm's thought, conscience. In the introduction we indicated that ethical systems in the western tradition, including Christian, have generally been directed along Greek or Hebrew lines, along the search for the good or the heeding conscience pathways. It was our hope that the psychotherapeutic findings might suggest ways of bringing those two perspectives together more adequately. In Flugel, despite the general Grecian-British tone of thought, we saw that the discussion of ethics was almost entirely along the conscience line, chiefly exposing the vagaries of conscience (our discovery or heeding of what is right or wrong) but also by implication about what the "good conscience" is.

In Fromm we have almost the reverse of Flugel at this point. He does write to some extent about conscience, and explicitly, as we shall see in this section. And the whole tone

<sup>1</sup>Fromm, MFH, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup>It may be noted that there is a kinship between Fromm's concepts of the marketing orientation and of alienation and the thought of Karl Marx. But since the depth of Fromm's psychological insight is very much greater than that of Marx, it would be a mistake to consider these concepts as mere modifications of Marxian views.

nd intent of his writing, as we saw, is decidedly like the Hebrew prophets, exposure of what he regards as the current idolatries. At the same time, all his discussion returns again and again to a Greek cast of thought, of what is the good for man and what impedes its actualization. As we follow Fromm's argument on conscience, we may be especially alert to any clues he gives about the juncture of the Greek and Hebrew perspectives on the nature of ethics.

The essence of Fromm's conscience theory is simple. There are two kinds or forms of conscience, authoritarian and humanistic. The former distorts life and character; the latter fulfills them. Although there may be some developmental relation between the two types, Fromm is cautious on this point, his real concern being to set the two types in sharp contrast to each other.

In the "authoritarian conscience," a "good conscience is consciousness of pleasing the (external and internalized) authority; guilty conscience is the consciousness of displeasing it."<sup>1</sup> This naturally follows when the "authoritarian character" establishes "authoritarian ethics." "The unforgivable sin in authoritarian ethics is rebellion, the questioning of the authority's right to establish norms and of its axiom that the norms established by the authority are in the best interest of the subjects."<sup>2</sup> When the authoritarian conscience is in control, man becomes "not only the obedient slave but also the strict taskmaster who treats himself as his own slave."<sup>3</sup> This results in a paradoxical situa-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

tion. If the authoritarian character has a good conscience, it means he has knuckled down and is therefore accepting his weakness and minimizing his strength (including moral strength). But if he has a guilty conscience, this "is a result of the feeling of strength, independence, productiveness, and pride . . ." <sup>1</sup> Any system of ethics, by implication, which would consider a guilty conscience as always good may be shrewd but is probably authoritarian, in Fromm's view.

On the origin and nature of guilt feelings, Fromm is not so explicit as Flugel. But they have been pulled into the authoritarian pattern in any event.

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. . . . The guilt of unavoidable transgressions before authority and the need for its forgiveness thus creates an endless chain of offense, guilt feeling, and the need for absolution which keeps the subject in bondage and grateful for forgiveness rather than critical of the authority's demands. <sup>2</sup>

Once a person's will has been "broken" by some "irrational authority," his "defeat and weakness are 'explained' as being just punishment for his sins. The fact of his loss of freedom is rationalized as proof of guilt . . ." <sup>3</sup> Fromm notes, as Flugel had done, that guilt feelings arise not only from attempted acts but from hidden wishes to be angry, and even more subtly from experiences of not pleasing the authorities. <sup>4</sup> These authorities which operate "irrationally" are always themselves to be understood as authoritarian, i.e., as preoccupied with power over people. <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 150.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 155.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 153.    <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

We should note that, in Fromm's view, "even the most unethical behavior--in the humanistic sense--can be experienced as 'duty' in the authoritarian sense. The feeling of 'oughtness,' common to both, is so deceptive a factor because it can refer to the worst as well as to the best in man."<sup>1</sup>

Especially in American culture, we rarely see a family pattern which is clearly and overtly authoritarian. But "Instead of overt we find anonymous authority expressed in terms of emotionally highly charged expectations instead of explicit commands."<sup>2</sup> This may operate just as effectively to produce an authoritarian conscience; one struggles to realize the expectations as he might, in a more direct system, struggle to please the clearly marked authority. In fact, Fromm believes that this may be even more oppressive.<sup>3</sup> He cites Franz Kafka's story, The Trial, in illustration.<sup>4</sup> "The story expresses the sense of guilt of a man who feels accused by unknown authorities and feels guilty for not pleasing them; yet these authorities are so beyond his reach that he can not even learn of what they accuse him or how he can defend himself."<sup>5</sup>

Although doing so in much less detail, Fromm refers to many of the intricate intrapsychic processes which were considered at length by Flugel. But there is the basic difference that Fromm considers all these to be related to the "authoritarian character,"

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>4</sup>Trans. Willa and Edwin Muir (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1937).

<sup>5</sup>Fromm, MFH, p. 168.

either as a person with that kind of dominant trend, or as a temptation to every one in our culture. That is to say, Flugel spells out the psychological anatomy and physiology of masochism, guilt, self-punishment, and the like, and then considers their social reference. Fromm reverses the process, finding the initial pathology in the social setting.

