

9. THE THEORIES OF ERICH FROMM

In the last fifty years there has been a tremendous growth in our knowledge of anthropology and sociology. One of the handicaps under which Freud labored in his earlier years was a lack of this knowledge. Since the 1880's and 1890's when Freud began to make his great discoveries and observations concerning the psychology of man, students of the social sciences at home and abroad have amassed a vast amount of material from every part of the world concerning man's nature and behavior. To be sure, Freud, Jung and Rank made use of a good deal of anthropological data acquired earlier but not a little of their work is marred by hasty interpretations based on inadequate or insufficient material. But the years have brought more cautiousness to psychoanalysis. The earlier exuberance has been replaced by a more careful, more precise formulation of theory based on much more empirical knowledge. Among those who apply contemporary knowledge of sociology and anthropology to psychoanalysis are Fromm, Kardiner,¹ Horney and H. S. Sullivan.

With the publication of *Escape from Freedom* Erich Fromm immediately became, in the judgment of many people, one of the foremost thinkers in psychoanalysis. In this work he asserts that Freud and most of his disciples had only a very naive notion of what goes on in society and that most

of his applications of psychology to social problems were misleading constructions.

"Freud went further," he says, "than anybody before him in directing attention to the observation and analysis of the irrational and unconscious forces which determine parts of human behavior. He and his followers in modern psychology not only uncovered the irrational and unconscious sector of man's nature, the existence of which had been neglected by modern rationalism; he also showed that these irrational phenomena followed certain laws and therefore could be understood rationally. He taught us to understand the language of dreams and somatic symptoms as well as the irrationalities in human behavior. He discovered that these irrationalities as well as the whole character structure of an individual were reactions to the influences exercised by the outside world and particularly by those occurring in early childhood."²

Yet Freud, like every one else, even a genius, was so imbued with the spirit of his culture that he could not transcend certain limits set by that culture. As the earth carries the atmosphere around with it, all of us carry within us the virtues and limitations of our culture, by means of which, as it were, we live and breathe. Hence, the limitations of Freud's culture circumscribed his understanding of the sick individual as well as the "normal" one; they also handicapped his understanding of the irrational phenomena which operate in society.

Fromm goes on to press his analysis of Freud into the details of the latter's theories:

"Freud accepted the traditional belief in a basic dichotomy between man and society, as well as the traditional doctrine of the evilness of human nature. Man, to him, is fundamentally antisocial. Society must domesticate him, must allow some direct satisfaction of biological—and hence, ineradicable—drives; but for the most part society must refine



and adroitly check man's basic impulses. In consequence of this suppression of natural impulses by society something miraculous happens: the suppressed drives turn into strivings that are culturally valuable and thus become the basis for culture. Freud chose the word sublimation for this strange transformation from suppression into civilized behavior. If the amount of suppression is greater than the capacity for sublimation, individuals become neurotic and it is necessary to allow the lessening of suppression. Generally, however, there is a reverse relation between satisfaction of man's drives and culture: the more suppression the more culture (and the more danger of neurotic disturbances). The relation of the individual to society in Freud's theory is essentially a static one: the individual remains virtually the same and becomes changed only in so far as society exercises greater pressure on his natural drives (and thus enforces more sublimation) or allows more satisfaction (and thus sacrifices culture)."³

The founder of psychoanalysis erected a conception of human nature on the basis of the most important drives he discovered operating in modern Western man. For him the individual of his culture represented "man," that is, mankind, and he thought that the passions and anxieties of people in his culture were eternal forces rooted in the biological constitution of man.

THE CONCEPT OF INSTINCT

Fromm proceeds to lay the basis for his own theories by a clarification of the concept of instinct. If by instinct one means a physiologically determined need or urge like hunger, thirst, sex, then there can be no quarrel with such a notion, for, of course, man has such biological needs. However, the *form of expression and satisfaction* of these needs is culturally determined. And this form of expression and satisfaction varies enormously throughout the world. But when people talk about

instincts, they often confuse a specific action pattern determined by inherited neurological structures, such as is found in the animal kingdom, with biological needs; the latter in the human being do *not* have specific, fixed, inherited action patterns by which they are satisfied. Such a confusion has enormous theoretical and practical consequences which we cannot enter into here. Fromm is careful to point out that the higher we go in the scale of animal development, the less completeness of structural development do we find at birth. With human beings the lack of structural adjustment at birth is at a maximum. And he quotes another writer (L. Bernard) to the effect that instinct is a diminishing if not a disappearing category in higher animals—especially in human beings. This means that man's adaptation to nature is based essentially on the process of learning, on culture, not on instinct.

THE KEY PROBLEM OF PSYCHOLOGY, RELATEDNESS

Hence the key problem of psychology for Fromm is *the specific kind of relatedness of the individual towards the world and to himself*. This relatedness is acquired in the process of human learning, human acculturation. To be sure, he says, man has certain fundamental needs, which have to be satisfied, but the significant problems of psychology are located elsewhere: in the relationship of man to his world. And this relationship is not fixed. To say or imply that the fundamental problem of human psychology lies in the problem of the satisfaction or frustration of instinctual needs and drives is to oversimplify matters enormously. For the very fact of human learning generates new needs and problems as imperative—or even more so—than the needs of hunger and thirst. In a world that is not fixed, static but ever changing and dynamic, new problems and possibilities arise.

Fromm has put this so well that we quote his own words. "It is not as if we had on the one hand an individual equipped

by nature with certain drives and on the other, society as something apart from him, either satisfying or frustrating these innate propensities. Although there are certain needs, such as hunger, thirst, sex, which are common to man, those drives which make for the *differences* in men's characters, like love and hatred, the lust for power and the yearning for submission, the enjoyment of sensuous pleasure and the fear of it, are all products of the social process. The most beautiful as well as the most ugly inclinations of man are not a part of a fixed and biologically given human nature, but result from the social process which creates man. In other words, society has not only a suppressing function—although it has that too—but it has also a creative function. Man's nature, his passions, and anxieties are a cultural product; as a matter of fact, man himself is the most important creation and achievement of the continuous human effort, the record of which we call history."⁴

The animal lives in an harmonious relation with its world, not in the sense that it does not have to make any effort in order to survive, but in the sense that its inherited instinctual equipment makes it a fixed and unchanging part of its world. The emergence of man from the purely animal state has brought with it new qualities which distinguish him from the animal. These qualities include "his awareness of himself as a separate entity [from the rest of nature], his ability to remember the past, to visualize the future, and to denote objects and acts by symbols; his reason to conceive and understand the world; and his imagination through which he reaches far beyond the range of his senses." Although he is the most helpless of all beings at birth, his biological weakness thus becomes the prime cause for the development of his specifically human qualities.

Since man is not a fixed, unchanging part of his world like an animal, reason, imagination and self-awareness, which he has developed in the place of relatively unchanging action

patterns by which the animal is adjusted to its world, have concomitantly and further disrupted man's harmonious adjustment with the rest of nature. He has become an anomaly, "a freak of the universe." "He is part of nature, subject to her physical laws and unable to change them, yet he transcends the rest of nature. He is set apart while being a part; he is homeless, yet chained to the home he shares with all creatures. Cast into this world at an accidental place and time, he is forced out of it, again accidentally. Being aware of himself, he realizes his powerlessness and the limitations of his existence. He visualizes his own end: death. Never is he free from the dichotomy of his existence: he cannot rid himself of his mind, even if he should want to; he cannot rid himself of his body as long as he is alive—and his body makes him want to be alive."⁵

Thus the conditions of human life—being a part of nature, yet transcending the rest of it, "homeless," yet chained to this natural world, longing for immortality, yet condemned to death, possessing a rational mind which tells him of his brief hour and a body that makes him want to be alive, a craving for oneness with the world and a self-awareness which sets him apart—such conditions constitute incompatibilities which Fromm calls existential dichotomies because they spring from the nature of human existence. These conditions cannot be eradicated but man must face them. He cannot return to the prehuman state of animal existence in which reason, self-awareness, and imagination do not exist to remind him of his powerlessness, aloneness, and mortality. Thus the human situation impels man everlastingly to strive for a solution to these incompatible conditions of life. Reason, which is his blessing, is also his curse. Human history is a record of the struggle to overcome, or at least to come to satisfying terms with, the incompatible conditions of human existence. This is in part also what Fromm means by saying that the relationship of man to his world is not static but

dynamic. As humanity strives to solve some of the basic "contradictions" or incompatibilities of human existence, new problems are generated. No final solutions are reached. Reason is constantly reminding man of his failures, of his powerlessness, of his aloneness in a world indifferent to his fate. And this is intolerable. Hence, man cannot rest; he must struggle to overcome or somehow find a way to make these tormenting conditions bearable. "The dynamism of his history is intrinsic to the existence of reason which causes him to develop and, through it, to create a world of his own in which he can feel at home with himself and his fellow men. Every stage he reaches leaves him discontented and perplexed, and this very perplexity urges him to move toward new solutions."⁶

Although there is no innate drive for progress, man must proceed on the way he set out—a road that leads farther away from animal existence—toward another kind of harmony with nature, his fellows and himself. One way by which he has attempted to negate or deny his fate is by creating religions which promise an eternal life in the hereafter. Another is by attaining ever increasing knowledge and understanding, by which he can control or at least modify some of the conditions of his life and make it more bearable and satisfying, and by which, comprehending the conditions of human life, he attains a sense of community and relatedness with all men who share the same fate.

