



## CHAPTER IV

### FROMM'S THEORY OF REALITY

Fromm's evolutionary approach gives the structure to his concepts of human nature and society. Man is seen as moving from his primal unity with nature to a transcendence which ultimately enables him to establish a productive reunion with nature. In order to draw these conclusions, Fromm makes certain assumptions regarding the nature of reality that he never questions, but accepts on faith.

#### I. THE NATURE OF THE WORLD

##### A. FACTS

In his book Socialist Humanism, Fromm introduces the contributors as those who are concerned about "the reality of human existence, and hence are critical of ideology"<sup>495</sup> who desire to know the essence of things, what life is really all about. These men are realists, he says, who passionately seek truth. Sharing a "belief in the possibility of man's perfectibility,"<sup>496</sup> the humanist commitment to reason has always constituted a "threat to mankind"<sup>497</sup> for mankind has historically been swayed more by emotion and tradition than by reason.

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<sup>495</sup> Socialist Humanism, p. 11.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid., p. 8.



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Fromm sees reason "as a means for discovering the truth and penetrating the surface to the essence of phenomena."<sup>498</sup> It is autonomous, incapable of being interfered with by even "the supernatural voices from heaven."<sup>499</sup> In this fashion, Fromm accepts the Kantian view that man is capable of being objective to phenomenal facts,<sup>500</sup> of making valid statements about facts,<sup>501</sup> and of seeing "the totality of a phenomenon"<sup>502</sup> in terms of its nature.<sup>503</sup> The only alternative to human autonomy and reason is moral confusion.<sup>504</sup>

On these premises, Fromm suggests that man is able to discern and make value judgments about reality in order to arrive at "valid ethical norms"<sup>505</sup> that can guide us toward productive living. These ethical norms are based on the knowledge of man's nature, not on revelation or man-made laws and conventions,<sup>506</sup> and true knowledge "always and necessarily refers to a judgment and not to a description of a phenomenon which we perceive with our senses and which we denote with a word symbol."<sup>507</sup>

<sup>498</sup>Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 5.

<sup>499</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>500</sup>Man for Himself, p. 110.

<sup>501</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>502</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>503</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>504</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>505</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>506</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>507</sup>Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 15.



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Fromm holds that this is the only possible position to maintain, that while it is possible to have "ideas" about things, these ideas may be delusional. or they may correspond to facts, but they are not necessarily "true" in themselves; in the final analysis, all "ideas" must be subjected to the "criterion of truth," to which even the great religions of the world attest.<sup>508</sup> "But even if man's frame of orientation is entirely illusory it satisfies his need for some picture which is meaningful to him."<sup>509</sup>

Fromm further differentiates between reason and intelligence:

Reason is man's instrument for arriving at the truth, intelligence is man's instrument for manipulating the world more successfully; the former is essentially human, the latter belongs to the animal part of man.<sup>510</sup>

Man needs some frame of reference to give meaning to his life and to keep sane,<sup>511</sup> but his objectivity can be distorted by malignant narcissism.<sup>512</sup> Nevertheless, man's powers of love and reason enable him to comprehend the world, mentally and emotionally, and in utilizing these powers over matter, he is able to produce things in creative process.<sup>513</sup>

Fromm views each society as essentially normal in relationship to itself, and that "pathology can be defined only in terms of the individual's lack of adjustment to the ways of life in his society."<sup>514</sup> Considering the

<sup>508</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>509</sup> Sane Society, p. 64.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>511</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>512</sup> Heart of Man, p. 85.

<sup>513</sup> Man for Himself, p. 103.

<sup>514</sup> Sane Society, p. 21.



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environmental, hereditary and constitutional forces interacting in an individual and in his society, each man has a number of "real possibilities"<sup>515</sup> for personal choice in his process of development. In terms of ethics, this implies that "the concept of absolute is meaningless"<sup>516</sup> and has little place in a scientific outlook.

### B. SCIENCE

According to Fromm, all sciences are based on discovery, "on what dominates nature."<sup>517</sup> The proof of what makes a science is the attitude of the researcher, the critical approach to problem-solving and the correctness of the scientific method being applied.<sup>518</sup> All scientists are prone to falsification, therefore the scientific attitude is basically a matter of conscience.<sup>519</sup> "In the last analysis, the whole of the scientific orientation is really a matter of sanity; namely, knowing the difference between fact and thought, between reality and subjective experience."<sup>520</sup> On these terms, he justifies psychoanalysis as a science.<sup>521</sup> The main task of the psychoanalyst is to examine his own subjective motivation, biases and distortions of data.<sup>522</sup> The combination of self-analysis and patient

<sup>515</sup> Heart of Man, p. 140.

<sup>516</sup> Man for Himself, p. 26.

<sup>517</sup> Evans, Dialogue with Erich Fromm, p. 80.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>521</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>522</sup> Loc. cit.



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analysis qualifies psychoanalysis as a rigorously empirical science,<sup>523</sup>

it lays the basis for hypothesis testing and continual growth in the search for truth.<sup>524</sup>

We might perhaps agree that the history of science is a history of errors, for it is the nature of the scientific process that one error be replaced by a new error. Nevertheless, in this process of replacing one error with another (or one truth with another) scientific thought proceeds. There is no such thing as a final statement about ultimate truth. The difference really is whether an error is productive or sterile. The history of science is the history not only of fertile error but also of fertile truth."<sup>525</sup>

The study of psychology, says Fromm, "must be based on an anthropologico-philosophical concept of human existence"<sup>526</sup> that takes into account social and economic forces. Consequently, "the scientific study of character begins on the day when Freud published his short paper on the anal character."<sup>527</sup> While Fromm occasionally refers to other branches of psychology and their respective contributions to the knowledge of man, he is thoroughly committed to psychoanalysis as the most rigorous of the branches<sup>528</sup> as well as the one that has contributed the most significant material.<sup>529</sup> Acknowledging that in the past, it made mistakes in "divorcing psychology from problems of philosophy and ethics,"<sup>530</sup> Fromm

<sup>523</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid., p. 79, 83, 84.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>526</sup> Man for Himself, p. 54.

<sup>527</sup> Evans, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>529</sup> Man for Himself, p. 40.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid., p. 16.



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finds that psychoanalysis today seeks to understand "man in his totality, which includes his need to find an answer to the question of the meaning of his existence and to discover norms according to which he ought to live."<sup>531</sup>

Psychoanalysis is concerned with experience; "the investigation of its influence on emotional development is its primary purpose."<sup>532</sup> One of its presuppositions is that a person's constitution more or less determines the emotional development of the individual, "but psychoanalysis itself is concerned exclusively with the investigation of the influence of the individual's life-situation on his emotional development."<sup>533</sup> In practice this means that the analyst must have "extensive information concerning the individual's life pattern"<sup>534</sup> based on general observations and case history. Psychoanalysis aims at removing illusions that block decision-making,<sup>535</sup> overcoming alienation within both the analyst and patient,<sup>536</sup> enabling the unconscious to become conscious,<sup>537</sup> freeing man to live according to rational rather than irrational forces,<sup>538</sup> and helping the patient to adjust psychically to reality.<sup>539</sup>

<sup>531</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>532</sup>Dogma of Christ, p. 7.

<sup>533</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>534</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>535</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>536</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>537</sup>Hammond, Man in Estrangement, p. 51.

<sup>538</sup>Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 6, Man for Himself, p. 44.

<sup>539</sup>Dogma of Christ, p. 9.



### C. EVOLUTION

Fromm's conceptualization of the development of man and society along evolutionary lines is another crucial theme in all of his writing, leading him to continual revision of Freud's classical theories in order to incorporate current data on personality.<sup>540</sup>

He views man's birth as essentially a negative event.<sup>541</sup> Man is the most helpless of animals at birth and learns to develop his potentials gradually. Environmental conditions can either encourage independence and growth in man or bring conflicting demands, discourage growth and act contrary to man's nature. In order to maintain sanity, man must either react to "bring about conditions which are more in accordance with his needs"<sup>542</sup> or else face deterioration and death. Man's ability to adapt, coupled with "certain indestructible qualities of his nature"<sup>543</sup> which propel him forward, make him unique in the animal world. He is a freak of nature because "he is the only case of a living organism having awareness of itself."<sup>544</sup> This ability to transcend nature, Fromm calls the "psychic evolution,"<sup>545</sup> and it leaves man frightened because his animal ancestry binds him to the very nature he transcended.

<sup>540</sup>Hammond, op. cit., p. 25. Sane Society, p. 34, 238, 240.

<sup>541</sup>Sane Society, p. 27.

<sup>542</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>543</sup>Man for Himself, p. 32.

<sup>544</sup>Evans, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>545</sup>Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis, p. 86. Hereafter cited Zen Buddhism.



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There is only one solution to his problem: to face the truth... to recognize that there is no power transcending him which can solve his problem for him...recognize that there is no meaning to life except the meaning man gives his life by the unfolding of his powers, by living productively..."<sup>546</sup>

As man has evolved, his societal forms, ethical norms<sup>547</sup> and religious concepts<sup>548</sup> have changed to meet his current needs. Therefore man cannot be thought of in terms of "good" or "evil,"<sup>549</sup> only in terms of his creativeness or destructiveness in relation to himself and his society.<sup>550</sup> Society evolves because man is "by origin a herd animal";<sup>551</sup> it is destroyed because of man's alienation and narcissism.<sup>552</sup>

#### D. FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM

Fromm uses his concepts of man's animal origins and transcendent self-awareness to develop his discussions on freedom. By this procedure, he hopes to circumvent the dilemma of, on the one hand, holding the view that there is no essence in man, which is the view held by those who claim that man is only the product of his culture or, on the other hand, holding the Freudian view that man has a basic nature, which seems to

<sup>546</sup>Man for Himself, p. 53.

<sup>547</sup>Ibid., p. 28, 29.

<sup>548</sup>Dogma of Christ, p. 8.

<sup>549</sup>Heart of Man, p. 123.

<sup>550</sup>Sane Society, p. 312.

<sup>551</sup>Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 58.

<sup>552</sup>Sane Society, p. 312.





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deny evolution by assuming that man's nature has remained basically the same since his emergence.<sup>553</sup> "There is," he says, "one condition which every answer must fulfill: it must help man to overcome the sense of separateness and to gain a sense of union, of oneness, of belonging."<sup>554</sup>

Fromm rejects several solutions to the separateness-unity problem. He first rejects what he terms the "regressive answer,"<sup>555</sup> the seeking to return to one's origins or one's ancestors so widely found in primitive religions and severe psychopathology. Equally invalid is the "progressive solution, that of finding a new harmony...by the full development of all human forces, of the humanity within oneself."<sup>556</sup> This latter view depends upon revelations and man becoming god-like. Both of these views force belief in man's goodness or evilness and ultimately lead either to bitter disillusionment or false optimism.<sup>557</sup>

The question is raised whether man is free to choose the good for himself, or whether he is controlled by forces within and outside of himself. "A realistic view sees both possibilities as real potentialities, and studies the conditions for the development of either of them."<sup>558</sup> Fromm

<sup>553</sup>Heart of Man, p. 115.

<sup>554</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>555</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>556</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>557</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>558</sup>Loc. cit.



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asserts that the answer is found in a compromise between both positions, or in "alternativism," and hinges upon the problem of "real possibility,"<sup>559</sup> mentioned above. Man is a "constellation of forces" structured in an identifiable manner and influenced by "environmental conditions (class, society, family) and by hereditary and constitutional conditions."<sup>560</sup> His fictitious possibilities are symbolized by his wishes that can never be realized, and his real possibilities are those capable of fulfillment. A person with a particular constitutional make-up has no real possibility of transforming himself into an entirely different kind of person; he may be able to control certain tendencies, but he will never be indifferent to his own constitutional factors. For example, the person with "a constitutionally given or early acquired sadistic component"<sup>561</sup> has the real possibilities of becoming a sadist, or overcoming it through formation of "a particularly strong mental 'antibody' which makes him incapable"<sup>562</sup> of cruelty, but he will always be sensitive to sadistic tendencies on his or another's part.

He concludes that the unconscious forces or inclinations operating in personality reach high or low intensities which either determine a man's actions or provide him with reasonable choices. These choices are also influenced by the environmental forces. Freedom consists in the awareness of alternatives and consequences. "There is never indeterminism; there

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<sup>559</sup> ibid., p. 140.

<sup>560</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>561</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>562</sup> Loc. cit.



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is sometimes determinism, and sometimes alternativism based on the uniquely inhuman phenomenon: awareness."<sup>563</sup> Although the laws of cause and effect determine man, both Marx and Freud proposed that by "awareness and right action he (man) can create and enlarge the realm of freedom."<sup>564</sup> Freedom, per se is an abstract concept; the only reality is "the act of freeing ourselves in the process of making choices."<sup>565</sup>

In the light of the above, Fromm reaches certain conclusions regarding the problem of evil. First, evil is an "attempt to regress to the pre-human state, and to eliminate that which is specifically human: reason, love, freedom."<sup>566</sup> But, tragic as is regression, it can never satisfy man who still yearns for survival. Secondly, evil manifests itself in degrees corresponding to the degrees of regression. Lesser evil appears as lack of love, lack of reason or of courage. The greater evils appear as malignant narcissism and the love of death. Thirdly, man is capable of moving backward or forward depending on "the balance of inclinations" within him. Fourthly, man is only responsible when he is relatively free to make his own choices. Lastly, "man's heart can harden; it can become inhuman, yet never non-human";<sup>567</sup> man always retains his uniqueness.

#### E. FAITH

Any discussion of Fromm's concept of the world would be incomplete without mentioning his ideas of faith. Usually when he speaks of faith,

<sup>563</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>564</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>565</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>566</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>567</sup>Ibid., p. 150.



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he clearly eliminates any theological connotations, especially those of Calvinism, which he considers anathema.<sup>568</sup>

He argues for a humanistic faith in man resting upon man's courage to be himself.<sup>569</sup> This faith preserves us from becoming sterile<sup>570</sup> and consists of a basic attitude, "a character trait which pervades all his (man's) experiences, which enables man to face reality without illusions."<sup>571</sup> True faith avoids irrational doubting of the validity of all experience, a doubting that says that there can be no certainty anywhere. Faith does encompass rational doubting of the assumptions of authority, so important in the emancipation of youth.<sup>572</sup> It has critical elements that lead to hypothesis formation and testing.<sup>573</sup> It is "rooted in one's own experience, in the confidence in one's power of thought, observation and judgment,"<sup>574</sup> and sees the potentialities in every individual.<sup>575</sup>

To live by faith is to live productively<sup>576</sup> and creatively. Without rational faith, man cannot find real meaning or the will to progress.

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Fromm's world view repeats itself throughout all of his discussions on the nature of man and ethics. It colors his methodology and his conclusions; therefore it is well to keep it in focus in the following discussions.

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<sup>568</sup> Man for Himself, p. 212.

<sup>569</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>571</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>576</sup> Ibid., p. 210.



## II. THE NATURE OF MAN

For the purposes of this study, Fromm's position on man is viewed in terms of his concepts of the human situation, personality and socialization, and partly overlaps what has already been said.

