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The aim of this study is to explore, analyze and evaluate the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm's critical theory of religion.<sup>1</sup> Fromm initiated his critical theory of religion during the 1930s in the framework of the critical theory of society, which the social philosopher Max Horkheimer developed in the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt on the Main, Germany, the Left Hegelian Frankfurt School of philosophy and sociology.<sup>2</sup>

Since the 1940s Horkheimer and his colleagues in the Frankfurt Institute, Theodor W. Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, have again and again singled out their former collaborator Fromm as a representative of the "revisionist theory" and have accused him of having changed after his departure from the Institute at the end of the 1930s from radical thinker and critique of civil society into a spokesman for adjustment to the status quo.<sup>3</sup> Fromm's theories, so Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse have criticized, are philosophically idealistic, advising conformity to the present capitalistic society, and only paying lip service to the criticism of this same society. Has Fromm, the former member of the Frankfurt School, indeed betrayed its critical social theory from the 1940s to the 1970s?

It is certainly a fact, that Fromm has accommodated himself more to the American civilization than Horkheimer, Adorno, or Marcuse.<sup>4</sup> It is also correct to say that Fromm by far does not negate the capitalistic society and civilization so radically and totally as Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse. It is nevertheless our thesis, to be proven in this paper, that Fromm's theory of religion, the coronation of his whole life work as a psychoanalyst, up to his last book To Have or To Be of 1976 is as critical as Horkheimer's, Adorno's and Marcuse's critical theory of religion.<sup>5</sup> For Fromm as for Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, critique means not only, as for the positivists, clarification, but also and much more so, as for Hegel, Marx and Freud,

human liberation.<sup>6</sup> Fromm's theory of religion, like that of Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, combines critical Hegelian, Marxian and Freudian elements.<sup>7</sup> Certainly Fromm's theory of religion culminates in a negative theology, but so does that of Horkheimer and Adorno.<sup>8</sup> In Fromm's theory of religion, negative theology contradicts as little as in that of Horkheimer and Adorno the critical character of the Frankfurt School's theory of society.<sup>9</sup> Rather, negative theology constitutes the very center and foundation of the critical theory.<sup>10</sup> It is our purpose to show, that Fromm's theory of religion does not only rise out of the context of the Frankfurt Institute's critical social theory, but that it also remains faithful to the latter in its essential elements and that furthermore it constitutes an outstanding contribution to the further development of the critical theory of society.

#### Humanistic "Religiosity"

Fromm's critical theory of religion is like that of Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse from its very beginning in the early Frankfurt Institute to its preliminary conclusion in the book To Have or To Be intended for those men and women--living in the 20th century, a century without God, characterized by irreligious Marxism, Freudianism and logistic positivism and social revolutions--who are no longer authentically rooted in theistic religion, be it Judaism, Christianity or Mohammendanism.<sup>11</sup> According to Fromm, for these men and women the crucial question is that of conversion to a humanistic "religiosity" without positive religion, without dogmas, and institutions. It is long prepared by the movement of non-theistic religiousness from Buddha over Maimonides, Master Eckhart, Spinoza and Hegel to Karl Marx.<sup>12</sup> In Fromm's view, modern men and women are not at all confronted with the mere choice between selfish bourgeois materialism and the acceptance of the Christian concept of God, the Trinity and Incarnation.<sup>13</sup> Fromm predicts in 1976 that in the future, social life itself in all its aspects--in marriage and family, society, state and culture--will be the expression of the religious spirit.<sup>14</sup> No separate positive





religion will any longer be necessary. Fromm's demand for a new non-theistic, non-institutionalized religious<sup>ness</sup> is not necessarily an attack on the existing positive religions in civil society. For Fromm, this does mean however that, for instance, the Roman Catholic Church, beginning with the Roman bureaucracy, must convert itself to the spirit of the gospels. Fromm's demand does not mean, that the socialist countries must be desocialized and must return to private capitalism, but that their fake socialism shall be replaced by a genuine humanist socialism or socialist humanism.

