



FROMM'S THEORY OF RELIGION

by Rudolf J. Siebert

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Erich Fromm has been criticized by his former colleagues at the Frankfurt Institute for having philosophically idealist theories, advising conformity to present capitalist society, and paying only lip service to social criticism. But an analysis of his theory of religion shows that it is not only faithful to the essential elements of critical social theory but that it culminates in the very foundation of critical theory: negative theology.¹ As with the theories of Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, Fromm's theory of religion is intended for those people in the twentieth century who no longer ascribe to theistic religions and for whom the crucial question is whether conversion to a humanistic "religiosity" without the dogmas and institutions of positive religions is possible. According to Fromm, these people are not merely confronted with the choice between selfish bourgeois materialism and the Christian concepts of God, Trinity and Incarnation.

Born into a religious Jewish family in Frankfurt in 1900, Fromm recalls in his autobiography that the writings of the Old Testament touched and exhilarated him as a boy more than anything else he was exposed to.² Fromm was particularly moved by the prophetic writings of Isaiah, Amos and Hosea, with their vision of the last days in which universal peace and harmony would reign. This prophetic promise appealed to the adolescent Fromm especially as he experienced minor episodes of anti-semitism and the exclusionary clannishness of the Christians as well as the Jews. But the autobiographer believes that these experiences would not have impressed him so deeply had it not been for World War I.³ As most 14-year-olds, Fromm was caught up in the initial excitement of war, the celebrations of early victories and the reports of the tragic deaths of individual soldiers. But by the war's end, young Fromm was seriously troubled by the question of what made war possible.

Having become deeply suspicious of all official religious or secular ideologies, Fromm gave up the outward form of his Jewish orthodoxy in 1926.

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1. See Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (Boston, 1973), p. 200; Max Horkheimer, *Die Sehnsucht nach dem ganz Anderen* (Hamburg, 1970), pp. 54-89; Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory* (New York, 1972), pp. 129-131.

2. Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (New York, 1962), p. 5.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

In his search for an understanding of the irrationality of human mass behavior, he followed a path that led him to Hegel, Marx and Freud.⁴ Blending empirical observation and Hegel's logic, Fromm revised both Marx's theory of society and Freud's theory of the individual and finally integrated them in *The Dogma of Christ*, published in 1930. Here he set forth his theory of religion as well as the essence of his critical theory of society. In this first attempt to transcend the customary psychologistic approach to historical and social phenomena, Fromm employed traditional psychoanalytic methodology to show that ideas and ideologies can be understood only by comprehending the real life conditions of the people who create them and believe in them.

The roots of Fromm's theory of religion are to be found not only in Marx and Freud but in the bourgeois enlightenment as well. As described by Hegel in the introduction to his philosophy of religion, enlightened bourgeois thought held that the knowledge of God could not be posited by the comprehending reason. Consciousness of God could arise only from feeling: Hegel is amazed that enlightenment thinkers continued to attribute any objectivity to God. More consistent, he believed, were the materialist or positivist theorists who reduced human thought and spirit to sensation, and identified God as a product of feeling and therefore without objectivity. But against both views, Hegel argued that the bourgeoisie had reified and privatized God into individual property. What was rooted merely in feeling existed only for the individual as his property, but not on its own. Hegel believed that any philosophy of religion was first of all under the obligation to prove that God exists.⁵

Fromm, as most materialists in Hegel's time, considers God a product of human feeling without any independent existence. While for Hegel neither God nor people could be understood in isolation from each other, Fromm is confident that he can speak about people without reference to God. Whereas for Hegel, the foundation of religion was the dialectical relation between God's absolute spirit and human subjective spirit, for Fromm it is the individual's relation toward a wholly indeterminate X-reality.⁶ Hegel felt that the philosopher of religion at least had to establish the independent necessity of religion, if not of God. Only after he left the Frankfurt Institute in 1939 did Fromm go beyond religion's external, instrumental and functional necessity as an integrative social factor.⁷ In the past three and a half decades, he has increasingly emphasized an internal personal necessity of a humanistic religiousness.

4. During 1929, Fromm was introduced to the leading intellectuals of the Frankfurt Institute: Marcuse, Adorno and Horkheimer, the Institute's second director. For the next decade Fromm was part of the Institute, contributing directly to its critical social theory.