### A. THE HUMAN SITUATION

The basis of Fromm's psychology of man is what he calls the "human situation": Any person represents all human beings as a "specific example"<sup>577</sup> of man's peculiarities and uniqueness. Thus, while Fromm eschews any idea of a basic nature for man, he cannot help speaking about man's self-awareness that distinguishes him from all other animals.<sup>578</sup>

#### 1. MAN'S BIOLOGICAL WEAKNESS

Man, Fromm proposes, is negatively differentiated from other animals by his relative inability to instinctively adapt himself to his surroundings.<sup>579</sup> He says that "the less complete and fixed the instinctual equipment of animals, the more developed is the brain and therefore the ability to learn."<sup>580</sup>

#### 2. EXISTENTIAL AND HISTORICAL DICHOTOMIES

Man's unity and harmony with nature has been disrupted by his emerging transcendence, his "self-awareness, reason and imagination."<sup>581</sup>

<sup>577</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>578</sup> Sane Society, p. 29.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid., p. 30. Man for Himself, p. 48.

<sup>580</sup> Man for Himself, p. 48.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid., p. 48.



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Man's "break with nature," symbolically referred to as the fall of man,<sup>582</sup> now drives him "to seek new unities and harmonies with nature, his fellow man and himself."<sup>583</sup> Actually, it is only by breaking with nature that man can find his true humanity. Here Fromm again introduces his concepts of regression and progression, previously mentioned.

Rooted in man's existential situation are three dichotomies. The most fundamental is the dichotomy between life and death.<sup>584</sup> Death is man's ever present enemy, irrevocable and tragic. Awareness of it "profoundly influences"<sup>585</sup> man's life and he has tried to negate it through such ideologies as the Christian doctrines of immortality and resurrection,<sup>586</sup> but he cannot alter its final defeat of him. The mortality of man faces him with the second dichotomy: every human being is "the bearer of all human potentialities, but the short span of his life does not permit their full realization under even the most favorable circumstances."<sup>587</sup> Again, man does not really solve this problem, but chooses vainly to establish ideologies; that life is fulfilled after death, or that man is subordinate to the state or the community. Thirdly, man is an alienated individual who somehow must find his identity and solidarity in relationship to society; this is the eternal problem of the one-and-the-many coupled with that of isolation vs. fellowship.

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<sup>582</sup> Sane Society, p. 30.

<sup>583</sup> Hammond, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>584</sup> Man for Himself, p. 50.

<sup>585</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>586</sup> ibid., p. 51.

<sup>587</sup> Loc. cit.



Faced by these dilemmas, man may choose either to deny his uniqueness and his powers, or else use them in creative productivity and the acceptance of responsibility. Only the latter course will lead him to find meaning for himself.<sup>588</sup>

## B. PERSONALITY

Fromm defines personality as "the totality of inherited and acquired psychic qualities which are characteristics of one individual and which make the individual unique."<sup>589</sup> "Temperament, gifts, and constitutionally given psychic qualities"<sup>590</sup> are inherited, while the acquired qualities are one's character. The latter reveal one's success in the art of living and form the basis for the problem of ethics.

### 1. CHARACTER

Fromm prefers to deal with character rather than with temperament. Temperament is constitutional and unchangeable, the "mode of reaction"<sup>591</sup> of man, and its confusion with character has complicated the history of ethics,<sup>592</sup> especially the questions of responsibility<sup>593</sup> and moral judgment.<sup>594</sup>

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<sup>588</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>589</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>590</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>591</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>592</sup>Ibid., p. 60-62.

<sup>593</sup>Heart of Man, p. 128.

<sup>594</sup>Man for Himself, p. 232.



a) The Dynamic Concept of Character

Fromm contends that Freud developed the first, and "the most consistent and penetrating theory of character as a system of strivings which underlie, but are not identical with, behavior,"<sup>595</sup> i.e., the theory of unconscious motivation. Behavior can be understood and predicted only by understanding the highly charged unconscious forces motivating man.<sup>596</sup>

Closely allied with this is Freud's "theory of the conative nature of character traits"<sup>597</sup> which states that a person's specific character structure largely determines his perceptions and emotions and his ability to control his inner dynamic forces.<sup>598</sup> The character structure is an organizational pattern or syndrome of character traits that result from what Fromm calls an "orientation of character."<sup>599</sup> However, he modifies Freud's idea that "the sexual drive was the source of energy of the character"<sup>600</sup> in order to include the larger dimensions of man's interpersonal relationships to society, nature and self.

The main difference... is that the fundamental basis of character is not seen in various types of libido organization but in specific kinds of a person's relatedness to the world. In the process of living, man relates himself to the world (1) by acquiring and assimilating things, and (2) by relating himself to people (and himself). The former I shall call the process of assimilation; the latter, that of socialization.<sup>601</sup>

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<sup>595</sup>ibid., p. 63.

<sup>596</sup>Heart of Man, p. 65.

<sup>597</sup>Man for Himself, p. 64.

<sup>598</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>599</sup>ibid., p. 66.

<sup>600</sup>ibid., p. 65.

<sup>601</sup>Loc. cit.





With these orientations forming the core of personality structure, Fromm defines character as "the (relatively permanent) form in which human energy is canalized in the process of assimilation and socialization."<sup>602</sup> And simultaneously, he rejects the typically behavioristic explanation "that man reacts in a semiautomatic fashion by developing habits of action and thought which can be understood in terms of conditioned reflexes."<sup>603</sup>

Fromm is also aware of the problems of defining the conscious and the unconscious. He points out that the term unconscious has been variously used to refer to the lack of subjective awareness of inner experiences, a specific "part of personality,"<sup>604</sup> as "the seat of irrationality"<sup>605</sup> as Freud conceived of it, or as "the seat of the deepest sources of wisdom"<sup>606</sup> as Jung thought. Fromm argues that both the conscious and the unconscious depend on the mores of society and "on the patterns of feelings and thoughts it produces";<sup>607</sup> both are socially conditioned in large part. Man is conscious only of those thoughts and feelings that are capable of penetrating the barriers of socially conditioned language, logic and taboos.<sup>608</sup>

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<sup>602</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>603</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>604</sup> Zen Buddhism, p. 95f.

<sup>605</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>606</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid., p. 104.



"Experiences which can not be filtered through remain outside of awareness; that is, they remain unconscious."<sup>609</sup> But the unconscious "always represents the whole man, with all his potentialities for darkness and light."<sup>610</sup>

b) Non-Productive Character Orientations

According to Fromm, "the character of any given person is usually a blend"<sup>611</sup> of several types of orientation, both productive and non-productive, but a person may be dominated by one of them.

In the "Receptive Orientation"<sup>612</sup> the person believes that all good comes from outside of himself. He is almost exclusively concerned with being loved and cared for, rather than with loving and giving; therefore, he is utterly dependent on others for support, the typical "yes-man."

The "Exploitative Orientation"<sup>613</sup> also operates on the premise that all good comes from without, the difference being that this type uses force and cunning to manipulate others in giving the "good." These persons tend to fall in love with some other person's spouse, plagiarize the works of others, lack originality, underrate their own talents, and overrate the talents of others.

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<sup>609</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>610</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>611</sup> Man for Himself, p. 69.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid., p. 71.



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The "Hoarding Orientation"<sup>614</sup> gains security from keeping and saving; giving constitutes threat. "Death and destruction have more reality than life and growth."<sup>615</sup> They are seen as rigid, sterile, backward looking, orderly and compulsive.

The "Marketing Orientation"<sup>616</sup> fits well into modern societies geared to the advertising approach to life. The self is submerged to fit the laws of supply and demand, gradually becoming a commodity, an object with exchange value. Success depends on how well one can sell oneself, manage the appearance, or fit in to the group. This orientation leaves the personality vague and undefined, and the person fails to develop in freedom and individuality.

c) The Productive Orientation

This refers to a basic attitude, or mode of relatedness in "mental, emotional and sensory responses to others, to oneself and to things."<sup>617</sup> It mobilizes all the life-giving forces in "man's inherent primary potentialities"<sup>618</sup> to fight against destructive and evil impulses. It can constructively use any of the forms of social relatedness--loyalty, authority,

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<sup>614</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>616</sup> Ibid., p. 75-85.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid., p. 230.



fairness, assertiveness--which in the non-productive person would become submission, domination, withdrawal, destructiveness.<sup>619</sup>

The productive person experiences himself fully, participates in life, uses his powers of reason love and imagination,<sup>620</sup> and lives realistically. Productivity is not to be confused, however, with creativity<sup>621</sup> or with activity<sup>622</sup> per se.

## 2. PERSONALITY SYNDROMES

When Fromm wrote his second book, Man for Himself (1947), he was apparently just beginning to formulate concepts that later became identified as the "personality syndromes" in The Heart of Man (1964). In the intervening years, a significant shift took place which Hammond saw as incongruity in Fromm's ideas of mature love.

It would seem that in discussing 'progressive' love Fromm alternates between two partially contradictory conceptions. On the one hand...progressive (as well as regressive) love springs from man's deep need to be reunited with the world and his fellow man. This understanding suggests that love presupposes alienation, that union presupposes separation. On the other hand, Fromm describes love as a form of productivity. Love is self-giving, the highest expression of human potency.<sup>623</sup>

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<sup>619</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>620</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>621</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>622</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>623</sup>Hammond, op. cit., p. 53.



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Probably when Fromm concentrated on the problem of ethical norms (Man for Himself) and rationality (The Sane Society), he was mainly concerned with the idea of interrelatedness in terms of productivity and economics, the result of his Marxist interest. In pursuing the problem of good and evil he focussed on man's capacity to love (The Art of Loving, 1956), and later dealt with man's capacity to destroy, his narcissism and his incestuous fixation. In The Heart of Man, these paradoxical tendencies are called Biophilia, the love of life and Necrophilia, the love of death. Oriented to one or the other, man develops either the syndrome of growth or the syndrome of death. He speaks of them in The Sane Society (1955) as orientation in the process of socialization.

a) The Syndrome of Decay.

The syndrome of decay is composed of three sub-orientations or phenomena, which in Fromm's opinion, form "the basis for the most vicious and dangerous form of human orientation."<sup>624</sup> Because this syndrome epitomizes stagnation and destruction, it fulfills Fromm's criterion by which he measures whether man is good or evil,<sup>625</sup> that man is evil only if he lacks growth and development<sup>626</sup> and reverts to archaic impulses.<sup>627</sup>

(1) Necrophilia - The Love of Death. The necrophile is attracted by "all that is not alive, all that is dead; corpses, decay, feces, dirt";<sup>628</sup>

<sup>624</sup> Heart of Man, p. 23.

<sup>625</sup> Man for Himself, p. 212.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid., p. 220; cf. p. v-9.

<sup>627</sup> Heart of Man, p. 121.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid., p. 39.



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they love to discuss sickness, burials and death. Here they find a perverted source of strength. The theme of decay reappears in their passions, dreams, attachments and behavior, even their appearance.<sup>629</sup> Usually, it is blended with the sexual instinct, which produces sadism, masochism, necrophagia and coprophagia,<sup>630</sup> and Fromm also related it to Freud's anal character distinguished by extreme orderliness, parsimony and obstinacy.<sup>631</sup>

The necrophile dwells in the past,<sup>632</sup> nurses old grudges,<sup>633</sup> glories in destruction of life.<sup>634</sup> He is magnetized by force and by those who symbolize the power to kill.<sup>635</sup> Thus, he loves mechanical devices, the bureaucratic order<sup>636</sup> and is only attracted by an object or a person if he can possess them.<sup>637</sup>

Fromm's prime examples of the pure necrophilic type are Hitler and C. G. Jung. Hitler's "deepest satisfaction lay in witnessing total

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<sup>629</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>630</sup> Ibid., p. 46. Necrophagia: eating of corpses; Coprophagia: eating of excrement.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>633</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>634</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>635</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

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and absolute destruction: that of the German people, of those around him, and of himself."<sup>638</sup> Jung, whose dreams were "filled with corpses, blood, killings"<sup>639</sup> and who was fascinated by corpses,<sup>640</sup> balanced his tendency with a desire to heal and create, using his necrophilic interests as the subject matter for "his brilliant speculations."<sup>641</sup>

(2) Malignant Narcissism, This concept provides Fromm with an understanding of "psychosis ('narcissistic neurosis'), love, castration, fear, jealousy, sadism" in relation to the individual, and "nationalism, national hatred and the psychological motivations for destructiveness and war"<sup>642</sup> in relation to society. He accomplishes this by expanding Freud's concept of narcissism that Fromm claims was restricted to the states of infancy and psychosis.<sup>643</sup>

According to this Freudian theory, man develops from "absolute narcissism to a capacity for objective reasoning and object love,"<sup>644</sup> and narcissism is never absent in even the most mature adult. While Freud used his notion of sexual libido as a basis for the narcissistic impulse,<sup>645</sup> Fromm uses a concept of non-sexual psychic energy. The person is bound,

<sup>638</sup>ibid., p. 39

<sup>639</sup>ibid., p. 43.

<sup>640</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>641</sup>ibid., p. 44.

<sup>642</sup>ibid., p. 62.

<sup>643</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>644</sup>ibid., p. 63.

<sup>645</sup>ibid., p. 64.



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unified, integrated by psychic energy that enables him to relate to himself and the outside world.<sup>646</sup> The infant is seen as having not yet related to the outside world and therefore being unable to differentiate between the "I" and the not "I." To the insane person the world outside has "ceased to be real,"<sup>647</sup> while the paranoid and the neurotic fear the world. Psychosis is the "state of absolute narcissism";<sup>648</sup> the patient himself alone is real, a God to himself.

Bordering on psychotic isolation are persons who have reached an extraordinary degree of God-like power: "the Egyptian pharaohs, the Roman Caesars, the Borgias, Hitler, Stalin, Trujillo,"<sup>649</sup> who have all attained the authority of absolute judgment and demand the impossible. Less severe narcissism is found in preoccupation with one's body, appearance and talents, and the demand for attention. In "moral hypochondriasis"<sup>650</sup> the person is absorbed with overwhelming guilt feelings, inadequacy, unreality and self-accusation. The Narcissist acts and looks smug and self-satisfied, but may hide behind a disguise of modesty and humility. Essentially he is an idol worshipper: asked who he is, he replies that "he is

<sup>646</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>647</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>648</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>649</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid., p. 69.





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his brain, his face, his wealth, his penis, his conscience, and so on."<sup>651</sup>

Fromm argues that narcissism is necessary for survival, but that it is also a "threat to survival"<sup>652</sup> when it distorts rational judgment.<sup>653</sup> Individual narcissism is effected by group narcissism, becoming prejudiced<sup>654</sup> and biased against the extraneous world. Criticism of the group is met with hostility, possibly resulting in rationalistic justification for "defensive warfare" and "righteous indignation." "The highly narcissistic group is eager to have a leader with whom it can identify itself,"<sup>655</sup> and submits to him in an "act of symbiosis."<sup>656</sup>

(3) Incestuous Symbiosis. The fixation on the mother figure is the core of incestuous symbiosis. Fromm agrees with Freud that this attachment persists into adulthood, weakening independence and goal-striving, and leading to "various neurotic conflicts and symptoms."<sup>657</sup> But it is the "pre-Oedipal attachment of boys and girls to their mother"<sup>658</sup> that is for Fromm, far more vital than any genital desires, and "one of the central phenomena in the evolutionary process and one of the main causes of neurosis or psychosis."<sup>659</sup>

<sup>651</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>652</sup> Ibid., p. 73..

<sup>653</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>654</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>655</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>656</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>657</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>658</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>659</sup> Loc. cit.

