

repression of the aggressive instinct are all processes that serve to preserve the integrative and progressive development of the personality, thus contributing to the maintenance of mental health. Furthermore, the development and constant application of the rational cognitive faculties afford the
nition and critical evaluation of the determinative and detrimental influence exerted on the personality by extra-cognitive factors. The exercise of rationality is thus the indispensable condition that makes possible the liberation of personal judgement from the invidious influence of cultural values, and generates within the individual the development of freedom, independence, and self-determination. In regard to the consequences of transcendence for society, this exercise of the rational function signifies that the detrimental effect of repressive mores can be undermined by the transformation of the mores in a direction supportive of the practice of life and beneficial to mental health. Such a transvaluation would benefit both the individual and society in that it would aid in preventing the decline into mental illness, and also promote a constructive and stabilizing integration of individual and society.

CHAPTER 7: Erich Fromm

Introduction

...mental health cannot be defined in terms of the "adjustment" of the individual to his society, but, on the contrary...it must be defined in terms of the adjustment of society to the needs of man, of its role in furthering or hindering the development of mental health. Whether or not the individual is healthy, is primarily not an individual matter, but depends on the structure of his society (Fromm, 1955:71).

In trying to avoid the errors of biological and metaphysical concepts we must not succumb to an equally grave error, that of a sociological relativism in which man is nothing but a puppet, directed by the strings of social circumstances. Man's inalienable rights of freedom and happiness are founded in inherent human qualities: his striving to live, to expand and to express the potentialities that have developed in him in the process of historical evolution (Fromm, 1965:121).

...the nature or essence of man is not a specific substance, like good or evil, but a contradiction which is rooted in the very conditions of human existence. This conflict in itself requires a solution, and basically there are only the regressive or the progressive solution (Fromm, 1971a:152-153).

The ability to act according to one's conscience depends on the degree to which one has become a citizen of the world (Fromm, 1971b:128)



The position of normative humanism presented by Erich Fromm in The Sane Society is quite in accord with the thesis of this monograph of the need for a scientific ethic devoted to the amelioration of the quality of human life. Deriving his inspiration from the provocative notion of collective neurosis developed by Freud in Civilization and Its Discontents, Fromm contends, in the first place, that society itself can be sane or insane depending on whether it is conducive to mental health or mental illness, and secondly, that it is the task of the social sciences—as sciences of human nature and society—to determine the sanity or insanity of society. He defines the sane society as that which contributes to mental health by corresponding to the needs of human beings. Fromm, therefore, like Freud, considers the satisfaction of human needs to be the requisite condition for mental health, though he differs from Freud in the identification of those needs.

The needs which, according to Fromm, must be satisfied in order to preserve mental health, are of an ontological rather than biological nature. This identification arises from his fundamentally evolutionary perspective, and the corresponding teleological view of nature and human nature. According to the evolutionary perspective, the phenomena of nature are regulated by a process of immanent development characterized by the "...emergence of new forms from unique combinations of pre-existing elements of older forms... The new forms are qualitatively different from the older forms..." (Theodorson, 1970:137). In this context, human nature represents the emergence of a new form of life qualitatively different from the rest of nature.

As a product of evolution and subject also to the process of immanent development, the essence of human nature is given as a contradiction between the qualities which humans share with the rest of nature, and the emergent qualities which separate them from the animal world—i.e., reason, freedom, and love. The solution required by this agonizing contradiction consists of the reestablishment of a union between human beings and nature, and the character of the specifically human—that is, ontological needs—is determined by this primal drive toward union. The satisfaction of these needs through which humans are re-united with nature can be achieved in either a regressive or a progressive fashion—that is, by regression to a pre-human state in which the uniquely human qualities are relinquished and the animal qualities predominate, or by

progression to a fully human state in which these unique qualities are developed and predominate. The progressive tendency thus entails the realization of embryonic humanity through growth toward ever-increasing complexity, and accords with the teleological character of the evolutionary process, while the regressive tendency involves the degeneration of the human organism from a more complex to less complex state, and is antithetical to the intrinsic purpose of evolution. According to Fromm, the resolution of the contradiction in human nature and the reunion of human beings and nature attained through the satisfaction of the ontological needs in the progressive fashion—i.e., the development of the unique and emergent qualities—is conducive to mental health, whereas the resolution achieved in the regressive fashion—i.e., the failure to develop human qualities—is conducive to mental illness.

Definitions of Evil and of Transcendence

As a psychoanalyst concerned with the cure of mental illness and the preservation of mental health, Fromm necessarily defines mental illness as evil and mental health as good. Consequently, he identifies as evil the tendency to regression in human nature, and as good—or, in this case, as transcendent, the opposite tendency to progression in human nature.

Evilness...is the attempt to regress to the prehuman state, and to eliminate that which is specifically human: reason, love, freedom ... Good consists of transforming our existence into an ever increasing approximation to our essence... (Fromm, 1971a:192-193).

With regard to the influence of society on human nature Fromm identifies as evil the "insane society" which elicits and sustains the regressive tendency of human nature, and as transcendent the "sane society" which elicits and sustains the progressive tendency of human nature. Thus, within the context of his evolutionary perspective evil is defined as those predispositions in human nature and conditions in social reality which inhibit or preclude the full realization of the individual's embryonic human qualities, and conversely, transcendence is conceived as those predispositions in human nature and conditions in social reality which facilitate or engender the realization of the individual's emergent humanity. It is the ethical task of the social



scientist to discern to what extent the conditions of social reality are conducive to the evil decline of human nature or to its transcendent development.

Locus of Causality

Fromm's evolutionary and teleological assumptions also have definite implications with regard to the locus of causality. That is, if human nature is comprised of certain unique potentials for which the initial impetus to development is provided by the contradiction between these qualities and the animal attributes, and if the actual realization of these potentials is elicited or prohibited by conditions of social reality, then both human nature and social reality must function as dimensions of causality. It is the interaction of these equally dynamic causal realms—of the immanent potentials inherent in human nature and the evocative conditions of social reality—that determines the actual manifestations of human nature. Fromm contends, as did Freud, that the range of the possible manifestations of human nature is determined by the innate qualities of human nature—however these are variously defined—and that which of these possibilities will be realized in actuality is determined by the existing conditions of social reality.