5. G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* (Stuttgart, 1965), vol. I, p. 68.

6. Erich Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods* (New York, 1966), pp. 56-62; Erich Fromm, *The Heart of Man* (New York, 1964), chapter 6.

7. See Erich Fromm, *The Dogma of Christ and Other Essays* (New York, 1963), pp. 11-21;

Fromm derives his critique of religion from Marx's claim that man makes religion, and not religion man.⁸ According to Marx, religion represents an unreal world consciousness because it is a reflection of the false relations of state, society and family. Since the human essence lacks real objectifications, it seeks realization through fantasy in religion. Only by unmasking this fantastical self-realization for the sham that it is does Marx believe the philosopher can begin the critique of politics and social relations. For Fromm, Marx's work is the secular manifestation of the radical humanism expressed in the vision of the Old Testament prophets and the key to history. As in Marx's theory of religion, it is Fromm's intent to disillusion people so that they may come to their senses and think, act and change their reality.

Yet, critical theory developed partly because the German and European proletariat resisted such disillusionment and was reluctant to fulfill its historical revolutionary role. In Freud, Fromm found an explanation for the peculiar tenacity of religious ideas. According to Freud, primitive religion arises out of the need to personify the forces of nature in order for humans to react to them and overcome the feeling of complete helplessness. Even with the advent of a scientific understanding of nature, humanity's sense of helplessness remains, along with the longing for protection and Gods. Man's situation *vis-à-vis* nature, in Freud's view, is only the continuation of an infantile prototype. As small children, men find themselves in a state of helplessness in relation to their parents, whom they have reason to fear—especially their fathers—yet they are certain the fathers will protect them against the dangers of the outside world. With science, natural forces lose their human traits, but people still need to cling to the existence of a father, one more powerful than the biological one. Freud argued that the strength of religious ideas was due entirely to the power of humanity's oldest and strongest wishes and fears.

Fromm's concept of social character, introduced in *The Dogma of Christ* and later empirically verified in the Frankfurt Labor Study of 1931,⁹ mediates between Marx's notion of social reality and Freud's understanding of

"Ueber Methode und Aufgabe einer analytischen Sozialpsychologie," in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, vol. I (1931), pp. 28-54; "Die psychoanalytische Charakterologie und ihre Bedeutung für die Sozialpsychologie," in *ibid.*, vol. 3 (1932), pp. 253-277; "Review of Otto Heller, *Der Untergang des Judentums*," *ibid.*, pp. 438-439; "Robert Briffault's Werk über das Mutterrecht," *ibid.*, (1933), pp. 382-387; "Die sozialpsychologische Bedeutung der Mutterrechtstheorie," *ibid.* (1934), pp. 196-227; "Die gesellschaftliche Bedingtheit der psychoanalytischen Therapie," *ibid.* (1935), pp. 365-398; "Sozialpsychologischer Feil," in Max Horkheimer, ed., *Studien über Autorität und Familie* (Paris, 1936), pp. 77-135; "Zu Gefühl der Ohnmacht," *ibid.* (1937), pp. 95-117; "The Social Psychology of 'Will Therapy,'" *Psychiatry* (May, 1939), pp. 229-237.

8. Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right,'" in *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, Joseph O'Malley, ed. (Cambridge, 1970), p. 131; Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (New York, 1957), part I; Karl Marx, "Die deutsche Ideologie," in *Die Frühschriften* (Stuttgart, 1953), pp. 339-341.

9. The Frankfurt Labor Study grew out of the conviction of Horkheimer and his colleagues that the National Socialists would probably take power and that the revolutionary workers would



individual psychology. Character structure, shaped by socio-economic reality, determines not only what ideas one will choose, but also their strength.¹⁰ Further, Fromm argues that once created, the ideas influence social character and thereby the socio-economic structure.¹¹ As in Hegel's dialectic, Fromm's middle term, social character, becomes more important than ideas or the socio-economic structure. This dialectical configuration gives his theory immediacy, empirical concreteness and humanistic warmth, but it leaves him open to his critics' charge that he psychologizes the family, state and history, and thereby promotes the adjustment of the individual to an antagonistic social reality.¹² Fromm could have strengthened his analysis by showing how ideas mediate between social character and socio-economic reality and how, in turn, socio-economic structures mediate between ideas and social character.