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This 'incestuous' striving, in the pregenital sense, is one of the most fundamental passions in men or women, comprising the human being's desire for protection, the satisfaction of his narcissism; his craving to be freed from the risks of responsibility, of freedom, of awareness; his longing for unconditional love, which is offered without any expectation of his loving response.<sup>660</sup>

Adults as well as infants are dependent, helpless and crave certainty; they know the risks and dangers of life, therefore seek protection and power for control of life's forces. It is this seeking that provides the base for all religions in Fromm's view;<sup>661</sup> and indicates why there is a paradoxical fear and love of God in so many of them.<sup>662</sup>

By the "symbiotic" attachment, Fromm means that the "person is part and parcel of the 'host' person to whom he is attached";<sup>663</sup> he cannot live apart from the host person, whether that host is living or dead or merely a symbol. The deepest level of this mother fixation is "incestuous symbiosis,"<sup>664</sup> a condition of complete identity between the person and the host. The person "may sometimes feel superior, sometimes inferior, sometimes equal to the host person--but always they are inseparable."<sup>665</sup>

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<sup>660</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>661</sup> Ibid., p. 99. cf. also You Shall Be As Gods, p. 7.

<sup>662</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>664</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>665</sup> Loc. cit.



The level of regression determines the extent of the symbiotic pathology. In many cases there is only a minor dependence on, or fear of, women. Pathology increases from hostility toward any critics of the host person, distortion of reason, failure to experience "another being as fully human,"<sup>666</sup> loss of independence and integrity, and finally, self-imprisonment.

When all these three phenomena join together in greater or lesser degree, they form the syndrome of decay, resulting in various forms of violence<sup>667</sup> and destructiveness;<sup>668</sup> and in masochistic-sadistic characteristics.<sup>669</sup> Fromm says that the fact that most people do not fear total destruction, such as nuclear war, is because they do not love life, are indifferent to life, or are attracted to death.<sup>670</sup> The most fundamental contradiction in man is the affinity to life opposed by the affinity to death.<sup>671</sup>

b) The Syndrome of Growth

Just as the syndrome of death is the "evil" in man, so Fromm sees the "good" existing in the syndrome of growth.

<sup>666</sup> Ibid., p. 107

<sup>667</sup> Ibid., p. 24-36. Fromm lists eight types of violence.

<sup>668</sup> Escape From Freedom, p. 203. Fromm speaks of rational and irrational destructiveness.

<sup>669</sup> Ibid., p. 163f. Fromm thinks of masochism as vicarious participation in a power enterprise. p. 177.

<sup>670</sup> Heart of Man, p. 56.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid., p. 50.



(1) Biophilia--The Love of Life. Fundamental to all living substance is "the tendency to preserve life and to fight against death,"<sup>672</sup> and this drive toward life integrates, unites and enhances development and growth in the entire organism.<sup>673</sup> This provides the basis for attractions between males and females culminating in sexual union and creative productivity.

The most basic conditions for the development of biophilia are, first, for the child to "be with people who love life, love of life is just as contagious as love of death";<sup>674</sup> secondly, for the child to grow up in an atmosphere of economic and psychological abundance;<sup>675</sup> thirdly, the abolition of injustice;<sup>676</sup> fourthly, the freedom to venture and be creative.<sup>677</sup> Such conditions enable the person to develop his true identity as an authentic individual, fully experiencing himself as the "center and subject of human power."<sup>678</sup>

(2) The Love of Man. Man's narcissism can be overcome by "the scientific and humanist orientations."<sup>679</sup> The humanist creed is

<sup>672</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>673</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>674</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>675</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>676</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>677</sup>Loc. cit., cf. Sane Society, p. 61.

<sup>678</sup>Evans, Loc. cit., p. 28.

<sup>679</sup>Ibid., p. 92.



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essentially religious-spiritual,<sup>680</sup> viewing each man as representative of all mankind with worth and value; "the 'human condition' is one and the same for all men, in spite of unavoidable differences in intelligence, talents, heights, and color."<sup>681</sup>

Humanism transcends nationalism, preferring to extend group narcissism to include "the entire human family"<sup>682</sup> where no man would be alien to another, since all are equal<sup>683</sup> and all carry within themselves the elements of sinner and saint, child and adult, sane and insane, the past and the future.<sup>684</sup>

(3) Independence. Man becomes increasingly independent as he becomes increasingly aware of himself, basing his behavior "on the awareness of alternatives and their consequences."<sup>685</sup> He is able to cut the umbilical cords binding him to any gods, to mother and to tribe,<sup>686</sup> thus freeing him to bear his own convictions, to think rationally, to experience himself.<sup>687</sup>

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<sup>680</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>681</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>682</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>683</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>684</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>686</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>687</sup> Loc. cit.



### C. SOCIALIZATION

When Fromm deals with the problem of human consciousness, he depends more upon Marx than upon Freud. Although both Marx and Freud taught that ideology and rationalism created a "false" consciousness<sup>688</sup> in men and that behavior is basically controlled by unconscious motivations, Marx attributed to society the direction of consciousness and the blocking of awareness of facts and experiences,<sup>689</sup> while Freud attributed these to "man's libidinal strivings."<sup>690</sup>

This way of looking at character development is the foundation for Fromm's "social character," which refers to

the nucleus of the character structure which is shared by most members of the same culture in contradistinction to the individual character in which people belonging to the same culture differ from each other.<sup>691</sup>

Society, therefore, plays a large role in shaping the individual, particularly through the agency of the family. It is this concern for social pathology that sets Fromm's work apart from Freud's, leading him toward the possibilities of social health in a "sane society."<sup>692</sup>

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<sup>688</sup> Zen Buddhism, p. 98.

<sup>689</sup> Marx's Concept of Man, p. 21.

<sup>690</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>691</sup> Sane Society, p. 76.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid., p. 13-20.



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Earlier, we noted that Fromm emphasized man's distinctiveness as his evolutionary transcendence, his self-awareness that in turn led to isolation, or alienation from nature, and eventually brought him toward reunion with nature.<sup>693</sup> By coupling this idea with Marx's view of the social origin of consciousness, Fromm radically departed from Freud's conceptualization of socialization as being primarily a process of controlling and redirecting the internal desires.<sup>694</sup> Freud saw physiological motivations as the root of self-awareness, but Fromm holds that self-awareness develops in addition to physiological forces.<sup>695</sup>

#### 1. ORIENTATIONS IN THE PROCESS OF SOCIALIZATIONS

In 1955, Fromm spoke of assimilation and socialization as the "two kinds of relatedness to the world"<sup>696</sup> distinguished by three forms: symbiotic relatedness, withdrawal-destructiveness and love. By 1964 these developed into his "personality syndromes" mentioned above. The point here is that Fromm sees these syndromes as largely influenced and controlled by socialization, although man has freedom to cooperate with his affinity to life and thus transform or modify his personality.<sup>697</sup>

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<sup>693</sup>cf., p. v-6, v-12.

<sup>694</sup>Freud, Civilization and its Discontent, p. 94-103.

<sup>695</sup>Evans, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>696</sup>Man for Himself, p. 113.

<sup>697</sup>Heart of Man, p. 57.



## 2. ALIENATION AND SOCIALIZATION

Hammond points out that Fromm uses the concept of alienation from nature and from self to explain the process of socialization, but that he does not always use it consistently.<sup>698</sup> In his earlier writing, Fromm used alienation as a positive term to describe man's necessary progression toward maturity, but in his later works, he differentiates between alienation as such and man's regressive answer to the fact of alienation. In this, he differs from Marx, who, he says, thought of alienation only as corrupting and perverting all human values,<sup>699</sup> and restricted it to the unskilled working class, whereas today all classes are alienated to the extent that they have lost the sense of self and the sense of their creative powers.<sup>700</sup> And he suggests that dynamic psychology ought to empirically study those specific behaviors, "all those religions, philosophical and political phenomena"<sup>701</sup> associated with alienation.

### a) Alienation and Self-Awareness

Fromm sees two sides to alienation. Negatively, man "must first separate himself from nature and his fellow man, and in a real sense from

<sup>698</sup>Hammond, op. cit., p. 65-77, 121-130.

<sup>699</sup>Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 52.

<sup>700</sup>Evans, op. cit., p. 89

<sup>701</sup>Ibid., p. 90.





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himself<sup>702</sup> before he can become "fully born."<sup>703</sup> Positively, alienation leads to a higher consciousness of self and the better use of one's powers.<sup>704</sup>

The process of achieving self-awareness has three aspects: "intellection," overcoming narcissism and the distortion of consciousness by society.

As the person matures, he splits the subject from the object, the "me" from the "not-me." "This separation gradually takes place, and the final achievement is expressed by the fact that the child can say 'I.'<sup>705</sup> This development of objectivity is called intellectual reflection, or "intellection."<sup>706</sup>

The second aspect of mature self-awareness is the overcoming of narcissism. The child soon learns to distinguish reality as it is from what he wants it to be. It is essentially an affective development. But if the person does not accept reality and continues to live in his wishes, he will neurotically attempt "to force reality to correspond to his wishes (that is, to do the impossible)."<sup>707</sup> This is narcissistic omnipotence.

<sup>702</sup>Hammond, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>703</sup>Zen Buddhism, p. 94.

<sup>704</sup>Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 61.

<sup>705</sup>Zen Buddhism, p. 128.

<sup>706</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>707</sup>Ibid., p. 90.



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Thirdly, society influences the development of consciousness and unconsciousness by means of its "social filters." At this point, Hammond clarifies Fromm's analysis of self-awareness by differentiating between abstract consciousness (the form) and the content of consciousness, which society regulates.

Man...has the formal or abstract capacity for consciousness. However, the actual content of consciousness (that is, how self and the world are understood) is deeply affected by the type of society into which the individual is born. A regressive society...may force the individual to repress some aspects of his own self-awareness. As we have seen, it is the limitation of the content of consciousness that must be eliminated in full maturity. Since this limitation is due in large measure to the repressive effect of the society on the individual, and since this in turn stems from regression in society, we can see that alienation and regression cannot be completely separated, though they must be distinguished.<sup>708</sup>

The aspects of intellection and overcoming of narcissism lead to temporary alienation; as one sees himself separate from other persons he feels his separation and aloneness more keenly. The societal factor may not, in itself, lead to alienation, but could increase or decrease this feeling depending on whether the "social character" of the culture was progressive or regressive.

b) Alienation and Regression

Not only does Fromm use alienation to mean a progressive movement upward, but he also uses it in reference to man's regressive answer to the fact of alienation, which tends to confuse the issue. It would probably be better if he had restricted its use to the progressive form.

<sup>708</sup>Hammond, op. cit., p. 68.



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Man, declares Fromm, tries to escape from his alienation. Authoritarian religion, repression, neurosis and psychosis are a few of the common forms of escape. Any attempt to fall back on destructive impulses, find symbolic security in the womb or in death, or in archaic forms of pre-human existence are regressive impulses, totally incompatible "with the inherent goals of the evolution of man's nature."<sup>709</sup>

(1) Repression. Repression is a form of regression. Repression is the process of limiting consciousness or of preventing any impulse from entering the realm of consciousness, or removing the experience of the impulse from the conscious.<sup>710</sup> All forms of neuroses are the result of deep repressions of "unconscious strivings which tend to harm and block a person's growth,"<sup>711</sup> and, he writes, it is the task of psychoanalysis to "de-repress," i.e., "to make the unconscious conscious."<sup>712</sup>

On the whole, he feels that regression in any form is evil and archaic. Regression in the form of neurosis is a "symptom of moral failure ...the specific expression of moral conflicts."<sup>713</sup> The pre-Oedipal attachment is "one of the main causes of neurosis and psychosis."<sup>714</sup> Neurosis is the failure to live productively.<sup>715</sup>

<sup>709</sup> Zen Buddhism, p. 105.

<sup>710</sup> Man for Himself, p. 228.

<sup>711</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>712</sup> Zen Buddhism, p. 95, 105.

<sup>713</sup> Man for Himself, p. 5.

<sup>714</sup> Heart of Man, p. 97.

<sup>715</sup> Man for Himself, p. 222.



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(2) Regression in Religion. Fromm sees all religions and ethical systems, except those of humanism, as regressions to archaic forms, dehumanizing their adherents. Religion is "the formalized and elaborate answer to man's existence"<sup>716</sup> that creates "a feeling of reasonableness and of security by the very communion with others."<sup>717</sup>

He correlates religious ideas with neurotic ideas. When the regressive wishes of man clash with consciousness and society's demands, the result is often a regression to primitive forms of religion.<sup>718</sup> In a sense, a neurosis is a "private form of religion."<sup>719</sup> In neurotic regression, one passion comes to dominate the person and becomes set apart from the rest of his personality. It becomes his ruler, his idol. He grows weaker as "it" grows stronger until "he has become alienated from himself precisely because 'he' has become the slave of part of himself."<sup>720</sup>

It is in this sense that he often uses the term alienation.

I use 'alienation' as it was used by Hegel (1960) and later by Marx (1932): instead of experiencing his own human powers--for example, love or wisdom, thought or reason, acting justly--a person transfers these powers to some idol, to force or forces outside himself. In order, then, to get in touch with his own human power, he must submit completely to this idol.<sup>721</sup>

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<sup>716</sup>Zen Buddhism, p. 91.

<sup>717</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>718</sup>Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 27.

<sup>719</sup>Zen Buddhism, p. 91.

<sup>720</sup>Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 60.

<sup>721</sup>Evans, op. cit., p. 88.



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Fromm attacks any religion that demands submission to a force or God, and although he admits that the concept of monotheistic authority "guarantees man's independence from human authority."<sup>722</sup> He states that "every act of submissive worship, is an act of alienation and idolatry";<sup>723</sup> the power undergirding the Christian church is nothing but "group narcissism,"<sup>724</sup> and religious devotion is an attempt to remove "reason and self-awareness,"<sup>725</sup> the "regressive, archaic solution to the problem of human existence."<sup>726</sup>

The problem of religion is vital to Fromm's position on man and ethics, occupying a major portion of all his works. He assumes that man's concepts of God are always projections or fantasies of man's inner needs and impulses,<sup>727</sup> and that the history of religion parallels man's evolution.

...religion has a threefold function: for all mankind, consolation for the privations exacted by life; for the great majority of men, encouragement to accept emotionally their class situation; and for the dominant minority, relief from guilt feelings caused by the suffering of those whom they oppress.<sup>728</sup>

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<sup>722</sup>You Shall Be As Gods, p. 75.

<sup>723</sup>Sane Society, p. 113.

<sup>724</sup>Heart of Man, p. 85.

<sup>725</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>726</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>727</sup>Dogma of Christ, p. 46.

<sup>728</sup>Ibid., p. 20.



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Fromm's concern for religious ideas stems from their psychic influences on man,<sup>729</sup> and the fact that all men have religious needs which find expression somehow,<sup>730</sup> even though some deny it. His definition of religion is: "any system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion."<sup>731</sup>

Fromm is particularly hostile to Calvinism as his example of the most authoritarian form of religion. He sees its main virtue as obedience and "its cardinal sin is disobedience."<sup>732</sup> It epitomizes worship of dependence, self-degradation and self-limitation, and is therefore "masochistic and self-destructive."<sup>733</sup>

There is no such thing as a God who is a real being in Fromm's system, only a symbol "of man's own powers."<sup>734</sup> But ecclesiastical authorities established a concept of God as a father figure in order to increase the guilt feelings of the masses and thus through the rituals of repentance and pardon, to maintain control.<sup>735</sup> The ethical implications will be considered in more detail in the next chapter.

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<sup>729</sup> Heart of Man, p. 118, Dogma of Christ, p. 9.

<sup>730</sup> Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 25.

<sup>731</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>732</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>734</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>735</sup> Dogma of Christ, p. 66.



