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debilitating and enervating thought that only scholarship can prepare the way.

This is in part what is meant by the theological revival in our time. Once again the learned have an open sesame to faith; and religion, not least the Christian faith, seems an open possibility. More than this is the fact that the older theologies of the early church and of the Reformation are now blessed with a kind of contemporaneity that makes them real options. This is an incidental fruit of scientific scholarship. Confusions still abound, but in the pages which follow, a few topics will be explored by which clarity enters too.

CHAPTER TWO

Psychoanalysis and Faith: Erich Fromm

No one can pretend to finality on the question of the compatibility of psychoanalysis and religion, and least of all the author, who is only a professor. For one thing, the question is not as clear as one might wish. There are undoubtedly many persons who are religious and who have been psychoanalyzed, and with some of these persons it makes sense to say that analysis did not dissipate their religion. On the other hand, there may be people who are *neurotically* religious, who, when they command their neuroses in some fashion, or let us say it more charitably, when they are no longer behaving neurotically, no longer behave religiously. If this is true, one may be saying nothing more than that being neurotic and religious simultaneously is difficult, and knowing about one's neuroses and being religious is even more difficult. On the level of behavior, in other words, there seem to be people who stay religious when analyzed; and there are analysts who are religious and religious people who become analysts.

But there are areas about which it is not easy to speak with assurance. What religious people say about certain phenomena does seem to contradict what psychoanalysts sometimes say



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about the same phenomena. And then the strain is not in the same area at all. Instead of asking whether one can be religious and analyzed, the issue is whether both sets of claims about human nature can be true. When Freud said religion had a future, even though religion was illusory, he surely was saying something quite different from, and logically contradictory to, that said by most of the pious. All the razzle-dazzle one might introduce on the importance and even the necessity of illusions does not mitigate for the religious or for Freud the difference between religion being claimed to be true about God and man and psychoanalysis being said to be true about the illusion concerning God and man: In this latter instance, there is an incompatibility between the assertions found within much of psychoanalytic literature, on the one hand, and religious literature on the other, and this is because they predicate diversely and even contradictorily about the same things.

It is not being urged that this is the impasse upon which the human race is hung. I suspect that there is no definitive either—or available at the moment. Neither the psychoanalysts, who have spoken so opportunely, nor the religious, who have countered so vociferously, are entirely right about each other. In fact, there is an embarrassing plentitude of books written by religious authors in our day, who tell us that Freud was wrong in the metaphysics (where heaven knows it is difficult to be anything else) but right in his human dynamics, his psychotherapeutics. Not to be outdone, the analysts are writing books and articles too, beating their breasts in public, to show that their story was a little premature, that it is not quite so clear as some of the early apostles of cultural sanity had said. There has been a blurring of the lines, a softening of the cries of victory, a tendency to repudiate the monolithic urge that early analysis encouraged.

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There have been several confusions on these matters. Sometimes people of intellectual bent have overgeneralized and overextended their views. It is a readily understood temptation to want to extend every hypothesis about a limited subject matter to other troublesome areas of widespread concern. For example, there do not seem to be scientific answers to most ethical problems, to political issues, to religious difficulties. Psychoanalysts who, like the psychologists of all time, have studied human behavior and its causes, have not always resisted this great temptation. They have frequently pontificated about matters where they should properly have been journeymen researchers instead.

The cry for increasing objectivity among men of learning is not a fortuitous and accidental phenomenon. For objectivity is precisely that human temper which anyone needs who says only what he knows, who must limit himself to what the evidence permits and suggests. Surely one of the reasons for the circumspection of modern psychoanalysis, and contemporary psychology of other kinds too, is that there has been a widespread recognition of the need for more objectivity and, correspondingly, for less easy and enthusiastic talk about numerous difficult matters.

Sometimes this kind of objectivity is misunderstood. It is contended that scientists and scholars are refusing to take their responsibilities seriously when they do not talk generously and quasi-scientifically about everything of human concern. Part of the progress of science is simply a matter of learning how to speak precisely and circumspectly about a very limited subject matter. Many people misunderstand those who study human behavior on this very count. They want on scientific grounds what science can not provide. They want moral judgments, wide generalizations, immediately useful policies—anything but scientific explanations and exact descriptions. What appears to



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be a weakness—the reluctance to speak on germanely human issues—may be a strength, especially if it is occasioned by an awareness of the limits of one's knowledge. Furthermore, this kind of progress in scientific study augurs well for both moral judgments and theological generalizations; for it means very probably that we are learning not to moralize or to theologize on irrelevant grounds.

But psychologists and psychoanalysts are also human beings. Most of them also have moral, religious, and a host of other interests. Erich Fromm among the psychoanalysts is one of the most catholic. While he is to be admired for getting a hearing, he also has to be read with care; for he tends to use psychological generalizations for his springboard into all kinds of fascinating realms. Certainly he knows his moments of restraint, but his moments of boundless enthusiasm are more frequent. He is almost a preacher, a homiletician, for psychoanalysis. He keeps up that odd practice, reminiscent of Freud himself, of enlarging psychoanalytic judgments to include everything human, all the while as if a new learning were on his side. He essays the largest issues, nothing less than ethics in *Man for Himself*, myth and rituals in *The Forgotten Language*, the body politic in *The Sane Society*, and then religion in *Psychoanalysis and Religion*. These latter pages were the Terry Lectures at Yale and are published by the press of that university.