EXISTENTIAL AND HISTORICAL DICHOTOMIES

Fromm makes a distinction between existential and historical dichotomies. Life versus death is the most fundamental existential dichotomy. Another existential dichotomy results from the fact that man lives for only a brief period in the historical process. The limitations of any historical period become his limitations. By and large, the realization of human potentialities cannot exceed the limits of the culture which

is reached at any given time. Only if the life span were identical with the entire historical process could one realize his potentialities to the fullest. And of this fact man has at least a dim perception.

The conditions which generate existential dichotomies cannot be changed. Death is unalterable, and all life is limited to a small sector of space and time. No power of reason, no magic of rite and ceremony can alter these facts. But there are other incompatibilities in human life which are not eternal and unchangeable. These are "historical dichotomies" which can be overcome, given intelligence and courage, either at the time they occur or at a later historical period. The contemporary abundance in our world of material and technological resources and our inability to use it for peace and general welfare are incongruous facts. Fromm adds that those who benefit from historical dichotomies strive to convince mankind that they are an unavoidable and ineradicable part of human existence, that they are existential dichotomies.

Now, according to Fromm, one of the peculiar qualities of the human mind is that when confronted with incongruities, incompatibilities and contradictions, it cannot remain passive. It must try to resolve them. All human progress, he says, is due to this. If man is to be prevented from reacting to the awareness of contradictions by action, they must be denied. In individual life rationalization (more or less plausible but spurious reasoning and explaining) serves this function. In society, "ideologies" (socially patterned rationalizations) have the same function. A widespread acceptance of ideologies or the say-so of authority will persuade people to accept them; their minds become appeased, though not entirely set at rest.

Historical dichotomies can be eradicated given courage and wisdom, but existential dichotomies cannot. People may deaden and appease their minds with soothing ideologies which, for example, may stifle their fear of death, but unconsciously (and often consciously) they remain restless, dis-

satisfied and anxious. It is pretty difficult to explain death away—or starvation in a land of plenty. Eventually man must face the truth about himself; it is the only genuine solution. He must recognize his aloneness in a universe indifferent to his fate.

THE HUMAN SITUATION

Fromm's attitude and outlook in this problem of the human situation is uncompromising. The only meaning life has is what the individual gives it by the unfolding and realizing of his powers of reason, love, and productive work. This unfolding and realizing of man's powers constitutes the basis of man's happiness and salvation.

In contrast to Freud, Fromm believes, in accordance with the ideas we have discussed, that a large part of man's strivings cannot be explained by the force of his instincts. When man's needs for food and drink and sex are satisfied, then, says Fromm, his most compelling problems *begin*. "He strives for power, or for love, or for destruction, he risks his life for religious, for political, for humanistic ideals, and these strivings are what constitutes and characterizes the peculiarity of human life."⁷

Since the disharmony of man's existence with the rest of nature generates needs which far transcend those of his animal origin, such as an imperative drive to restore a unity and equilibrium between himself and the rest of nature, he has to erect a mental reference-frame, an orientation, from which he can derive an answer to the question of where he stands and what he ought to do. Having a body as well as a mind, he must also create this reference-frame to contain answers and solutions to every aspect of his existence, not only in thinking, but in his feelings and actions. Such a system attempts to give an answer to the human quest for meaning. And Fromm calls such a system a frame of orien-

tation and devotion. The need for such a system is common to all men. Some find it in organized religion, others in systems whose contents are secular although they fulfill the same fundamental need: to be significantly related to the world, to oneself and one's fellow men.

While Freud explained religion as a form of neurosis, Fromm maintains that neurosis is a form of religion (a frame of orientation and devotion) which differs mainly from organized religion by its individual, non-socially-patterned characteristics. For Fromm this need for a frame of orientation and devotion is the most fundamental and all-inclusive need of mankind. And this concept is the key to understand Fromm's thought.

Since frames of orientation and devotion differ in content, by what criterion can we judge them? By their truth, by the extent to which they further the development of man's powers of reason, love, productive work, etc., and by the degree to which they offer a genuine solution to man's need for equilibrium and harmony in his world.

THE GROWTH OF INDIVIDUALITY

We now can go on to discuss in more detail the problems and possibilities of mankind which have arisen from its emergence from a pre-human existence. We have pointed out that the history of man began with his emerging from a state of oneness with the rest of nature to an awareness of himself as a separate entity. But this awareness came about very gradually. It remained dim over long periods of history. Man remained closely tied to the natural and social world in which he lived. For a long period of history he was only partly aware of himself as a separate being; therefore, he still felt himself to be an indissoluble part of the rest of nature. But the time came when man became sharply aware of his separateness and uniqueness. This process of the emergence of mankind

from its original ties with nature is called by Fromm the process of individuation, which he thinks reached its peak between the Reformation and the present. The process has been described as follows:

"From the beginning of his existence man is confronted with the choice between different courses of action. In the animal there is an uninterrupted chain of reactions starting with a stimulus, like hunger, and ending with a more or less strictly determined course of action, which does away with the tension created by the stimulus. In man that chain is interrupted. The stimulus is there but the kind of satisfaction is 'open,' that is, he must choose between different courses of action. Instead of a predetermined instinctive action, man has to weigh possible courses of action in his mind; he starts to think. He changes his role toward nature from that of a purely passive adaptation to an active one: he produces. He invents tools and, while thus mastering nature, he separates himself from it more and more. He becomes dimly aware of himself—or rather of his group—as not being identical with nature. It dawns upon him that his is a tragic fate: to be part of nature, and yet to transcend it. He becomes aware of death as his ultimate fate even if he tries to deny it in manifold phantasies."⁸

Primitive religions and myths bear testimony to man's original ties to nature, what Fromm calls "primary ties," to the soil he lives on, the sun and moon and stars, the trees and flowers, animals, and the people with whom he is related by ties of blood. This feeling of identity with nature, clan, religion gives him security and a sense of belonging. He is rooted in an organized, structuralized totality, in which he has an unquestionable place. Thus, he is protected from the most awful human predicament: complete aloneness, complete isolation, and tormenting uncertainty and doubt.

But there is another side to the picture. These primary ties stand in the way of the development of his reason and

his critical capacities, for he has no impelling reason to use them. The primary ties "let him recognize himself and others only through the medium of his, or their, participation in a clan, a social or religious community, and not as [self-governing] human beings; in other words, they block his development as a free, self-determining, productive individual."⁹

According to Fromm, European and American history since the end of the Middle Ages marks the full emergence of the individual. And he devotes considerable space to an analysis of this process of growing freedom—and growing isolation. Unfortunately we cannot discuss it here.

Let us sum up the process which we shall see again, or at least its analogue, in the individual. The emergence of man resulted in a process of growing strength and integration, mastery of nature, a growing power of reason, and growing solidarity with others. But the process of increasing individuation also meant growing isolation, insecurity, and doubt concerning one's role in the world. Doubt arose as to the meaning of one's life, and an increasing sense of one's own powerlessness and insignificance. In other words, Fromm, borrowing from Hegelian philosophy, says that the process of individuation has a "dialectical" or dichotomous character.