## CHAPTER V

### FROMM'S PHILOSOPHY OF ETHICS

Fromm's concept of ethics emanates from his concern for the growing skepticism and moral confusion in today's world where man finds himself cut off from the traditional "guidance of either revelation or reason."<sup>736</sup>

The result is the acceptance of a relativistic position which proposes that value judgments and ethical norms are exclusively matters of taste or arbitrary preference and that no objectively valid statement can be made in this realm. But since man cannot live without values and norms, this relativism makes him an easy prey for irrational value systems. He reverts to a position which the Greek Enlightenment, Christianity, the Renaissance, and the eighteenth-century Enlightenment had already overcome. The demands of the State, the enthusiasm for magic qualities of powerful leaders, powerful machines, and material success become the sources for his norms and value judgments.<sup>737</sup>

Because this study is concerned primarily with the problem of conscience and guilt, it has not seemed necessary to detail Fromm's position on every area he discusses in ethics; consequently, only brief summarizations will be made on some problems which are arbitrarily assigned to the section following.

#### I. ABSOLUTE VS. RELATIVE ETHICS

True to his presuppositions on the nature of man, Fromm establishes his ethics on man's autonomy, and rejects any authoritarian ethics

<sup>736</sup> Man for Himself, p. 15.

<sup>737</sup> Loc. cit.



founded on

...the premise that the criterion of validity is the unquestionable superior and omniscient power of the authority. It is the very essence of this claim to superiority that the authority cannot err and that its commands and prohibitions are eternally true.<sup>738</sup>

Fromm disposes of this claim on the basis of appeal to "all other fields of scientific thought, where it is generally recognized that there is no absolute truth but nevertheless there are objectively valid laws and principles."<sup>739</sup> Every new insight enables man to make a closer approximation of the truth;<sup>740</sup> every culture makes its contributions.

#### A. NORMS

Furthermore, he argues, ethical norms are not only subject to constant revision, but there are situations "which are inherently insoluble and do not permit any choice which can be considered the 'right' one."<sup>741</sup> These situations arise in connection with existential dichotomies and with conditions inherent in the social order.

Fromm also distinguishes between "universal" and "socially immanent" ethics.<sup>742</sup> "Universal ethics" refer to those norms of conduct

<sup>738</sup> ibid., p. 239

<sup>739</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>740</sup> ibid., p. 240.

<sup>741</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>742</sup> ibid., p. 241-245.





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that appear in most world cultures, and the "socially immanent norms" are those specific codes of conduct enabling a particular culture to maintain itself efficiently; i. e., people do "what they have to do under the existing circumstances."<sup>743</sup>

In this connection, it is interesting to note that Fromm uses the term "norm" in a distinctive manner. As commonly used, norm refers to "an authoritative standard; a principle of right action binding upon the members of a group and serving to guide, control, or regulate proper and acceptable behavior,"<sup>744</sup> or perhaps in the sense of the usual kind of behavior observed. But Fromm uses the word norm as an equivalent of "principle," which has the meaning of "a comprehensive and fundamental law, doctrine or assumption; a rule or code of conduct; a primary source; an underlying faculty or endowment..."<sup>745</sup> He also believes that both norms and principles can remain valid for an indefinite period in a variety of cultures, and that they have the force of an "ought," as in the following:

A few words must be said about my approach to the Bible in this book. I do not look at it as the 'word of God,' not only because historical examination shows that it is a book written by men--different kinds of men, living in different times--but also because I am not a theist. Yet, to me, it is an extraordinary book, expressing many norms and principles that have maintained their validity throughout thousands

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<sup>743</sup>ibid., p. 242.

<sup>744</sup>Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 575.

<sup>745</sup>ibid., p. 676.



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of years. It is a book which has proclaimed a vision for men that is still valid and awaiting realization.<sup>746</sup>

Moreover, Fromm seems to hold to a Platonic concept of eternal principles that govern both God and man. In discussing the evolutionary development of the concept of God in the Old Testament, Fromm writes:

With Abraham's challenge (for God to comply with the principles of justice) a new element has entered the Biblical and later Jewish tradition. Precisely because God is bound by the norms of justice and love, man is no longer his slave. Man can challenge God--as God can challenge man--because above both are principles and norms.<sup>747</sup>

#### B. AUTHORITARIAN VS. HUMANISTIC ETHICS

One of Fromm's major themes is his distinction between authoritarianism and humanistic ethics. Fromm asserts that man's religious needs stem from man's dichotomous relationship to nature, i.e., his identity with and transcendence of nature, resulting in an inherent fear of his alienation, insecurity, and a vast feeling of powerlessness.<sup>748</sup> This condition generates within him a desire to restore his equilibrium, to establish ideals, to seek satisfaction and meaning.<sup>749</sup> This is seen by Fromm as the moral problem of man today: "man's attitude toward force and power"<sup>750</sup> which

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<sup>746</sup>You Shall Be As Gods, p. 7.

<sup>747</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>748</sup>Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 22.

<sup>749</sup>Ibid., p. 24, 25.

<sup>750</sup>Man for Himself, p. 246.



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is rooted in his existence. Threatened by his fears, man becomes paralyzed emotionally and mentally, grasping at any promises made by those in possession of power who offer peace and security. "Man's submission to this combination of threat and promise is his real 'fall.' By submitting to power = domination he loses his power = potency."<sup>751</sup> Man becomes indifferent to himself,<sup>752</sup> losing his sense of uniqueness, and in his loss of courage, he turns to idolatry.

### 1. AUTHORITARIANISM

The error of authoritarian religion as Fromm sees it is that it originally fought against idolatry in the name of God, and then proceeded to turn its God into another idol.

The approach to the understanding of what an idol is begins with the understanding of what God is not, God as the supreme value and goal is not man, the state, an institution, nature, power, possession, sexual powers, or any artifact made by man. The affirmations 'I love God,' 'I follow God,' 'I want to become like God'--mean first of all 'I do not love, follow, or imitate idols.'

An idol represents the object of man's central passion, the desire to return to the soil-mother, the craving for possession, power, fame, and so forth. The passion represented by the idol is, at the same time, the supreme value within man's system of values.<sup>753</sup>

As we noted previously, Fromm sees idol worship as the impoverishment of man that occurs when he transfers his "passions and qualities

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<sup>751</sup> Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>752</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>753</sup> You Shall Be As Gods, p. 43.



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to the idol,<sup>754</sup> which then becomes the "alienated form of man's experience of himself."<sup>755</sup> Through the media of the idol, man worships himself. Thus, "God" can become an idol. Man can transfer his qualities to the supreme being, impoverish himself by submission, guilt feelings and devotion. What does Fromm ask of man? Simply, "not to blaspheme God and not to worship idols."<sup>756</sup> "If mankind has achieved solidarity and peace, not even the common worship of one God is necessary."<sup>757</sup>

To briefly sum up Fromm's concept of the development of authoritarian religion and ethics: The Old Testament prophets and leaders intended to restrain their people from idol worship and indignity. They developed the concept of a single authoritarian God who must be obeyed; God became "the constitutional monarch"<sup>758</sup> who later "becomes bound by the principles he has announced."<sup>759</sup> Eventually, he becomes the nameless God, "EHEYEH,"<sup>760</sup> who bears no possible representation, but is only experienced.<sup>761</sup> Man becomes liberated to determine his own history, free to

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<sup>754</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>755</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>756</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>757</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>758</sup> Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>759</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>760</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>761</sup> Ibid., p. 30-42.



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accept or reject the prophetic message. The concept of God became merely a "unifying principle"<sup>762</sup> for the Jewish nation, a religious attitude that easily developed into a humanistic affinity toward their fellow men and nature. Later, the Christian Church slowly evolved a system of theology that reverted to idolatry in the figure of Jesus, who originally satisfied the need for the suffering masses to identify with one who had proclaimed deliverance from life's misery and who had himself suffered under the hands of authorities whom the masses despised.<sup>763</sup> Soon the suffering servant was transformed into the Son of God; the Christian could now identify with the God-man, and thereby relieve his hostilities against a sovereign God of judgment and oppressive power.

Since the believing enthusiasts were imbued with hatred and death wishes--consciously against their rulers, unconsciously against God the Father--they identified with the crucified; they themselves suffered death on the cross and atoned in this way for their death wishes against the father. Through his death, Jesus expiated the guilt of all, and the first Christians needed such an atonement.<sup>764</sup>

Identification with Jesus meant that in the after-life, the believer would also rule alongside God and become content.

Next, the "Church" promulgated the idea that Jesus had eternally existed with the Father-God, but only after the composition of the Christian

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<sup>762</sup> ibid., p. 226.

<sup>763</sup> Doqma of Christ, p. 29-41.

<sup>764</sup> ibid., p. 48.



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community shifted from the oppressed masses to the middle and upper classes in the age of Constantine.<sup>765</sup> The theology of Paul, an intellectual, predominated over the simplicity of the Gospels. The eschatological expectation that the Kingdom of God was imminent began to dissipate and Christians looked backward to the cross,<sup>766</sup> and to inward, rather than political salvation.

Finally, a decisive change took place in Christian doctrine: Christ was conceived of now as God becoming man and this, contends Fromm, destroyed the revolutionary spirit of the early Christian community that had directed its aggressive impulses against the established authorities. When the Christian masses began to think of Christ as God coming down to mankind, they could no longer relieve their hostility against the Father, but now had to turn their aggressiveness against themselves, thus simplifying their subjugation to the clergy. Church authorities then assumed complete control; by rigidifying their doctrines, they bound the masses in subservient obedience.<sup>767</sup>

While the Protestant Reformation began the movement away from "the passively infantile attitude of the Middle Ages"<sup>768</sup> and toward a revivification of the Father-God, Lutheranism and especially Calvinism,

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<sup>765</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>766</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>767</sup> Ibid., p. 64-71.

<sup>768</sup> Ibid., p. 91.



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"emphasized the wickedness of man and taught self-humiliation and self-abasement as the basis of all virtue."<sup>769</sup> Says Fromm:

An illustration is the feeling of guilt and anxiety which Calvin's doctrines aroused in men. It may be said that the person who is overwhelmed by a feeling of his own powerlessness and unworthiness, by the unceasing doubt of whether he is saved or condemned to eternal punishment, who is hardly capable of any genuine joy and has made himself into the cog of a machine which he has to serve, that person, indeed, has a severe defect.<sup>770</sup>

Authoritarian ethics forces the person to "internalize" the rules and prohibitions of higher authorities, and to obey them "as if he were obeying himself."<sup>771</sup> He believes this voice to be his own conscience. Disobedience to the conscience is evil; compliance is virtuous.

## 2. HUMANITARIANISM

Quite different from the authoritarian (heteronomous) conscience is the 'humanistic' (autonomous) conscience. It is not the internalized voice of an authority whom we are eager to please and afraid of displeasing; it is the voice of our total personality expressing the demands of life and growth. 'Good' for the humanistic conscience is the voice of our self which summons us back to ourselves, to become what we potentially are.<sup>772</sup>

Fromm avers that man is free to choose the kinds of ideals that he will follow, but that he "is not free to choose between having or not having ideals."<sup>773</sup> For humanistic ethics, the summum bonum is the

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<sup>769</sup> Escape from Freedom, p. 117.

<sup>770</sup> Man for Himself, p. 223.

<sup>771</sup> You Shall Be As Gods, p. 55.

<sup>772</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>773</sup> Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 24.



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productive character:<sup>774</sup> "the ability of man to make productive use of his powers is his potency; the inability is his impotence."<sup>775</sup>

To live productively, one must be able to love, which is possible only when one knows and respects the loved one. This depends on the use of reason, which attempts to grasp "the total picture"<sup>776</sup> of self and others, reaching to the depth or "the essence of things and processes."<sup>777</sup>

Fromm rejects any attempt to establish the "dicta" of the authority as the criteria for good or evil, but aware of the complicating factors, he says:

Humanistic ethics has to cope with the difficulty.. that in making man the sole judge of values it would seem that pleasure or pain becomes the final arbiter of good and evil. If this were the only alternative, then, indeed, the humanistic principle could not be the basis for ethical norms... How can our life be guided by a motive by which the animal as well as man, the good and the bad person, the normal and the sick are motivated alike? Even if we qualify the pleasure principle by restricting it to those pleasures which do not injure the legitimate interests of others, it is hardly adequate as a guiding principle for our actions.<sup>778</sup>

The empirical approach, he holds, is the answer to the fallacious alternative of choosing between submission to either authority or to pleasure. It leads him to conclude that:

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<sup>774</sup> Man for Himself, p. 93.

<sup>775</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>776</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>777</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>778</sup> Ibid., p. 176.





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Happiness and joy although, in a sense, subjective experiences, are the outcome of interactions with, and depend upon, objective conditions... (which) can be summarized comprehensively as productiveness.<sup>779</sup>

Psychoanalysis gives us the empirical method of discovering the foundations for the proper norms of behavior and pleasure, confirming the view "that the subjective experience of satisfaction is in itself deceptive and not a valid criterion of value."<sup>780</sup> "Every neurosis... confirms the fact that pleasure can be in contradiction to man's real interests."<sup>781</sup> Happiness is actually a function of our entire personality, an "expression of the state of the entire organism."<sup>782</sup> For a few, pleasure is "the feeling accompanying the relief from painful tension,"<sup>783</sup> but the tension can be psychic tension as well as physiological (as Freud hypothesized) springing from insatiable irrational desires that represent "a dissatisfaction within oneself."<sup>784</sup>

The conditions influencing irrational or rational pleasure and satisfaction include economic and psychological scarcity or abundance,<sup>785</sup> Independence, self-accomplishment and awareness.<sup>786</sup>

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<sup>779</sup> Ibid., p. 176-177.

<sup>780</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>781</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>782</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>783</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>784</sup> Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>785</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>786</sup> Ibid. n 102-104



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Fromm also depends on rational faith in the development of humanistic ethics, which has already been discussed.

In his earlier works, Fromm realized that man achieves happiness through practical activities, primarily his work, but also through other interests. Man is free under the conditions of economic, intellectual and moral freedom,<sup>787</sup> a freedom that can only be attained when he is able to reconcile his conflicts in the interpersonal relationships in society. The only alternative to alienation, automatization and insanity is "humanistic communitarianism";<sup>788</sup> this involves sharing property, work and experience.

## II. LOVE

Fromm warns that the growing interest in psychology can easily blind us to those aspects that are "dangerous and destructive to the spiritual development of man."<sup>789</sup> The patient can be considered as an object, a thing for manipulation and dissection. Yet, the psychologist is driven to "penetrate into the secret of man's soul, into the nucleus which is 'he.'"<sup>790</sup> Moreover, psychology functions negatively, telling us what man is not, how man is bound by his illusions and fears; but "it cannot tell us what man, what each one of us, is."<sup>791</sup>

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<sup>787</sup> Sane Society, p. 277.

<sup>788</sup> Ibid., p. 313.

<sup>789</sup> Dogma of Christ, p. 191.

<sup>790</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>791</sup> Ibid., p. 195.



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However, there is "another path to knowing man's secret; this path is not that of thought, but that of love,"<sup>792</sup> and psychological knowledge may provide the "condition for full knowledge in the act of love",<sup>793</sup> it ought never become a substitute for love or for union with others.

Love is not primarily a relationship to a specific person; it is an attitude, an orientation of character which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole, not toward one 'object' of love. If a person loves only one other person and is indifferent to the rest of his fellow men, his love is not love but a symbiotic attachment, or an enlarged egotism.<sup>794</sup>

Love is an act of the will, a "decision to commit my life completely to that of one other person."<sup>795</sup> It is vital to productiveness; the ability to achieve unity with others, while remaining independent.

#### A. LOVE AND CHARACTER

Man's desire to reunite with nature and his fellows motivates him to alleviate his anxieties through productive work,<sup>796</sup> orgasmic union<sup>797</sup> and conformity.<sup>798</sup> These are only partial answers; "the full answer lies

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<sup>792</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>793</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>794</sup> The Art of Loving, p. 38, 39.

