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PHILOSOPHICAL ANTIROPOLOGY VERSUS EMPIRICAL SCIENCE †

ERICH FROMM has always attempted to understand human behavior in a social and historical context. Therefore, from Fromm's point of view, a study of psychological principles and ideas leads one to an examination of the wider social context in which the specific behavior patterns and experiences of people occur. In the opinion of this reviewer such an approach is highly necessary, although extraordinarily difficult. However, Fromm has not contented himself with the empirical procedures of the sciences, using tentative hypotheses which can be checked, altered, and when necessary replaced by others. He brings to his investigations certain biases, moral and philosophical, which carry him far beyond the realm of science, into philosophy. His latest book, *The Sane Society*, goes further in the direction of social philosophy than perhaps any of his previous works. But it does more. Fromm claims that his method of inquiry is superior to the empirical method of science, at least in regard to certain assumptions which now obtain in psychology and social science. Such claims and the assumptions they rest upon deserve close examination.

In a Foreword, he states that he has attempted to develop more systematically the basic concepts of what he now calls "humanistic psychoanalysis." But *The Sane Society* is not a treatise on psychoanalysis in the usual sense, for it is primarily concerned with a broadly philosophical analysis of certain ideas and assumptions in psychology and psychiatry, and with criticism of the major institutions of Western civilization.

The first chapter of the book raises the question: Are we sane? And the answer is that we, collectively, are not, even though the majority of us may be said to be normal. For our so-called normality or normalcy is itself pathological. Fromm adduces several facts in Chapter 1 in order to suggest that this apparent paradox is not fanciful. For example, in the Western world, we have created unexampled material wealth, provided unrivaled conditions of material well-being, yet we, as a group, have engaged in mass slaughter—that is, in wars of increasing destructiveness, carried on over several periods in an ever-widening circle, and with ever more deadly weapons. Incidentally, one statement in this part of the book is to the effect that *statesmen* of the various countries cause wars primarily because

of their mismanagement of the affairs entrusted to them. This seems to me to be a considerable oversimplification of the causes of war, but I must leave it to the historians to judge.

In Chapter 2, a fundamental question is raised: Can a *society* be sick? For Fromm this is no mere question of definition, but a substantive problem. And he thinks that a society not only can be sick but, as in the case of our own, actually is. If it is legitimate to conceive of a society as sick, what are the criteria for such a characterization? Fromm argues that such a notion implies that there are universal criteria for mental health which are valid for the human race "as such" and according to which the state of health of each society can be appraised or "judged."

These assumptions, in turn, rest on certain other premises—for instance, that the species man can be defined not only in anatomical and physiological terms but according to certain *psychic* qualities which the members of the human race share in common; that these qualities function according to universal laws which are discoverable; and that a knowledge of these qualities and the laws which govern them will make possible a satis-

† *THE SANE SOCIETY*. By Erich Fromm. New York, Rinehart, 1955; xiii, 370 pp.



factory solution of the problem of human existence, since it will reveal the goals of human life that are intrinsic or necessary to the development and unfolding of human nature.¹ In other words, there are not only a set of anatomical and physiological characteristics common to the human race, there is also a set or core of psychic qualities or characteristics which operate according to laws that are discoverable, a knowledge of which would provide the key to an understanding of mental health and happiness. Thus the criterion of mental health is said to be a universal one, valid for all men, and one which gives a satisfactory answer to the 'problem' of human existence. But Fromm admits that "we cannot yet give a satisfactory definition of man in a psychological sense" (p. 13). Whatever the psychic core common to the human race may be, he implies, it is not yet known. And if this is so, one may well ask how Fromm knows that such a common core exists. My own opinion is that he, like everyone else, does not and cannot know at this stage of human knowledge. It is, or seems to me to be, a philosophical doctrine which he adopts, a position in philosophy going back to the Greeks.