### Jewish Tradition

Fromm was born into a religious Jewish family in Frankfurt, in 1900.<sup>15</sup> Fromm, like Horkheimer and Adorno grew up in the Jewish tradition.<sup>16</sup> Fromm remembers in his autobiography of 1962 that the writings of the Old Testament touched and exhilarated him as a boy more than anything else he was exposed to in his family.<sup>17</sup> But not all writings of the Old Testament interested Fromm to the same degree. He was bored by or even disliked the history of the conquest of Canaan by the Hebrews. He had no use for the stories of Mordecai or Esther. Before his fourteenth year Fromm did also not appreciate the highly erotic Song of Songs. But Fromm was impressed deeply by the story of Adam's and Eve's disobedience, of Abraham's pleading with God for the salvation of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Jonah's mission to Niniveh. More than anything else, the young Fromm was moved by the prophetic writings, by Isaiah, Amos and Hosea. More than their warnings and their announcements of disaster, Fromm was interested in the prophet's promise of the end of days, when nations shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; when nation shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; when all nations will be friends; and when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

The Old Testament vision of universal peace and harmony between nations touched



Fromm deeply when he was about twelve or thirteen years of age, shortly before World War I.<sup>18</sup> In his autobiography, Fromm discovers the immediate reason for his absorption by the Old Testament's idea of peace and internationalism in the situation in which he found himself in his youth: a Jewish boy in a Christian environment, experiencing in the otherwise rather liberal city of Frankfurt small episodes of anti-semitism and, more importantly, a feeling of clanishness on the Christian as well as on the Jewish side. Fromm disliked clanishness all the more so because he had an overwhelming wish to transcend the emotional isolation of a lonely pampered boy. Nothing could be more exciting and beautiful for the young Fromm than the Old Testament vision of universal brotherhood, peace, solidarity, love and justice.

As we can trace Horkheimer's critical theory of religion down to the novels and diary pages he wrote during World War I, so can we find the roots of Fromm's critical theory of religion in his preoccupation with the Old Testament during his adolescence and particularly with the prophetic vision of a peaceful, reconciled society.<sup>19</sup> This prophetic vision is the red thread which leads through the whole development of Fromm's critical theory of religion. It is as alive today for the seventy-six year old thinker Fromm, living in New York, as it was once for the boy, Erich, living in Frankfurt, and maybe even more so.<sup>20</sup>

#### World War I

Fromm speculates in his autobiography, that all these experiences of his childhood in Frankfurt would not have affected him so deeply and lastingly had it not been for the event that determined more than anything else his further development: the First World War.<sup>21</sup> When the war started in August 1914, the excitement of war, the celebration of early victories, the tragedy of the death of individual soldiers were uppermost in the experience of the fourteen year old Fromm. But soon an experience with one of his teachers in the humanistic high school, to which he went, helped to change Fromm's attitude toward war. Fromm's Latin teacher in his lessons during the



two years before the war had proclaimed as his favorite maxim the sentence: Si vis pacem para bellum. This same teacher showed his greatest delight, when the war broke out. The young Fromm recognized, that the teacher's alleged concern for peace could not have been true. Fromm asked himself the question, how it was possible, that a man who always seemed so concerned with the preservation of peace should now be so jubilant about the war? From this time on Fromm found it difficult to believe in the principle, that armament preserves peace, even when advocated by people possessing more good will and honesty than his Latin teacher in the humanistic gymnasium in Frankfurt.

When the war ended in 1918, the eighteen year old Fromm was a deeply troubled young man.<sup>22</sup> He was obsessed by the question of how war was possible? He felt the deep wish to understand the irrationality of human mass behaviour. He was driven by the passionate desire for peace and international understanding. More important even, Fromm had become deeply suspicious of all official ideologies and proclamations be they religious or secular. He had become filled with the conviction, that everything between heaven and earth must be doubted.

Up to the present, Fromm's theory of religion is fundamentally as sceptical as that of Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse.<sup>23</sup> It is essentially, like the critical social theory of the Frankfurt School in general, ideology critique, that is critique of any justification of unjustifiable social conditions, socially necessary false appearance and consciousness.<sup>24</sup> The roots of Fromm's theory of religion as ideology critique lie in his experiences with political and religious ideology before, during and shortly after World War I.<sup>25</sup>

### Marx and Freud

By the end of World War I, Fromm was extremely eager for an answer to his very troubling questions with regard to individual and social phenomena.<sup>26</sup> Fromm found answers to his questions both in the teachings of Marx and Sigmund Freud. At the same time Fromm was also stimulated by the antithesis between the Marxian and the Freudian system. He wanted to solve the contradictions between the two systems.