Thus, both Fromm and Freud appear to agree in the perception of dichotomous dimensions of causality—i.e., that human nature provides the predisposing conditions for the manifestation of human nature, and that social reality provides the necessary precipitating conditions. However, in contrast to Freud's emphasis on the primacy of cultural causality, Fromm stresses the equality of causal factors arising from both realms. That is, in reaction to Freud, Fromm emphasizes the dynamism of human nature which opposes and may transform inimical social conditions—for instance:

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 (Fromm, 1965:121).

Specifically, it is the progressive tendency to develop and realize the uniquely human attributes that Fromm identifies as the dynamic factor in human nature that reacts against hostile social conditions,

and which may transform those into conditions favoring human development. That is:

Needs like the striving for happiness, harmony, love and freedom are inherent in his nature. They are also dynamic factors in the historical process which, if frustrated, tend to arouse psychic reactions, ultimately creating the very conditions suited to the original strivings (Fromm, 1955:78).

Thus, in contrast to Freud's pessimistic conception of the primacy of cultural causality, Fromm optimistically emphasizes the interaction of the equally dynamic factors in human nature and social reality.

Sources of Evil and of Transcendence

In The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil, Fromm explores most extensively the notion of the contradiction in human nature as the seminal source of the human being's antinomic tendencies to evil and to the transcendence of evil. As mentioned above, this contradiction is manifested as the dichotomy between the attributes humans share with other animals, and the animal-transcending qualities. As such, this contradiction may be categorized as the interaction—or more accurately, the conflict between these dissimilar components of the human organism. Specifically, the conflict arises between the human's limited instinctual equipment and the practical intelligence shared with other animals, on the one hand, and on the other, the emergent faculties of reason which distinguish humans from the rest of nature. Human destiny, as it were, is determined by the fact that the human's under-developed instinctual equipment and the intelligence which provides for securing immediate aims are not sufficient to ensure survival—this depends upon the further development of the higher mental faculties. These higher mental faculties, however, ensure also the awareness of estrangement from nature:

Man transcends all other life because he is, for the first time, life aware of itself. Man is in nature, subject to its dictates and accidents, yet he transcends nature because he lacks the unawareness which makes the animal a part of nature—as one with it (Fromm, 1971a:147).





Reason, self-awareness, and imagination comprise the newly evolved faculties which disrupt the harmony with nature, estrange humans from other forms of life, render them cognizant of this dilemma, give rise to the unique ontological needs, and which must be expanded and utilized to preserve the sanity and the very existence of the human species. According to Fromm, this inescapable existential dilemma necessitates a solution: the impact of the terrible realization of this inner division, of uniqueness and isolation, compels humans to attempt to integrate the divided self, to overcome their isolation, to somehow effect a return to nature, to harmony, to unity.

The resolution of this inner contradiction, as noted previously, is accomplished through the satisfaction of the ontological needs for relatedness, transcendence, rootedness, a sense of identity, and a frame of orientation and devotion in either a regressive fashion—arising from the animal aspects of human nature, or a progressive fashion—arising from the animal-transcending aspects of human nature. If, on the one hand, the attempt to overcome the inner contradiction and to return to union with nature takes the form of the satisfaction of these ontological needs in accord with the regressive tendency immanent in the animal attributes, humans relinquish the very qualities which ensure their sanity and survival, and suffer a decline into the evil of mental illness. On the other hand, if this attempt occurs in the form of the satisfaction of the ontological needs in accord with the progressive tendency immanent in the distinctively human qualities, then human life is enriched, stabilized, and integrated through the gradual development of the qualities necessary to mental health and continued existence. The elemental contradiction in human nature, the antithesis of the animal and animal-transcending components of the human is the inner source of the human being's intrinsic ambivalent tendencies to evil (i.e., mental illness) and to transcendence of evil (i.e., mental health).

The actual manifestations of human nature, however, as is evident in Fromm's dichotomous conception of causality, are functions not only of inner motivations, but also of the conditions of social reality. In brief, the real possibilities existent in the conditions of social life for the satisfaction of human ontological needs serve as the precipitating factors which induce manifestation of the regressive or progressive predispositions of human nature. That is, the exigencies of social life may prove favorable

to the manifestation of evil by providing for the satisfaction of human needs in an unhealthy regressive manner, and thus elicit and sustain the intrinsic predisposition to regress to a pre-human level. Conversely, the exigencies of social life may favor the manifestation of transcendence of evil by providing for the satisfaction of human needs in a healthy progressive manner, and thus elicit and sustain the alternative predisposition to progress to a fully human level. The existing conditions of social life thus interact with the inherent drives of human nature, and function as catalytic factors to precipitate the actual manifestations of human nature. The specific components of social life which Fromm identifies as significantly involved in this interactive process are the mode of production and the mode of social and political organization. Thus, the possibilities for evil and for the transcendence of evil arise also from the interaction of societal conditions—i.e., the mode of production, the social and political organization, and the given ambivalent tendencies of human nature.

Manifestations of Evil and of Transcendence

Consistent also with the dichotomous conception of causality presented in *The Sane Society*, Fromm maintains that the particular causes of evil and of transcendence—ensuing from sources in human nature and social reality—similarly involve an interaction of internal psychological tendencies and external societal conditions. He represents the effect of this determinative interaction in the construct of the "social character" which is defined as:

...the nucleus of the character structure which is shared by most members of the same culture in contradistinction to the individual character in which people belonging to the same culture differ from each other
(Fromm, 1955:76).