His avowed field of investigation stems from what he calls a "Science of Man," whose task is to arrive eventually at a correct description of what deserves to be called human nature. In other words, the "real problem is to infer the core common to the whole human race from the innumerable manifestations of human nature, the normal as well as the pathological ones, as we can observe them in different individuals and cultures. The task is furthermore to recognize the laws inherent in human nature and the inherent goals for its development and unfolding" (p. 13). The precise nature of the Science of Man is unclear. For example, what is its relation to the empirical, social, and psychological sciences? Apparently it would have higher authority because, in Fromm's view, the empirical psychological and social sciences are

frequently "relativistic," and, as such, misleading and perhaps "reactionary." As far as I can make out, the Science of Man has some similarities to Aristotle's concept of an architectonic science or art—in the Greek sense—as outlined in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.² But, as is generally recognized nowadays, philosophic methods are not a rival of, or substitute for, the methods and procedures of the empirical sciences engaged in discovering matters of fact. If there is a psychic core common to the human race, and if it is discoverable, then the only reliable methods of inquiry are those of the empirical sciences. Therefore, unless the Science of Man is only a name for the cooperative scientific endeavors of psychologists and social scientists, it can only lead to endless speculation and controversy.

Fromm seems to think that the history of man provides evidence for the notion that there is a nature common to all men. Perhaps it does. But the evidence he mentions only shows that men react—and in different ways—to the circumstances of their lives.

Coming back to the question of social pathology, one finds in Fromm's latest book a distinction that was made in *Man For Himself*: that of defect and that of neurosis. "If a person fails to attain freedom, spontaneity, a genuine expression of self," Fromm says in *The Sane Society* (p. 15), "he may be considered to have a severe defect, provided we assume that freedom and spontaneity are the objective goals to be attained by every human being." When the majority of human beings in a given society do not attain such a goal or goals, the phenomenon of socially patterned defect appears. Since an individual shares this defect with the majority in a society, he is not aware of it as a defect and does not feel the threat of being different. He fits in with the rest of mankind as he knows it, and makes up for the defect by the security thus gained.

Whether or not the notion of a socially patterned defect is significant or not I shall leave to the sociologist to decide, although it rests on a set of value assump-

¹ This is an interpretation or slight reformulation of Fromm's statement on pp. 12-13, which actually seems ambiguous.

² Compare Fromm, *Man For Himself*; New York, Rinehart, 1947; pp. 20 ff.



tions. It certainly raises difficult problems. One problem has to do with the *meaning* of freedom and spontaneity, which Fromm fails to clarify. Nor does he demonstrate in any logical fashion precisely what their connection is with human nature as he conceives it.

But suppose the essential qualities of human nature, if such there be, can be discovered and fostered, on what grounds can one accept the fulfillment of human nature as the chief good of man or, in other words, as constituting mental health and happiness? Self-development nowadays may seem to be self-evidently the major goal towards which men should strive. But it is by no means self-evident. Fromm is well aware of this and attempts to confront the problem in his discussion of "The Human Situation."

The general outline of the human situation is similar to that expounded in *Man For Himself*. Animal existence is said to be one of harmony with nature, in the sense that the animal is equipped by nature to cope with the very conditions it has to meet. For Fromm, apparently, instinctive adaptation, uncomplicated by self-consciousness, reason, memory, and uncertainty, signifies harmony. Man is born at the point in animal evolution where he transcends the passive role of instinctive adaptation. His self-awareness, reason, and imagination are said to disrupt the harmony. "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 . . ." (pp. 23-24).

The notion of a dichotomy or "contradiction" in human existence is unclear. I assume that it goes back to the Hegelian-Marxian concepts of a dialectic of opposites, of opposing forces or tendencies which are reconciled on a higher level in a new synthesis, which in turn generates new contradictions, and so on. Whether I am correct in this assumption or not, I find it difficult to find in Fromm's formulation wholesale and genuine contradictions, confronting man with the necessity for ever-new solutions—a necessity

which would furnish man with the motivating dynamic to find ever-higher forms of unity with nature, his fellows, and himself, and would be the source of all his psychic qualities.

It is not at all clear, for example, why the realization of man's "powerlessness and the limitations of his existence" makes for or constitutes any sort of contradiction. From a strictly evolutionary point of view, I can see no such wholesale contradictions as Fromm delineates. There is a slow, perhaps tortuous, development in the face of innumerable obstacles and limitations. In the evolutionary scheme, birth and death, for instance, however accidental, are natural events like the falling rain or the movements of the heavenly bodies. Subjectively, the inexorable march of events, when one begins to understand it, may be terrifying because it promises death, disintegration, oblivion to all men. But there is no contradiction in such occurrences and experiences relating to them, as far as I can see; there is only the pathos of mortal existence. Nor is there any contradiction between the fact that man cannot return to the animal state and the (alleged) fact that he must develop his reason until he becomes master of nature and himself. Therefore, the assumption that the contradictions in man's existence, or rather the necessity to find ever-new solutions for them, is the source of all psychic forces which motivate man, seems to me erroneous. It is the product of a speculative philosophical anthropology rather than of careful empirical research.