To the authoritarian, ". . . even punishment is better than rejection. . . . By his acceptance of the punishment his sin is wiped out and the security of belonging is restored."<sup>1</sup> This leads into self-punishment as well. The "moral masochism" of which Freud spoke is accounted for by Fromm in this way: "'Moral masochism' is the striving for being harmed psychically, humiliated, and dominated; usually this wish is not conscious, but is rationalized as loyalty, love, or self-negation, or as a response to the laws of nature, to fate, or to other powers transcending man."<sup>2</sup> No other explanation is needed, therefore, for moral masochism than the combination of individual-social interactions which have produced the authoritarian character in a certain form, namely, the "receptive orientation" in its extreme form. Fromm has said somewhere that there is a striking difference between people with moral masochism and those with sexual masochism. The latter tend to be, in a superficial sense, socially well adjusted; the former, not. The moral masochists may have no obviously masochistic elements in sex life. I do not recall Fromm's attempting any explanation of the difference. He would probably point to both as authoritarian

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

characters, with the receptive orientation. But the sexual masochist would delude himself about his real self's being involved in the superficially smooth social adjustments; and the moral masochist would delude himself that his yearning was unrelated to sex. In any event, Fromm says that "both types of masochism are essentially one and the same phenomenon."<sup>1</sup>

But authoritarian conscience, in all its forms, is not the sole kind of conscience, is indeed not the true conscience-- which Fromm sub-titles in his chapter, "Man's Recall to Himself."<sup>2</sup> This he formerly called "genuine conscience,"<sup>3</sup> more recently "humanistic conscience."<sup>4</sup> This is a radically different phenomenon from authoritarian conscience. It should be noted that Fromm is almost unique among psychoanalytic writers in discussing conscience in this sense which, as he notes, is built upon the work of philosophers from the days of the Greeks down through scholasticism, the English moralists, Kant and others. "Humanistic conscience is the reaction of our total personality to its proper functioning or dysfunctioning; not a reaction to the functioning of this or that capacity but to the totality of capacities which constitute our human and individual existence."<sup>5</sup> As well as defined as the whole person-in action, so conscience is our judgment of ourselves as a whole in terms of whether we are fulfilling ourselves as human beings. "Conscience is thus a re-action of ourselves to ourselves. It is the voice of our true selves which summons us back to our-

<sup>1</sup> Fromm, EFF, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> Fromm, MFH, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> Fromm, EFF, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> Fromm, MFH, p. 143.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 158

selves, to live productively, to develop fully and harmoniously-- that is, to become what we potentially are."<sup>1</sup> The essence of humanistic conscience is that "No power transcending man can make a moral claim upon him. Man is responsible to himself for gaining or losing his life. Only if he understands the voice of his conscience, can he return to himself."<sup>2</sup>

If the humanistic conscience speaks to a man, calls him to judgment for not living productively as he potentially could, the assumption is that something exists within him which does this speaking. As we shall see later, Fromm would call this the "true self." But this still leaves the question open as to the extent to which the "true self" and conscience are products of social interaction, or how much they are the psychological equivalent of Freud's belief that there are biological realities which must work themselves out in some way. On this point Fromm has never been clear.

Whatever the intrapsychic metaphysics of the matter, Fromm is clear that conscience does not always speak "loudly and distinctly."<sup>3</sup> Instead, our perception of the humanistic conscience in operation is likely to be quite indirect. "Perhaps the most frequent indirect reaction of our conscience to being neglected is a vague and unspecific feeling of guilt and uneasiness, or simply a feeling of tiredness or listlessness."<sup>4</sup> Man can indeed "successfully shut himself off against hearing the voice of his conscience"

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 162.



cept in one kind of situation, sleep and dreams.<sup>1</sup> This of course places Fromm, historically speaking, in alliance with Jung, if the dream may reveal aspects of man's positive nature as a human being both deeper and better than what he has acknowledged to himself in consciousness. In any case, "learning to understand the communications of one's conscience is exceedingly difficult."<sup>2</sup> In our society we are not accustomed to listening to ourselves, and we have a phobia about being alone.

What, in Fromm's view, is the relation between authoritarian and humanistic conscience? Fromm states explicitly that "the difference between humanistic and authoritarian conscience is not that the latter is molded by the cultural tradition, while the former develops independently."<sup>3</sup> This is to say that both forms of conscience develop through the personal-social interactive process, but that each, so to speak, develops in response to a different aspect of the culture in which it occurs. But if this is so, then is there not one kind of conscience-developing process rather than two, with the statement of an authoritarian and a humanistic conscience being misleading in suggesting two kinds of process to account for two different results? Fromm's reply would be that he is discussing "results," that the authoritarian and the humanistic conscience are results of the same kind of process but with different content in the culture (i.e., attitudes of people who do the rearing). This is confirmed when he writes: "I do not believe that with regard to the child, in a nonauthoritarian society, the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 171.