Assuming the constancy of the intrinsic contradictory predispositions to evil and transcendence, the status of the social character is an indication of the relative strength of societal conditions conducive to evil and to transcendence. That is, the function of the social character is to channel human energies in a direction consistent with the requirements of the social system in order to secure the continued functioning of the society. In function, then, the social character is analogous to the Freudian superego. This

determination of human behavior in accord with the requirements of the social system reveals also the ways in which human ontological needs can and must be gratified within the limitations of a particular social system. The existing possibilities for the satisfaction of these needs provided by the society and imposed upon members of the society through socialization into the social character, elicit either the regressive or progressive tendencies, in varying degrees, thus precipitating mental illness or mental health. Hence, the predominance of regressive or progressive elements in the social character reflects the relative insanity or sanity of the society.

The point of departure for Fromm's evaluation of the sanity of modern Western society is an analysis of the contemporary social character. The initial thrust of the analysis is to ascertain whether contemporary social conditions engender evil by eliciting the regressive tendency to satisfy human needs in an unhealthy fashion, or engender transcendence by eliciting the progressive tendency to satisfy human needs in a healthy fashion. The constellation of several drives which compose the regressive tendency is identified as: the drive to satisfy the need for relatedness through narcissism; the drive to satisfy the need for transcendence through destructiveness; the drive to satisfy the need for rootedness through incest; the drive to satisfy the need for a sense of identity through "herd conformity," and the drive to satisfy the need for a "frame of orientation and devotion" through irrationality. Conversely, the constellation of drives comprising the progressive tendency is identified as: the drive to satisfy the need for relatedness through love; the drive to satisfy the need for transcendence through creativeness; the drive to satisfy the need for rootedness through brotherliness; the drive to satisfy the need for a sense of identity through individuality; and the drive to satisfy the need for a frame of orientation and devotion through reason (Fromm, 1955:36-65)

Each of these various drives, if evoked by social conditions, functions as a cause of particular forms of evil or transcendence. Specifically, the unhealthy and evil consequences of the drives constituting the regressive tendency are identified, respectively, as: destruction of personal integrity and increase in undue dependence on others (narcissism); the infliction of suffering on self and others (destructiveness); unreflective identification with societal values (incest); sense of self as passive and

determined creature (herd conformity); and a distorted, impractical, and dysfunctional world-view. In contrast the healthy and transcendent consequences of the drives comprising the progressive tendency are identified respectively as: growth of personal integrity and independence (love); discovery of meaning and purpose in life (creativity); reflective identification with universal human values (brotherliness); development of sense of self as active and volitional being (individuality); and an objective, pragmatic, realistic, and functional world view (reason) (Fromm, 1955:36-65).

The tendency to seek the satisfaction of human needs in the regressive direction thus forms a "syndrome of decay" (Fromm, 1971a:2) culminating in the deterioration of the distinctively human qualities of reason, freedom, and love, and the decline into mental illness. Conversely, the tendency to seek the satisfaction of human needs in the progressive direction forms a "syndrome of growth" (Fromm, 1971a:2) culminating in the full realization of the distinctly human qualities, and the preservation of mental health.

As previously indicated, the particular constituents of social reality which induce and sustain either of the innate antinomic predispositions of human nature are identified as the mode of production and the social and political organization of society. According to Fromm's stance at this point, these constituents of the social system determine the structure and process of interpersonal relations through which the social character is formed and internalized. His analysis of the capitalistic mode of production and social and political organization of modern western society identifies several specific social factors which generate a predominance of the regressive tendency in the social character. These factors are: the illusion of freedom promoted by the self-regulating mechanism of the modern market (Fromm, 1955:84); the principle of "the use of man by man" typical of class societies (Fromm, 1955:88); the capitalistic system of values which subordinates human beings to things (Fromm, 1955:90); the "process of abstractification" which underlies all forms of relatedness (Fromm, 1955:108); and the anonymity of social laws which regulate human life in capitalistic system. The special effects of these factors on the structure and processes of interpersonal relations are specified as, respectively: the loss of individual freedom (Fromm, 1955:84); the transformation of humans from being an end in themselves to being merely a means for another's



economic ends which negates the intrinsic value of the individual person (Fromm, 1955:88); the subordination to things alienates the individual from his or her own volition and creativity (Fromm, 1955:90); the "process of abstractification" undermines genuine relationship to self and others (Fromm, 1955:106), and the regulation of life by anonymous social forces induces the experience of personal powerlessness (Fromm, 1955: 125-126).

With regard to the ontological human needs for relatedness, transcendence, rootedness, sense of identity, and frame of orientation and devotion, the consequence of these pernicious social factors is to block the expression of the progressive tendency, and to expedite the expression of the regressive tendency. Specifically, with regard to (1) need for relatedness: the satisfaction of this need through the simultaneous intimacy and respectful independence of love is prevented by the abstractification of relationship, whereas satisfaction through narcissism is promoted by the practice of exploiting others as means to one's own ends. With regard to (2) need for transcendence: satisfaction through creative activity is precluded by the system of values which alienates humans from their own creative powers, whereas satisfaction through destructiveness is promoted by the practice of exploitation. With regard to (3) need for rootedness: satisfaction through commitment to universal human values is prevented by the subversion of relationship through abstractification and the socially sanctioned practice of exploitation, whereas unreflective identification with societal values is induced by the loss of individual freedom and the regulation of life by anonymous social forces. With regard to (4) need for sense of identity: satisfaction through the experience of personal volition, efficacy, and the growth of individuality is prevented by subordination to things, the exploitation by others, and personal powerlessness in the face of social forces, whereas satisfaction through herd conformity is induced by the loss of personal freedom. With regard to (5) need for frame of orientation and devotion: satisfaction through the utilization and development of reason is prevented by the subordination to things which alienates human beings from their human faculties, whereas satisfaction through the growth of irrationality is promoted by the incomprehensible regulation of life by unseen and unknown social laws. The predictable culmination of this interaction between factors in human nature and social reality antithetical to the healthy and continuous development of the human organism is the ultimate evil of mental illness.