<sup>795</sup> ibid., p. 47.

<sup>796</sup> ibid., p. 14.

<sup>797</sup> ibid., p. 9-11.

<sup>798</sup> ibid., p. 12-14.



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in the achievement of interpersonal union, of fusion with another person, in love,<sup>799</sup> Essentially, it comes through the act of giving.

It is hardly necessary to stress the fact that the ability to love as an act of giving depends on the character development of the person. It presupposes the attainment of a predominantly productive orientation; in this orientation the person has overcome dependency, narcissistic omnipotence, the wish to exploit others, or to hoard, and has acquired faith in his own human powers, courage to rely on his powers in the attainment of his goals. To the degree that these qualities are lacking, he is afraid of giving himself--hence of loving.<sup>800</sup>

The perversion of love is manifested in passive and active states of symbiotic union with others, the seeking of oneness with another by destroying the integrity of oneself. The passive form of symbiotic union is masochism, the submitting of oneself to another by merging with the more powerful entity. The masochist rids himself through humiliation and abasement. Pain may be present, but pain in itself is not his aim; his goal is the destruction of himself as a unique person.<sup>801</sup>

Fromm uses Calvinism as his example of theological masochism. It is a theology,

...according to which man is essentially evil and powerless. Man can achieve absolutely nothing that is good on the basis of his own strength or merit...Man should have not only the conviction of his absolute nothingness but he should do everything to humiliate himself.<sup>802</sup>

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<sup>799</sup>ibid., p. 15.

<sup>800</sup>ibid., p. 21, 22.

<sup>801</sup>ibid., p. 16.

<sup>802</sup>Man for Himself, p. 124, 125.



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The active form of symbiotic union is sadism, or domination. Here, too, the sadist wants to become part of the host person, but accomplishes this escape from alienation by enhancing and inflating himself at the expense of the other.<sup>803</sup> In seeking power, the sadist often uses pain, but pain is, again, not the ultimate concern. In the more benign forms of sadism, the sadist permits the host some measures of satisfaction, except the most vital one: independence.

Masochism and sadism manifest different symptoms, but they have in common the element of "fusion without integrity";<sup>804</sup> consequently, some persons react sadistically-masochistically toward different objects.

Hitler reacted primarily in a sadistic fashion toward people, but masochistically toward fate, history the 'higher power' of nature. His end--suicide among general destruction--is as characteristic as was his dream of success--total domination.<sup>805</sup>

Sadistic-masochistic tendencies have been interpreted by some people as their love for the objects of their desires; the proof is in the limits granted to the host persons.

#### B. SELF-LOVE

Fromm criticizes Calvin, Kant, Nietzsche and Freud for their inadequate conceptualizations of self-love. He says that Freud's self-love

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<sup>803</sup> Art of Loving, p. 16.

<sup>804</sup> ibid., p. 17.

<sup>805</sup> Loc. cit.



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is "the same as narcissism, the turning of the libido toward oneself";<sup>806</sup>  
Libido could only be turned toward others or self; in extreme cases the  
person "is insane." On such terms,

Love and self-love are thus mutually exclusive in the sense  
that the more there is of one, the less there is of the other.  
If self-love is bad, it follows that unselfishness is  
virtuous.<sup>807</sup>

In contrast, Fromm stresses the conjunctive relation in love, that  
love for self "is inseparably connected with the love for any other being."<sup>808</sup>  
The Biblical injunction, "love thy neighbor as thyself" expresses this idea.  
Here, once more, is Fromm's idea that, "not he who has much is rich, but  
he who gives much";<sup>809</sup> it is the psychological as well as the material  
hoarder who is impoverished. Therefore, in order to give, one must be  
able to possess, and one must know and appreciate one's own possessions.  
The failure of modern culture, he asserts, is that people are not concerned  
enough with their own real interests, "not in the fact that they are too  
selfish, but that they do not love themselves."<sup>810</sup>

True self-love has four indispensable elements that are missing  
in the selfish, narcissistic person: concern for others, acceptance of

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<sup>806</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>807</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>808</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>809</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>810</sup> Man for Himself, p. 143.



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responsibility, respect, and knowledge of self and others.<sup>811</sup> To put love into practice, one must have concentration, patience, and supreme concern.<sup>812</sup> Concentration means the abilities to observe, listen, and "live fully in the present,"<sup>813</sup> i.e., development of sensitivity. In order to love, one needs courage and faith in his fellow men.

In the light of this, what does Fromm mean when he says that the mature person might learn to love God?

The truly religious person, if he follows the essence of the monotheistic idea, does not pray for anything, does not expect anything from God; he does not love God as a child loves his father or his mother; he has acquired the humility of sensing his limitations, to the degree of knowing that he knows nothing about God. God becomes to him a symbol ... He has faith in the principles which 'God' represents; he thinks truth, lives love and justice, and considers all of his life only valuable inasmuch as it gives him the chance to arrive at an ever fuller unfolding of his human powers-- as the only reality that matters, as the only object of 'ultimate concern'; and, eventually, he does not speak about God--nor even mention his name. To love God, if he were going to use this word, would mean then, to long for the attainment of the full capacity to love, for the realization of that which 'God' stands for in oneself.<sup>814</sup>

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<sup>811</sup>Ibid., p. 134-145; cf. also Art of Loving, p. 48-53.

<sup>812</sup>Art of Loving, p. 91-112.

<sup>813</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>814</sup>Ibid., p. 59-60.



### III. CONSCIENCE

#### A. CONSCIENCE AND CHARACTER

According to Fromm, man has a limited ability to control or influence internal and external forces through some modification of those conditions that bring about realization of the good. However, it must be kept in mind that,

...while we have reason and conscience, which enable us to be active participants in our life, reason and conscience themselves are inseparably linked up with our character. If destructive forces and irrational passions have gained dominance in our character, both our reason and our conscience are affected and cannot exercise their function properly.<sup>815</sup>

This point was previously elaborated in discussing Fromm's concept of the "social character" and here merely serves to underscore his ideas of the humanistic conscience, sin, and guilt. Just as the problem of moral judgment relates to those of determinism and indeterminism, so the individual conscience can be viewed in these same terms. All aspects of man, his conscience no less than his will, are expressions of his character.<sup>816</sup> The productive person acts according to his reason and is able to exercise his will toward his own enhancement, but the nonproductive person is slave to irrationality and lacks willpower. Therefore we need to understand "the strength of a person's innate vitality that made

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<sup>815</sup> Man for Himself, p. 234.

<sup>816</sup> Loc. cit.





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it possible for him to resist environmental forces acting upon him in his childhood and later on"<sup>817</sup> in order to make judgments upon him. But only the authoritarian conscience really feels qualified to pass judgments on the conscience of its fellow men, for it assumes a prior supreme authority,<sup>818</sup> which would, of course, be absurd as long as the "concept 'God' was conditioned by the presence of a socio-political structure."<sup>819</sup>

#### B. HUMANISTIC CONSCIENCE

The humanistic conscience, ideally, "is the reaction of our total personality to its proper functioning or dysfunctioning."<sup>820</sup> It represents the real self; "it contains also the essence of our moral experiences in life."<sup>821</sup>

Fromm asks, why does not man develop his natural tendencies for a humanistic conscience? The fact is, he replies, the human situation is morally precarious.<sup>822</sup> There are extremely difficult problems for the humanistic conscience to overcome. One is the fact that its voice is feeble in most people because they have lost themselves.<sup>823</sup> Another

<sup>817</sup>Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>818</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>819</sup>You Shall Be As Gods, p. 18.

<sup>820</sup>Man for Himself, p. 162.

<sup>821</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>822</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>823</sup>Loc. cit.



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fact is that most people refuse to listen, or have become insensitive to it, for this requires discipline plus the rare art of learning to "be alone with oneself."<sup>824</sup> Then, too, our conscience speaks indirectly; we only realize its symptoms: guilt, anxiety, the fear of death, the fear of disapproval.<sup>825</sup> Fromm concludes that man has too long been under the domination of the authoritarian conscience. It has left him with irrational guilt feelings; it has suppressed that true conscience that would lead him on toward life.<sup>826</sup>

### C. GUILT

It is by now quite obvious that the themes of conscience and guilt pervade Fromm's writings, that the antagonists are authoritarian conscience and guilt vs. humanistic conscience and guilt. Why speak of "humanistic" guilt? Fromm proposes that,

Often guilt feelings are consciously experienced in terms of the authoritarian conscience while, dynamically, they are rooted in the humanistic conscience. A person may feel consciously guilty for not pleasing authorities, while unconsciously he feels guilty for not living up to his own expectations of himself.<sup>827</sup>

He gives the example of a man who repressed his own desires to be a musician in order to satisfy his father, who wanted him to enter the business field. Unsuccessful, and feeling frustrated and depressed, he

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<sup>824</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>825</sup> Ibid., p. 165-167.

<sup>826</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>827</sup> Ibid., p. 169.



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went to a psychoanalyst. At first, he superficially felt that his guilt feelings were caused by his father's disappointment in him; however, later he came to see that,

the core of his guilt feeling is not the failure to satisfy his father, but, on the contrary, his obedience to him and his failure to satisfy himself.<sup>828</sup>

These guilt feelings, says Fromm, are common to patients; they feel overwhelmed for not loving their parents as they should, performing unsatisfactory work, hurting another's feelings:

They react with a sense of inferiority, of depravity, and often with a conscious or unconscious desire for punishment. It is usually not difficult to discover that this all-pervasive guilt reaction stems from an authoritarian orientation.<sup>829</sup>

Fromm refers to The Trial by Kafka as "a beautiful illustration of the complex interrelation of authoritarian and humanistic conscience."<sup>830</sup> The hero, K, is arrested and kept ignorant of his crime. After vainly trying to find means of escape, he is finally executed. K's inner experiences symbolize,

...the sense of guilt of a man who feels accused by unknown authorities and feels guilty for not pleasing them; yet these authorities are so beyond his reach that he cannot even learn of what they accuse him, or how he can defend himself. Looked at from this angle, the novel would represent the theological viewpoint most akin to Calvin's

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<sup>828</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>829</sup> Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 90.

<sup>830</sup> Man for Himself, p. 171.



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theology. Man is condemned or saved without understanding the reasons. All he can do is to tremble and to throw himself upon God's mercy.<sup>831</sup>

In contrast, he argues, the humanistic conscience rejects any transcendent power. Man is responsible to save himself; "Only if he understands the voice of his conscience, can he return to himself."<sup>832</sup> Here Fromm returns to his concept of responsibility. The usual denotation given to responsibility, he says, is that the person is "punishable or accusable."<sup>833</sup> Fromm much prefers to think of responsibility apart from any connection between punishment or guilt. "In this sense responsibility only means 'I am aware that I did it.'<sup>834</sup> As soon as the deed is experienced as "sin" or "guilt" it is alienated from the subject. Now, it is no longer the person who did the deed, but "the sinner," "the bad one," the "other person" who needs punishment; thus the subject avoids loathing himself and life.<sup>835</sup>

The biophilic conscience is motivated by its attraction to life and joy; the moral effort consists in strengthening the life-loving side in oneself. For this reason the biophile does not dwell in remorse and guilt which are, after all, only aspects of self-loathing and sadness. He turns quickly to life and attempts to do good.<sup>836</sup>

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<sup>831</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>832</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>833</sup> Heart of Man, p. 128.

<sup>834</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>835</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>836</sup> Ibid., p. 47.



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Man ought, therefore, asserts Fromm, not to be oppressed by a sense of sin, which is after all human, "almost unavoidable."<sup>837</sup> Fromm interprets the Old Testament words for "sin" as meaning "to miss (the road), "to err," and as rebellious "transgression."<sup>838</sup> The man who repents is the man who returns to the right road, "to God, to himself."<sup>839</sup> "Because we all share in the same humanity, there is nothing inhuman in sinning, hence nothing to be ashamed of, or to be despised for."<sup>840</sup> We are just as capable of returning to the good as we are to the evil.

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<sup>837</sup> You Shall Be As Gods, p. 169.

<sup>838</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>839</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>840</sup> Ibid., p. 176.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS

This study probed into the larger problem of the nature of man as it related to the narrower problem of guilt. Van Til and Fromm were chosen because of their diametrically opposite positions; placing them in juxtaposition has revealed how deep and irreconcilable are the Christian and non-Christian conceptions of man and guilt as viewed by these men. Certainly other men could have been chosen whose positions on the issues would have varied from those of Van Til and Fromm, but in retrospect the selection seems most fortunate; they represent extreme views on the nature of reality, and enable us to see more clearly, perhaps, what kind of impact their philosophies would have upon the client in therapy, and what might be some of the implications for practice and research in counseling.

Depending upon their background, critical readers will see other points of comparison and arrive at implications and conclusions varying from those presented here. In the interests of brevity, the following areas have been selected for summary discussion: Methodology, Implications for Counseling Theory, Selection of Counselors, Research Implications and Personal Observations.



## I. METHODOLOGY

### A. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS: SUMMARIZATION

#### 1. REALITY

The most obvious differences between Van Til and Fromm are their fundamental presuppositions. Van Til holds that there are only two alternatives concerning reality that man could logically maintain, and Van Til chooses to assume the ultimacy of God. Corollary to this assumption is a two-layer theory of being and knowledge, and the analogical relationship of nature and man, to God. The uniqueness of Van Til lies in his consistent application of this principle to every area under discussion even though it leads him to antinomies, or seeming paradoxes such as that of God's sovereignty and man's free agency. The question could be raised: "Does Van Til really solve anything by positing paradox as a function of human limits?" Van Til would probably reply that he is simply stating a truism; paradox is inherent in man's perception of reality by virtue of man's lack of exhaustive and comprehensive knowledge of that reality. This does not mean that man should avoid grappling with the antinomies, but that he should become aware that God alone knows the ultimate solutions. Man must live with ambiguity and by faith. Van Til argues that the antinomies are naturally expected by one who believes that the world has mystery for man, but not for God, and that it is faith in God's sovereign power and ultimate goodness that gives men the motivation to face life rationally; that unless one firmly holds to these principles,



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rational thinking collapses; that there would be no basis for science or philosophy, and finally, no meaning to life.

Fromm also sees the challenge of alternatives, but he chooses to accept man's autonomy, and is generally consistent in applying this principle. Man's reason cannot be interfered with, even by supposedly supernatural powers, it can make valid statements about the phenomenal world, it is capable of piercing to the essence of phenomena; reason can make value judgments about reality. This primacy of the intellect is the basis for all true science. He feels that the only alternative to the autonomy of man is meaninglessness, confusion, fear and subjugation to blind irrationalism and authoritarianism.

## 2. MAN

Van Til understands man to be a creature of God, utterly dependent upon Him for life and knowledge, both temporally and eternally. Man's dignity lies in his possession of the Divine Image, which reflects certain attributes of God's own nature, i.e., His righteousness, holiness, goodness, spirituality and self-consciousness. Created by God as unique from all other creatures, man is responsible to live in active obedience, the only condition that gives him true freedom to develop his full potentials.

Fromm views man as not having a basic nature, but as being the peak of the evolutionary continuum and thus intimately related to the animal world. Man has also transcended the animal world, but the ensuing self-awareness creates existential dichotomies, or tensions,





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between life and death, between potentiality and lack of fulfillment, and between independence and a need for social communion. Man finds meaning for life only in himself, though at the same time, he is conditioned by society. In spite of his denial of man's basic nature, Fromm speaks of man's uniqueness, transcendence, and alienation, which really seems to imply a "nature" that is identifiable.