In the peculiar stratification of class society, Fromm sees the infantile situation repeated for the individual. The individual at once fears the ruling minority while longing for the protection it affords. And everyone knows that resistance to that minority is always severely punished. Just as the child uncritically believes everything the father says, so does the individual accept whatever the ruling class or its political representatives decree. This infantile

rise up against Hitler and the magnates of industry and finance backing him. Although never satisfactorily completed, this study of the mentality of German workers was the first real effort of the Frankfurt Institute to apply critical theory to a concrete problem. Directed by Fromm, the study consisted of approximately 3000 questionnaires asking workers their views on such issues as education of children, the rationalization of industry, the possibility of avoiding a new war and the locus of real power in civil society and state. Fromm wanted to ascertain the level of opposition to Hitler among German workers. The premise of the study was that only those opinions rooted in the character structure of a person became convictions a person would be willing to fight for. The method was to examine individually formulated answers to the open-ended interpretive questionnaire and interpret their unintended, unconscious meanings. If, for example, a worker answered the question: "Which men in history do you admire most?" by saying "Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon, Marx and Lenin," Fromm interpreted the answer to be authoritarian, since the respondent admired dictators and military leaders. Were the answer "Socrates, Pasteur, Kant, Marx and Lenin," Fromm classified the worker as democratic-revolutionary because of the admiration shown for benefactors of humankind and not people with power.

The result of Fromm's study was that roughly ten per cent of the German workers had what critical theorists would call from that time on an authoritarian character structure, about fifteen per cent had a democratic-revolutionary character, and about seventy-five per cent had a mixture of the two character structures. This characterology was used by Adorno in his *Authoritarian Personality* and later again by Fromm in *Social Character in a Mexican Village*. Although never published because, so Fromm contends, he and Horkheimer differed over the value of the work, the questionnaire developed in the Frankfurt Labor Study was incorporated into the Institute's *Studies on Authority and Family* (1936). For further discussion, see Jay, *op. cit.*; Horkheimer, *Critical Theory, op. cit.*; and Fromm, "The Revolutionary Character," in *The Dogma of Christ, op. cit.*

10. Fromm, "The Revolutionary Character," *op. cit.*, p. 148.

11. Erich Fromm, "The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory," in *Socialist Humanism* (Garden City, 1966), pp. 233-234.

12. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination, op. cit.*, pp. 222, 229-230; Horkheimer, "Foreword" to Jay, *ibid.*, p. xii; Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (New York, 1962), pp. 217-251; Herbert Marcuse, "A Reply to Erich Fromm," in *Dissent*, 3:1 (Winter 1956), pp. 79-83.

bondage of the masses, one of the main guarantees of social stability, cohesion and equilibrium, is maintained and strengthened by the power elite.¹³ According to Fromm, one of the best ways of doing this is through authoritarian religion. The ruling class always claims God as its ally while religion itself intellectually intimidates the masses, making them distrust their own senses. Paradoxically, says Fromm, religion also offers people a certain measure of satisfaction, giving life a tolerable appearance to discourage them from attempting to change from obedient to rebellious children or from wage laborer to revolutionary.¹⁴

Fromm argues that the satisfaction religion offers are not those of ego drives such as self-preservation, better food or other material pleasures, but are libidinous satisfactions that occur in fantasy, especially collective fantasies.¹⁵ By virtue of their universality, the masses' social fantasies are perceived as if they were real by the individual. According to Fromm, religious fantasies function to console men and women for life's privations, encourage them to accept their class status by appeal to their emotions, and to assuage the guilt feelings of the ruling class by justifying their oppression of the masses.¹⁶

The Dogma of Christ describes the psychic situation of the Christian proletariat in the first three centuries of the faith. Fromm seeks to understand the social effect of the primitive Christian message and the changes in the early Christians' idea of Jesus.¹⁷ The first Christians were a brotherhood of the economically and socially oppressed held together by an enthusiastic hope and hatred. That hope sprang from the earliest Christian message: not a social or economic reform, but a promise of a not-distant future in which the poor would be rich, the hungry satisfied and the oppressed would gain authority. Not only is this hope expressed, but a hatred of the rich and powerful can also be seen in the Sermon on the Mount and the story of Lazarus.¹⁸ In fact, Fromm sees this understandable hatred for the oppressors in society run throughout the Gospels and the Christian tradition up to the Constantinian turn when the Church makes peace with the Roman establishment in whose name Jesus had been crucified three centuries earlier.