Mr. Fromm's discussions of religious matters are certainly in the genre previously noted. They are about religion and about religious behavior. But the author does not draw a distinction between language *about* religion and the language *of* religion. Instead, his pages abound in a kind of theologizing, but it turns out that psychoanalytic language about human behavior leads him smoothly and without strain right into a language of advocacy, of enthusiasm and of a kind of ethical, if not religious, pathos.

Mr. Fromm speaks for neither psychological nor religious orthodoxies. Maybe he is neither psychologically effective nor religiously edifying; but it does seem clear that his pages force reflection. Indirectly they seem to me to push the Christian theologian's definitions quite a little. We will turn, therefore, to several of his provocative themes.

## II

An overarching theme throughout his book on religion is the provocatively stated one that what matters for psychoanalysts and priests (this is Fromm's generic name, I take it, for priests, ministers, pastors, rabbis) is whether a person "lives love and thinks truth." Few of us can deny that conduct is very important, that behavior is often a better test of what we are than our words, so certainly the initial thrust of his words can not be disregarded. Mr. Fromm goes on to suggest something that is rather popular—that the matter of living *love* and thinking *truth* is more important than the symbol systems we use to talk about ourselves. This is one way in which the author denigrates theology, by suggesting that its words are often idle and that another way is available to test human adequacy.

It is almost as if the languages of morals and of religion are, therefore, the wrong place to have one's concern. These "symbolic systems," for this is what Fromm calls them, have often been made matters of subscription. Fromm thinks this is a mistake. Psychological study now shows why this is a mistake. Furthermore, the language of everyday usage, like the language of morals and of religion, has made us believe that the world is different than it actually is.

The facts are dreadful enough. Man cannot afford to live, as social conditions now are, in a loving manner. Neither can he know and tell the truth about himself and others. The world is made for hating and lying. The language systems, philoso-



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phies and theologies, depict the world as if it were otherwise. The upshot is that men become sick unto death. They yield to the world and its ways, albeit retaining the capacity to judge themselves as wanting and to suffer the hurt that comes from knowing something so unpleasant. They accept for true what the majority wants to be true, they rationalize irrational passions, they orient their lives to the herd while striving to be individuals. This is what Fromm describes as a dichotomous situation. Whites hate Negroes, Gentiles hate Jews, Americans hate Russians. The hating is for socially acceptable reasons. Meanwhile, amid the hate, the competition, the will to win, men also wish to be loving, kind, tolerant, democratic, Christian, and moral. Most of this is only talk; they espouse loving kindness, yet find little in their environment strengthening that resolution. Likewise, they reason, they command criteria for the truth, they judge, they criticize, they consult evidence, they measure the relativities involved. Again, however, there are compulsive and generating factors in society which turn them to another kind of *truth*, that which is said to be *truth* because it is easy, in accord with authority, the best for everyone, expressive of the spirit of the time, the modern and accepted way of thinking about matters.

Fromm wants us to believe that "living love and thinking truth" is the *sine qua non* of being human, and furthermore, that psychoanalysts have discovered this much. Psychoanalysts, he says repeatedly, have found that giving in to the dichotomous resolution means an unproductive, noncreative personality. Anyone who fails to achieve maturity and integration, in fact develops a neurosis of one kind or another. And a neurosis, at least as Fromm describes it, means that a person cannot love others; he thinks to his own intellectual detriment; he creates pictures which are illusory and clings to them with a tenacity which is incommensurate with their supposed quality. Perhaps

it is a phenomenon like one of the Chicago newspapers having to tell you on its masthead that it is the world's greatest newspaper—which, if it were true, would not have to be reiterated in every issue.

Up to this point Fromm sounds almost like a Christian theologian. One cannot help but wonder where he got this view that men had to live love and think truth in order to be human. He says that for him it stems from psychoanalytic practice and theory, and, of course, he may be right. But it seems to have had a longer history. Furthermore, there is a little difficulty in showing that a command saying that a man ought to be loving and ought to be truthful ever follows from any kind of fact whatsoever. Dr. Fromm is not very specific on this matter and perhaps he does not feel he has to be as long as he is so clearly, on this point at least, on the side of the angels.

But there is another theme, and this is in answer to the question, What is religion? "Any system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion," is a religion. I am not concerned with the question of whether this makes any sense or not. Granting this definition, there is a great deal of religion in the world. When you begin thinking about the thoughts and actions, the suggestions, the admonitions, the projects, the vocations, the political creeds, the common-sense convictions around which major industries and institutions grow up, then you get a clue to what Fromm is willing to call religion. "Frames of orientation and objects of devotion"—they are after all *plural*, and there is a kind of competition for souls. To an individual this may mean dichotomous or trichotomous frames and/or objects of devotion. Seen from another vantage point, everyone has a kind of religious need, i.e., a need for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion. This assertion, too, is straight from the



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analyst's mouth. Men may get their orientation and devotion with and by visible gods, saints, ancestors, nations, classes, money, or cleanliness. There is, therefore, a wide swath cut in human societies which is, according to Fromm, religious.