### 3. ETHICS

Both Van Til and Fromm agree that society falls short of its ideal state, that good and evil are resident in man, that perfectibility is possible and that alienation is the root of man's troubles, but they thoroughly disagree on the meaning of and the solution for each of these problems.

For Fromm, the ideal state for man and society is productivity in terms of life, love, and freedom. "Good" and "evil" are relative terms, universally present and equally ultimate in all persons, i.e., it is equally possible for man to grow as it is for him to decay. However, man can perfect himself if he will only learn to cooperate with the biophilic tendencies motivating him toward growth and if he fights against the death-pursuing necrophilic tendencies, which are evil. Alienation is man's human condition, and Fromm talks of this in terms akin to metaphysics: man's self-awareness has separated him from nature; frightened, man flees to illusions about reality, creating idols to which he projects aspects of his own personality, thus impoverishing himself by the loss of his "soul." Maintenance of this alienated condition brings ethical conflicts



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within man, and between man and his peers. But, since man is responsible to himself, his sin is essentially against himself, and he can seek forgiveness from himself and "save" himself by using his own productive powers; he can destroy his idols and become independent. The "cure" for man's neurotic symbioses leads to "adjustment" to society and self. Adjustment is relative to different societies, but because all societies are slowly growing towards each other according to the universal norms and principles established by the criterion of truth, Fromm holds that it is possible to speak of the "ideal state" for all men. However, he fails to deal with the origin, the locus, or the functioning of his "criterion of truth."

Van Til accepts only the Adamic State as the criterion for "normality"; man's summum bonum is God's glory, which finds expression on earth in the kingdom of God. The fall of man was ethical, not metaphysical, and produced an estrangement between God and man. Cut off from direct relationship with his Creator, man is lost, adrift on the sea of contingency and irrationalism and suffering under the wrath of God. Although the image of God is damaged by man's rebellion, it can never be completely eradicated; this image serves as the voice of conscience, that seed of religion continually motivating man to return to true fellowship. The divine image reinforced by common grace enables even the worst of sinners to perform some measure of civil good and empowers many to develop a large measure of their creative potential; nevertheless, man's blindness and hardness of



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heart prevent him from fulfilling his destiny. God's saving grace, manifested in Christ and transmitted through the Holy Spirit, regenerates man, establishes him in the proper Creator-creature covenantal relationship, and thus enables man to become, in principle, an integrated personality. Sin is still present in the believer, which hampers his full growth and prevents his perfectibility until the after-life when he participates fully in the resurrection of Christ. Meanwhile, society stands in desperate need of the restraining force and constructive efforts of regenerate men who are free to cooperate on every level with unbelievers for the common good, and all society "borrows" the principles of Christianity for its own use. All things are "good" that glorify God, all that detracts from His glory are "evil." Adjustment means renewal to relationship with God, and implies that believers will become unadjusted to their culture in terms of ultimate goals, methods of operation, standards, and mores, but only this reconciliation to God is able to free man from slavery to self (idolatry) and set him on the road toward inner growth, peace and happiness.

#### B. AUTHORITARIANISM AND HUMANISM

Fromm's antagonism against authoritarianism in all its forms provides a major theme for his works. Ironically, he speaks from the authoritarian position of psychoanalysis to establish his case. Authoritarianism, says Fromm, reflects sadism and masochism in its efforts to control, establish symbiotic union, and destroy freedom. It deludes man into believing



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that the higher authority has a right to demand worship and that irreverence and disobedience constitute sin. In reply,<sup>841</sup> Van Til declares that Fromm's analysis of Christianity is a caricature, a straw man existing only in Fromm's imagination. While Christianity accepts an omnipotent Creator, says Van Til, "it does not believe in a God of pure power"<sup>842</sup> in any arbitrary sense. It does believe that man was created to return God's love; obedience is love's expression. "Accordingly to the Christian, sin is a setting aside of God as man's loving Father, not an effort to escape from a tyrant, as Fromm suggests."<sup>843</sup> Van Til asserts that Calvin also fought against authoritarian religion in "its most objectionable form," and that Calvin's concern for man's humility before God was the result of Calvin's appreciation that man in his sinful condition experienced misery and powerlessness, not that Calvin sought to imprison man in such a condition.

Fromm holds that man's independence rests upon the principle of autonomy, while Van Til replies that on Fromm's basis, man would be in a vacuum: "It is only on the presupposition of the truth of the Christian position that human personality stands in an intelligible relationship to its environment."<sup>844</sup>

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<sup>841</sup> cf. Appendix A.

<sup>842</sup> Van Til, Search for Meaning, p. 38.

<sup>843</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>844</sup> Ibid., p. 39.



In view of the purpose of this study, a few comments are in order regarding Fromm's hostility against Calvin. In pursuing Calvin, Fromm usually quotes those passages supporting his own thesis that Calvinism is masochistic, perhaps sadistic, but he fails to point out that there are semantic and presuppositional differences behind this running argument. In fact, Fromm may only be reacting to a popular misconception of Calvin rather than to Calvin himself.

Referring to Calvin's teaching on self-love, Fromm comments,

This emphasis on the nothingness and wickedness of the individual implies that there is nothing he should like and respect about himself. The doctrine is rooted in self-contempt and self-hatred. Calvin makes this point very clear: he speaks of self-love as 'a pest.'<sup>845</sup> If the individual finds something 'on the strength of which he finds pleasure in himself,' he betrays this sinful self-love. This fondness for himself will make him sit in judgement over others and despise them. Therefore to be fond of oneself or to like anything in oneself is one of the greatest sins. It is supposed to exclude love for others<sup>846</sup> and to be identical with selfishness.<sup>847</sup>

Calvin did, indeed, see man as sinful and worthless in himself with respect to salvation by virtue of the fact that, through sin the will of man "is in a state of captivity, so that it can do nothing towards righteousness" until it has been liberated by "Divine grace."<sup>848</sup> The

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<sup>845</sup> Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. John Allen, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949. (Note that Fromm's 1928 edition which he cites has different page references.) Vol. I, Bk. III, Chp. II, p. 756.

<sup>846</sup> Fromm makes a reference to Calvin that does not exist. Perhaps typographical error: Man for Himself, p. 125, footnote 5.

<sup>847</sup> Man for Himself, p. 125.

<sup>848</sup> Calvin, op. cit., Chp. II, par. 8, p. 288.



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other half of the coin is that Calvin saw the dignity of man resident in the image of God, which, although mutilated by sin, was restored in Christ; conformed to Him, "we are so restored that we bear the Divine image in true piety, righteousness, purity, and understanding."<sup>849</sup>

For Fromm, this is the height of folly, a base submissiveness to God as an idol, but he forgets that both he and Calvin are consistent with their basic presuppositions. Fromm's god is man; self-love is therefore right and good. Calvin's God would be offended by this self-adulation and by the detraction from His glory.

There is also a semantic difference interwoven in the presuppositional one. When Calvin uses the term "self-love," it is apparently synonymous with what Fromm calls "selfishness." Fromm accuses Calvin of misunderstanding self-love, but he does this, first, by standing on his own assumptions of man's autonomy in order to attack Calvin's concept of self-love which rests on other assumptions. Secondly, after defining self-love in terms of productivity, care, responsibility, and respect, as "the affirmation of one's own life, happiness, growth, freedom,"<sup>850</sup> and as the capacity for love, he then argues that Calvin did not have this concept of self-love. And, indeed, Calvin did not have that concept. By self-love, Calvin meant pride, haughtiness, ostentation, avarice, libidinousness, luxury, effeminacy, and "a depraved passion for glory."<sup>851</sup>

<sup>849</sup> ibid., Chap. XV, par. 4, p. 209.

<sup>850</sup> Man for Himself, p. 135.

<sup>851</sup> Calvin, op. cit., Vol. I, Book III, Chp. VII, par. II, p. 753.



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"For we are all so blinded and fascinated by self-love, that every one imagines he has a just right to exalt himself, and to undervalue all others who stand in competition with him."<sup>852</sup>

Far from attaining a level of superiority over, or desire to judge, men, in view of the Christian's relationship to God, Calvin said:

We should remember, that we must not reflect on the wickedness of men, but to contemplate the Divine image in them; which, concealing and obliterating their faults, by its beauty and dignity allures us to embrace them in the arms of our love.<sup>853</sup>

## C. SPECIAL PROBLEMS

### 1. DETERMINISM AND FREEDOM

Oriented as he is to a philosophical-theological structure, Van Til does not spell out in psychological terms the relationship of determinism and freedom to the development of the Self. Psychology looks for causes in order to explain behavior. Perhaps there are those who might commit themselves to a strict concept of determinism, but most psychologists seem to accept some measure of freedom in man's development,<sup>854</sup> i.e., that in some aspects of living, man experiences liberation from necessity or coercion or constraint in choice or action. Indeed, psychotherapy has for its task the motivation of some inner factors whose influence will enable us to respond differently under the same

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<sup>852</sup> ibid., par. IV, p. 755.

<sup>853</sup> ibid., par. VI, p. 759.

<sup>854</sup> cf. to Hook, ed., Determinism and Freedom in the Age of Modern Science.



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conditions. For example, McKenzie accepts self-determination as a "causal agency."<sup>855</sup> adding that, if the Self fails to act in the interest of the whole personality, there must be some adequate explanation. Van Til would say that the believer as well as the unbeliever acts contrary to his best interests because of the effects of sin on his emotional and intellectual being. The difference between believers and unbelievers is that the former are restored in principle to a condition of integration and thus have the possibility to grow indefinitely because their powers of life are given by God's grace. Believers have attained a new measure of freedom because they have been freed from slavery to sin by the atonement of Jesus Christ. They may now cooperate with God toward the full development of their potentials, whereas the unbeliever is still bound by the principle of sin and therefore determined in rebelliousness toward God.

On the other hand, says Van Til, the principle of common grace enables unbelievers to develop their potentials to a partial degree, at least until death stops the process of growth, and even in this life, sin tends toward disintegration of the entire organism.

Granted that the above is true, at what points does man possess real freedom to enhance his own development? How can he change circumstances if God controls all things? For example, how would Van Til conceive of the relationships between character and behavior on the one hand, and definite motives, habits, emotions and interests on the

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<sup>855</sup> McKenzie, Guilt: Its Meaning and Significance, p. 115.





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other? If the Self is not free, how can God expect man to be responsible? But if the Self is free, then how does God exercise control? Van Til implies that such questions are mysteries. The researcher might choose to assume either freedom or determinism as man's condition and proceed with investigation. Van Til would reply that the researcher needs a sovereign God; the alternative is research in a vacuum.

Seemingly, Fromm's appeal to "alternativism" as a compromise between freedom and determinism supplies a better answer in psychological terms. Man is a constellation of forces that are structured in a definable manner (one's character) and influenced by environmental conditions. There are circumstances within and outside the self over which man cannot exercise control regardless of his wishes, but there are also real choices and possibilities. Fromm says that man has the capabilities of cooperating with his biophilic or necrophilic tendencies, and agrees with Marx and Freud that man can enlarge the realm of freedom.

As neat as it may appear, Fromm's appeal does not supply the answer. Under closer scrutiny, Fromm's position is seen to be essentially an assumption about the nature of man and reality. He simply affirms that man is capable of progressing or regressing. This is the beginning and ending of his argument. But we are not told why man chooses to move one way or the other. On Fromm's own ground, is it possible that some men might have extremely powerful necrophilic tendencies which would predispose them toward personality orientations around the syndrome of



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decay? If so, then these persons would be pre-determined regarding their choices, they would have no "real" freedom. Conversely, the same argument would hold regarding persons born with, or conditioned to develop, powerful biophilic tendencies. Fromm does say that a particular society can possess a particular "social character." To the degree that each member of that society is conditioned toward the orientation he loses a measure of freedom. In that case, it is highly unlikely that the individual will ever break out of the mold of his society. Fromm might respond that the individual's biophilic tendencies would clash with society's demands, and the person would free himself. In that case, it is evident that the person's biophilic tendencies were so powerful that he was predetermined to break his chains. Where then is freedom? He could do no other than what he did! And, on the other hand, if the person was afraid to contradict his culture, then his fear determined his choices, and he, too, lacked real freedom.

Therefore, it is evident that the problem of freedom and determinism remains a mystery for both Van Til, who admits it, and for Fromm, who claims he has the solution.

## 2. EMPIRICISM

While Van Til does not claim to be an empiricist, Fromm repeatedly affirms his commitment to psychoanalysis as a rigid, empirical science because it relies upon cautious observations and integration of psychic data. Therefore, he contends, psychoanalysis is able to



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determine valid norms and principles for human behavior. His generalizations reflect Freud's view that psychoanalysis was a revolutionary movement promising to transform the world.<sup>856</sup>

It can be shown that Fromm has committed himself to an untenable position. Empiricism depends solely on observation or experience, often without regard to system or theory, and is open to verification, disproof and revision. Now, it is true that Fromm has followed the dictates of his observations to some degree in revising his original Freudian and Marxian theories in order to fit subsequent evidence, but it is also clear that Fromm does operate within a theory. In fact, analysis of his sixteen major works produced from 1941 to 1966 indicates that he has not only maintained essentially the same theoretical position in this period, but also that he has used essentially the same language, case histories and illustrations with only minor revision.

He further jeopardizes his empiricism when he states that there are eternal norms standing above both God and man, thus revealing his presupposition of a Platonic principle of eternal truth, a principle incapable of empirical observation.

Moreover, it is apparent that both the data obtained in psychoanalysis and the methods used to obtain the data are completely bound to subjectivism. First, there is the fact of the diversity of psychoanalytic schools. Secondly, the psychoanalyst is not dealing with events in

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<sup>856</sup>Fromm, Sigmund Freud's Mission, last chapter.



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their historical situation, that is, as they have been experienced, are now perceived, and are being transmitted by the patient. Therefore, the analyst can never be sure that the events occurred precisely as the patient describes them. For example, the patient's quotation of another person's remark is distorted by his attitudes toward the other person, the environmental setting, the tone and pitch of voice used, and perhaps by relevant variables antecedent to the event of the quotation. The analyst can only make his judgments on the event or the quotation as given to him by the patient, and does not make any verification beyond the therapeutic setting itself.

Also, the analyst is himself influenced by his own feelings toward the patient, his immediate emotional condition, the environment, and his psychological theories and training.

Added to this is the fact that psychologists do not agree on certain universal norms or principles governing human behavior, that there is no accepted body of concepts regarding man's nature, and that psychologists are themselves motivated by a wide variety of desires and goals. At least one psychology professor describes his field as "an amalgam of humbug, platitude, piercing intuition, naivete, soaring flight of imagination, dull dogma, incisive reasoning, and sheer drive!"<sup>857</sup> and suggests that a healthy dosage of salt to be taken during its study.

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<sup>857</sup> McKenzie, op. cit., p. 61. Quote from Cohen, Humanistic Psychology, p. 11.



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Even Fromm, himself, underscores this notion when he says that the average man is half asleep even when awake!

I mean that his contact with reality is a very partial one; most of what he believes to be reality (outside or inside of himself) is a set of fictions which his mind constructs. He is aware of reality only to the degree to which his social functioning makes it necessary.<sup>858</sup>

Finally, Fromm fails to realize the contradiction in affirming, on the one hand, that science is a history of errors in which we make small approximations of the truth, and on the other hand, saying that humanism in general and psychoanalysis in particular have "laid the foundations for value systems based on man's autonomy and reason."<sup>859</sup> This is compounded by his claim that psychoanalysis (and by implication, he himself) is capable of penetrating to the essence of man's "nature" in terms of man's total personality. In order to accomplish this, Fromm has to assume comprehensive, exhaustive knowledge, not only of man as an individual phenomenon, but of society as a group phenomenon and of reality as a whole. Van Til stresses the impossibility of possessing such knowledge.