This exposition of the causes and effects of evil and transcendence arising from the interaction of psychological and sociological factors illustrates also the further point that in The Sane Society Fromm does not identify specific factors in social reality which may evoke the manifestation of the progressive tendency. The possibilities for the transcendence of evil are presented as arising only from the innate predisposition to transcendence, and the reaction of this dynamic striving for health against hostile factors in the social environment—which will be explained in the following section concerning the processes by which evil and transcendence are actualized.

Processes of Evil and Transcendence

In the course of this inquiry, it has become evident that Fromm conceptualizes the problems of evil and transcendence of evil as alternative responses to the existential dilemma posed by the implicit contradictions in human nature. Because of this contradiction human beings suffer a radical estrangement from all other forms of life, and their lives are characterized by an agonizing disequilibrium. The resolution of the contradiction is attained by means of the satisfaction of the uniquely human ontological needs for relatedness, transcendence, rootedness, a sense of identity, and a frame of orientation and devotion. There are within human nature two distinctive constellations of drives—one oriented toward resolution of the contradiction through the satisfaction of human needs in an unhealthy regressive fashion, and the other oriented toward resolution through the satisfaction of human needs in a healthy progressive fashion. The actual possibilities for the satisfaction of human needs are provided by existing conditions of social reality. These possibilities may allow for satisfaction in the regressive mode or the progressive mode, or both. If these possibilities generate satisfaction in the form of narcissism, destructiveness, incest, herd conformity and irrationality, then the tendency to regress to a pre-human level characterizes human existence. If these possibilities generate satisfaction in the form of love, creativeness, brotherliness, individuality, and reason, then the tendency to progress to a fully human level characterizes human existence. The satisfaction of human needs in the regressive mode results in neurosis, and the failure of social conditions to provide for need satisfaction even in the regressive mode

results in insanity. The satisfaction of human needs in the progressive mode produces and sustains mental health.

There is, however, one other possibility for transcendence of evil—i.e., the transformation of pathological social conditions by the dynamic striving of the progressive tendency for mental health. Even when the social environment facilitates the manifestations of regression, the vital progressive drives may react against the inimical social environment by striving to transform detrimental conditions into beneficial conditions. According to Fromm, this transformation of social pathology is analogous to the course of the cure for individual pathology. In both cases, there first arises a conflict between the needs of human nature, and the possibilities for the satisfaction of these needs existent in the social order. Secondly, the suffering which ensues from the frustration or the satisfaction of basic needs in an unhealthy regressive manner, arouses the reaction of the progressive drives. The striving toward health immanent in these vital drives directs the energies of the progressive tendency against inimical social conditions in the attempt to transform them into conditions beneficial to mental health or to render them innocuous. The effectiveness of this organic reaction is enhanced, and must be supplemented by the individual's rational recognition of the societal causes of this conflict, and the utilization of reason, effort, and will to eradicate or transform detrimental societal conditions. Thus, it is possible for the combination of the vitality of the human organism's progressive predisposition and the dynamic power of the distinctively human qualities to disrupt, negate, and/or change the causal processes emanating from social reality. This emphasis on the potential primacy of causality arising from human nature, Fromm contends, coincides with the Freudian and Marxian conceptions of individual freedom in the social context:

...neither Marx nor Freud were determinists in the sense of believing in an irreversibility of causal determination. They both believed in the possibility that a course already initiated can be altered. They both saw this possibility of change rooted in man's capacity for becoming aware of the forces which move him behind his back, so to speak—and thus enabling him to regain his freedom (Fromm, 1971a:161).

Consequences of Evil and of Transcendence

In conclusion, what does the relative balance or imbalance of the forces of evil and transcendence of evil given in Fromm's theory of normative humanism signify for human destiny? Within human nature the evil arising from the regressive tendency to narcissism, destructiveness, incest, herd conformity, and irrationality is counter-balanced by the forces of transcendence emanating from the progressive tendency to love, creativeness, brotherliness, individuality, and reason. Within the context of social reality and in the particular structure of the capitalistic system, there are apparently no transcending social factors opposed to the evil deriving from the illusion of freedom, the practice of exploitation, the system of values that subordinates people to things, the process of abstractionification, and the regulation of life by anonymous social forces. However, the evil arising from these societal circumstances may be counter-balanced, and even negated or transformed by the forces of transcendence in human nature—i.e., the organic striving toward health and the dynamic power of reason, effort and will. It seems, therefore, that while the quantitative sources of evil may be greater than the sources of transcendence, Fromm intimates that the quality of the strength of transcendent forces exceeds that of the forces of evil.

Fromm's critique of societal insanity identifies as the consequences of the forces of evil for the individual: devaluation of the significance of human life; alienation of the individual from his or her volitional being, and the consequent loss of productive and creative powers; deterioration of the capacity for genuine relatedness; the loss of a sense of meaning and purpose in life, and a crucial loss of the sense of identity as a unique individual, and also as a member of the human race. The consequences of evil for society consist essentially of the deterioration of the dynamic interaction and independence of creative individuals and society which ensures the continuance of the society by maintaining its necessary adaptability to change.

Conversely, the consequences for the individual of transcendence are delineated as: the significance of the individual life is retained as a central value; humans experience themselves as volitional beings, as self-determining and creative agents in the world; the experience of the genuine love relation increases the capacity to understand and relate to others in a brotherly fashion; the experience of personal volition,



reason, and imagination enhances the meaningfulness of life; and the development of the distinctive human qualities of reason, freedom, and love engenders the realization of the unity of humanity. The consequences for society involve the maintenance of societal adaptability through the creative interaction of individuals and society, and the reorganization of social life in accord with the ideal of universal humanity. Human destiny, in collective life as well as individual life—like human nature, is emergent, always revolving around the crucial alternation between the regressive degeneration to a less than human state, and the progressive growth to fully developed humanity.