In the history of the individual, a similar or at least analogous process is to be found. The beginning of individual human existence occurs with physical separation from the mother, a condition analogous to that of the emergence of man from the animal state of instinctual adaptation. Yet the child remains functionally one with the mother or her surrogate for some time, for he is fed and cared for in every vital respect by her. Gradually the child becomes aware of himself as an entity separate from the mother and other objects. By means of his own developing equipment, activity, and education, the child begins to experience a world outside himself and to make distinctions. The process of education, involving frustration and prohibition, especially sharpens the

child's awareness of the difference between the "I" and the "Thou," between the developing self and others. The growing self-awareness of the child is analogous to the growing self-awareness of mankind.

A very important point needs to be noted here. Education necessarily involves some frustration and prohibition. It is the kind of frustration and prohibition and especially the attitude of the mother or nurse which are all-important. If the mother is a loving person, no real damage to the child's developing personality will occur. Short of being an imbecile, a loving mother will "instinctively" do the right thing, at least within certain limits ordained by the culture. Growing up in an atmosphere of self-respect and love, the child will "naturally" develop into a self-respecting, healthy human being with respect and regard for others.

The hateful, destructive, or "overprotective" mothers and fathers are the ones who do the damage. "It is the thwarting of expansiveness, the breaking of the child's attempt to assert himself, the hostility radiating from parents—in short, the atmosphere of suppression which create in the child the feeling of powerlessness and the hostility springing from it."¹⁰

And so the child gradually develops his capacities within the limits ordained by the culture, family, and native constitution. More and more he becomes aware of himself as a separate being, different from others. From growing experience he learns something of his powers and how to use them. New possibilities of experience continually occur. For the healthy child, at any rate, the world is a strange and fascinating place in which to exercise his powers. The various spheres of his being, physical, mental, emotional become more and more integrated. An organized and integrated structure, the self, develops. Given fortunate circumstances, he becomes an individualized person, his personality guided by reason and will. The dependency on the parents is shed, as

it were, layer by layer, until as an adult the person becomes a free, self-governing being.

But here, too, alas! there is another side to the picture. The primary ties, the feelings of oneness and dependency on the parents and others, give the child a sense of security and belonging. The process of growth and individualization destroy this kind of security and sense of belonging. As the child emerges from a state of un-self-conscious unity with his milieu, he becomes aware of being alone, of being an entity separate from all others. "This separation from a world, which in comparison with one's own individual existence is overwhelmingly strong and powerful, and often threatening and dangerous, creates a feeling of powerlessness and anxiety. As long as one was an integral part of that world, unaware of the possibilities and responsibilities of individual action, one did not need to be afraid of it. When one has become an individual, one stands alone and faces the world in all its perilous and overpowering aspects."¹¹ The more the child has experienced hostility, the more his developing capacities have been blocked, the more he has been deprived of self-confidence and self-respect, the more difficult will this problem of a threatened isolation be. For many it will be a tormenting, agonizing prospect and a problem they will never solve. On the other hand, those children who are reared in healthy surroundings will have far less of a problem and, having greater inner strength, they will tend toward a more genuine solution.

As a result of this threat of unbearable isolation and powerlessness, impulses to abandon one's individuality, one's state of being a self-governing entity, by completely submerging oneself in the world outside arise. We shall study some of these forms of escape, but we can now say that the submersion of oneself in something or someone else can never be identical with one's primary ties. The process of individuation cannot be reversed. The only adequate solution, according to Fromm,

is a relationship with man and nature, chiefly by love and productive work, which strengthens the total personality, sustains the person in his sense of uniqueness, and at the same time gives him a feeling of belonging, a sense of unity and common destiny with mankind.

Were every degree of progress of the child toward separation and individuation marked by a corresponding growth of self, his development would be harmonious, without anxiety and fear of aloneness and powerlessness. But this does not happen for various reasons, such as an unhealthy, that is, a hostile and anxiety-laden family situation, or because of irrational, pathogenic factors in society, which are communicated to the child by the family, school or church. There is, therefore, a lag between increasing individuation and the progress of self security. This, in turn, leads to the development of various mechanisms of escape, some but not all of which are often labeled as "neurotic."

An analogous problem arose in connection with the development of mankind or at least a large section of it. Due to certain economic, social, and political conditions, which Fromm discusses, there has also been a lag in phylogenetic development. Here, too, there has been an imbalance in man's growth toward self-strength and security. And since the family is the "psychic agency" of society, this lag is, as we indicated above, conveyed to the child.

MECHANISMS OF ESCAPE

We shall now indicate the various "psychic mechanisms" by which the person attempts to escape unbearable feelings of aloneness and powerlessness due to pathogenic conditions in his familial and social worlds. These mechanisms are (moral) masochism, sadism, destructiveness and automaton conformity. Since masochism and sadism are regularly to be found in the same person, such a one is labeled sado-masochistic, or, for

reasons we discuss below, authoritarian. Masochistic strivings usually appear in the form of feelings of inferiority, powerlessness and individual insignificance. This is analogous to the feelings of the helpless child, but there is a difference. The feeling of helplessness, or relative helplessness, of a young child is factual, that is to say, because of his limited equipment and experience there is nothing he can do except to depend on the parents, the authorities on whom he leans for the necessities of life. Furthermore, he is yet only dimly aware of himself as a separate being. The parents still appear to be an integral part of the child's universe. Submission to them, therefore, has a different quality from that of the submissiveness of a grown-up who leans on an authority. While the moral helplessness of the adult is also causally determined, it is now his orientation to the world—his unconscious longing to return to or to remain in a state of dependency and helplessness—which causes him to feel and act as he does. And there is another difference. He can no longer accept the closed world of the child. Awareness of himself as a separate, isolated being has entered the picture.

Masochism

People with strong masochistic strivings may complain about their feelings of inadequacy and consciously want to get rid of them, but unconsciously they are impelled to feel inferior or insignificant. They have never really *experienced* to the depths of their being the happiness and fulfillment of being independent and free. Their minds tell them that the way they feel and act is foolish and thwarts their chances of happiness. They suffer intensely. But man has a great fear of the unknown, and they unconsciously fear that which they have never known, independence. In other words, they have no real insight or at least not enough into the nature of their problems and the genuine possibilities for their solution. However inadequate, thwarting, and tormenting their state may be,

it gives them some feeling of being related to others, of not being completely isolated and alone in the cosmic setting. Never having experienced independence, they cannot believe it promises a far more satisfactory and fulfilling kind of relatedness. And so they tend to remain weak, helpless and to depend on powers outside themselves, on other people, or institutions, or nature.

In order to avoid confusion, it must be pointed out that everyone is in a sense dependent, but it is a different kind of dependency, and to this matter we shall return later.

There are all sorts of disguises for masochistic feelings—"love," "loyalty," "devotion," etc. There are also extreme forms of masochism which we need not go into here.

Sadism

Sadism is, so to speak, the other side of the penny. People who have masochistic strivings will also be found to have sadistic strivings, varying in strength. Fromm distinguishes three kinds of sadistic strivings. "One is to make others dependent on oneself and to have absolute and unrestricted power over them, so as to make of them nothing but instruments, 'clay in the potter's hands.' Another consists of the impulse not only to rule over others in this absolute fashion, but to exploit them, to use them, to steal from them, to disembowel them, and, so to speak, to incorporate anything eatable in them. This desire can refer to material things as well as to immaterial ones, such as the emotional or intellectual qualities a person has to offer. A third kind of sadistic tendency is the wish to make others suffer or to see them suffer. This suffering can be physical, but more often it is mental suffering. Its aim is to hurt actively, to humiliate, embarrass others, or to see them in embarrassing and humiliating situations."¹²

One might think that the sadistic person is strong and independent in contrast to the masochist, who seems weak and helpless. But the sadist is weak and helpless too. He needs some

one to dominate, hurt and humiliate. Without such a relationship, he feels lost and alone.

As we have already mentioned, the two kinds of tendencies will be found in the same person, though usually one will predominate. Hence, in a sado-masochistic relationship between people, the roles will not infrequently be reversed. In either case, the person cannot bear the isolation and weakness of his own self. He has to "submerge" his real self, as Fromm puts it, thus losing his integrity. When the person is neither submitting to nor dominating another, he becomes anxious and afraid. He has no peace, no rest, and his life is taken up with either one or the other.

Although probably some masochistic and sadistic traits are found in everyone, only the person in whom they predominate can be called sado-masochistic.