### 3. THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE

In every system, the problem of epistemology is foremost. How does man really know anything truly? Does he have to know the whole before he can understand the part? In view of the complexity of data and

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<sup>858</sup> Fromm, Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis, p. 108.

<sup>859</sup> Man for Himself, p. 16. (Perhaps Fromm should have said that science is a history of diminishing errors.)



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the problem of integrating the data into a meaningful system, one is forced to a position of humility.

Van Til declares that man only knows partially, but that he can know truly, provided he has been given a foundation for that knowledge in revelation. Revelation from God enables man to understand truths about God and the world; the only other choice is to possess comprehensive knowledge. Is revelation in the Bible, then, trustworthy? There are those who argue with Fromm that the Bible is filled with errors and is only the product of man's mind. Van Til says that unless the revelation in Scripture is trustworthy, we have no source of knowledge that is authoritative. But Van Til is not a literalist, in the extreme sense of that word. He simply accepts the Scriptures as authentic and authoritative and endeavors to discern what they mean if taken at their face value. To argue that Van Til is a literalist is to set up a straw man, for hardly anyone holds a completely literal point of view in reference to the Bible. The issue as Van Til sees it, is what should be taken literally and what should be taken symbolically in terms of the Scripture as supernaturally conceived literature.

Can Van Til be sure that God exists and that it is possible to know Him? Can Fromm be equally sure that God does not exist and on that assurance dismiss all contentions to the contrary? One could wish for absolute knowledge about knowledge itself. There is only that principle to which Van Til and Fromm subscribe, each in his own way, namely, the



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principle of faith. One must be satisfied with sufficient and necessary implications based upon logical analysis of both positions. One must assume each position for the sake of argument to see where the ultimacy of God or man lead to, and then live by the faith one concludes is most reasonable. However, Van Til would say that without God as one's presupposition, there is no possibility for predication.

## II. IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING THEORY

### A. VIEW OF THE CLIENT

It would seem logical that both Fromm and Van Til would view the person coming to therapy, not as a "client" as in the Rogerian view where the counselor and counselee are peers in an existential situation, but as a "patient" who comes to the expert for assistance. Both men deal with the patient from a favored position of authority; Van Til from the authority of the revelation in Scripture, and Fromm from the authority of psychoanalysis. Each believes that he clearly knows the goals for the patient and fairly well understands the patient's general situation. However, the specific therapeutic techniques used might be the same. On the other hand, it is possible that the Van Tilian counselor who perceives himself as a "sinner saved by grace" would feel on a par with the counselee, and thus speak of him as a "client."



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## B. GOALS IN THERAPY

The counselor operating on Van Til's theories would relate to the patient on a foundation of loving concern, hoping eventually to bring the patient to acknowledgment of his guilt and into relationship with God. The counselor would rest in the authoritative, subjective work of the Holy Spirit as the Agent of regeneration, believing that He alone knows the extent of temptation, the inherent weaknesses, the delicacies of healing, and man in his totality. It could be argued that this position is essentially "soul-saving" rather than a liberating of growth forces and therefore cannot serve as a basis for therapy as an interpersonal professional endeavor. Van Til would probably reply that there is no such thing as a liberation of growth forces on any permanent basis apart from a true-Creator-creature relationship, and that the concept, "liberation of growth forces," is a value judgment based upon a particular philosophy of man.

The Frommian would also relate lovingly to the patient in the hope of making the unconscious conscious, replacing the irrational (the id) by reason (the ego) and changing the habits of thinking. He would seek adjustment, defined as the person's "ability to act like the majority of people in his culture."<sup>860</sup>

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<sup>860</sup>Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 73.





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The Van Tilian might experience conflict between his genuine desire to help every patient regardless of the patient's own religious convictions, and his own conviction that the patient cannot really be helped unless the patient becomes reconciled to God. Therefore, it would be difficult for the counselor, if not impossible, to set aside his own personal convictions. However, he would probably justify his approach on the ground that it is the only position to assume, and that any other approach could not lead to healing. He might contend truly permanent therapy would have to include conversion as a requisite for positive, long-range growth.

The Frommian also faces inherent problems in his therapeutic goals. It is to be noted that REPRESSION is a moderate form of REGRESSION in psychoanalysis. Fromm uses the term "de-repress" to indicate the psychoanalyst's task of making the unconscious conscious.<sup>861</sup> But, Fromm points out that certain human impulses are incurably destructive, that the "syndrome of decay" represents the evil in man. If so, then should not the analyst help the patient to repress those evil tendencies for the sake of the patient himself as well as for the security of society? Does it not seem reasonable that the analyst would seek to enhance the patient's development of life by repressing those tendencies toward death? Then repression cannot be altogether "unhealthy", yet this would defeat Fromm's goal.

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<sup>861</sup>Zen Buddhism, p. 95, 105.



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Fromm comes close to accepting the usefulness of some forms of repression when he speaks of benign as well as malignant forms of mother-fixation,<sup>862</sup> but on the whole, he feels that any form of regression is archaic, a symptom of moral failure.<sup>863</sup>

### C. TREATMENT OF GUILT FEELINGS

If a patient entered therapy with a Frommian or a Van Tilian counselor, he would probably be considered in terms of the counselor's theoretical attitude toward man.

Fromm classifies the person who is overwhelmed with his guilt as a moral hypochondriac,<sup>864</sup> one who is constantly preoccupied with his transgressions, although outwardly he may appear conscientious, moral, and concerned with others. Actually, says Fromm, he is quite narcissistic. The Frommian might even be suspicious of the person's true motives on the assumption that behind all guilt feelings is this "narcissistic preoccupation with oneself."<sup>865</sup> Through interpretation of case history, free association and dream material, the Frommian would select out those variables that he considered relevant. If the patient focused attention on his guilt and frustrations, the analyst would probably deal with this material as actions taken by the patient against himself.

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<sup>862</sup> Heart of Man, p. 101.

<sup>863</sup> Man for Himself, p. 5.

<sup>864</sup> Heart of Man, p. 69.

<sup>865</sup> Loc. cit.



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In order to help the patient toward productive living, the analyst would endeavor to remove the authoritarian conscience by substituting the humanistic conscience. Using a progressive society as a model, the patient would be encouraged to follow his own desires, establish his own goals, free himself from the shackles of standards and mores that thwarted his self-enhancement. Attention would be concentrated on early parent-child relationships and other significant relationships during the formative years of growth.

The feeling of guilt would be viewed as rooted in the patient's alienation. The solution would also lie in alienation, but this time by alienating oneself from the unwholesome action committed.

In this sense responsibility only means 'I am aware that I did it.' In fact, as soon as my deed is experienced as 'sin' or 'guilt' it becomes alienated. It is not I who did this, but 'the sinner,' 'the bad one,' that 'other person' who now needs to be punished...<sup>866</sup>

From the description given of this procedure, it would seem that Fromm helps the person rid himself of the feelings of guilt without actually doing anything about the deed itself assuming that it is possible to do something. But, does the "alienation" of the deed really mean that the person no longer feels responsible for the deed? Is it psychologically possible to rid oneself completely of the impression of responsibility? If it were possible, what would be the social and legal implications of this action? Finally, how would we define "responsibility"?

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<sup>866</sup> ibid., p. 128.



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How would a Van Tilian handle this problem? Van Til says that man has confused the metaphysical and ethical aspects of reality; man somehow rationalizes that his finiteness, or his human condition is the source of "sin." Instead "sin" is his ethical estrangement from God, and this influences his relationships with other men and his own psychological conditions. Unwilling to accept the blame for his own sin, man lays the blame on the circumstances around him and within him. It would follow from this, that the Van Tilian would encourage the patient to accept his guilt as real, that is, guilt would have some basis in objective fact. This position would be along the lines proposed by Mowrer, as we have seen before, although Mowrer sees guilt on non-theological lines. Mowrer wants to help the patient face the consequences of the deed in order to solve the problem of the social repercussions.

What would be the effects of facing the deed and admitting responsibility? It would separate the deed from the person! Fromm is saying to the patient, "Don't worry about it; look at the deed from another point of view. You don't have to loath yourself; after all, we are all in the same 'human situation!'" He wants the patient to experience the effect of alienation without going through any struggle, and expects that behavior will change as a result of changed attitudes. It would seem that what Van Til (and Mowrer) are saying is, "The only way to solve the problem is for you to acknowledge responsibility for the deed and then do something about it. Repentance and reconciliation, perhaps even



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penance, will relieve your feelings of guilt. Consequently, your behavior will change: attitudes follow actions."

The Frommian would be optimistic about the success of therapy because he has faith in the patient's motivation for life; the Van Tilian would be pessimistic about the patient's abilities to help himself, but optimistic because he has faith in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring men to God and because he would feel that, though he only is a human counselor, he would be God's instrument for healing. They would differ on whether or not the guilt feelings could be accounted for by some objective event.

#### D. THE FUNCTION OF CONSCIENCE

It appears that the Freudian view of conscience is essentially negative, although Fromm differentiates between the constructive humanistic conscience and the destructive authoritarian type. The problem is: how is one's "inner voice" qualitatively different from an "externalized conscience," i.e., a conscience formed by introjecting societal standards? Fromm would reply that the inner voice, or source of the humanistic conscience, moves one toward growth, while the externalized or authoritarian conscience pushes one toward decay. But since man is, on all terms, societally conditioned, his conscience is part of this conditioning. And therefore, would it not be difficult for the person to know whether a particular desire or "good" will truly enhance him or cause ultimate decay? Perhaps the person will become confused and imagine



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that the healthy demands of society are actually unhealthy. He might then reject those demands and seek to loose himself from mores which experience has proven to be useful for individual growth. He might turn toward decay simply out of a desire to become independent and "free."

Fromm only approximates a reply to these concerns. He assumes that somewhere there are norms and principles which science will discover.

On the positive side, Fromm does appreciate the fact that conscience can serve in two ways. A rigid, unyielding conscience that has internalized the standards of others may create undue anxiety within the patient. It is suggested that both Fromm and Van Til would agree that this kind of conscience needs adjustment. Conversely, conscience can serve as an organizational system integrating the self-structure of the patient and freeing him for productivity. Obviously both Fromm and Van Til would seek to establish this kind of conscience.

McKenzie gives a definition of conscience along the lines of the latter type, which definition might serve as a guide to further study:

Conscience is that sentiment which co-ordinates and regulates our moral ideas, emotions and behavior according to moral values, moral ideals, and moral principles we have consciously or unconsciously assimilated. It has an executive function as well as a judicial. It is a dynamic structure of the Self. If we define Will as the ability of the Self to canalize its energy toward its self-chosen ends, then so far as these ends are consistent with the content of conscience the Will is reinforced by the conscience.

This is the definition of the mature conscience. Its violation leads to realistic guilt-feelings. It is authoritative in



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the sense that it acts on behalf of the Self as a whole; it is this which gives it authority over every partial impulse. It is related to the fundamental need for moral unity in our lives.<sup>867</sup>

### III. SELECTION OF COUNSELORS

Any professional or lay persons in a position of referring persons to counselors would certainly want to know whether the counselor operated in an acceptable value system, i.e., whether they could trust their patients to the counselor. It seems obvious that a Van Tilian would avoid referring patients to a Frommian out of concern that the Frommian would change the values of the patients, and that a Frommian would think it folly to refer his patients to a Van Tilian counselor.

### IV. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The ultimate answers to the problem of guilt are unavailable. However, the theories of Fromm and Van Til could serve as the foundation for further research if studies could be designed to test certain elements of these two viewpoints.

At present, research in psychoanalysis is confined to analysis of theoretical essays. If psychoanalysts would allow use of more rigorous testing of their claims and theory in their own clinical settings, it would open up much more fruitful avenues for research. Kiesler (1966) has stated that at present research in psychoanalysis has been very ambiguous.

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<sup>867</sup> McKenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 54.



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If, however, therapists of each persuasion could be matched on certain variables and then given certain matched groups of patients to insure uniformity of both therapist and patient groups, it would be possible to pursue the question of whether the patient's behavior would change more effectively if concentration were placed upon his attitude or upon his transgressions.

#### V. PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

I think that it is appropriate to make a few remarks concerning my own commitments now that this study has concluded, for research is, after all, a mode of self-expression and should have some practical application.

The problems here discussed are vital to the entire field of counseling because they deal with ultimate values and because there are so many tensions between Christian theology and psychoanalytically-oriented psychology. Like Erich Fromm, many psychologists experience strong feelings against traditional religion, and especially against Christianity, and also like Fromm, while they disclaim Christianity, they cannot leave it alone. Fromm exemplifies this paradox. He says in The Art of Loving (p. 59, 60), and in his most recent book, You Shall Be As Gods, that the mature person does not need to speak God's name, yet Fromm himself constantly speaks of God, of revealed religion, of idolatry, and of John Calvin. He seems obsessed with God. But the God with whom he is obsessed is not the Christian God of the Scriptures,





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but a God of wrath and anger and infantile desires. Logically enough, Fromm's concept of God seems to have come from Freud, who saw God as a magnified father image<sup>868</sup> and who prophesied the demise of religion.<sup>869</sup> Years before Fromm challenged the notion that man's chief business was to glorify God, Cattell said that the physical sciences finally destroyed "illusory religious notions."<sup>870</sup> Later, Flugel proclaimed the doctrine of man's autonomy and the uselessness of supernaturalism.<sup>871</sup>

It is precisely here that Van Til's position is so relevant. He emphasizes that the real battle for men's minds does not lie in the physical sciences, or even in the behavioral sciences, which are far more esoteric, but in the philosophical presuppositions upon which men base their sciences. Once man begins on the wrong foundation, his whole house of cards will eventually tumble around him in chaos.

The problem has been set in perspective by Clark who intimated that there are no facts, only theories about facts, and that science does not explain the why of things, only the how.<sup>872</sup>

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<sup>868</sup> Ernest Jones, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. III, p. 354.

<sup>869</sup> Freud, The Future of an Illusion, p. 68.

<sup>870</sup> Quoted in White, God and the Unconscious, p. 3.

<sup>871</sup> Flugel, Man, Morals and Society, p. 280-281.

<sup>872</sup> Clark, The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God, p. 42.



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The question has been raised: Does Christianity (or any philosophy for that matter) effect empirical science? Aren't we talking about two different things? Put another way, when the chemist sets up a laboratory experiment, does his philosophy of life in any way determine his methods? Isn't the scientist neutral in relationship to the facts of his data, and isn't he led by conclusions derived from the data?

Perhaps this problem could be answered by asking whether it is possible to compartmentalize the scientist's subjectivity and objectivity. In this view, when he deals with philosophical, religious and ethical values and concepts, he would be said to act subjectively, and he would be objective when he arranges his laboratory experiment and arrives at his conclusions about physical laws. In reply, Clark points out that:

At best, scientific law is a construction rather than a discovery, and the construction depends on factors never seen under a microscope, never weighed in a balance, never handled or manipulated.<sup>873</sup>

He writes that, regardless of its complexity, the process of experimentation is essentially the "measurement of a line."<sup>874</sup> In order to measure any event, whether the temperature or pressure of a liquid, or the factors within light and sound, the scientist must calibrate it on a scale, and make inferences from his readings. However, repeated measurements bring varied results to which he assigns a range of error, such as

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<sup>873</sup>ibid., p. 61.

