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Enough is enough

THE "World Perspective" series (of which this is a volume) has the broad and noble aim of furthering the brotherhood of man; and responsible modern thinkers have been asked to contribute their views in an attempt to show the ultimate interdependence of all knowledge, and how best to work towards wholeness and the common good.

When Eric Fromm wrote *The Art of Loving* for this series twenty years ago, these aims were set out briefly and with a certain optimism. Today the much longer preface to *To Have or To Be* reflects a growing desperation: we are working against the survival clock, and the odds for global disaster—nuclear, psychological or ecological—are shortening sharply. We must produce a sane society or perish.

As one of the leading savants of the Frankfurt school Dr. Fromm would seem purpose-built to help stave off this Armageddon. A hybrid psychiatrist / sociologist / philosopher himself, he has spent a long life studying people; and his wisdom and wide learning are taking on an increasingly prophetic note as his books increase.

In this present volume he argues that there are two basic character orientations: the *having* mode, which is materialistic, greedy and bad; and

TO HAVE OR TO BE. By Eric Fromm. (Jonathan Cape, £4.95)

the *being* mode, which is unacquisitive, loving and good. On these two modes would appear to depend most of our sickness and our health, and which of the two becomes dominant is decided by the existing social structure. A detailed psychological and social analysis leads him to conclude

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that our present crisis is inevitable, and potentially disastrous, so long as we continue to prefer quantity (having) to quality (being).

The way back from the brink must depend on a "religious" impetus, because that alone is strong enough to create a new society, and within those inverted commas Dr. Fromm would include what he considers one of the most important new developments of the century—the growing liberation of women. If women can abjure men's power structures and formulate their own, then, hopefully, a better and more sharing society may yet emerge.

So a humanist is turned preacher, and provides some interesting twists for the Christian reader. He seeks to change the heart by appealing to the head. With Schumacher he believes that infinite growth cannot fit into a finite world and that for the first time ever we must restrain our economic and technological advancement (or at least redirect it) in the spirit of necessity. An appeal to reason, not to charity.

A Christian Europe Dr. Fromm dismisses as largely a sham—at least since the sixteenth century. Jesus himself is the perfect exemplar of "being" rather than "having"; but, despite numerous genuinely Christian movements, the character of our modern Western world is greedy and pagan. Dr. Fromm's lament that we are now possessed by machines, are commodities for sale, are alienated from our true selves, reads like a general confession; but it is a humanist one, believing that salvation lies only within ourselves.

This book is a study of concepts rather than empirical events. The analyses are always clear and the tendency to generalise can be provocative. One balks for instance, at the Buddha's Four Noble Truths becoming synonymous with Marx's philosophy, and at the over-simplified categories which seem more convenient than convincing; yet in these weaknesses lie also Dr. Fromm's strength.

His ability to scan horizons and take the broad view gives a visionary quality to his scholarship which has resulted in seminal works in the past, and provides this book with a stimulating argument. In the present flood of prepare-to-avert-thy-doom literature, it should have a significant place.



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