In Chapter 4, Fromm continues his arguments concerning the relation of mental health to society. Certain needs which allegedly stem from the human situation—such as the need for relatedness, "transcendence," and rootedness, the need for a sense of identity, and the need for a frame of orientation and devotion—have to be satisfied if man is to be sane and healthy. If this be true, a question arises as to whether Fromm, and others, have not actually discovered it from empirical investigation of people in a particular society or societies rather



than from "a study of man"—whatever that is. Furthermore, while there is some agreement as to what needs have to be satisfied if 'man' is to be sane and healthy, there are large areas of disagreement and controversy. In the present state of psychiatric knowledge, there seems to be no justification for sweeping statements.

Chapter 5, "Man in Capitalistic Society," repeats a good deal that was said in *Escape From Freedom*³ and *Man For Himself*, although Fromm has largely abandoned his earlier rather uncritical acceptance of Marx. Yet he retains as gospel the notion that the method of production determines the social relations in a given society. This is a highly controversial point. Many social scientists think that the social, political, psychological, and religious aspects of life are so intimately bound up with economic behavior that it is a vast oversimplification to ascribe primacy to any one sphere of activity.

In Chapter 5 especially there is a fierce critical assault on the major institutions—the economic, political, religious, and social arrangements—of Western society, as they are now constituted; in Fromm's view they are largely a glittering treachery. I believe that much of this criticism is in varying degrees valid when considered piecemeal and when carefully balanced against, or critically compared with, the constructive side of institutional arrangements; yet, especially in view of Fromm's unrealistic 'solution' to the problems of the Western world, I have the impression that the over-all result is not constructive. Unless one has an adequate and viable program for reconstructing the major institutions of a society, a wholesale negative criticism of them seems to me of doubtful worth.

The concept which he employs as his major weapon of criticism is alienation. I suppose that many of us associate this concept with Marx, who has perhaps given it its classic expression. But it is by no means exclusive to Hegel, Marx, and his followers. Paul Tillich has pointed

out that various European thinkers of different philosophic outlook, in one form or another, have adhered to the doctrine of alienation or estrangement.⁴ Fromm says that it can also be found in the Old Testament as "*idolatry*." And this, along with the fact that the notion of estrangement was employed by certain theologians, suggests its underlying religious motivation. The very notion of estrangement from a real self or true self, as in Fromm's view, indicates that it has a close connection with or similarities to the religious concept of the soul, even if it is decked out in secular garb.⁵ This thought is reinforced by the fact that Fromm is himself deeply interested in religion and in religious concepts. But no matter how highly one may value religious experience, such an interest does not justify a confusion of the categories of religion and science.

It is characteristic of those who advocate a theory of a 'real' self or 'true' self to seek it beyond experience, to try to transcend experience. At the same time—in order to do this—they generally seize upon *some phase of experience* or some part of its content and find it to be of a superior sort. "This special character then becomes the arrow that points beyond."⁶ Even ordinary language encourages this approach, "distinguishing somehow those actions that constitute what I 'really' am, and those 'alien' to me."⁷

By alienation Fromm means, he says, a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. In a manner of speaking, the person has become estranged from himself. "He does not experience himself as the center of his world, as the creator of his own acts—but his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys or whom he may even worship" (p. 120). The alienated person is said to be out of touch with himself, as he is out of touch

⁴ Paul Tillich, "Existential Philosophy," *J. History of Ideas* (1944) 5:44-70.

⁵ Compare "The Psychoanalyst as 'Physician of the Soul,'" Chapter 4 in Fromm's *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1950.

⁶ Abraham Edel, *The Theory and Practice of Philosophy*; New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1946; p. 192.

⁷ Reference footnote 6; pp. 192-193.