<sup>874</sup>ibid., p. 62.



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20.35 ± .004. He then adds his readings and divides in order to obtain an arithmetic mean. He could, however, choose the median or mode of his readings. The choice of mean, median or mode is entirely arbitrary; it is not dictated by the data, but is contributed by the scientist himself. He may then also plot his readings on a graph, pass a line or curve through the various points, and derive a formula that expresses the relationship between the data. But, since there are an infinite number of lines and curves that could connect the points on the graph, the choice of one is entirely arbitrary again, the product of his own subjective decision process.

Even through a series of points apparently on a straight line it is equally easy to pass a straight line or sine curve.... The empirical data do not necessitate any given curve. In other words, so far as observation is concerned, the scientist could have chosen a law other than the one he actually selected. Indeed, his range of selection was infinite; and out of this infinity, he chose, he did not discover, the equation he accepts.<sup>875</sup>

From this specific data and his newly derived law, the scientist now begins to establish relationships with other data and laws, increasingly broadening his base of inferences. We ask, then, at what point does he cease to be objective and introduce his philosophy of science, and we reply, at the point of simple measurement. In like manner, it is inferred here that any man's philosophy of science is intimately related to his philosophy of life, and that it is impossible to separate them at any place.

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<sup>875</sup> Ibid., p. 64.



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If this is so, then there is really no such thing as pure empiricism, or a purely scientific method. There is only good or bad philosophy. As Clark suggests also, science is useless outside its own restricted sphere because "science cannot determine its own value."<sup>876</sup>

There might be some truth to the statement that,

The psychologist is an authority in his own subject, yet when he leaves his own field and commences to propound a philosophy of life, he ceases to be an expert. His opinion outside his own specialty must carry no more weight than that of any other non-specialist. The Christian believes that the Bible contains profound principles to which human psychology (like all other branches of knowledge) must defer for their basic view of life and the world. The Bible certainly contains the most penetrating analysis of man's personality which we know. The Christian will ordinarily be grateful for the contributions to knowledge and for the new methods of treatment which modern psychology has brought. Where, however, psychological theory is in conflict with the plain teaching of the Bible, he will naturally hold to the latter.<sup>877</sup>

The problem is that no psychologist is an expert on human behavior, but rather a student in a vastly complicated field, and he must incorporate knowledge from a larger array of sciences in order to arrive at meaningful inferences in his own specialty.

Furthermore, I believe that the scientist ought to go to the original source and consider what the Bible itself says about reality, God, and man's destiny, and avoid building his arguments either on the distorted religious views held by neurotic patients in therapy or on some second-hand data.

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<sup>876</sup> ibid., p. 95.

<sup>877</sup> Intersarsity Fellowship, A Christian Approach to Psychological Medicine, p. 19.



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As I see it, Fromm misinterprets the Christian view, and particularly the Calvinistic viewpoint because he insists on running the Biblical data through his Freudian sieve. His method in You Shall Be As Gods, which is a radical interpretation of the Old Testament, is to transform Bible language into psychoanalytic thought patterns regardless of the original writer's intent. Fromm's method is extremely clever, but if Van Til's assumptions are correct, then Fromm has gravely transgressed against God and if Fromm's own assumptions about God are correct, then his study seems irrelevant, or at least improperly focussed.

Nevertheless, Fromm has done what Van Til expects of the superior non-Christian: he has produced works that offer insight into the human mind. His writings are very useful as springboards for thinking, and suggest a theoretical approach to therapy. His synthesis of the syndromes of growth and death, his productive and non-productive character orientations and his attempts to relate ethics to various fields stimulate creative thought.

It has been suggested that psychology (or psychiatry) and religion ought to work together for the common good, and that in a large sense, established facts of science and true religion can never really be at odds with each other.<sup>878</sup> Once we rid ourselves of the distortions of both, we can arrive at the common truth. Yet, Jansma has said that there exists

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<sup>878</sup> ibid, p. 18.



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a "Christian psychotherapy"<sup>879</sup> that recognizes the subjectivity, the value-centered orientations of the counselor, and the illusions of neutrality, and that unless Biblical Christianity is wedded with an adequate psychology of man, "psychiatry cannot be a healing science."<sup>880</sup>

Assuming that it is possible to wed these two disciplines, how can we look at conscience and guilt? Fromm's position is that man creates the idea of a wrathful God in order to solve the problems of his fears, hostilities and guilt. Similarly, a moral code was developed for society, and the authorities in society were invested with authority from the supreme Law-Giver. Carried over into the family the father was given moral authority, and the child identified his father with God. Thus, for Fromm, God is an illusion, morality relative, and religion a regressive adaptation. There is undoubtedly some truth to what he says, but the Christian holds that such distortions are the result of man's failure to relate to God, and the natural result of man's sin and degenerate state. Those infantile adaptations or forms of idolatry are what is left from man's original high estate. Therefore, Fromm's theorizing about morality, sin, conscience and guilt lose their significance for the Christian. These same distortions might also be the product of Fromm's own projections.

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<sup>879</sup> Jansma, "Christian Psychotherapy," Christianity Today, Vol. IV, 19, June 20, 1960, p. 9, 10.

<sup>880</sup> Quoted in Christianity Today, Vol. V, 9, Jan 30, 1961, p. 12.



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Sin implies personal and social responsibility. Personally, I feel that this may be why Christianity is attacked more widely than any other religion; among all the major religions, it leaves no room for man to escape full responsibility for his misery. Man has no one else to blame, not even God. If there is no room for responsibility, then there is also none for free choice, independent action, or creativity. Indeed, if man is largely conditioned by society, then Fromm's view is of no more significance than any layman's view on life and its meaning.

Apparently, Fromm avoids facing the patient with the need to bear full responsibility for misbehavior, as was pointed out in the discussion on alienating oneself from one's deeds. The results of such an issue are clearly stated by Frankel:

The year is 1930. The place, Berlin. You are a practicing psychoanalyst confronting an interesting new patient in your office. His name, Adolf Hitler. He is a professional politician regarded as one of the country's rising young men. Now he has come to you because he is troubled by persistent anxieties. He speaks confidently about his plans for Germany, yet he admits to fear of failure and therefore punishment by 'lesser' beings. Lately, however, when he considers some of the harsh deeds demanded by his grandiose plans, he has been bothered by feelings of guilt. Nevertheless, he is convinced that the ends he has in mind fully justify the means. He is bothered only because his increasing anxieties and guilt feelings may impede him in the execution of his designs. Hitler asks you to put an end to these disturbing feelings. Can you help him?<sup>881</sup>

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<sup>881</sup>Marvin Frankel, "Morality in Psychotherapy," Psychology Today, Vol. I, 4, Aug. 1967, p. 25.



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Hitler's purpose was to relieve himself of his feelings of guilt, not to have his values or plans changed. Would it be right for the therapist to argue that "there is no virtue in confronting one's fear"?<sup>882</sup> I believe that the therapist must help the client to become sensitive to the voice of conscience, but in a healthy manner. By this, I mean that the conscience can serve a constructive purpose. Obviously, a person can feel excessively guilty about overt actions or thoughts. He can unnecessarily blame himself for things for which he is not responsible, or only partially responsible. On the other hand, if he is committing or planning actions detrimental to others, then clearly, something is amiss if he does not feel concerned about the consequences. His conscience needs to be heeded.

In the Scriptures, the key reference to the concept of conscience is Romans 2:15, where Paul writes that men "show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them..." The conscience acts as a moral sense of right and wrong, warning us of the danger to our welfare and permitting us to pursue constructive goals. Obviously, the conscience can be warped, acting as a taskmaster and tyrant. But God acts to calm that conscience according to Scripture, as it is written in I John 3:20, "... (if) our hearts (conscience) condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything." So the

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<sup>882</sup> Ibid., p. 26.





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conscience can be trained to serve man as well as it can be allowed to destroy him.

In the psychoanalytic theory, "the superego performs the functions of self-criticism and control; much of this function is unconscious, and guilt is its normal concomitant."<sup>883</sup> However, there has been a confusion between guilt and guilt feelings. In the Biblical view, all men are sinners and ethically guilty. Associated with objective guilt is some degree of feelings of guilt. Lack of such a sense of guilt is regarded as abnormal, just as it would be abnormal and harmful if a person felt no pain when burned. It is regarded as useful to help men acknowledge this guilt and become reconciled to God.

Guilt feelings, or a guilt complex are different problems. They can be considered psychopathic, if they are out of proportion to their origin. Fear of punishment by the father-figure, self-abasement, a lack of worth, and suicidal tendencies emanate from a hyperactive, distorted conscience. It is possible for a Christian to have a neurosis resulting from such a conscience.

It is also possible for a person to be lead into deeper religious experiences and to develop a sensitized conscience through psychoanalysis. As Tournier says, psychoanalysis as he practices it, does not eliminate guilt, but shifts it.<sup>884</sup>

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<sup>883</sup>Inter-Varsity Fellowship, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>884</sup>Tournier, Guilt and Grace, p. 129.



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...above all, and without the analysed person perhaps realizing it, guilt is the driving force towards healing, the decisive power which determines the result of the struggle. It is easy to unburden oneself up to a point to someone who is neutral and kindly disposed. Sooner or later, however, the analysis of dreams or the free-association of ideas brings into consciousness memories of feelings the acknowledgement of which seems almost impossible.

At that point, any loophole of escape or deception can decisively jeopardize the cure; while on the other hand, the courage to retain absolute frankness even to the bitter end, will open the door to a great deliverance. The inward struggle is terrible. What is it that determines the issue? Two forms of guilt are at stake, engaged in mortal combat: one which creates a sense of terrible shame at giving expression to the memory or the feeling, and the other urges the patient to keep silent, to create a diversion or to take cowardly flight from this difficult task. When the latter form of guilt appears even less tolerable than the former, then the turning point of the cure is passed.<sup>885</sup>

Thus the sense of guilt awakened by Biblical doctrines is not seen as contrary to the love of God any more than the pain experienced in surgery is contrary to continued health. The ultimate aim is not to "suppress the arrogant sinner, but to arouse his sense of guilt, and so to humble him, thereby opening for him the way to grace."<sup>886</sup>

Man is full of paradoxes. Set apart from the animal world by his powers of reason and imagination, capable of producing works of beauty and reaching heights of ecstasy, he as easily turns upon himself destructively. He traps himself, destroys what he has created, slaughters his

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<sup>885</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>886</sup> ibid., p. 142.



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fellow man. Why does he seem bent upon crushing all that is fine and beautiful, delicate and intelligent? The imagination is fired when it conceives of what mankind could have become through gradual refinement of what Fromm has so aptly called the syndrome of growth. Yet, through bitter wars and centuries of violence, man seems destined to wander in circles, ever re-learning and re-losing the experiences of the past. Education has not granted man moral integrity, even though it has been influenced over the centuries by a variety of religious concepts, and in many cases, the sharpened intelligence has only made him more able to circumvent the laws designed to protect all of society. He is torn by a powerful drive upward and a matching drive downward, the good and the evil. Reflection upon man's historic dilemma caused at least one man to wonder, "what is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?"<sup>887</sup>

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<sup>887</sup> Psalm 8:4.



## APPENDIX A

### A Quotation From

C. Van Til, The Search for Meaning in Modern Thought  
Class Syllabi Mimeographed  
October, 1961

#### Erich Fromm

Erich Fromm deals with the subject "humanistic Religion." What he says here on the subject is taken from his work on Psychoanalysis and Religion.

There are, says Fromm, basically only two kinds of religion, the authoritarian and the humanistic. Fromm himself holds to the latter. This seems to make it impossible for him even to give an objectively correct statement of "authoritarian" religion.

(1) On the authoritarian view, says Fromm, "man is controlled by a higher power outside of himself." Because of this control this higher being is said to be "entitled" to "obedience, reverence and worship." Thus, he adds "the reason for worship, obedience, and reverence lies not in the moral qualities of the deity, not in love or justice, but in the fact that it has control, that is, has power over man. Furthermore it shows that the higher power has a right to force man to worship him and that lack of reverence and obedience constitutes sin." But, Christianity believes nothing of the sort. Christianity does indeed believe that God is all-powerful, but it does not believe in a God of pure power. It believes that God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable. ...It believes that God created man holy and righteous and asked him for the return of his love. Man's obedience to God was to be but the expression of his love. How can a child be said really to love his parents if he does not obey them? Obedience is but the expression of love.

Accordingly to the Christian, sin is a setting aside of God as man's loving Father, not an effort to escape from a tyrant, as Fromm suggests.

It is not surprising that, from his point of view, Calvin gives expression to authoritarian religion in its most objectionable form. Calvin speaks of the believer's humility due to his sense of misery and powerlessness. Regarding this Fromm remarks: "In authoritarian religion God is a



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symbol of power and force, He is supreme because He has supreme power, and man in juxtaposition is utterly powerless."

Then, as over against this authoritarian view, in which "religious or secular 'elites' control the lives of their fellow men" is humanistic religion. This humanistic religion is "centered around man and his strength." "Man's aim in humanistic religion is to achieve the greatest strength, not the greatest powerlessness; virtue is self-realization, not obedience. Faith is certainty of conviction based on one's experience of thought and feeling, not assent to propositions on credit of the proposer. The prevailing mood is that of joy, which the prevailing mood in authoritarian religion is that of sorrow and of guilt."

Now "Jesus' precept that 'the Kingdom of God is within you' is the simple and clear expression of nonauthoritarian thinking." It was the Church, not Jesus, that introduced the authoritarian idea of religion. But the "humanistic, democratic element was never subdued in Christian or in Jewish history, and this element found its most potent expressions in the mystic thinking within both religions."

Having thus set forth the contrasting characteristics of the two mutually exclusive religions, Fromm goes on to an "analysis of their dynamics." It is here, he says, that the psycho-analyst can make his special contribution. For he can probe even into the "unconscious processes" that control men's attitudes.

The "mechanism of projection" with which the believer in authoritarian religion works, enriches God at man's expense. "The more perfect God becomes, the more imperfect becomes man. He projects the best he has onto God and thus impoverishes himself." "The more he praises God, the emptier he becomes. The emptier he becomes the more sinful he feels. The more sinful he feels, the more he praises his God--and the less able is he to regain himself."

Fromm speaks of two "fallacies of reasoning" in connection with the authoritarian view of religion. Authoritarians do not realize that though man is dependent on forces beyond his control it is masochistic and self-destructive to worship such forces. Authoritarians do not realize that though man has a longing to relate himself to something beyond himself this is not proof that there is a God that actually exists. "Obviously that follows as little as our strongest desire to love someone proves that there is a person with whom we are in love. All it proves is our need and perhaps our capacity.



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In reply to Fromm it should be noted that if with him we reject the idea of man's dependence on God through Christ then we place man in a vacuum. It is only on the presupposition of the truth of the Christian position that human personality stands in an intelligible relation to his environment.

Then as to the logical fallacies that Fromm finds in the authoritarian view it should be remarked that there would be no contact between human logic and his environment at all except upon the presupposition that man and his world are placed in relation to one another by God. It is only because Fromm assumes human autonomy that he finds the fallacies he mentions. He assumes that man is self-dependent and not the creature of God. But, if man were self-dependent, then it would be illogical to prove that God exists as his creator. Christianity finds no intelligibility in the idea of man except in terms of his creation and direction by God in Christ. The believer does not start with the idea of man as autonomous in order, then, to prove the existence of God. This is indeed the Roman Catholic way of reasoning, but it is not the Protestant one. The Protestant view is that no human reasoning has meaning except on the presupposition of the truth of Christianity.



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