Fromm finds the oldest teaching on Jesus's nature to be adoptionist, i.e., that Jesus was not the Son of God from the beginning but became so only by a definite act of God's will. This is "Left-Wing Christology" or Christology from below since it starts out from Jesus's humanity. In many respects, Left-Wing Christology resembles the concept, familiar to the Jewish masses for many centuries, of a Messiah chosen by God to introduce a kingdom of righteous-

13. Fromm, *The Dogma, op. cit.*, p. 16.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 16; Cf. Marx, "Contribution," *op. cit.*, pp. 131-132.

15. Fromm, *The Dogma, op. cit.*, p. 20.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 37.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 39. See also in the New Testament Luke 18: 18-25; Luke 16: 19-31; and James 5: 1-11 for further examples of the polemical message of Christianity against the rich.



ness and love. But Fromm finds two new elements in the early Christian faith: that the Messiah is exalted as the Son of God and that, no longer the powerful military hero of Jewish tradition, the Messiah gains his significance and dignity from his suffering and death on the cross. Fromm argues that the adoptionist belief is a new form of the old myth of the rebellion of the son against the father. Not only did the Christian proletariat hate their earthly fathers, the ruling class, but they also detested the divine Father who was always portrayed as the ally of their mundane oppressors. The early Christians did not dare consciously slander the powerful Father-God, but instead expressed their unconscious hostility by putting a man at his side, thereby depriving him of his privileged and unreachable patriarchal position.¹⁹ To Fromm, the adoptionist belief represents an unconscious wish for the removal not only of the divine Father but of earthly fathers as well.

The guilt these unconscious feelings generated was displaced by the figure of the suffering Messiah. In the first place, says Fromm, Christians identified with Jesus because he was a suffering human being like themselves. This identification then forms the basis for the fascinating power of the idea of the suffering man Jesus and its effect on the proletariat in the Roman Empire. Secondly, Christians shifted some of their death wishes against the Father to the Son. As in Hegel's view, Fromm sees the father killed in the son's crucifixion in the early Christian myth.²⁰ And thirdly, in their identification with the Son, Christians suffered death themselves, thereby atoning for their death wishes against their earthly and heavenly fathers.²¹ The focus on the early Christian fantasy of the crucified son, according to Fromm, lies not in the Christians' masochistic expiation through self-annihilation, but in the displacement of the Father by the suffering Jesus. Fromm sees in Christianity the end of religion and the beginning of humanism because for the first time a man has moved into the X-dimension, previously reserved for God.²² In the third and fourth centuries, "Right-Wing Christology," or Christology from above—the doctrine that Jesus was always God—became popular in the Church, a trend which Fromm claims represented an elimination of hostility toward God and a legitimization of the power both of the Father and of the ruling class.²³

Part of the psychic background of the belief in Christ was the cult of the Roman Emperor, which Fromm claims to have been closely related to monotheism in its belief in a powerful and righteous Father.²⁴ The hostility toward the Emperor and Roman authority were not unique to the Christian proletariat nor were those goals the ones they hoped for. But while the

non-Christian masses tried to realize their wishes through political praxis, the hopelessness of that path led the Christians to seek fulfillment of their wishes in fantasy. Hegel, to the contrary, argued that in the principle of subjective freedom—that the individual is of infinite value and destined to the highest freedom—can be found a revolutionary element, one that was a contributing factor to the final downfall of the Roman Empire.

Hegel emphasized that the validity of the society and of the state, as well as alienated human beings, will die with Jesus's death. What in the Romans' mind was the worst disgrace—crucifixion as a criminal—was transformed into the highest honor, shaking all the bonds of human life in the process. Having no substantial claim on the Christian, the status quo could resort only to the application of the completely external force of the death penalty to gain allegiance. But since they believed in eternal life, Christians no longer shied away from death, and so the Empire lost its last weapon against the faith. Furthermore, that God dies, that the negation of everything is found even in God, is a most terrifying thought for Hegel. But, he argues, in the resurrection and ascension of Christ, God retains identity in the non-identity of death. For the early Christians that liquidation of the negative and the elevation of a man into heaven represented the highest verification of human value. For Hegel, this verification is the foundation of all Christian humanism.