³ Fromm, *Escape From Freedom*; New York, Rinehart, 1941.



with any other person. To be alienated is to lack a sense of self, and to experience oneself and others as things are experienced—"with the senses and with common sense," but without being related productively to oneself and the world outside. Alienation has other or additional meanings, for Fromm says that in modern society alienation pervades the relationship of man to his work, to the things he consumes, and to the state.

Now, a critical reader naturally will want to know what is the self which, according to Fromm, so many millions in the Western world lack—how do you define it? Can you give an unambiguous and recognizable characterization of it? If there be such a characterization in *The Sane Society*, it has escaped me. As near as I can make out, people who have the ability to love, to reason, to work productively, to engage in artistic creation, have a self—a real self. Although a good deal of controversy might often arise as to each of these abilities, still there can be no question but that *some* people can and do love, reason, create. And no one in his right mind would deny that these things, in so far as any of them can be achieved or realized, are precious. But why are such things *the* qualities of the self? Throughout history, cruelty, hatred, greed, envy, and many other unlovely qualities have surely been at least as outstanding characteristics of people. Are the latter less real? Are they not just as surely qualities of 'human nature'? Fromm's answer is, in general, that they are, or are outcomes of, "secondary potentialities." Such an answer, resting on an unconvincing distinction between primary and secondary potentialities, is only a verbal solution. Fromm has simply ascribed his 'humanistic' philosophy to human nature while slighting or explaining away, by means of the notion of secondary potentialities, the terribly real evil qualities of human nature. It is very tempting to do this; but it flies in the face of human experience and is not supported or justified by scientific findings. I am reminded of the old philosophic tactic, so dear to some theologians, of explaining away evil by labeling it nonbeing or

absence of being. Unhappily, the Devil never read Plotinus.

Of course, there can be no doubt that many people are deprived of the opportunity of attaining vivid, enriching, and deeply meaningful experience. To me, as well as to Fromm and others, such an impoverishment is appalling. But, *on the evidence*, all experience appears to be equally *real*. The self of an intellectually and emotionally impoverished, alienated man appears to be just as real as that of a da Vinci, and the alienated man's experience seems to be just as much a manifestation of human nature as are the most ecstatic flights of a Shelley. And so any quasi-metaphysical distinction between a real self, and a social self or a secondary sense of self, seems groundless and misleading.

Since Fromm passionately believes that his own notions of the self are valid—notions that seem to be derived largely from a speculative philosophical inquiry—he has little or no use for a theory like Sullivan's which is largely built up from observations of people in a particular society, although enriched by its author's keen awareness of cultural differences. It is well to remember that Sullivan was one of the pioneers in culture and personality theory, and that the very methods he espoused are in the long run self-corrective. Nevertheless, according to Fromm, Sullivan's theory of the self is based on the alienated personality, which has no self.

Leaving aside further consideration of what I think is the obvious fact that Fromm's concept of the alienated personality is loaded by his own moral preferences, I believe the criticism boils down to the undoubted fact that Sullivan built his theory largely on the basis of his experiences with people in American society, who undoubtedly have some shortcomings and limitations. Some of them might be labeled "neurotic," some "psychotic," and—since another label won't really make very much difference—some might be called "alienated." But what in particular necessarily follows from these facts? The answer is nothing—absolutely nothing. To say, or imply, that Sullivan's



theory is invalid because the people he worked with were of such and such a character, belonging to such and such a society, is to commit a form of the genetic fallacy. One cannot know whether Sullivan's theory of the self is valid or not without a study of the theory itself, subject only to the limitations of present-day knowledge. It is not the particular social origins of the theory that counts; the functions it may serve and the consequences in further research and therapy which follow from its application provide the acid test.

Fromm does make a show of examining the theory itself in a sort of hit-and-run fashion, without ever actually coming to grips with it, on page 143: "The self for him [Sullivan] is nothing but the many roles we play in relations to others, roles which have the function of eliciting approval and avoiding the anxiety which is produced by disapproval. What a remarkably fast deterioration of the concept of self since the nineteenth century, when Ibsen made the loss of self the main theme of his criticism of modern man in his *Peer Gynt*!" But Sullivan did not say that the self is "nothing but" the many roles we play in relation to others. The self, with its particular structure or organization or pattern is the *limit* or containing manifold of the many roles we play—otherwise called "me-you patterns"—which is quite different from the invidious, reductive implications of "nothing but." Just what Sullivan's self 'contains' is a long story which only a review of his lectures could make clear. If he has left out some significant aspect of experience, it can be brought in. And this is a question of fact which can be determined only by future research, not on the literary authority of Ibsen.