Another major discovery of the psychoanalysts is that, therefore, no one can be without a religion. It was a mistake of the earlier psychologists and psychoanalysts to say otherwise. The issue is instead which kind of religion—one which furthers man's development or one which paralyzes him? Despite the warnings of other students of these matters, William James and numerous others, Fromm contends that the psychological analysts along with the religious leaders are interested in the *value* of religions, not only in their causes or what he calls their "psychological roots." Defending the thesis that "the need for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion is rooted in the conditions of man's existence," Fromm says the issue is really how the need is going to be satisfied. In this perspective every neurosis looks like a *private* form of religion, an inadequate religion because the individual is badly oriented and badly devoted.

III

Now surely, saying this much is to skip a lot of difficulties. It means that precision and exactness have been forsaken. Anyone can say easily enough, "What does Fromm mean by 'badly oriented'?" How does he know? But now the first theme returns. "Badly oriented" means that a man does not live love and think truth. There are countless religions because there are countless frames of orientation and objects of devotion. But the point to which we have been brought by Mr. Fromm's argument is that the analysts, a kind of blessed tribe at least if they

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are right, now are able to tell us that "living love and thinking truth" is the necessary and universal condition for being human, for productivity, and for the good life.

Whether every detail is correct or not, there is surely something important in all of this. It seems that Fromm has discovered, or at least he believes he has discovered, what Christian faith has always said:—that everyone must choose this day whom he shall serve. This is commonplace enough but never trivial. On the contrary, it is most important. This fact about people, that they need orientation and an object of devotion, enables Fromm to get to religious matters from other concerns. Paul Tillich, among the Christian theologians, also exploits this fact and uses it to characterize human existence. What he calls the science of ontology is precisely the science of what it means for anything to be. According to Tillich, to be human requires the exercise of decision and choice and distinguishes the "being" of persons from the being of everything else. The interest of Tillich and many existentialist theologians has been quickened by just such themes as Fromm has developed.

But there is still another matter to note: analytic therapy is essentially an attempt to help the patient gain or regain his capacity for love. This is the psychoanalyst's medicine for the soul and an area of overlap with religion, not all of it to be sure, but some of it. Religion with a capital "R," organized, institutional religion is, as Mr. Fromm sees it, usually authoritarian. It demands belief, obedience, and worship of the God it declares. Authoritarian religion is incompatible, Fromm thinks, with the analyst's discoveries and surely with what he, Fromm, has been saying. The kind of religion which is *humanistic*, self-developmental, which specializes in creativity, in a richer and better humanity, in the unfolding of a person's powers of love and reason—this kind is not threatened by psychoanalysis. On



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the contrary, this kind of religion finds that psychoanalysis contributes a great deal to its realization.

At this juncture it is clear that Mr. Fromm is playing the pontiff for the human race. He finds that the see of St. Sigmund (Freud, that is) still permits him the luxurious privilege of declaring the faith to all men. Even if it is not the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints, it is still a faith—modern, psychoanalytically approved—and full of promise for the race. Furthermore, it condones the joint efforts of priests and psychotherapists. Fromm is mightily persuaded by all of this and touchingly persuasive besides. One could have hoped, however, that a little more scrutiny be given such persuasiveness before it became a book. For what facts open to the psychologists command this proposal? What views of even authoritarian religion finally exclude what Fromm and most men agree is so desirable? This is a matter for the reflection of each reader and a reminder that an author cannot do everything for the reader.

After all of this has been read, the new harmony proposed and a certain obviousness made even more obvious, one might be inclined to ask, "What in thunder is all the fuss about?" Mr. Fromm is for truth, beauty, goodness, love, and reason. Who is not? But the irony of Mr. Fromm's whole treatment of the difficulties between psychoanalysis and religion is that he can resolve the differences only by proposing *another* religion, one which includes psychoanalysis and the proper frame of orientation and object of devotion. One is reminded of the gentleman who was asked to walk the chalked line in the police station to prove his sobriety. He did it, but betrayed his drunkenness by the extraordinary effort it took him to do it.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Historical Research and Faith

The title of this chapter suggests a perennial issue for religious people who reflect: Is faith a consequent to historical research? Is religiousness somehow established and/or disestablished by archeology, by analysis of texts, by confirmation of hypotheses about historical events and peoples?

This may seem a trivial question and obvious enough to answer. But the difficulty is that the "obviousness" is a duplex phenomenon. It seems equally obvious to some persons that historical research is a way to establish or disestablish faith and to others that nothing is so clearly irrelevant to religiousness as historical research.

It must be clear to everyone concerned that there are some religions which are not affected at all by any kind of recognition of past events or persons. I believe most Buddhists and many Hindus, probably many Confucianists, do not care a whit about the religious implications of historical research. They need not care because their religion in no way depends upon claims about past events or past personages. And if their god or their gods stand related in any way to human events, that relation is described in ethical commands and is couched, per-



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