Destructiveness

Since sado-masochistic strivings are often found along with the phenomenon which Fromm calls destructiveness, it is not easy to elucidate its special characteristics. In fact, in one sense all the "mechanisms of escape" we discuss are destructive since they thwart and block the development of man's powers and deprive him of any genuine and unalloyed happiness. But destructiveness in the sense in which Fromm uses it has some special characteristics. The destructive person tries to eliminate or destroy the other person or object, not to dominate, nor to submit, nor to conform like a robot. Since destructiveness too is based on unbearable feelings of powerlessness and isolation, the destructive person aims to remove any basis of comparison or any possible threat. "I can escape the feeling of my own powerlessness in comparison with the world outside of myself by destroying it. To be sure, if I succeed in removing it, I remain alone and isolated, but mine is a splendid isolation, in which I cannot be crushed by the overwhelming power of the objects outside of myself. The

destruction of the world is the last, almost desperate attempt to save myself from being crushed by it."¹³

Here too we find destructiveness masquerading under various disguises: "love," "duty," "conscience," "patriotism."

It is necessary to distinguish between two forms of destructiveness: what Fromm calls irrational and rational destructive tendencies. The former we have discussed above. "There are destructive tendencies which result from a specific situation; as reaction to attacks on one's own or others' life and integrity, or on ideas which one is identified with. This kind of destructiveness is the natural and necessary concomitant of one's affirmation of life."¹⁴ This is rational.

According to Fromm, when man's sensuous, emotional and intellectual capacities are stunted, when the drive to live productively, lovingly, happily, which depends on the development of man's powers, is thwarted, the energy directed toward life-furthering activities undergoes a process of reorganization and becomes directed toward irrational destructiveness.

Automaton Conformity

Automaton conformity is difficult to elucidate, partly because it is so widespread that it seems the "natural" way of life, partly because some conformity is necessary in any culture, partly because one must have some patterns of thought, feeling, and action as materials to go on in order to become a human being. But more of this below.

The mechanism of automaton conformity is characterized by the fact that one adopts entirely the kind of personality offered him by cultural patterns; "and he therefore becomes exactly as all others are and as they expect him to be."¹⁵

The automaton conformist wipes out or attempts to wipe out the difference between himself and others, thus overcoming the conscious—but not unconscious—fear of aloneness and powerlessness. Such a person aims to think, feel, imagine, and act exactly like all others of his culture or class. To be

sure, in American society, where there is a variety of clashing culture patterns, such a person may have to exercise some ingenuity. But here the schools, the radio, the newspapers, the movies come in handy. They can teach him. It is true, also, that some people have local or other loyalties because of such things as religion or foreign origin. But by and large they will strive to become exactly as all others are. In other words, they substitute a pseudo-self for their own real self.¹⁶

ASSIMILATION AND SOCIALIZATION

Before discussing Fromm's theory of temperament and character we need to introduce some other ideas. In the process of living, he says, man relates himself to the world by (1) acquiring and assimilating things, and (2) relating himself to people and himself. The former is called the process of assimilation, the latter, socialization. The two processes are conjunctive. "Man can acquire things," he observes, "by receiving or taking them from an outside source or by producing them through his own effort. But he must acquire and assimilate them in some fashion in order to satisfy his needs. Also, man cannot live alone and unrelated to others. He has to associate with others for defense, for work, for sexual satisfaction, for play, for the upbringing of the young, for the transmission of knowledge and material possessions. But beyond that, it is necessary for him to be related to others, one with them, part of a group. Complete isolation is unbearable and incompatible with sanity. Again man can relate himself to others in various ways: he can love or hate, he can compete or cooperate; he can build a social system based on equality or authority, liberty or oppression; but he must be related in some fashion and the particular form of relatedness is expressive of his character."¹⁷

Except for the kind of relatedness referred to under the heading of spontaneous love and productiveness, which we discuss below, the various forms of socialization have been

outlined. But for the sake of clarity we mention the various kinds of socialization and assimilation at this point. In the process of socialization there are five orientations, two of which, masochism and sadism, are interrelated: masochism, sadism, destructiveness, automaton conformity, and love. There are also five kinds of orientation in the process of assimilation: the receptive, the exploitative, the hoarding, the marketing, and the productive. The orientations in both the process of assimilation and socialization are respectively related. Thus, the receptive character is masochistic, the productive character is a loving person.

CHARACTER AND TEMPERAMENT

The various character types are "ideal constructions," that is, they are never found in a pure state. Everyone is a mixture of more than one type, although one usually, if not always, predominates.

For Fromm, personality designates the totality of inherited and acquired psychic qualities of the person which make him unique. The difference between inherited and acquired psychic qualities is in the main equivalent to the difference between temperament, endowment and all constitutionally given psychic qualities, and character. Temperament as a concept refers to the mode of reaction to experience. Following Hippocrates, Fromm classifies temperaments as choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic, and melancholic. Thus a choleric person's reaction will be "quick and strong," with rapidity and intensity of feeling, and resulting generally in quick vigorous action. But this does not tell us what the reaction refers to. Here one has to know something of the person's character as well as the situation. The loving person, the productive character, with a choleric temperament, will react quickly and strongly to love; the sadistic person who has a choleric temperament will react perhaps just as vigorously to submissiveness.

The fundamental basis of character lies in the specific kind of relatedness of a person to the world. Character is defined "as the (relatively permanent) form in which human energy is canalized in the process of assimilation and socialization."¹⁸ The character system is the human substitute for the instinctive apparatus of the animal. Once energy is organized into a character system, the person's orientation toward life, which constitutes his character, is extraordinarily difficult to change. The quality of his experience and behavior will be determined by his character.

The character of the child is moulded by the family, but the latter, according to Fromm, is the "psychic agency" of society. By adjusting himself to the family situation, the child acquires the kind of character which makes him want to do what he has to do in order to function with some social effectiveness. In thus adjusting himself, he acquires a character whose core is common to most members of his social class and culture. This common core is by Fromm called the "social character." It is constituted by or derived from the dominant social and cultural patterns of his world.

On this common core are "superimposed" all the variations of the individualized character. Since the personalities of the parents differ, perhaps only to a trivial degree, perhaps considerably in some cases, and since there are psychic and material differences of the specific, local social environment, and finally, since each person will have constitutional differences, there will be various degrees of individuation and differentiation constituting the individual character. One may think of the difference between the social and individual character as a continuum. Near one end of this continuum are people whose personalities are constituted mainly, almost exclusively, by conventional social patterns, and near the other end those who depart widely from some of them, for example, geniuses. However, difference of itself tells nothing—it is the

kind of difference that matters. A "deviant" may be a creative artist or an idiosyncratic and ineffectual nonentity.

We can put this another way by saying that every person, by reason of his acculturation, which means by reason of his being human, must acquire the various materials of his culture. If he grows up in fortunate circumstances where he is given a fair chance to develop his capacities (which in turn depend on native endowment), he will be able to reorganize and work over and recreate these materials to such a degree that he will become what Fromm calls a productive human being. Otherwise he will develop one of what Fromm calls the non-productive orientations, although even here there will be differences. But as we said above, whether the difference be great or small, it is the kind of difference that matters. Just which type of non-productive orientation a person develops will depend on his particular family situation, but ultimately, by and large, on the dominant social and cultural patterns.

As to why certain social and cultural patterns do predominate is a problem for sociology. Fromm has discussed these matters to some extent, but they are beyond the scope of this book.

The Receptive Character

We now take up the various orientations from the point of view of assimilation. In the receptive orientation, the person believes that everything he needs or wants, material goods, love, knowledge, or pleasure, must come from an outside source which he passively accepts, not from his own efforts. He believes that the only way he can get anything is by someone's giving it to him. Such a person leans on authority for knowledge and help and on people in general for any kind of support. Love for him means being loved, not the active process of loving. Since the receptive person feels so inadequate, he will easily "fall for" anyone who gives him anything that looks like affection or love. In general, such a person is

passive, and feels paralyzed when left alone. He is always in search of a "magic helper," someone to "take care of" him. Needing many people for help, he will be loyal to many people, and he cannot say "no" to requests and demands. The receptive person has great fondness for food and drink, as if to overcome anxiety by eating and drinking. In the dreams of such a receptive person, being fed is a frequent symbol of being loved.

Receptive characters are friendly and optimistic, but they become anxious when their source of supply is threatened.