Taking a brief glance at The Chains of Illusion: My Encounter with Marx and Freud, it is interesting to compare this synthesis of Freudian and Marxian theory with the ideas Fromm presented in The Sane Society. The theory developed in The Chains of Illusion, again is based on an evolutionary perspective, assumes a teleological view of nature and human nature, and hence defines evil as whatever prevents the maximum realization of human potentials, and defines transcendence as whatever facilitates this realization. However, in contrast to the position of The Sane Society, it is here argued that in the interaction of causal factors in human nature and social reality, the factors of social reality predominate. That is, the primacy of social reality as a locus of causality is emphasized.

Fromm's basic ambivalence with regard to the issue of causality is especially evident in his identification of the sources of evil and transcendence. On the one hand, he stresses that evil arises from detrimental conditions of the social order which corrupt human nature, and on the other, he retains his previous emphasis on the transformative power of reason as a force of transcendence. The components of the social order which give rise to evil are identified as the implicit contradictions and irrationalities of the system which necessitate the repression of those human potentials which threaten to expose these irrationalities, and undermine the stability of the "insane society." That is, among the diverse immanent faculties of human nature there are some which, if developed, would lead to the discovery of societal contradictions, and hence threaten the continued existence of society in its present state—and there are other faculties, whose development would not undermine the society. The latter can be allowed to become manifest, whereas the former must be repressed, if society is to be preserved in its

present state. The determination of human nature in accord with these requirements of the social system demonstrates the action of one system—social reality, on another—human nature.

The societal determination of the manifestation of human nature is carried out by means of socialization into the social character, and, by the repression of forbidden faculties in the "social unconscious" effected by the "social filter" (Fromm, 1971b:121). That is, socialization into the desired social character provides the members of society with impulses, concepts and behavior patterns, supportive of the society. The non-threatening faculties are elicited, developed, and directed through the processes of social interaction. Simultaneously, the formation within the social filter of taboos and restrictions on thought and behavior installs within the personality a regulatory mechanism which functions to repress—into the social unconscious—any thoughts or impulses which could lead to the discovery of societal contradictions. The contradictions of society thus preclude the maximum realization of human potentials by allowing only a few faculties to reach the level of awareness, and by relegating a great many to the reservoir of the social unconscious. This structuring of the person according to societal requirements—by preventing the perception of societal evils—arouses an unconditional commitment to the society and its values, and promotes a slavish conformity of the masses. Furthermore, this total encompassing of the person by society evokes in him or her a fear of isolation and ostracism so terrifying that her or her voluntarily participates in the repression of perceptions of societal evil. Thus, the individual is driven to believe what he or she is taught to believe, and conforms despite first-hand evidence of societal corruption.

On the other hand, Fromm contends that the innate and transcendent faculty of reason is also developed through the processes of social interaction. It must be assumed, then, that the development of reason is somehow essential to the maintenance of an irrational society, even though it is implicitly capable of transcending and transforming the irrationalities of the society. The transcendent power of reason is given in the fact that—whereas the contents of consciousness that is, the concepts which are used in the reflective process, are determined by society—and while the reflective process itself is stimulated by social processes, the content and direction of reflection is not



determined by society, but is rather of an emergent and creative nature. In the reflective process, the interaction of the reasoning and imaginative faculties utilizes determined concepts but combines them in novel and unique ways to produce perceptions, thoughts, and values above and beyond those permitted by society. Whereas the given contents of consciousness are peculiar to the person's society and bind him or her to that society, the reflective process is a universal human quality, which binds the person to the whole of humanity. It is possible, therefore, for individuals to discover universal human values on their own. Through reflection—the combination of reason and imagination, individuals are able to overstep and transcend society's restrictions, to conceive of universal ideals beyond those of their society, and by which they can evaluate their own society.

In the context of this theory, Fromm identifies the specific causes of evil arising from social reality as the social character, the social filter, and the social unconscious—the instruments of repression and restriction inculcated in human nature. These mechanisms not only preclude the healthy development of all human faculties but also create a tension between the repressed faculties in the unconscious and the expressed faculties of consciousness that culminates in the evil of neuroses. Although Fromm continues to maintain that the unpredictable faculty of reason constitutes the indispensable cause of transcendence, he also indicates that certain social factors may be conducive to transcendence. Specifically, a marginal position in the social structure provides a more objective and detached perspective from which to view and evaluate one's society. Similarly, there is the possibility that unexpected individual experiences may so traumatize a person that he or she is shocked out of complacency, begins to speculate, and to doubt the validity of his or her heretofore unquestioned assumptions about the world. The culmination of these innate faculties and social experiences is the discovery of universal ideals, commitment to those ideals, critical evaluation of one's own society in the light of these higher ideals, and if necessary, individual and collective action to reorganize society according to transcendent ideals.

The process by which evil becomes manifest, as previously indicated, originates with the inculcation of the instruments of repression—the social character, social filter, and social unconscious. Secondly, the

tension which arises between the many repressed faculties within the social unconscious and the few expressed faculties of consciousness undermines through distortion the permitted contents of consciousness, leading finally to neuroses. Thus, the usual processes of an insane society signify that human thought and behavior are greatly determined by forces of which humans are not aware, and in the case of neuroses, they are almost completely determined such forces.

The process of transcendence of societal evil requires the enhancement of rationally deduced insights by external events such as the insecurities of marginal social position, or the shock of unexpected traumatic individual experiences. The added evidence of such external events both supports the conclusions of reflection, and lends further impetus toward continued critical reflection, commitment, and constructive action in service of universal ideals.

As in The Sane Society, the final consequences of evil are here conceived in terms of the deterioration of human faculties. In an insane society the human being becomes an automaton exhibiting above all obedience and mindless conformity to the dictates of society—which by repressing and perverting human potentials, is also destroying itself. Similarly, the consequences of transcendence are conceived in terms of the maximum development and realization of human faculties which serves to preserve society through the creative interaction of individuals and society, and through the reorganization of the society in line with rationally perceived human values.



The subversion of the sense of humanity and of the critical faculties signifies that the ultimate end of bureaucracy is genocide—as Hilberg observed:

It is the bureaucratic destruction process which, in its step-by-step manner, finally led to the annihilation of five million victims (Hilberg, 1961:29).

