



Authority and Family, edited by Max Horkheimer, Librairie Felix Alcan, Paris, 1933, pp. 947

by John Dollard

This book is the fifth volume of research reports from the Institute of Social Research which now has a branch domiciled at Columbia University. It is an important and interesting book with a manner of treating its problem quite different from current American research on the family. It will reward the effort of any American scholar who polishes up his German and reads it. The nature of the problem may be called social-psychological, in the best sense of the word, because the attempt is made to consider the problem of authority in the family and then to relate to wider social institutions the respect of authority which is engendered there. Attention is centered on our own Western European society as an actual productive mechanism and on the family as a means of generating individuals who can peacefully take their places in it. The problem is properly set in its historical context with a scholarly review of historical and philosophical thought, both on the development of the family and of our society. The analysis of the material seems to derive from two systematic standpoints: first a historical view of our society and family from the dialectical standpoint of Marx, and second that of Freud's psychology, a most unusual but singularly interesting combination. The treatment is characterized by the cool vision of realistic thinkers on current social life and contains no clarion calls to man the barricades.

The volume is divided into three main sections: the first, a theoretical section; the second, research reports on some questionnaire studies; and the third, a series of historical reports and resumes of literature. It is the first section which will receive the chief attention here. In this section are three papers, the first by the director

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of the Institute, Max Horkheimer himself. In this paper Horkheimer argues for the unity of society and the reciprocal relationship of its parts and, as a special case of this, the interdependence of the family and other social institutions. It is argued that our philosophical and religious views have posited an individual with inner freedom who accepts voluntarily an unalterable outer world and social system. There is a deep split in this view between theoretical spiritual freedom and actual freedom, the result being to render the individual ineffectual as an active agent in social change. The patriarchal family is seen as the training ground for authority in which the father is the surrogate of the wider society who prepares his children for participation in it. The home stressed, however, the value and individuality of the person who is more or less of a cog in the formal social scheme of things. The mother through her husband is also seen as dependent on the existing order and as transmitting her sense of respectful dependence to her children. The relation between family and wider society is reciprocal; the family generates respect for authority, and the other social institutions in turn support and stress the maintenance of the family form. Whatever be the changes of a mechanical nature in the organization of the home, the training in attitudes of respect for authority remains a highly stable fact and one little altered as yet by revisions in the sphere of material culture. This paper does exactly what it sets out to do, that is, to give a historical and theoretical sketch of the recent role of family authority in the maintenance of our social order.

A second paper by Erich Fromm presents original views on the psychological aspects of the family and social authority. The fact that he uses Freudian psychology will be novel to readers who think of Psychoanalysis as riveted to biological notions only. Fromm makes clear the



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social setting of Freudian theory and ingeniously applies certain aspects of it to the problem of authority in society. His views are naturally a first attempt in a new field rather than a definitive resolution of the problem. Fromm indicates that the Superego function is an internalization of social authority and seems to be especially an inner reflection of the prohibiting influence of the patriarchal father. In addition to this genetic point, he shows that the attributes of the Superego, i. e. morality, wisdom and strength, are projected on to the institutional surrogates of the social order who thereupon gain an idealized role. These institutional figures in turn reinforce the conscience function in the individual. Two main attributes of the Superego of highest relevance are its function of repressing anti-social impulse in the individual and of urging the individual actively to fill the stipulations for model and ideal behavior in his society. The Superego can be weakened and its repressive role eliminated if the socialized self of the person is able to take over control of impulse and to determine rationally the external activities of the person. As man's control of nature increases, he is able to trust more of his problem of self and world mastery to his Ego and needs less to rely on the emasculating process of repression.

Fromm gives special attention to the type of sado-masochistic character which seems to be an especially frequent end-product of patriarchal family life. It should be noted that Fromm is talking about a character form and not merely about sadistic or masochistic acts. Such a character tends to love those who are powerful and dominant and to despise and dislike the weak and helpless. Our class hierarchy permits indefinite indulgence of these traits, since a man placed at any spot in it, except the top, can respond positively to those above and deservingly to those below him; even the lowest can revenge themselves on women, children, animals, and minority groups. Sado-masochistically



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oriented persons tend to have helpless reverence for natural law, duty and sacred institutions and to stress the impotence of man against social and natural forces. So far as the individual psyche is concerned, there is an obvious relationship between sado-masochism and homosexual tendencies. The inferior person develops twin attitudes, either of which may be dominant. If the individual be adequately loved by his masculine superior, he may succeed in repressing his hostility for authority; if not, he may become one of the chronic revolutionaries who cease their activities only when some authoritarian person understands how to give them the love they lack. In such cases the overthrow of existing authority is always followed by emotional demand for a new type of social superior who plays the role demanded by the unchanged sado-masochistic character structure. It is possible, Fromm believes, to have a character which demands change in the existing social structure without emotionally demanding the replacement of existing authoritarian figures. In this case the character structure of the individual has changed, his Ego has accepted the task of impulse and milieu mastery, and the sado-masochistic relationship to authority is broken.

This brilliant analysis by Fromm sets the stage for a development of a characterology which actually relates social institutions to individual behavior and offers an excellent example of the type of collaborative work which is possible in such an Institute as that which produced this book. Apparently here psychologists cannot maintain their frozen isolation from the demands of the students of society. "A possible critical query is as to whether the role of the mother as an authoritarian figure in developing the conscience of the child is adequately treated and whether she may not often earn the hostility she gets from the sad-masochistic character, by her treatment of the child. Even if this were true, of course, the chain of events leading



back to the overhead social structure could be established.

The third paper in the first section by H. Marcuse is historical in orientation. It discusses conceptions of personal freedom in their relation to concepts of social action. The double notion of the individual, which has been characteristic of our theology and philosophy, as a member of an other worldly or rational community in which he is free and of an earthly community which he is irrevocably bound to accept as it is, becomes quite clear. Men are seen as free to do that which their parents or culture demands of them. The fiction that one does voluntarily what one must do anyway is often added as a kind of comfort to the trussed individual. In modern Protestant bourgeois society there was need of an anti-authoritarian spirit, at least to the extent of shaking off feudal bounds to modern enterprise and the protest note was therefore sounded to some degree in the Protestant ethic. Succinct summaries are given of the views of the Luther, Calvin, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Pareto, and others, in respect to orientation of the individual toward authority and the State. This is a very valuable section of the report and complements Horkheimer's presentation in essential respects.

One is greatly impressed by the value of the historical orientation to such a problem as authority when one reads these studies, especially since it is an orientation often missing from our own approaches. Incidentally the views here advanced are indispensable for viewing the modern social scene as well, especially since absolutistic authority seems to be making its claims in so many states. What becomes clear is that the one real justification for social authority is actual function in constructively organizing social life for the benefit of the total group on our particular technological level. Where the interest of everyone are actually and more or less equally represented in the charter under which authority is exercised, there is ample justification for its exercise and little excuse for revolt.



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In a second section of the study data is presented which have been collected by a series of questionnaires, one on workers' attitudes, a second on questions of sex morality since the war, a third on authority in the family, addressed to experts, a fourth a report of an inquiry among young people on authority and the family, and finally one concerning authority and the family among the unemployed. All of these questionnaires are viewed as tentative and a good deal of reverence is displayed for American questionnaire methods. Factual orientation is certainly achieved and very interesting findings presented which it is impossible to summarize here. The third section of the book includes a series of special monographs, some abridged and some summarized, relating to the historical literature on the family and authority.

This publication shows a vigorous social science institute in functions and is a real addition to the viewpoint and the methodology of American sociology. It is scholarly as well as realistic in a current sense and calls for translation into English at an early date.

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