The Exploitative Character

The exploitative person, on the other hand, tries to take everything from people by force or cunning. Whatever sphere of life he is concerned with, he will want to grab or steal: another's spouse or friend, another's ideas, another's material goods. Everyone is an object of exploitation. Anything the exploitative person can take or steal is more attractive than what he can produce by his own efforts. His attitude is one of hostility and manipulation. While the receptive person is confident, the exploiter is suspicious, envious, jealous, and cynical.

The Hoarding Character

In the hoarding orientation, people have little faith in anything new they can get from outside. Security is based on hoarding and saving, keeping what they have, while spending is felt as a threat and arouses anxiety. They are misers with money, thoughts and feelings. Love means possessiveness. They are said to know everything but are incapable of creative thinking. They can show a kind of faithfulness toward people, but they are suspicious. Although they have no faith in the future, they are sentimental about the past.

The hoarder is orderly, pedantic, punctual, and he can-

not endure having things out of place. He may indulge in compulsive washing, another way to undo contact with the outside world. In general, the outside world is experienced as a threat to his orderly, fortified, insulated self. The hoarder tends to believe he possesses only a fixed quantity of strength or mental capacity, which is diminished by use and which cannot be replenished. Hence, he has no faith in the self-replenishing power of living things. He does not realize that activity and the exercise of one's powers are strengthening, and that they deteriorate with inactivity. Creation is unreal. With people, intimacy is conceived of as threatening; remoteness or possession, to the hoarder, implies security.

The Marketing Character

The marketing orientation is the counterpart in the process of assimilation to that of automaton conformity in the process of socialization. People of this kind feel that their personalities are commodities to be bought and sold like a bale of hay. Our education fosters this orientation. We are taught to be "adaptable" and sensitive to the changing expectations of other people. To be "successful" is to be valuable; to be unsuccessful is to be worthless. Such people try to be experts at "selling" their personality, and so their personality is constituted by whatever qualities are in demand. But this means one has no stable and genuine personality. Hence, one has no real experience of self as an autonomous being capable of guiding one's own destiny. Such a person is bound to feel empty and anxious.

The Productive Character

Thus far we have discussed what Fromm calls the non-productive orientations in the conjunctive processes of assimilation and socialization. Before discussing the last orientation in both spheres, the productive, we wish to outline his views on selfishness and self-love.

Fromm aptly points out that modern culture is pervaded by a taboo on selfishness. While we are taught that it is virtuous to love others, we are also taught that to love ourselves and to be selfish is sinful. Yet this is in flagrant contradiction to another doctrine which we imbibe, namely, that the most powerful and legitimate drive in man is selfishness and that by following this imperative drive we make the best possible contribution to society. Again, it is usually implied that loving oneself is incompatible with love for others.

First of all, Fromm asserts, it is fallacious to claim that self-love and love for others are incompatible. If it is a virtue to love another as a human being why should not one love oneself as a human being also? Furthermore, "not only others, but we ourselves are the 'object' of our feelings and attitudes; the attitudes toward others and toward ourselves, far from being contradictory, are basically *conjunctive* . . . Love of others and love of ourselves are not alternatives. On the contrary, an attitude of love toward themselves will be found in all those who are capable of loving others. *Love, in principle, is indivisible as far as the connection between 'objects' and one's own self is concerned.* Genuine love is an expression of productiveness and implies care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge. It is not an 'affect' in the sense of being affected by somebody, but an active striving for the growth and happiness of the loved person, rooted in one's own capacity to love."¹⁹

Nor is it true, as the notion of romantic love has it, that there is only one person in the world whom one can love, and, if that person be discovered, that love for him entails a withdrawal of love from all others. Love of one person implies love of mankind, since he embodies all the essential attributes of man, and since love of mankind is the basis of individual love and not conversely. Genetically, the ability to love is acquired in loving specific individuals, members of one's own family, for example, but one loves them

primarily for their qualities as human beings. In other words, love of man is, logically speaking, the premise of individual love.

From all this it follows that if a person can love others, he necessarily loves himself too. If he can "love" others, but not himself, and conversely, if he "loves" himself but not others—then in either case he cannot love at all.

As for selfishness in the usual sense, it does not imply self-love but self-hatred. Psychoanalysis reveals that selfish people in the usual sense are profoundly anxious, self-contemptuous, empty and frustrated. Hence, they are eager to snatch from life whatever they can get to compensate for their feelings of powerlessness and incapacity to love. Since they lack self-respect and self-love, they necessarily have no respect for the dignity, integrity and rights of others.

In general, says Fromm, the trouble with modern culture "lies not in its principle of individualism, not in the idea that moral virtue is the same as the pursuit of self-interest . . . *not in the fact that people are too much concerned with their self-interest, but that they are not concerned enough with the interest of their real self; not in the fact that they are too selfish, but that they do not love themselves.*"²⁰

We return now to the concept of productiveness and love in the process of assimilation and socialization. Man is not only a rational and social being, he is also a producing being. He must produce in order to live. Using his imagination and reason, he transforms the material he finds. Material production, however, is only one aspect of man's productiveness. In a wide sense, productiveness "is man's ability to use his powers and to realize the potentialities inherent in him."²¹ These powers are mental, emotional, and sensory, involving responses to other people, to oneself, and to things. Hence, the productive orientation refers to one's mode of relatedness in all realms of experience. We can put this another way by saying a person is born with certain inherent capacities.

Depending on circumstances, mainly those of family and culture, he may develop these capacities to the maximum, within the scope of development of the culture. Certain it is that if a person in childhood is mistreated and uncared for, he will tend to grow into a warped human being, his innate capacity for love stunted, and his capacity to think independently limited or destroyed. But to be able to develop one's powers, such as reason and love, and to use them, is to be productive. This does not mean one has to become a great scientist or artist. It simply means that one is able to think independently and critically, to feel intensely without serious emotional warp, to respect oneself and one's fellow men, to enjoy sensuous pleasures without anxiety and repression, to delight in the works of nature and art—in a word to affirm oneself and life and to find life good. Of course many of us, for a variety of reasons, chiefly cultural, never develop any of our powers to a significant degree, to a point where we can think critically and independently, or to experience the full ecstasies of imagination and feeling.

On the subject of love it is easy to get confused or sentimental. Fromm quickly disposes of the usual drivel about love. "There is hardly any word which is more ambiguous and confusing than the word 'love.' It is used to denote almost every feeling short of hate and disgust. It comprises everything from the love for ice cream to the love for a symphony, from mild sympathy to the most intense feeling of closeness. People feel they love if they have 'fallen for' somebody. They call their dependence love, and their possessiveness too. They believe, in fact, that nothing is easier than to love, that the difficulty lies only in finding the right object, and that their failure to find happiness in love is due to their bad luck in not finding the right partner. But contrary to all this confused and wishful thinking, love is a very specific feeling; and while every human being has a capacity for love, its realization is one of the most difficult achievements.

Genuine love is rooted in productiveness and may properly be called, therefore, 'productive love.' Its essence is the same whether it is the mother's love for the child, our love for man, or the erotic love between two individuals . . . Although the objects of love differ and consequently the intensity and quality of love itself differ, certain basic elements may be said to be characteristic of all forms of productive love."²²

Love is an activity in which one respects and cares for another. To care for someone implies that one will foster his growth and development and not hinder or destroy it, as in other kinds of relationships, such as the sado-masochistic. A good example of caring is that of the mother for her child, who labors for the child's growth. While an adult is not as helpless as a child, the difference is relative. All men depend on one another. The caring is mutual, and this is one way in which such relationships differ from neurotic dependency, where one wants everything from a "magic helper," who, if he accepts the role, dominates and exploits the former instead of fostering his growth and independence. In a loving relationship both labor for the further development of the other's capacities. In this sense they genuinely "care for" each other.

Love is also characterized by responsibility and knowledge. To be responsible means one is willing to answer to oneself for the welfare of the other, to exact of oneself the duty of helping him to flourish mentally and emotionally. Finally, in order to help another person one must understand him, know him. Efforts at assistance made in ignorance can be hurtful or at best merely sentimental busyness.