The older Fromm grew and the more he studied intensely the writings of Marx and Freud, the more he doubted certain assumptions within their systems. Fromm wanted to understand the laws that govern the lives of individual men and women as well as society, that is, men and women in their social existence. Fromm tried to find the lasting truth in Marx's theory of man and society as against those assumptions, which were in need of revision under changed circumstances in civil society. Fromm tried to do the same in relation to Freud's theory. Finally, Fromm made the attempt to arrive at a synthesis, which followed from the understanding and the criticism of Marx and Freud. Ultimately Fromm integrated the revised Freudian theory of the individual into the revised Marxian theory of society. Fromm's theory of religion is constituted by revised Marxian and Freudian elements.<sup>27</sup>

According to Fromm, his endeavor to unite Marxian and Freudian theory did not take place solely by means of theoretical speculation.<sup>28</sup> Throughout his life Fromm believed in the superior value of blending empirical observation with philosophical speculation. According to Fromm much of the trouble with modern social science is that it often contains empirical datas without philosophical speculation; that it separates absolutely science and philosophy; that it is entirely positivistic and as such chained to the positivistic rules of phenomenalism, nominalism, value freedom and the unity of natural science methodology; that as such it participates in the positivistic alienation of human reason.<sup>29</sup> More precisely, Fromm, like Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, combines empirical observation of facts, so characteristic of the positivistically oriented social sciences particularly in the United States, with Hegel's dialectical logic.<sup>30</sup> Fromm has always tried to let his dialectical thinking be guided by the observation of datas. He has always striven to revise his dialectical theories, when the observation seemed to warrant it. Fromm's critical theory of religion is empirical as well as speculative or dialectical. It is dialectical philosophy as well as critical psychology and sociology of religion.<sup>31</sup> It is as interdisciplinary as the Frankfurt School's critical social theory in its totality.<sup>32</sup>



Fromm sees religion always concretely, that is, in connection with individual, society, culture and history.<sup>33</sup>

### House of Learning

In his early twenties, Fromm, along with his friend Leo Lowenthal, joined the circle of Jewish intellectuals surrounding the charismatic Rabbi Nehemia A. Nobel.<sup>34</sup> It included such figures as Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Siegfried Kracauer and Ernst Simon. This group gave rise to the famed Free Jewish House of Learning in Frankfurt in 1920. Fromm was instrumental in the formation of this celebrated House of Learning together with Georg Salzberg and Rosenzweig. Fromm lost the outward form of his Jewish orthodoxy only in 1926 after he was analyzed for the first time in Munich, Germany. But a deep attitude of humanistic, non-theistic religiousness remains nevertheless with Fromm throughout his later work and becomes even more intense through the years and finds its most adequate expression in his critical theory of religion.<sup>35</sup>

Fromm has often been characterized as retaining secular versions of Jewish themes in his work, particularly in his certainly secular theory of religion, even after he left the Jewish Orthodoxy in the mid 1920s.<sup>36</sup> For Fromm as for Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and Walter Benjamin, nothing of the traditional theological contents will continue unchanged into the future.<sup>37</sup> All theological contents--resurrection from the dead, last judgment, eternal life, God, sin, repentance--must undergo the test of immigrating into the dimension of the secular, the profane.

Frequent comparisons have been made between Fromm's work and other members of the Frankfurt House of Learning, particularly Martin Buber.<sup>38</sup> What Fromm absorbed from his Jewish antecedents is very similar to that taken by Horkheimer, Adorno and Benjamin.<sup>39</sup> While stressing like Horkheimer and Adorno the non-representational quality of truth and the impossibility of defining the essence not only of God, but also of man, Fromm affirmed nevertheless unlike the latter the notion of a philosophical



anthropology.<sup>40</sup> Like Buber and other Jewish intellectuals in the House of Learning, Fromm always understood man's nature as something created through relatedness to the world and the interaction with others.<sup>41</sup> Throughout his whole intellectual work inside and outside the Frankfurt Institute Fromm affirmed the reality of a human nature.<sup>42</sup> It was, however not a fixed, static concept like the Roman natura. It was rather an idea of man's potential nature, similar to the Greek physis. Fromm always put great emphasis on the anthropological implications of Hegel's philosophy of society and of history and of Marx's Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts.<sup>43</sup> Of those associated with the Frankfurt School, Fromm most often employed the Hegelian-Marxian notion of alienation.<sup>44</sup> In attempting to ground his vision of a perfected man and a sane society in man's essential nature, Fromm sought glimpses of that nature in the writings of the great masters of the past as Maimonides, Eckhart, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel.<sup>45</sup> In the 1940s Fromm went beyond psychology, to a humanistic ethical system also based on human nature.<sup>46</sup> It is most completely expressed in Fromm's book Man for Himself of 1947.<sup>47</sup> Fromm's theory of religion is from its very beginning in his book The Dogma of Christ of 1930 to its preliminary end in To Have Or To of 1976, anthropologically grounded.<sup>48</sup> At the same time Fromm in his theory of religion remained like Horkheimer, Adorno, Lowenthal and Benjamin interested in the negative theology of Judaism, expressed most clearly in the Jewish prohibition against making images of the Absolute.<sup>49</sup>