But Fromm has, by implication, another criticism which I take is more misleading. First, I must add that Fromm mentions a *secondary sense* of self, which appears, in order to save the person from becoming insane, when the experience of self (as Fromm conceives it) disappears—the latter, I take it, is a primary sense of self. This secondary sense of self is allegedly acquired by experiencing one-

self "as being approved of, worth while, successful, useful—briefly, as a salable commodity which is *he* because he is looked upon by others as an entity, not unique but fitting into one of the current patterns" (p. 143). At this point one would like to have a clear, unambiguous definition or characterization of the self, as Fromm conceives it, so that one would know precisely under what circumstances it develops and under what particular conditions it is lost. In brief, what is it? Is it somehow independent of the social roles which its possessor plays in society? And if so, how? If it is not independent of them, what connection has it with them? Does it have any connection at all with the approval and disapproval of others? And if it does, precisely what is the connection? If it has no connection, under precisely what circumstances do people with such a self grow? In general, what is the evidence for the existence of this self, or is it a mere promissory note on the strength of a Science of Man? •

The basis offered for the distinction between a real self in Fromm's sense and a secondary sense of self is highly elusive. Apparently Fromm equates his secondary sense of self with Sullivan's theory, and by a misuse of words which, except for Fromm, are not synonymous—"approved of, worth while, successful, useful—briefly as a salable commodity"—equates Sullivan's theory with the marketing orientation. As a matter of fact, one can be approved of and be highly unsuccessful, and one can be disapproved of and still be successful. There is no inherent connection between experiences of approval, disapproval, and "salability." Different individuals in a society have different methods of gaining approval and avoiding disapproval. And so do the members of different societies. Their particular goals are likewise different.

A cursory examination of Sullivan's theory of the self-dynamism will reveal that it has nothing to do with a secondary sense of self—assuming for the moment that the latter is not a mere verbalism. Sullivan attempts to describe in detail how the self-dynamism develops from birth onwards. He believed that the



child's self develops in any society in relation to the responses of significant others, and that "it is built largely of personal symbolic elements learned in contact with other significant people."⁸ At no point in his theory is there any suggestion of loss of something—one does not know precisely what—which as far as the evidence goes, the person never had. There are, of course, limitations and thwartings. In *Conceptions* and elsewhere Sullivan explicitly says that people are limited by the customs, folkways, and mores of their society or community. People cannot grow and develop a self in a social vacuum, as Fromm certainly knows, and therefore their personalities will in general be limited and circumscribed by the prevailing cultural patterns. And if they are compared with the imaginary people of an imaginary society—that is, Utopia—they will no doubt make a very poor showing.

It is quite true, in my opinion, that Sullivan inveighed unnecessarily against *unique* individuality. He has at various times offered at least three reasons for this. First, personality is and can only be developed in particular social situations, and therefore any person brought up in a community must be much more like than different from others brought up and living in that community, since they have shared a vast number of similar social experiences, are exposed to similar demands in a great number of their activities, and have a great many similar goals held up to them. Second, "we are all much more simply human than otherwise, be we happy and successful, contented and detached, miserable and mentally disordered, or whatever."⁹ This may be a corollary of the first, or may rest on some broader basis. Third, what is absolutely unique is forever beyond the grasp of science, since the latter deals with uniformities ("recurrent patterns") and kinds of events which possess identifiable traits—traits that are open to "observation," that are "public."¹⁰

⁸ Harry Stack Sullivan, *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry*; New York, Norton, 1953; p. 46.

⁹ Reference footnote 8; p. 16.

¹⁰ See, for example, Harry Stack Sullivan, "The Illusion of Personal Individuality," *PSYCHIATRY*

If by individuality one means the capacity to reason, to love, to work creatively, there is nothing in Sullivan's *theory* which rules out those things. On the other hand, I would seriously question whether Fromm has a theory of the self at all—in the sense of a systematically ordered body of propositions about the origin and function of the self. (And I would similarly question whether Fromm has a theory of mental illness, or of anxiety.) Vague or general and unsupported statements about human potentialities, about reason and love and freedom and spontaneity, do not form a scientific theory.