We conclude our discussion of the various orientations or character types by observing that when the productive orientation in a person is dominant, any elements of the four non-productive orientations also existing in the person become transformed and take on positive, life-furthering qualities. For example, a minor tendency toward submissiveness becomes devotion, stubbornness becomes steadfastness, oppor-

tunism becomes purposefulness. There are further possible combinations and permutations which we omit here.²³

AUTHORITARIANISM

Any account of Fromm's theories which omits a discussion of authoritarianism would be seriously defective. There is a very important difference between rational and irrational authority. Rational authority is based on competence. The person who has such authority functions adequately in the task with which he is entrusted. Rational authority requires constant scrutiny and criticism of its role. Being temporary, when the tasks and functions assigned to it have been carried out, it ends. It is based on equality, except for some difference of knowledge or skill between the person entrusted with authority and those subject to him. An example of rational authority is that of a competent teacher who imparts his knowledge without dominating or overawing his pupils, who in principle can become as expert as he.

Irrational authority is based, not on competence to fulfill specific tasks and functions, but on power over people. The power may be physical, mental or "moral," actually employed by a person to manipulate people, or irrational attributions of power to another, springing from the anxiety and helplessness of the submissive person. Irrational authority claims eternal sway. It intimidates its subjects and at the same time arouses their admiration by seemingly magic qualities. Criticism by its subjects is forbidden. Hence irrational authority is based on inequality. "The Church," "The Party," "The Family," among others, are examples of irrational authority. Sometimes an institution combines elements of both, as is often the case in the family situation. But irrational authority does not have to be a person or institution which tells one what to do and what not to do. It can be an attitude, a "philosophy" of life which one adopts, not from critical thinking and reflective experience, but from anxiety. Thus

certain elements of Kantian ethics, which we cannot discuss here, can be adopted uncritically and be as impelling as the dictates of a church or Party.

The person submitting to irrational authority internalizes the commands and taboos of the authority. "The laws and sanctions of external authority become part of oneself, as it were, and instead of feeling responsible to something outside, one feels responsible to something inside, to one's conscience."²⁴ Furthermore, because man has a need to admire and have an ideal, and to strive for some kind of perfection, the image of such perfection becomes projected onto the authority, resulting in an unshakable conviction as to its ideal character.

The person who submits to irrational authority has a sado-masochistic ("symbiotic") or "authoritarian" character structure.²⁵ The authoritarian character finds "inner security by becoming, symbiotically, part of an authority felt to be greater and more powerful than himself. As long as he is part of that authority—at the expense of his own integrity—he feels that he is participating in the authority's strength. His feeling of certainty and identity depends on this symbiosis, to be rejected by the authority means to be thrown into a void, to face the horror of nothingness. Anything, to the authoritarian character, is better than this. To be sure, the love and approval of the authority give him the greatest satisfaction; but even punishment is better than rejection. The punishing authority is still with him, and if he has 'sinned,' the punishment is at least proof that the authority still cares. By his acceptance of the punishment his sin is wiped out and the security of belonging is restored."²⁶

Authoritarianism is usually pyramidal, especially in certain societies like Nazi Germany. But there is such a thing as "anonymous authority" such as "the market" but we cannot discuss it here.²⁷ Our own society is said to be dominated by the authority of the market—and hence the marketing orientation predominates.

Freud's super-ego, according to Fromm, represents the authoritarian conscience.²⁸ As we shall see below, the essence of the Oedipus complex represents the struggle of the son against the father in the former's efforts to escape the latter's domination and exploitation.

SEX AND HAPPINESS

We have had little to say about sex in our discussion of Fromm's views. This does not mean that he slights the role of sexual needs. For Fromm, however, sex is only one of man's imperative needs, and, as we have seen, is not the nuclear explanatory concept in understanding human behavior that it was for Freud (along with the "death instinct").

Furthermore, for Freud the essence of pleasure, including sexual pleasure, is relief from painful tension. But for Fromm pleasure, including sexual pleasure, is based on the use of surplus energy along with, or after, the satisfaction of bodily needs. Happiness is an expression of freedom and productiveness.²⁹

ETHICS AND HUMAN NATURE

Before we come to the last theme to be discussed, Fromm's interpretation of the Oedipus myth and complex, we wish to discuss his views on the relation of ethics to psychoanalysis. He maintains that ethical norms and values have a vital relationship to man's self-realization and the fulfillment of his potentialities. He also believes that problems of ethics and ethical validity cannot be divorced from the study of personality. "The value judgments we make," he says, "determine our actions and upon their validity rests our mental health and happiness. To consider evaluations only as so many rationalizations of unconscious, irrational desires [as do certain psychoanalysts³⁰]³⁰—although they can be that

too—narrows down and distorts our picture of the total personality. Neurosis itself is, in the last analysis, a symptom of moral failure (though 'adjustment' is by no means a symptom of moral achievement). In many instances a neurotic symptom is the specific expression of moral conflict, and the success of the therapeutic effort depends on the understanding and solution of the person's moral problem."³¹

These neurotic symptoms are often typical expressions of some of the problems of modern man. Modern man is uneasy and more and more bewildered; and he is dimly aware of a sense of futility about the way he lives and the goals he strives for. "While his power over matter grows, he feels powerless in his individual life and in society. While creating new and better means for mastering nature, he has become enmeshed in a network of those means and has lost the vision of the end which alone gives them significance—*man himself*. While becoming the master of nature, he has become the slave of the machine which his own hands built. With all his knowledge about matter, he is ignorant with regard to the most important and fundamental questions of human existence: what man is, how he ought to live, and how the tremendous energies *within* man can be released and used productively."³²

For Fromm the character structure of the mature and integrated personality, the productive character, constitutes the source and basis of virtue. In other words, to live productively, in the sense we elaborated above, is to live virtuously. Vice, on the other hand, springs from indifference or contempt for oneself and from self-mutilation.

THE OEDIPUS MYTH³³

Fromm claims "*that the [Oedipus] myth has to be understood not as a symbol of the incestuous tie between mother and son, but as the rebellion of the son against the authority of the father in the patriarchal family; and that the marriage*

of Oedipus and Jocasta is only a secondary element, only one of the symbols of the son's victory, who takes over his father's place and with it all his privileges."³⁴

He begins by pointing to certain difficulties in Freud's interpretation. If the myth is a symbolic expression of the incestuous tie of the boy to the mother with rivalry toward the father, why is there no indication in the myth that Oedipus is attracted by or falls in love with Jocasta? While he marries her, according to Sophocles' version, actually it seems that she merely, so to speak, "goes with the throne." In all except one of the older versions of the myth, he does not marry his mother at all. Another question: since Oedipus is the courageous and wise hero who defeats the Sphinx and is therefore the benefactor of Thebes, why is he the man who commits the crime which is considered to be the most horrible by his contemporaries? The fact that in Greek tragedy the powerful and strong are suddenly struck by disaster does not seem to Fromm to provide the most satisfactory answer.

If we consider the trilogy, not merely "King Oedipus" as Freud did, we find that the theme which runs through the three works is the conflict between father and son. In "King Oedipus" the conflict is expressed by the killing of Laios. In "Oedipus at Colonus," the conflict is between Oedipus and his two sons. In "Antigone" it is the conflict between Creon and Haemon. There is no incest problem between Oedipus' sons and their mother or between Haemon and his mother. It is plausible to assume, then, that in "King Oedipus," the conflict between father and son, not the problem of incest, is the real issue. "An analysis of the whole Oedipus trilogy will show," Fromm says, "that the struggle against paternal authority is its main theme and that the roots of this struggle extend far back into the ancient struggle between the patriarchal and matriarchal systems of society, family and religion." Furthermore, Oedipus, Haemon and Antigone represent

the matriarchal world. These representatives of the matriarchal world "attack a social and religious order based on the powers and privileges of the father, represented by Laios and Creon."³⁵

Fromm here, of course, is drawing upon Bachofen's theory of "Mother-right" as a basis for his own interpretation of the Oedipus myth. Since we have discussed "Mother-right" in connection with other writers, especially Rank, we need not repeat what was said then in regard to the social organization of matriarchy.³⁶ Eventually men defeated, subdued and succeeded women, themselves becoming rulers in a social hierarchy. "The patriarchal system which was thus established," Fromm relates, "is characterized by monogamy (at least as far as women were concerned), by the authority of the father in the family and the central role of men in a hierarchically organized society." Religion corresponded to the social organization in the patriarchal culture. Male gods are the supreme rulers of men (instead of goddesses as during the matriarchy), like the father in the family.