### Frankfurt Institute

Lowenthal, who had been a friend of Fromm since 1918 and was a member of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research since 1926, introduced him as one of three psychoanalysts brought into the latter's inner circle around 1929.<sup>50</sup> The inner circle of the Frankfurt Institute coalesced around its second director, Horkheimer. It consisted of Friedrich Pollock, Adorno, Marcuse, Lowenthal and finally Fromm. The critical social theory, which forms the Frankfurt Institute's historical achievement, is really the work of Horkheimer and of his cooperators in its inner circle. The critical theory of society, to which Fromm contributed directly and

decisively at least during the 1930s, is rooted in the Central European tradition of philosophy, particularly in the social philosophy of Georg W.F. Hegel.<sup>51</sup> It is open to contemporary empirical techniques.<sup>52</sup> It is addressed to current social problems in capitalistic and socialistic society. Fromm's critical theory of religion is an integral part of the Frankfurt Institute's social theory and can fully be understood only in its context.

The work to which the Frankfurt Institute devoted itself before its emigration from Germany in 1933, when Hitler came into power--for instance Fromm's study on the German workers or Horkheimer's, Marcuse's and Fromm's work on Authority and Family--meant something new in comparison to the then official educational system in Europe and America.<sup>53</sup> It meant the ability to pursue critical, non-administrative philosophical, sociological and psychological research for which the Western universities still offered no opportunity.<sup>54</sup> The enterprise succeeded only because a group of intellectuals like Horkheimer, Marcuse, Adorno, Fromm, etc., interested in social theory and from different scholarly backgrounds, came together with the belief that formulating the negative in the present worldhistorical transition period was more meaningful than academic careers. What united these intellectuals was the critical approach to the existing civil and socialistic society. While Fromm appears in his theories, including the theory of religion, somewhat more conciliatory in relation to modern society than the other critical theorists, he portrays the negativity of it hardly less dramatically than Horkheimer, Adorno or Marcuse.<sup>55</sup>

#### Western Marxism

Horkheimer belongs to the most important founders of a philosophically oriented Marx interpretation.<sup>56</sup> It is quite different from the dominant philosophical trends in the 1920s and 1930s. So Horkheimer rejected all the attempts, customary since Bernstein and the whole revisionism movement, to amalgamate the Marxian teaching in an external fashion with neo-Kantian, positivistic-pragmatistic or later on phenomono-



logical and existential-philosophical motifs. For Horkheimer a really productive, progressive appropriation of the dialectical materialism was necessarily connected with a precise analysis of the historical as well as essential significance of Hegel for Marx.<sup>57</sup> Still as late as 1858 Marx had called Hegel's dialectical logic unconditionally the ultimate word of all philosophy.<sup>58</sup> At the same time Marx pointed out, that it is necessary to free dialectics from the mystical appearance, which it still has with Hegel. For Hegel the dialectical logic had been the system of the pure reason, the realm of pure thought, the dimension of truth as it is without cover in and for itself: the representation of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of the nature and of a finite human spirit.<sup>59</sup>

Horkheimer read Hegel in terms of the double Marxian imperative: he accepted the dialectical method and tried to emancipate it from its mystical, that is, theological content.<sup>60</sup> Horkheimer's mode of reading Hegel had little in common with the academic Hegel Renaissance, as it began before World War I in Italy, when Benedetto Croce volunteered to pick apart somewhat arrogantly what is still alive and what is already dead in Hegel's philosophy.<sup>61</sup> Only too often the academic Hegel Renaissance distorted Hegel's philosophy, be it in terms of neo-Kantianism or in terms of a life-philosophical, phenomenological or existentialistic irrationalism and a Prussian authoritarianism and conservatism.<sup>62</sup> In both cases Hegel's dialectical method was eliminated. The Frankfurt School is fundamentally Hegelian. Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse, the Frankfurt Institute's leading men, are Hegelians.<sup>63</sup> Also Fromm's theories, particularly his theory of religion, are unthinkable and impossible without the Hegelian dialectical logic in secularized form.<sup>64</sup>