Conversely, the consequences of the countervailing factors of transcendence—of exposure to the primary relations and the free exchange of information in informal groups, to the discipline of logic in education, and the traumatic confusion of role conflict—may be summarized as a heightened consciousness and appreciation of the common bond of humanity uniting all people, the arousal of doubt and distrust of all perspectives or world-views, the strengthening of the tendency to critically and skeptically examine the domain assumptions and consequences of all perspectives, and a very considerable and depressing decline in a person's naive belief in the innate goodness of his or her own society. But, surely, the loss of innocence is a small price to pay for the prevention of social destructiveness.

With regard to the central issue of human judgment, there are, most certainly, processes within the bureaucratic order hostile to and destructive of human judgment, but, in the last analysis—as this study has revealed—it cannot be eliminated. The existence of human judgment may be taken for granted though its exercise cannot, for individuals may freely and knowledgeably choose to ignore or neglect to use this faculty. They are, however, morally and legally culpable for such negligence.

CHAPTER 16: Toward a Sociology of Evil and Transcendence

Introduction

Few anthropologists would today defend without important qualification Ruth Benedict's famous statement (1934:278): "...the coexisting and equally valid patterns of life which mankind has carved for itself from the raw materials of existence." ...the abandonment of the doctrine of untrammelled cultural relativity is a reaction to the observation of social consequences. If one follows out literally and logically the implications of Benedict's words, one is compelled to accept any cultural pattern as vindicated by its cultural status: slavery, cannibalism, Nazism, or Communism may not be congenial to Christians or to contemporary Western societies, but moral criticism of the cultural patterns of other people is precluded (Kluckhohn, 1962:266).

You believe (and I share your belief) in cosmopolitanism, i.e., that the natural barriers and prejudices which until now have impeded the free intercourse of nations by the egoism of their national aspiration, some day will fall before the light of reason and consciousness, and that the peoples will then start living in one congenial accord, like brethren, sensibly and lovingly striving for universal harmony (Dostoevsky, 1949:577).

Mankind's salvation lies exclusively in everyone's making everything his business, in the people of the East being anything but indifferent to what is thought in the West, and in the people of the West being anything but indifferent to what happens in the East (Solzhenitsyn, 1973a:30-31).

If the One World is not to destroy itself, it needs a new kind of man—a man who transcends the narrow limits of his nation and who experiences every human being as a neighbor rather than as a barbarian; a man who feels at home in the world (Fromm, 1971:171).

The implicit and, hopefully, clearly explicated value judgment which motivated this study is analogous to Kluckhohn's critical assessment of ethical relativism in anthropology as indicated in the above quotation. That is, in brief, the social consequences which ensue from the scientist's adherence to the doctrine of ethical neutrality—as in the case of the anthropologist's observance of ethical relativism—vitalize the ostensible validity of that doctrine. According to this view, scientific neutrality with respect to moral issues and problems has contributed considerably to the unstable and perilous state of the world today. In this case, the scientific community is morally obligated to renounce and discard the obsolete and inexpedient position of ethical neutrality, to incorporate an ethical ideal which postulates the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of the betterment of humanity rather than for the sake of knowledge alone, and, under the aegis of such an ideal, to confront directly the fundamental moral issues of evil and transcendence. To this end, an ethical ideal, constructed on the basis of the lessons of history, and which envisions the well-being of humanity, was tentatively suggested as an appropriate standard for the reorientation of science toward moral issues. Essentially, the central postulate of the ideal is that the quality of human life depends upon the fate of human dignity and moral judgment—that the quality of life deteriorates as a result of violations of human dignity and moral judgment, and conversely, the quality of life improves as a result of preserving human dignity and moral judgment. In terms of this ideal, then, the role of science with regard to the phenomena of evil and transcendence of evil entails empirical identification of the conditions of life on the individual, interpersonal, and societal levels which constitute or foster violations of human dignity and moral judgment, and conversely, identification of the conditions of life on the individual, interpersonal, and societal levels which are conducive to the preservation of human dignity and moral judgment. Furthermore, scientific activities should be directed toward the innovation of strategies designed to reduce the incidence of the former, and increase the incidence

of the latter. Accordingly, this study was designed to survey the theories of selected novelists and social science scholars who have dealt with the problem of evil and transcendence in an effort to obtain at least a preliminary indication of the various types of phenomena which can be designated as manifestations of evil or of transcendence, and thus, moreover, to demonstrate the relevance and potential fecundity of scientific inquiry with respect to such intrinsically value-laden issues.

Major Conclusions

As an exploratory and theory-oriented prelude to empirical investigation of evil and transcendence, this study has revealed several significant conclusions with regard to the exoteric manifestations of evil and transcendence. These conclusions are listed below.

- (1) All of the diverse phenomena defined as evil are characterized by a common conception of a deterioration in the distinctive human faculties—however these are variously identified. Conversely, all of the phenomena defined as transcendent share a common conception of the continuing development of these faculties.
- (2) Six (Chekhov, Solzhenitsyn, Freud, Fromm, May, and Arendt) of the nine scholars whose theories were examined concur in assuming a dichotomous conception of the locus of causality.
- (3) The sources of evil and transcendence identified within the causal realms of human nature, interpersonal interaction, and social reality are comprised primarily of combinations of factors within these realms, and secondarily of interactions of factors between the three realms.
- (4) The majority of the specific factors conducive either to evil or to transcendence were identified as conditions of social reality. Of the remaining factors, a greater number were identified as predispositions of human nature, and



the least number were identified as processes of interpersonal interaction. Secondly, social reality was found to contain the greater number of factors conducive to evil while human nature contains the greater number of factors conducive to transcendence.