Fromm asserts on pages 193-194 that Sullivan believed that the "basic needs of man" are freedom from anxiety, the need for intimacy, and the need for lustful satisfaction. What Sullivan actually says on pages 263-264 of *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry*,¹¹ to which Fromm refers, is as follows:

In fact, making very much sense of the complexities and difficulties which are experienced in adolescence and subsequent phases of life, depends, in considerable measure, on the clarity with which one distinguishes three needs, which are often very intricately combined and at the same time contradictory. These are the need for personal security—that is, for freedom from anxiety; the need for intimacy—that is, for collaboration with at least one other person; and the need for lustful satisfaction, which is connected with genital activity in pursuit of the orgasm.

Nothing is said about these being *the* "basic needs of man." On this spurious interpretation, among others, Fromm on page 193 ascribes to Sullivan the influence of "alienated thinking"—whatever alienated thinking may be. Nor is this all. On page 194, Fromm says: "A critical examination of these concepts [of Sullivan], however, shows that they mean something different in an alienated world than what they might have meant in other cultures." Suppose that the meaning of such concepts do differ or have differed in different societies, would not this also hold for other people's concepts, includ-

(1950) 13:317-332, and the Foreword to *Conceptions* (reference footnote 8; pp. ix-xiii).

¹¹ Harry Stack Sullivan, *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry*; New York, Norton, 1953.



ing Fromm's favorite concepts of reason, love, and productive work? Assuredly Sullivan's concepts can be misinterpreted—as Fromm so vividly illustrates. It is no secret that scientific concepts are not rarely misinterpreted and misapplied. This of course in no way militates against the validity of the concepts. And their logical or scientific meaning does not differ among competent scientists of different countries.

But perhaps Fromm has in mind that the psychological 'content' of security or the means of achieving security would differ for people, or has differed in different societies. Again I reply that if this be true, it will also be true for reason, love, and productive work, or for any other activities and goals. The "emotional meaning" of love, for example, is just as much, or just as little, likely to vary for people in different societies as security. Similar considerations apply to the means of achieving any of these goals. Therefore if the statement I quoted above has to do with the logical meaning of concepts, it is erroneous. If, instead, it has to do with the psychological content of experiences such as security, or with the means of achieving them, it would also apply to other experiences, such as love, and for that reason has no special significance: Sullivan and Fromm would be in the same boat.

Then Fromm turns to a discussion of security "as the most popular modern concept in the arsenal of psychiatric formulae" (p. 194). An increasing emphasis, he asserts, is put on this concept as the paramount aim of life, and he mentions certain reasons for this emphasis. The problem is said to become more complicated by a confusion between psychic and economic security. Furthermore, propaganda against the so-called welfare state and the principle of economic security, Fromm believes, is more effective because of the widespread confusion of economic and emotional security.

"Increasingly people feel," Fromm goes on to say on page 195, "that they should have no doubts, no problems, that they should have to take no risks, and that they should always feel 'secure.' Psy-

chiatry and psychoanalysis have lent considerable support to this aim. Many writers in this field postulate security as the main aim of psychic development and consider a sense of security more or less equivalent with mental health." And Sullivan, Fromm says, was one of these writers. While it is certainly an oversimplification of Sullivan's ideas to say that he postulated security "as the main aim of psychic development," I will pass that by. What I wish to call attention to is that Fromm implies—by means of the juxtaposition of the three sentences I have just quoted—that Sullivan believed, and that his concept of security means, that it is desirable or healthy for people in general to want to have no doubts and no problems, to take no risks, and so on. How could any intelligent person think that it is *even possible* for people to have no doubts, have no problems, take no risks? What Sullivan meant by his concept of security, as anyone who studies *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry* can easily find out, is that people have a need to be free from anxiety, to have a sense of personal worth, to be accepted and approved—not by people at large, but by significant others. Whether this idea is valid is a factual question and can be decided by empirical investigation. It cannot be decided by rhetorical questions such as Fromm's on page 196, "How can a sensitive and alive person ever feel secure?"—even though I might reply in kind by saying, "Why can't he? The world has tranquilizing aspects too."

I turn next to Fromm's criticism, on page 199, of Sullivan's concept of love.