Horkheimer's and the other critical theorists turn to Hegel, the last great Greek and Christian philosopher and at the same time the philosopher of modernity par excellence is closely connected with the great intellectual movement, which Maurice Merleau-Ponty has called the specifically "Western" Marxism.<sup>65</sup> It is the attempt of Georg Lukacs and Karl Korsch to work out in recourse to Hegel the phi-



losophical content of a materialistic dialectics, in likewise decisive opposition to the Soviet and to the Social Democratic Orthodoxies of the 1920s. Lukacs applied the first time and in principle the Marxian category of commodity fetishism and reification to the epistemeological problematic in contemporary philosophy in his famous book History and Class Consciousness of 1923.<sup>66</sup> Lukacs' influence is manifest in the work of Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Bloch, Benjamin as well as of Fromm.<sup>67</sup>

Korsch launched a sharp polemic against the social-Darwinistic distortions of the Marxian teaching in Kautsky's work The Materialistic Concept of History of 1927 in his book of the same title of 1928.<sup>68</sup> The merit of the early writings of Lukacs and Korsch consisted in the fact, that they posited qualitatively new criteria for the interpretation of Marx by finally breaking with the dogmatic tradition of the II. International, which continued in the later Kautskyanism as well as in the Marxism-Leninism codified in Russia after Lenin's death. Both Orthodoxies attacked Lukacs and Korsch vehemently. Both Orthodoxies did so with the same objectivistic, positivistic arguments, which idolized the methodology of the natural sciences. Fromm as well as Marcuse, Horkheimer and Adorno developed their antipositivistic, dialectical work including their theory of religion in the context of Western Marxism or what he prefers to call socialist humanism or humanist socialism.<sup>69</sup>

### Marxism and Fascism

Around 1930 Horkheimer and his colleagues, including Fromm, were convinced of the probability of a National Socialistic victory in Germany as well as of the fact, that it could be met only through revolutionary practice.<sup>70</sup> That indeed a second world war would be needed in order to overcome Hitler fascism, the critical theorists did not yet envision at that time. They rather thought of an uprising of the German workers against Hitler and the magnates of industry and banking who paid him.<sup>71</sup> Because of that, Marxism won its decisive meaning for Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Fromm.<sup>72</sup>



In 1929, so Fromm remembers in 1964 in his book The Heart of Man, there were factors which made the Germans inclined to move toward Nazism.<sup>73</sup> There existed an embittered and sadistic Catholic and Protestant lower middle class, whose mentality had been formed between 1918 and 1923. The depression of 1929 caused large scale unemployment. The Social Democratic leaders had tolerated the continually increasing strength of Germany's militaristic forces. The leaders of heavy industry were afraid of anticapitalistic developments. In their tactics the communists considered the Social Democrats to be their main enemies. A half crazy, though gifted opportunistic demagogue, Hitler offered his services to the German people. On the other hand, there existed in Germany strong anti-Nazi working class parties. There were powerful trade unions. There existed an anti-Nazi liberal middle class. Germany had a tradition of culture and humanism, including religious humanism and humanistic religion. According to Fromm, the inclining factors on both sides were balanced in such a way that in 1929 a defeat of Nazism could still have been a real possibility. But the German workers did not only not overthrow Hitler, but followed him even up to the total disaster of Stalingrad in 1943 and even beyond.<sup>74</sup>

### Proletariat

The critical theory was developed in the Frankfurt Institute partly in response to the failure of the traditional orthodox Marxism to explain the reluctance of the German and European proletariat to fill its historical role to liberate mankind from capitalism and to establish a socialistic and finally a communistic society.<sup>75</sup> One of the primary reasons for Horkheimer's early interest in psychoanalysis had been the help it might give in accounting for the psychological "cement" of society. Accordingly, when he assumed the reigns of the Frankfurt Institute in 1930, one of the first tasks he announced was an empirical study of the mentality of workers in the Weimar Republic.<sup>76</sup>