Fromm agrees that there is a revolutionary element in the death of Jesus, but doubts that it actually gave the world a different form, Christianity being more fantasy than effective factor for social change.²⁵ Nor does he find in Christianity the highest verification of human nature. For Fromm, God dies and there is no resurrection, and in that is to be found humanity's ultimate liberation. Accepting the principle of subjective freedom, Fromm believes that human powers alone give value to life, not the fact that people are the objects of divine love. While steadfastly believing in the possibility of humanism without God, Fromm has since *The Dogma of Christ* developed his critical theory of religion by recourse to the anthropological basis of Hegel's philosophy of religion: the disunity between immediate human existence and its mediate essence.²⁶

Fromm defines human essence as a contradiction inhering in human existence.²⁷ On the one hand, we are animals, and on the other, since we are conscious, we cannot be one with nature, as animals can. This is the classical view, shared by Hegel, that humans are body and soul, angel and animal. Neither for Fromm nor for Hegel is the awareness of human limitations the subjective basis for religious consciousness. Rather, that awareness is the key to human transcendence of limitations through the development of freedom.

19. Fromm, *The Dogma*, *op.cit.*, pp. 46-47.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 48; cf. also Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *op.cit.*, pp. 63-66.

22. Erich Fromm, *To Have or to Be* (New York, 1976), pp. 53-65.

23. Fromm, *The Dogma*, *op.cit.*, pp. 50-91.

24. *The Dogma*, *op.cit.*, pp. 48-49; cf. also Horkheimer, *Die Sehnsucht*, *op.cit.*, pp. 63-64.

25. *The Dogma*, pp. 21-49.

26. Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (New York, 1955), chapters 1-3, 8; cf. also Fromm, *The Heart*, *op.cit.*, pp. 116-118.

27. Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York, 1967), pp. 1-83; *The Heart*, p. 116.

In Hegel's view, a person's feeling of limitation is a comparison of one's nature with one's existence at this particular time in history. Immediate existence seems inappropriate, in conflict with human essence. Fromm points out that not only is human essence a contradiction, but it is also one that demands a resolution. Both Fromm and Hegel see in the search for such a resolution the dynamic source for the world's positive religions: how can people find relief from this inner tension and be at home in the world?²⁸

Fromm claims that there is a progressive as well as a regressive resolution. The latter is exemplified by the attempt of primitive religion or severe psychopathology to do away with what makes us human—reason, freedom and self-awareness—and merge back into nature.²⁹ In civil society, regressive self-reconciliation takes place in the form of fascism.³⁰ The alternative is to find harmony through full development of all human productive and creative capabilities.³¹ According to Fromm, the progressive solution surfaced in the monotheistic teachings of Moses around 1350 B.C. The same idea was expressed in other times and cultures: by Lao-tse in China, Buddha in India, Zarathustra in Persia and in Israel by Jeremiah and Isaiah. Whatever the form of this message, the idea was the same: to answer the question of life by becoming fully human. But in Fromm's view, this message of reconciliation is perverted and falsified as soon as people hear it for they immediately idolize and ideologize God.³² Fromm's theory of religion is an attempt to motivate people to return to the authentic search for inner harmony. He does this in the context of negative theology.³³

The core of negative theology is that God is unknown—an idea that, according to Horkheimer, had its origins in Judaism.³⁴ In his work *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966), Fromm traces the development of the concept of God in the Old Testament and later Jewish tradition. Formulated over a period of 1200 years, what is common to the idea of God in the Old Testament is that ultimate reality, or the highest value, can be found neither in nature nor in human history. Rather, only the *One* represents supreme value and the final goal of humanity.³⁵ Fromm sees three stages in the evolution of this concept: first, God is visualized an absolute ruler who can arbitrarily destroy what he has created; second, in the Noah story, God makes a covenant with humanity, a step which prepares the way to complete human freedom, even from God; and third, to Moses God is revealed as the God of History rather

than the God of nature.³⁶ In that event, Fromm sees the most important distinction between God and idols: only idols have names, while Moses's God of history is nameless. According to Fromm, this uniquely Jewish prohibition against representations of God, expressed in the Second Commandment, finds its most advanced and radical formulation in the negative theology of Moses Maimonides in the Middle Ages.³⁷