... Sullivan's description [of love] refers to the experience of the alienated, marketing personality of the twentieth century. It is a description of an "egotism à deux," of two people pooling their common interests, and standing together against a hostile and alienated world. Actually his definition of intimacy is in principle valid for the feeling of any co-operating team, in which everybody "adjusts his behavior to the expressed needs of the other person in the pursuit of common aims."

Fromm bases his judgment on two quotations, the second of which is a misquotation. The first quotation is from page 246



of *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry*:

Intimacy is that type of situation involving two people which permits validation of all components of personal worth. Validation of personal worth requires a type of relationship which I call collaboration, by which I mean clearly formulated adjustments of one's behavior to the expressed needs of the other person in the pursuit of increasingly identical—that is, more and more nearly mutual—satisfactions, and in the maintenance of increasingly similar security operations.

This statement is made in connection with preadolescence, when a boy becomes the chum of another, and pairs of chums combine to form a gang under the leadership of some outstanding boy. It is to be regretted that Fromm does not mention the context of the statement. In any case, one would want to know why or how the two boys are "standing against a hostile and alienated world." What has an allegedly alien and hostile world got to do with the friendship of the chums anyway?¹² Why is the friendship of the two boys an *egotism à deux*? The device of ipse dixit will not do in science or in philosophy either.

But Fromm also says on page 199: "Sullivan, putting it more simply, defined the essence of love as a situation of collaboration, in which two people feel: 'we play according to the rules of the game to preserve our prestige and feeling of superiority and merit.'" This "quotation" is taken from the Editors' footnote on page 246 of the *Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry*, where they give a quotation from page 55 of the *Conceptions*: "Collaboration . . . is a great step forward from cooperation—I play according to the rules of the game, to preserve my prestige and feeling of superiority and merit." Again one would like to know where the alleged *egotism à deux* can be found, or what collaboration has to do with an "alienated," hostile world. In this connection, I should like to suggest that my

¹² I want to call attention in passing to the ambiguity of Fromm's use of *alienation*—as in "alienated personality," "alienated thinking," "alienated world," "alienated worker from the total work situation," "alienated religion" or "idolatry," "alienated authority," "alienated consumer," "alienated culture," and so on.

readers review what Sullivan says about preadolescence in the *Conceptions*. Curiously enough, on page 35 Fromm refers to Sullivan's description of preadolescent love *cum laude*.

Fromm thinks that Sullivan's concept of consensual validation is naïve. "It is naïvely assumed," Fromm says on page 14, "that the fact that the majority of people share certain ideas or feelings proves the validity of these ideas and feelings." Sullivan, as anyone who has carefully studied his published lectures can see, did not have any such notion. Sullivan has used the concept of consensual validation in at least two senses, which of course has facilitated misunderstanding; one meaning has to do with common-sense experience, and the other, with scientific work. I may illustrate the common-sense meaning as follows: If I have the notion that all Irishmen are drunkards but boon companions, I will, if I am wise, check that notion against the experiences of others (preferably non-Irish) who are acquainted with the Irish people. It is possible, of course, that I am right, and that the others who (I discover) think that not all Irishmen are drunkards but boon companions are wrong. But in general, it is unwise to assume uncritically that my own notions of people are right when they are markedly at variance with the opinions of others, however inadequate common-sense opinion often is.¹³

The second meaning simply refers to scientific confirmation. A careful reader of the *Conceptions*, Lecture IV,¹⁴ can find it without much trouble. In subsequent lectures, consensual validation in the scientific sense is *operationalism*. Thus I think that serious criticisms of Sullivan's theories should be made on the basis of a genuinely critical examination of what he wrote, not on a misinterpretation of what he allegedly said or believed.

One of the criticisms which Fromm makes of capitalistic society is its abstraction of what is concrete. And yet he himself performs the supreme abstracti-

¹³ Compare Sullivan's discussion of the "syntactic mode," reference footnote 11; pp. 298-300.