Although never actually completed satisfactorily, this study of the mentality of



the German workers was the first real effort of the Frankfurt Institute to apply the critical theory to a concrete, empirically verifiable problem.<sup>77</sup> The study was directed by Fromm and had a number of collaborators, including E. Schachtel. Paul Lazarsfeld acted as statistical advisor for the labor project. Approximately three thousand questionnaires were distributed to workers asking their views on such issues as education of children, the rationalization of industry, the possibility of avoiding a new war, and the locus of the real power in civil society and state. Adolf Levenstein had been the first to use an interpretative questionnaire in 1912. But Fromm's psychoanalytical training allowed him to develop a more sophisticated characterology based on the modified Freudian types he evolved in the Frankfurt Institute's Journal for Social Research. Adorno used the same interpretative method as Fromm, but with even greater refinement, in his cooperative work the Authoritarian Personality of 1950, emphasizing religious data.<sup>78</sup> Fromm himself applied the same interpretative method once more in his study Social Character in a Mexican Village of 1970, also emphasizing religious facts.<sup>79</sup>

Fromm wanted to ascertain in his study on the character of German workers around 1930 in Germany what the chances were for Hitler's being defeated by the majority of the population.<sup>80</sup> According to Fromm in 1930 the majority of the German population, especially the workers, were against Nazism. They were on the side of democracy as had been demonstrated by political and shop steward elections. The question was, if the workers would fight for their ideas in the event that it came to a fight. The premise of the Frankfurt labor study was, that it is one thing to have an opinion and another to have a conviction. Anyone can acquire an opinion, just as one can learn a foreign language or a foreign custom. But only those opinions which are rooted in the character structure of a person, behind which there is the energy contained in the character, only those opinions become convictions. The effect of ideas, political or religious, while these are easy to accept if the majority proclaims them, depends to a large extent on the character structure of a person in a critical



situation. According to Fromm, character, as Heracleitos and Hegel said and Freud demonstrated, is the fate of man.<sup>81</sup> The character structure decides what kind of an idea a man will choose.<sup>82</sup> It also decides the force of the idea a man has chosen. In Fromm's view this is indeed the great importance of Freud's concept of character--that it transcends the traditional concept of behaviour and speaks of that behaviour which is dynamically charged, so that a man not only thinks in certain ways, but his very thought is rooted in his inclinations and emotions.

The question which Fromm asked in his Frankfurt labor study was: To what extent do German workers have a character structure which is opposite to the authoritarian idea of Nazism.<sup>83</sup> That implied still another question: To what extent will the German workers, in the critical hour fight Hitler fascism? The result of Fromm's study was, that roughly speaking ten percent of the German workers had what critical theorists call from that time on an authoritarian character structure or an authoritarian personality.<sup>84</sup> The latter combines a political category, that of the authoritarian structure of state, society and family, with a psychological category, namely the character structure, which forms the basis for such a familial, social and political structure.<sup>85</sup> According to Fromm's labor study about fifteen percent of the German workers had a democratic-revolutionary character structure during the three years before Hitler took power in 1933. About seventy-five percent of the German workers showed during this same time span a character structure which was a mixture of the authoritarian and the democratic extreme.

The method used by Fromm in his labor study was to examine the individually formulated answers to the open-ended interpretative questionnaire, by interpreting their unintended, unconscious meaning, in distinction to the manifest answer.<sup>86</sup> If a worker, for instance, answered the question "Which men in history do you admire mostly?" by saying "Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon, Marx and Lenin," Fromm interpreted the answer as authoritarian, because the combination shows, that he ad-



mired dictators and military leaders. If the answer was "Socrates, Pasteur, Kant, Marx, Lenin," Fromm classified the worker as democratic-revolutionary because he admired benefactors of mankind and not people with power.

Fromm assumed theoretically in his labor study that the authoritarians would be ardent Nazis, the democratic-revolutionary personalities militant anti-Nazis, and that the majority would be neither one nor the other.<sup>87</sup> According to Fromm these theoretical assumptions turned out to be more or less accurate, as events in the years between 1933 and 1945 showed. There are no data available, which show exactly the political attitudes of workers under Hitler, except that, for instance, Hitler discontinued the shop stewards' elections because, in spite of pressure and terror, the Nazis could not obtain a majority among the German workers.<sup>88</sup> In Fromm's view there is little doubt that while the figures of the labor study were not necessarily exact, they correspond nevertheless to an order of magnitude which existed among the German workers under Hitler. The vast majority of German workers were neither ardent Nazis nor passionate fighters against fascism. A small minority became genuine converts to Nazism. A larger minority of German workers remained faithful to their anti-Nazi convictions and fought fascism in whatever way they could. Hitler's concentration camps were full of German workers--socialists, communists, Christians, Jews, Russians, Poles. Here Fromm does not want to say, of course, that all ardent anti-fascists had a democratic-revolutionary character structure. The figures in Fromm's labor report represent trends, affinities, correlations and do not pretend to make statements about every individual in the groupings of authoritarian democratic-revolutionary and mixed democratic-authoritarian personalities.