The difference between the matriarchal and patriarchal order extends to social and moral principles. "Matriarchal culture is characterized by the emphasis on ties of blood, ties to the soil and the passive acceptance of all natural phenomena. Patriarchal society in contrast is characterized by respect for man-made law, by the predominance of rational thought and by the effort to change natural phenomena by man." While these principles of patriarchy represent an advance over matriarchy, in other respects the latter was superior. "In the matriarchal concept all men are equal since they are all the children of mothers and each one a child of Mother Earth. A mother loves her children all alike and without [limiting] conditions, since her love is based on the fact that they are all her children and not on any particular merit or achievement; the aim of life is the happiness of men and there is nothing more important or dignified than

human existence and life. The patriarchal system, on the other hand, recognizes obedience to authority as its main virtue. The principle of equality is replaced by a hierarchical order in society and state, ruled by an authority just as the family is dominated by the father."³⁷

In the various versions of the myth, upon which Sophocles built his work, the figure of Oedipus was always connected with the cult of the Earth Goddess, who, according to Bachofen, represents matriarchal religion. Fromm offers two examples which we need not give here.

The Sphinx episode also, according to Fromm, points to a connection between the matriarchal principle and Oedipus. When he arrives in Thebes, the Sphinx is devouring the young men and women of the city. She will cease only when someone can give a correct answer to the riddle she is asking: "What is it that first goes on four, then on two and eventually on three?" Anyone who can solve the riddle and free the city is to be made king and to have the king's widow as a wife. Oedipus discovers the answer to the riddle. The answer is man, who first as a child walks on all fours, then as an adult on two legs, and in old age on three legs (that is, with a cane). When Oedipus solves the riddle, the Sphinx throws herself into the sea, and Thebes is saved.

However, not the riddle itself, but the answer to the riddle is important, Fromm believes, basing his interpretation on psychoanalytic principles of symbolic interpretation of dreams and myths. There is, he says, a displacement of accent from the important element in the latent content of the riddle, to a minor element in the manifest content. The translation of the Sphinx' words is: "He who knows that the most important answer man can give to the most difficult question he is confronted with is man himself can save mankind." The answer stresses the importance of man, which reflects an attitude and a principle characteristic of matriarchy, and which shows that Oedipus belongs to the matriarchal order.

The principle of man's importance is likewise expressed in "Antigone" by Sophocles; Oedipus' daughter, Antigone, cares only for man himself, the natural law and love. She holds to these principles in contrast to the position of Creon, who represents the authoritarian principle in the family and state, against which Haemon likewise rebels.

The question arises as to why Jocasta is destroyed instead of being victorious, assuming she symbolizes the motherly principle. She is destroyed because she failed to fulfill her duty as a mother, being ready to kill her child in order to save her husband, which from the patriarchal point of view is legitimate, but which from the matriarchal standpoint is the unforgivable crime. "It is she who by committing this crime starts the chain of events which eventually lead to her own end and to her husband's and son's destruction."³⁸

In other words, Fromm seems to imply, Sophocles who represents or favors the matriarchal principle in the play has Jocasta destroyed because in a matriarchal society the fate of a mother who would kill her child is death. Furthermore, this being the greatest crime in a matriarchal society, disaster to those close to her, which psychologically speaking, means a further disaster to her, would naturally follow.

Stated from another point of view, we must not lose sight of the fact, Fromm says, that the myth "as it was known to and formulated by Sophocles had already been changed according to the patriarchal pattern, that the manifest and conscious frame of reference is that of a patriarchy and that the latent and older meaning appears only in a veiled and often distorted form. The patriarchal system had been victorious and the myth explains the reasons for the downfall of matriarchy. It proposes that the mother by violating her paramount duty brought about her own destruction."³⁹ It is not clear to us whether Fromm wants to imply also that the latent content has a still deeper meaning, namely, that the matriarchy was defeated by the patriarchal

form of society when the former began to betray its own principles. If the mother symbolizes the motherly principle, this latter interpretation seems plausible.

In "Oedipus at Colonus," Oedipus arrives at, dies in a mysterious way and is buried in the grove of the goddesses of the earth. These "awful" goddesses "of dread aspect" are representatives of the old mother-goddesses and the matriarchal principle. If an element appears in a myth belonging to an earlier phase of development and which is no longer part of people's conscious frame of reference at the time of final formulation, it may often have the quality of dread and awfulness (analogous to what happens in dreams). "Touching upon something hidden and tabu," as Fromm puts it, "the conscious mind is affected by a fear of a particular kind—the fear of the unknown and the mystifying."⁴⁰

The scene at the grave makes a plain allusion to matriarchy. Oedipus praises his daughters as true images of the ways of Egypt, where men weave in the house and the wives go forth to win the daily bread—a reference to Egyptian matriarchy. Further, he alludes to his daughters who preserve him as men, not women.

As Oedipus dies the emphasis again is upon something awful and mystifying. The messenger who reports how Oedipus dies sees Theseus, King of Athens, who accompanied Oedipus to the holy place of the goddesses, holding his hand before his face to screen his eyes as if he had seen something dreadful and not to be beheld.

Theseus, the messenger reports, prayerfully salutes the earth and the heavens above, both at once. The passing of Oedipus is wonderful and mystifying. The messenger cannot tell whether he was removed from the earth by the gods above or below, by the world of the fathers or that of the mothers. But in a formulation written centuries after the mother-goddesses had been conquered by the Olympian gods, the uncertainty of the messenger, Fromm says, can only be a (dis-

guised) expression of a secret conviction that Oedipus was brought back to where he belongs, to the mothers.

In "Antigone," the two principles for which Creon and Antigone stand are clearly those which Bachofen characterized as patriarchal and matriarchal. Creon represents the patriarchal principle of the supremacy of the law of the state, of obedience to authority, over the allegiance to the natural law of humanity, of the precedence of the tie between man and wife, between ruler and ruled, over ties of blood. The patriarchal principle "is the principle of order and authority, of obedience and hierarchy."⁴¹ Antigone stands for the matriarchal principle of blood relationship as the most fundamental and indestructible tie, of the equality of all men, of the respect for human life, and of love. Hence, she is Creon's uncompromising antagonist. Her laws are of all time, and as the play puts it, no man knows when they were first put forth; they are not those of an authoritarian state. The law of burial, which she passionately affirms, of returning the body to the earth, likewise originates in the religious principles of matriarchy. It is her nature to love, as she says, not to hate. "She stands for the solidarity of man and the principle of the all-embracing mother love."⁴²

Creon's values are the two interrelated values of authority in the family and in the state. Sons are regarded as the property of their fathers and their function is to be "serviceable" to their fathers. Likewise citizens are the property of the state and its ruler. Their disobedience is regarded as the worst of evils. From these principles and from his father's authority, Haemon eventually rebels. He relies on reason, which he says is the highest of all things we possess, and on the will of the people.

As the tragedy nears its end, Creon has Antigone buried alive, another symbolic expression of her connection with the earth and the goddesses of the earth. Again Tiresias appears, this time to make Creon aware of his crime. With the death

of Antigone, Haemon, and Creon's wife, Eurydice, Creon recognizes the "complete collapse of his world and the defeat of his principles."

THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX

Freud made three factually correct observations concerning what he called the Oedipus complex, according to Fromm, but the theory by which he explained them was fallacious. He observed, first, the presence of sexual strivings in children. Second, he observed that the ties by which a child is bound to his parents often are not severed when as a result of his development they normally should be, with the growth of independence. Freud saw that this irrational fixation of children to their parents is found in all neuroses, and that it is one of the causes of neurotic symptoms and neurotic character traits. As Freud put it, the Oedipus complex is the kernel of every neurosis. Third, he recognized that the father-son conflict is characteristic of patriarchal societies, and he also observed how the son's unsuccessful rebellion against his father's authority and the son's fears following defeat established the basis for a neurotic development.

Freud explained all three on the assumption that the attachment to the mother is based on the sexual strivings of the child, and that the conflict between father and son is a result of sexual rivalry. However, data since gathered by certain psychoanalysts and child psychologists, for example, as well as by anthropologists, have thrown grave doubt on the correctness of the explanation.

Fromm points out that the recent data show that the Freudian Oedipus complex is not universal, that the rivalry between father and son does not occur in societies where strong patriarchal authority does not exist, and that the tie to the mother is not essentially sexual. When not suppressed, infantile sexuality, instead of being directed primarily

toward the mother, is normally satisfied auto-erotically and by contact with other children. Furthermore, it seems that the fixation or pathological dependence on the mother is caused particularly by a dominating attitude of the mother, making the child helpless and in greater need of her protection and love.