Fromm concludes by saying that in the Jewish view the only thing that matters is that God *is*.³⁸ Since Jewish scholars attach little importance to speculation about God's nature, Judaism has not had a theological development comparable to that of Christianity. Rather, Jewish theology has always been a negative one in that the acknowledgement of God is fundamentally the negation of idols. Fromm's critical theory of religion, then, insofar as it is a negation of idols, is essentially negative theology. For Fromm, the history of humankind is the history of idol worship: from primitive idols of clay and wood against which the Jewish prophets fought, to the modern idols of the state—the leader, production and consumption, sex, car and career.

Fromm argues that negative theology can show that as an alienated individual is necessarily an idol worshipper since by transferring living powers onto an external thing the self must worship the thing in order to retain a measure of self-awareness.³⁹ In worshipping the idol, a person worships a limited, partial aspect of the self, limiting the self to that aspect and ceasing to grow. While the idol represents only an isolated part of the person, God stands for the totality. Therefore, one who tries to be like God approaches his or her own totality—the full development of one's creative powers.

According to Fromm, late medieval culture flourished because people followed the vision of the *City of God*. Modern civil society bloomed because people were energized by the vision of the growth of the *Earthly City of Progress*. In twentieth century advanced or organized capitalist society, however, this vision deteriorated to that of the *Tower of Babel*, which is now beginning to collapse and which will ultimately bury everyone in its ruins. If the *City of God* and the *Earthly City* were thesis and antithesis, then a new synthesis is the only alternative to chaos, barbarism and death: the synthesis between the spiritual core of the late medieval world and the development of rational thought and science since the Renaissance. In Fromm's vision, this synthesis is the *City of Being*. Fromm's critical theory of religion is from its very beginning in the *Dogma of Christ*, 46 years ago in Frankfurt, to its conclusion in his latest book, *To Have or to Be*, entirely devoted to the coming of this life-friendly *City of Being*. Throughout his life, Fromm has worked against the actualization of alternative Future I—the totally

28. Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

29. Fromm, *The Heart*, p. 118; cf. also Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York, 1970), chapter 5.

30. Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (New York, 1973), chapter 13; *The Heart*, p. 118; *Escape from Freedom*, chapter 6.

31. *The Heart*, pp. 118-119.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

33. Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods*, *op.cit.*, chapter 2.

34. Horkheimer, *Die Sehnsucht*, *op.cit.*, pp. 57-59.

35. Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods*, p. 22.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-32.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 48.



administered, technocratic, automated, and bureaucratic society and against alternative Future II—escalating wars and nuclear holocaust, and toward the alternative Future III—the reconciled, rational and free society.⁴⁰

Behind non-believing Jews such as Fromm, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse—searching today for a new meaning of human existence—rises a 3000 year history of faith of an intensity without comparison in world history, be it in relation to the faith itself or to the many attempts to liquidate it.⁴¹ From Fromm's critical theory of religion, it is obvious that the thorn of being chosen has bored itself deeply into the Jewish flesh, whether Jews try to rebel against this determination, repress it or transform it into the program of a non-theistic dialectical anthropology and eschatology, anticipating the City of Being, the humanistic society. Fromm's theory is mainly a critique of ideology—the justification of unjust relations, false consciousness, necessary appearance, untruth—but something remains of religion after it is de-ideologized: the X-experience and with it, the anticipation of the City of Being, the truly rational and free society. In reality, Fromm does not transcend the negative theology of Judaism, but rediscovers in it the polemical and revolutionary content it always had—perfect social justice.

40. *To Have or to Be*, *op. cit.*, p. 202; cf. also Ossip K. Flechtheim, *Futurologie. Der Kampf um die Zukunft* (Cologne, 1971), chapter 9, especially pp. 396-397.

41. Cf. Walter Strolz, "Sinnfragen nicht-glaubender Juden," *Frankfurter Hefte*, 31:3 (March 1976), pp. 25-34; cf. also Fromm, *The Heart*, chapter 4; *You Shall Be as Gods*, chapters 2-3; *To Have or to Be*, p. 202; and *You Shall Be as Gods*, pp. 53, 57, 61.

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