Despite the pre-science of its conclusions--the German working class was, in fact, to accept Nazism without any really effective resistance--Fromm's labor study was never actually published by the Frankfurt Institute.<sup>89</sup> As late as 1939 plans were still afoot to have it appear as The German Workers under the Weimar Republic.





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But with Fromm's departure from the Frankfurt Institute in 1929 went a major reason for its publication. Fromm argues, that Horkheimer and he differed over the value of the work and that therefore it was not published. This quarrel, in fact, contributed to the break between the two critical theorists. But the questionnaire Fromm had developed in his labor study, was incorporated into the next major project of the Frankfurt Institute, The Studies on Authority and Family of 1936, directed by Horkheimer.<sup>90</sup> Also Fromm worked some of the Frankfurt labor project's findings into subsequent studies of religious and secular authoritarianism, such as his book, Escape from Freedom of 1941.<sup>91</sup>

#### Dogma of Christ

In the same year, 1930, when he initiated the Frankfurt labor study, Fromm published his first book in the field of religion--The Dogma of Christ.<sup>92</sup> It contains in a nutshell not only Fromm's whole Marxian and Freudian theory of religion, but also his entire critical theory of society.<sup>93</sup> Marx had stated in his "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," that the

". . .criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism.

The profane existence of error is discredited after its heavenly oratio pro aris et focis has been rejected. Man who looked for a superman in the fantastic reality of heaven and found nothing there but the reflexion of himself, will no longer be disposed to find but the semblance of himself, the non-human where he seeks and must seek his true reality."<sup>94</sup>

For the strict Marxist Fromm of 1930, his critical theory of religion, articulated the first time in his work The Dogma of Christ is the premise for his humanistic critical theory of society, individual and culture to be produced in the next 46 years.<sup>95</sup> Fromm, for whom up to today Marx's work is the key to the understanding of history and the manifestation in secular terms, of the radical humanism expressed in the Messianic vision of the Old Testament prophets, rejects in his critical theory of religion the "speech for the altars and hearth", that is religious ideology, so that he may discredit the untruth of modern society. In his theory of re-



ligion, Fromm is no longer willing to find the non-human where he seeks and must see man's true reality.

Already the theory of society underlining Fromm's Frankfurt labor study presupposes his critical theory of religion worked out in the Dogma of Christ.<sup>96</sup> Fromm wrote this book in a period of his life, when he was not only a strict Marxist, but also a strict Freudian as well.<sup>97</sup> Fromm stresses in his first work on religion the social function of religion as a substitute for real satisfaction and as a means for social control. Already in 1930 for Fromm the history of religions reflects the history of man's spiritual evolution, his humanization process.

Fromm's book The Dogma of Christ was the first work in which the attempt was made to transcend the psychologistic approach to historical and social phenomena so customary in psychological literature even up to today.<sup>98</sup> Fromm had been stimulated to write his book on the development of the Christological dogma in the church of Antiquity by the paper on the same subject written by one of his teachers at the Psychoanalytic Institute, in Berlin, Germany, -Theodor Reik. He had employed the traditional psychoanalytic method. Fromm tried to show, following not only Freud, but also Marx, that we cannot understand people by their ideas and ideologies. According to Fromm, we can understand ideas and ideologies only by understanding the people, who create them and believe in them, in their real life conditions. Marx had described in The Capital the truly critical method of a truly scientific religion in the following way:

"The technology reveals the active behaviour of man toward nature, the immediate process of the production of his life, thereby also of his social conditions of life and the spiritual representations flowing from the former. Even all history of religion, which abstracts from this material basis is uncritical. It is indeed much easier to find through analysis the earthly core of the religious fog formations, than vice versa, to develop from each real condition of life its deified form. The latter is the only materialistic and therefore scientific method."<sup>99</sup>