- (5) The processes from which the phenomena of evil and transcendence emerge were described as involving the transformation of latent potentialities into manifest effects.
- (6a) Wherever there are factors conducive to evil in any one of the causal realms of reality, these factors are counterbalanced by other factors conducive to transcendence, and originating either within that particular realm or within one of the two other realms of reality. For example: when evil arises from certain predispositions in human nature, it is opposed by other (transcendent) predispositions of human nature, or by processes of interpersonal interaction, or by conditions of social reality. Thus, a tenuous balance exists between the antinomic forces of evil and transcendence.
- (6b) The ultimate consequence of all the various phenomena identified as evil is the fatal subversion or annihilation of the unique human faculties which may occur (1) on the individual level, through the repression or restriction of innate and/or learned needs, (2) on the interpersonal level, through the inhibition or nullification of the self-and-other confirming process of symbolic communication, and (3) on the societal level, through the totalitarian subjugation and domination of the individual by the collective. Alternatively, the ultimate consequence of the phenomena identified as transcendent consists of the continued maturation of the unique human faculties which results (1) on the individual level, from the freedom to express

innate and/or learned needs, (2) on the interpersonal level, from the confirmation of self and other in the process of symbolic communication, and (3) on the societal level, from the freedom of the individual to react or rebel against as well as to conform to the particular patterns of thought and behavior prescribed by his or her society.

In terms of the implication for empirically-oriented research, these conclusions suggest, in the first place, that two of the three possible causal realms of reality—human nature and social reality—should be the principal targets of investigation. Secondly, the investigation of human nature and social reality should focus on determining the probable combinations and interactions of factors between these realms which comprise sources of evil and transcendence. And thirdly, the distribution of specific causal factors between the two realms indicates that research oriented toward eliminating evil should focus on reconstructing pernicious societal conditions, whereas research oriented toward expediting transcendence of evil should concentrate upon stimulating the transcendent faculties of human nature.

These observations, drawn from the philosophical speculations and theoretical formulations of scholars concerned with the problem of evil and transcendence, support the view that social science and, by extension natural science also, can in fact fruitfully contribute to the needed understanding of contemporary manifestations of evil and transcendence. By abandoning the perspective of ethical neutrality, and adopting an ethical ideal such as the one herein suggested which advocates empirical investigation of evil and transcendence, the scientific community will be in a position to contribute not only to the understanding such phenomena, but also to the practical resolution of the typical dilemmas that disrupt individual, interpersonal, and societal life. Furthermore, above and beyond the eminently desirable prospect of actually ameliorating the quality of life, the dual strategy of, on the one hand, inventing techniques to alleviate or eliminate the conditions identified as detrimental to the well-being of humanity, and on the other hand, inventing techniques to stimulate and increase conditions identified as beneficial to the well-being of humanity, will also expedite the emergence of a cosmopolitan



consciousness of common humanity among the peoples of all societies. This consciousness of common humanity would transcend the divisive conflicts of ethnocentric values and interests, and constitute the essential psychological foundation for the establishment of international interdependence and world peace. Finally, this study illustrates that the proposed ideal of preserving human dignity and moral judgment was supported by a consensus of opinion among the selected novelists and scholars who agree that destruction of the distinctive human faculties (which were previously identified as the ontological foundation of human dignity) produces a decline in the quality of life, whereas preservation of these faculties enhance the quality of life. The information which would become available as a result of Scientific inquiry into the nature of evil and transcendence could be meaningfully utilized in the validation of existing, or proposed, and perhaps universal ethical norms.

Furthermore, it was discovered in the course of this study, that the attribute of moral judgment was considered by a majority of the selected novelists and scholars to be by far the most powerful, and therefore the single most important evil-transcending component of the constellation of distinctive faculties comprising the special worth or dignity of human beings. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of the nature and function of human judgment is crucial to the ethical enterprise of resolving the problem of evil. According to each of the theories examined, the nature of human judgment was conceived as a consciousness of fundamental moral principles pertaining to both individual behavior and the activities of society—which concurs with Berdyaev's contention that society as well as individuals is in need of moral evaluation. The transcendent function of human judgment was defined in terms of the ability to recognize the intrinsic evil of individual or collective egoism, to become aware of, reflect upon, and critically evaluate the implicit and unexplicated givens of society, and to expand narrow egoistic or ethnocentric interests to the wider system of interests involved. In terms of origin, this individual and societal-transcending faculty was variously perceived as deriving from an inherent moral consciousness (Lawrence, Solzhenitsyn, Arendt), from the emergent nature of reason (Chekhov, Freud, Fromm), from an innate ethical sensitivity (May), from the processes of role-taking and the prevision of gestures (Mead), and from negative thinking (Marcuse). Despite this

variation in origin, moral judgment was in all cases considered to be a latent faculty peculiar to human beings which is aroused and brought to fruition by either universal social processes or conflictual situations endemic to human life. The existence of this faculty, in other words, is inevitable and thus can be taken for granted.

More importantly, the fact that this faculty is necessarily aroused by unavoidable conditions of human life was interpreted by five of these nine theorists (Lawrence, Solzhenitsyn, Fromm, May, and Mead) to mean that the exercise of human judgment—the awareness of good and evil, and the construction of behavior on the basis of this knowledge—is likewise unavoidable. Both the existence and the exercise of human judgment are inevitable, and can be taken for granted. This interpretation—which concurs with the symbolic interactionist thesis that human beings freely construct and hence, control their actions, and are therefore endowed with moral responsibility for the beneficial or harmful consequences of their intentions—signifies that the perpetration of evil cannot be attributed to the victimization of unwitting individuals by circumstances, but rather, follows from the witting and irresponsible choice of individuals to relinquish their control of circumstances. That is, every prospective action confronts the individual with a necessary choice between enacting evil—initiating a course of conduct detrimental to others—or enacting transcendence—initiating a course of conduct beneficial to others. Therefore the manifestation of evil derives from either: (1) a voluntary choice of the evil alternative, or (2) a witting and voluntary decision to ignore the potentially injurious consequences of an intended act, or (3) errors of judgment arising from an incomplete or inadequate understanding of all the values involved in a particular situation, and hence a miscalculation of the probabilities of evil and transcendence.