The conflict between father and son is a product of authoritarian patriarchal society, where especially the son is regarded as his father's property, whose interest he should serve "like a thing," like a chattel or a beast of burden. The conflict has little to do with sexual rivalry. Such an attitude and the treatment by the father of the son which springs from it are opposed to man's wish to be free and independent. Hence, a conflict whether open or unconscious necessarily occurs. The greater the pressure by the father to make his son a means to his (the father's) own ends, the greater will be the conflict.

Freud interpreted neurosis and the Oedipus complex as a result of the conflict between the irrational passions of the child and "reality" as represented by parents and society. Fromm regards both the Oedipus complex and neurosis as expressions of a conflict between man's legitimate striving for freedom and independence and those social arrangements which frustrate man's striving for self-fulfillment, happiness, and independence.⁴³ When the social arrangements which thwart self-fulfillment and independence are successful, they create in man a destructive passion, which, in turn, must be suppressed by external or internal force.

To conclude, when we have a society in which the respect for the integrity of every individual, including every child, is realized, then, says Fromm, the Oedipus complex, like the myth, will belong to the past.

10. THE THEORIES OF HARRY STACK SULLIVAN

The writer in some ways most difficult to understand of the several psychiatrists and psychoanalysts we discuss is Harry Stack Sullivan. There are many reasons for this. Sullivan is not, as a reviewer put it, one of the writing psychoanalysts who can write a book "between patients." He has written little; his language is highly technical, and his thought, as a rule, very complicated, subtle and highly compressed.¹ But there is another and still greater difficulty, which we can only gradually indicate, and with which we shall be concerned throughout the chapter. This relates to his theory of interpersonal relations. At first blush it appears that the statement that psychiatry is the study of processes that involve or go on between people, interpersonal relations, is simple and obvious. Yet it is the most complicated psychiatric theory known to us. We shall approach this theory deviously, and from various angles.

Unless we have devoted a good deal of study and thought to the matter, we tend to think of ourselves as self-contained, physically and mentally isolated beings, looking out upon the world, as it were, from a tower in our own private castle, save perhaps for periodic excursions outside to satisfy physical, emotional and mental needs and desires. And then, further, we tend to assume that these contacts with the outside world



she says that the basic conflict is born of the three incompatible attitudes. This means, if we take the statement literally, that the three incompatible attitudes are logically prior to the basic conflict; the basic conflict presupposes the existence of the three attitudes. Yet the three attitudes enter in as, or contribute toward, major attempts at solution of the basic conflict. This, then, implies that the basic conflict is prior to the incompatible attitudes. Formally, at any rate, this is a contradiction.¹¹

Actually, Horney seems to mean that there is a relation of interaction between the incompatible attitudes and the basic conflict. The incompatible attitudes are "conflicting." Furthermore, she implies, that the incompatible attitudes become exaggerated in the course of time by the effort to escape anxiety and conversely. We could, following popular usage, put this in another way by saying that the incompatible attitudes are both cause and effect of the basic anxiety.

But every situation has an indefinite number of complex relations and qualities. We can, if we wish, restrict ourselves to noting and describing a uniform conjunction of traits repeatedly observed to exist with no understanding of why the conjunction occurs. In that case we are empiricists in the bad sense of the word. We have no theory which states the rationale of why such a conjunction of traits occurs. We are like an automobile mechanic who knows that an engine operates in a certain way without knowing the physical principles involved. We may say that the basic conflict is associated with the incompatible attitudes in a relation of both cause and effect—if that strictly is meaningful—or that they interact, but we do not then tell *why*. We must go further. We may redefine our concepts and we may search for a more fundamental ground or frame of reference from which the explanation of observable phenomena may be logically derived.

All of this in no way denies the fact that events are constantly interacting. But if we are to explain in the logical sense, not merely describe what happens, we must elucidate the logical structure of what occurs.

In any case, we think that Horney has not yet sufficiently clarified her fundamental concepts.

FROMM

In the opinion of many people, Erich Fromm's *Escape From Freedom* is a contemporary classic piece of sociological and psychological analysis, although critics have not infrequently shown a curious lack of understanding of what that work actually is about. His second book attempts to establish a logico-philosophical foundation for an explanation of man's nature and behavior. As Fromm has pointed out, Freud and most of his disciples have shown a singular lack of sociological sophistication, although they are not unique in this respect.

Fromm brings to his work a wide knowledge of sociology, anthropology, and history. For this reason, if not for others, his writings have a profundity which those of most psychoanalysts lack. Fromm does not suffer from the illusion that all psychological knowledge began with Freud—or with Fromm. An Aristotle, a Spinoza, a Meister Eckhardt, a Kafka may not have known much about the so-called libido, but they knew a great deal about other matters—perhaps ultimately much more important matters—concerning what has been traditionally called man's spirit. Among contemporary major psychoanalysts, Fromm alone has availed himself freely of the rich literary and philosophical tradition of the West.¹² Not that philosophers, as they themselves well know, have not written much nonsense—a phenomenon incidentally that is not confined to philosophers. But it is a mark of intellectual maturity to recognize and to be able to separate the chaff from the wheat.

This does not mean that we agree on all points with Fromm's philosophy, but we are not here concerned with technical philosophical problems. The chief disagreement with Fromm which we wish to mention is based on the belief that, as we understand him, he is not sufficiently an "interactionist" in his description of social and psychological processes. For example, we think he has slighted the role of science and technology in the history of Western civilization in recent centuries. As we understand it, science has played a causal role in the development of modern capitalism and in general in various sectors of modern life. At least Fromm uses the categories, socio-economic, psychological, and ideological so broadly that it is difficult to know how he thinks science and technology have operated. Were they an effect of socio-economic conditions, or are they included in the concept of socio-economic conditions, or do they play a causal role in the creation of socio-economic conditions? This point is not clear to us.

An analogous problem exists in Fromm's concept of character. In his first book he states that character determines the thinking, feeling, and acting of individuals.¹³ We doubt if this is to be taken literally because the combined modes of thinking, feeling and acting constitute character. Recently Fromm has stated that ideas, judgments, and actions result from a person's character.¹⁴ But ideas, judgments, and actions, we believe, are constituent elements of character, not a result of character. This is not a mere matter of phraseology. It is a factual, not merely a formal, question. In Fromm's formulation, something else, character, is given a primary causal function, and ideas, judgments, and actions are said to be an effect or result of character. Fromm like most, if not all, psychoanalysts apparently wants to make the emotional attitude of a person primary. But no one has shown more eloquently than Fromm the role of ideas, of reason, in human life. Hence, we suspect that ideas and judg-

ments, for example, instead of being a result of character, are as efficacious in the constitution of character as anything else.

SULLIVAN

Sullivan first became known for his spectacular success with young schizophrenic patients. And while more recently he has attempted to work out a theory of personality and personality development, his ideas always retain a therapy-oriented formulation. For good or ill they retain, as someone said, something of "the odor of the clinic." His main contribution, however, is his theory of interpersonal relations. This theory attempts to show *how* the patterns of the culture come to make up the warp and woof of mind and personality. Whatever may be the virtues or defects of Sullivan's theories in detail, this is a great step in advance of the mere *assertion* that they do. Furthermore, he has succeeded to a considerable degree, we believe, in showing *how* mind and personality always operate in an interpersonal reference, not as an isolated and more or less self-contained entity. In other words, he has attempted to demonstrate *how* and *why* psychiatry is ultimately the locus of social psychology. In theory, psychiatry as the specialized professional preoccupation of doctors with the mentally ill is replaced by a conception of psychiatry as the study of processes that involve or go on between people. Therefore, a theory of interpersonal relations becomes a nuclear explanatory concept for social psychologists and sociologists.

Partly because of his preoccupation with interpersonal processes, Sullivan in recent years has developed a curious animus against the concept of individuality. This, we believe, is a mistake. Individuality in no way contradicts the fact that personality develops and has its being in interpersonal relations. Furthermore, we know of no contemporary concept

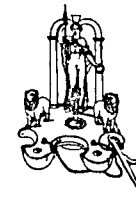
OEDIPUS MYTH AND COMPLEX

To
Janet MacKenzie Ríoch

A Review of Psychoanalytic Theory

By
PATRICK MULLAHY

Introduction
ERICH FROMM



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