¹⁴ Reference footnote 8; pp. 87-174.



fication, for he puts the emphasis on Man—man the universal or archetype—not on concrete, specific persons. Of course, science and philosophy must deal with universals, with abstractions; but science also deals with particulars and with particular situations. Amid the welter of abstractions in *The Sane Society*, flesh and blood people rarely appear, in all their complexity and variety. But Sullivan, who ostensibly has no concern with unique individuals, presents—for instance, in his *Conceptions*—a deeply felt and eloquent portrayal of suffering persons in all their humanity and complexity, with little or no moralizing. So I wonder if Fromm's philosophy of archetypal man could not easily lead in psychiatry to neglect of or indifference to concrete individuals, who might be considered as inferior and imperfect exemplars of Man in the ideal communitarian socialist society.

In Chapter 8, Fromm offers his own solution for our major social ills—admittedly not a new one. His program, coming as it does from a student of Marx, is astonishing in its lack of realism. To be sure, Fromm, on pages 282 and 321, castigates those who have a less rosy picture of human nature or of Utopian schemes. That is one way of anticipating your critics' arguments—to impugn their integrity. Despite the fact that so many experiments with "communitarian socialism" have failed, Fromm is undaunted and steps forth with one more plan. This plan, if it may be called such, is so vague in outline that it would require pages to review it. Perhaps the following quotation from G. D. H. Cole, which Fromm gives on pages 284-285, will suggest what the latter in general seems to have in mind:

Until men at their work can know themselves members of a self-governing community of workers, they will remain essentially servile, whatever the political system under which they live. It is not enough to sweep away the degrading relation in which the wage-slave stands to an individual employer. State Socialism, too, leaves the worker in bondage to a tyranny that is no less galling because it is impersonal. Self-government in industry is not merely the supplement, but the precursor of political liberty.

Fromm offers various suggestions of both a psychological and sociological nature, although he does not seem to think they will or can take effect in the near future for the realization of his ideals.

His suggestions have to be evaluated in the light of current obstacles and current trends. The sociologist Arnold Green, among others, has pointed up some of them in a book which, I think, might profitably be compared with Fromm's.¹⁵ First, consider what a world government, a genuine sovereign entity, which Fromm espouses, would entail. It would require, as Green points out, the surrender of national sovereignty. The nations of the world, including the United States, Russia, and China, would be obliged to dismember themselves as sovereign entities. Can anyone seriously think this is an acceptable solution to the various nations, great and small? As Green says: "At no time in the past has any nation ever voluntarily surrendered sovereignty; it could hardly be argued that the present augurs any such event."¹⁶

Consider next the fact that the reforms envisaged by Fromm and others, which are not to be brought about by force because such a means would destroy the ends envisaged, imply a degree of rationality that people in general have never manifested. Fromm seems to be falling into the same inconsistency that many modern sociologists do who stress "cultural determinism, the imprisonment of thought within the structure of language, the imperial force of early-life conditioning, the power in the mores, the intractability of habit, the compulsion of emotional identification with groups, symbols, and shibboleths, and the subliminal dominance of unconscious motivations" and then either by direct plea or by implication ask their audience to reform its behavior in the light of what they consider the facts.¹⁷ Reforms of the magnitude and generality of the sort which Fromm and others envisage, where the public itself must take action, have, on

¹⁵ Arnold Green, *Sociology*; New York, McGraw-Hill, 1952.

¹⁶ Reference footnote 15; p. 545.

¹⁷ Reference footnote 15; p. 549.



the evidence of history, never been accomplished except by a shrewd manipulation of power, of emotionalized sentiment or, more often, both. In other words, the realization of such vast and far-reaching reforms would be likely to entail destruction of individual responsibility.

Furthermore, men's careers are tied to existing organizations—to a labor union, business, professional society, government bureau, university, and the like, and the personality or self is in turn tied to, or inextricably bound up with, the career. How many would or could surrender so dear and vital a part of themselves, of their personalities? Decentralization with its at least temporary inevitable loss of economic efficiency would entail immediately the loss of most of the things which

most people today hold dear, however benighted and 'alienated' these people may seem. "Beyond creature comfort, amusement, petty egotistical display, and the squalor of reiterated distractions, how many would or could renounce the cult of progress, efficiency, the nation-state, and success?"¹⁶

Fromm concludes with the assertion that the choice which confronts Man is not that between capitalism and communism, but between robotism and humanistic communitarian socialism. Can it be that simple? I doubt it. In fact, I think there is no justification for such dogmatism. But that is the way with inspired reformists.

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¹⁶ Reference footnote 15; p. 550.