In each of these three cases individuals are morally culpable for the evil which they initiate although the degree of guilt varies with the nature of their intentions, and the extensity of their knowledge of the situation. That is, the maximum degree of culpability is illustrated in the extreme case where a person possesses adequate knowledge of the situation, is fully cognizant of the issues and values involved, recognizes the probability of injurious consequences, and yet, despite all this, chooses to enact the evil



alternative. Conversely, the minimum degree of moral culpability is demonstrated in the other extreme case where a person does not intend evil but is hampered by inadequate or faulty knowledge of the situation which distorts his or her judgment, prevents recognition of the probability of evil consequences, and thus induces selection of an ultimately harmful course of action which vitiates the person's genuinely good intentions. The median degree of guilt issues from the case where a person possesses an adequate knowledge of the situation, and is thus capable of rationally determining the harmful or beneficial consequences of prospective alternative actions, but freely decides not to make this evaluation, and chooses a course of action unmindful of its consequences.

According to this examination of the nature and function of human judgment, the control which human beings exert over their behavior invests them also with moral responsibility for the consequences of their actions, and with moral culpability for the evil they initiate. There are no conditions which excuse or justify individual perpetration of evil, although there are conditions which mitigate the degree of culpability. The degree of individual culpability depends upon the nature of a person's intentions, and the extensity of his or her knowledge of a situation. The range of individual guilt is illustrated by the three indicated prototypical categories—(1) premeditated choice (maximum degree of guilt) (2) culpable negligence (median degree of guilt),² and (3) culpable ignorance (minimum degree of guilt).

The conclusion that the existence and exercise of human judgment can be taken for granted signifies that human beings are capable of morally evaluating their own actions, the actions of others, and the projects of their own society. According to the several theories here considered, such moral evaluation is a function of the reflective (prevision) and empathetic (identification) aspects of human consciousness. In the first place, the reflective aspect refers to the fact that human beings construct their actions by means of the imaginative completion of the act which enables them to anticipate before the fact the probable consequences of their intentions, and the range of possible

²My thanks to Professor Sjöberg and Professor Littrell for suggesting the concept of culpable ignorance.

alternative courses. In the second place, the empathetic aspect refers to the tendency to identify with or take the role of the other which places the actor in the position of the other whom he or she is affecting and enables the actor to feel and realize—through his or her own responses—the harmful or beneficial effects of his or her actions on the other. Similarly, human beings evaluate the actions of others and the projects of their society by imagining themselves in the position of the recipient other toward whom individual or societal action is directed, and then determining the harmful or beneficial nature of these actions according to their own negative or positive reactions. Thus, human beings morally evaluate the actions of individuals (themselves or others) and the projects of their society in terms of their own spontaneous reactions to an imaginatively anticipated effect. The impetus to make such an evaluation—with respect to either individual or societal activities—is aroused by the universal process of social interaction and/or the experience of conflictual situations. Both of these experiences induce an awareness of the hidden underlying values that structure human intentions, expose discrepancies or inconsistencies in these values, and thus render such values problematic or questionable.

In the case of social interaction, the coordination of self and other activities depends upon the actor's ability to ascertain both the other's intentions and the meaning of his or her own intentions for the other, both of which require imaginative identification with the other in order to experience and understand the other's reactions. If, in the process of this imaginative identification, the actor discovers that his or her intended action will produce a detrimental effect on the other, he or she is necessarily compelled to question the ethical validity of that intention, and of the underlying value which motivates that intention. The actor is compelled to reflect upon and re-evaluate the morality of his or her individually or socially-derived values which had heretofore been taken for granted as unexamined givens. Similarly, in the case of conflictual situations, the personal trauma of such experiences—i.e., the spontaneous negative reaction against an injury to the self evoked by the repression of eroticism, the agony of isolation, the demoralizing degradation of incarceration, the anxiety of sexual frustration, the sense of being unfulfilled, the uncertainty which follows from a loss of a center of values, the isolation which ensues from anti-social



activities, and the loss of a sense of self as the individual is subordinated to the collective—also stimulates an awareness and suspicion of the societal values which must exist as the normative substructure that makes such conditions possible. The individual is again confronted by a transformation of the previously unexamined and unexplicated given into the ethically-suspect problematic which must be rationally reconsidered and re-evaluated in order to restore the necessary continuity of the world.

Thus, the exercise of human judgment is elicited by the universal process of social interaction, and by the inevitable experience of ubiquitous conflictual situations, both of which bring hidden societal values to the level of consciousness, expose their questionable ethical validity, and induce reflection and re-evaluation of these values. This evaluation proceeds through, and is determined by spontaneous individual reaction against real or imagined injury to the self. By virtue of these processes, then, human beings are capable of transcending the limitations of the given social construction of reality into which they are socialized, and of evaluating the morality or immorality of their own society. And, furthermore, having recognized the moral deficiencies of their society, human beings are also capable of transforming an evil society into a good one, through the imaginative construction of a society without those deficiencies, which vision provides the inspiration, motivation, and direction for needed social reform. By virtue of their special qualities—of judgment, reason, and imagination—human beings are far more than the passive products of omnipotent society, and are indeed the creative inventors of moral and social change.

In conclusion, the evidence of this study suggests that the resolution of the problem of evil which confronts the modern world can and should be facilitated by the contribution of science which will serve to complement and reinforce the transcendent function of human judgment, which moreover, in agreement with Hannah Arendt's position, is definitely not "...the last thing to be taken for granted in our time" (Arendt, 1973:295). When human beings "...behave according to the rules of society..." (Horton and Leslie, 1970:31) which at times requires individual participation in the perpetration of evil, they do so not "...partly because it never occurs to them to do otherwise..." (Horton and Leslie, 1970:31), but because they freely and wittingly choose to do so.

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THE DIMENSIONS OF EVIL AND OF TRANSCENDENCE:

A Sociological Perspective

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