Fromm's theory of religion, explicated in the Dogma of Christ, is in Marxian terms critical, materialistic and scientific in the sense that it does not explain people





and their life conditions from above by their ideas and ideologies, but rather vice versa their ideas and ideologies from below by their real life conditions and their interaction, their metabolism with nature.<sup>100</sup>

In doing this, Fromm transcends individual psychology and enters the field of psychoanalytical-social psychology.<sup>101</sup> Thus in dealing with ideologies and ideas, particularly religious ideas and ideologies, for instance the idea of Christ in the old church, Fromm studies the social and economic conditions of the people who accept them and tries to recognize, what he later called their "social character" a concept which is already operative in his Frankfurt labor study.<sup>102</sup>

The main emphasis of Fromm's study in classical Christology is the Marxian analysis of the socio-economic situation of the social groups which accepted and transmitted Christian teaching in Antiquity.<sup>103</sup> His main question is: To what extent was the struggle between Right and Left Christologists in the church of Antiquity economically and socially conditioned?<sup>104</sup> It is only on the basis of this Marxian analysis that Fromm attempts a Freudian psychoanalytic interpretation.<sup>105</sup> Fromm developed the method of the application of psychoanalysis to historical phenomena on the basis of the Marxian analysis of the socio-economic conditions in all his subsequent books written between 1930 and 1976.<sup>106</sup> While Fromm has refined his Marxian-Freudian analysis of social and historical phenomena in many ways during the last almost half century, its nucleus is contained in the work The Dogma of Christ in a form, which is still of great interest even today.

### Subjectivity

Fromm's theory of religion, as it appears the first time clearly in the book The Dogma of Christ does not only presuppose the Freudian and the Marxian enlightenment, but also already the bourgeois enlightenment of the 18th and early 19th centuries.<sup>107</sup> Fromm's theory of religion combines in itself elements of the bourgeois, Marxian, and Freudian enlightenment as does the critical social theory of the Frankfurt

School in general.<sup>108</sup> Fromm's theory of religion can be fully understood only from the roots it has in the bourgeois, Marxian, and Freudian enlightenment.

Hegel, the most outstanding philosopher of religion in Modern Europe, states in the introduction to his philosophy of religion, that the bourgeois enlighteners demand, that man should no longer posit the knowledge of God into the comprehending reason.<sup>109</sup> Rather, the consciousness of God springs from feeling alone. The enlightened man must no longer pull the religious relationship over into the dimension of rational thinking. According to Hegel—who is not only an enlightener but also a believer/—if God is removed— from the realm of rational insight, the necessary substantial subjectivity, then nothing remains to be done, other than to ascribe to him the area of the contingent subjectivity, the realm of feeling.<sup>110</sup> Hegel is amazed that in the process of bourgeois enlightenment any objectivity is still attributed to God at all.<sup>111</sup>

In Hegel's view in this point the materialistic, that is, empiristic, positivistic, historicistic or naturalistic theorists of religion are at least more consequential than the subjective-idealistic bourgeois enlighteners.<sup>112</sup> As the materialists take man's spirit and thinking for something material and reduce them to sensations, they identify also God as a product of feeling and therefore deny to him objectivity. The result is then atheism. So God is a historical product of man's weakness, fear, joy, or selfish hope, or greed and lust for domination. In Hegel's perspective what is rooted merely in an individual's feeling, is only for him, his property, but not its own property, not independent in and for itself. According to Hegel, bourgeois agnosticism leads with logical necessity to socialistic atheism.

Against this development Hegel finds it necessary, first of all to show, that God has not only man's feeling for his roots.<sup>113</sup> God is not only the God of this particular individual, his property. The bourgeois enlighteners had privatized religion. Hegel wants to deprivatize once more the knowledge of God. The bourgeoisie had thingified God into the property of the individual. Hegel wants to de-reify the God concept. According to Hegel the medieval metaphysicians and theologians,



as Anselm of Canterbury, Thomas Aquinas, or Master Eckhart, have always first of all proven, that God is and not merely a feeling of God.<sup>114</sup> In Hegel's perspective, the philosophy of religion of Modern Time is also under the obligation first of all to prove, that God is.<sup>115</sup> When Hegel died on November 14, 1831, the last work on his desk, determined for publication, consisted of a revision of the Medieval proofs of the existence of God.<sup>116</sup> This work remained a torso. Today critical political theologians, like Johannes B. Metz, Gustavo Gutierrez, Camillo Torres and Rubem A. Alves continue Hegel's program to deprivatize the knowledge of God and to promote a new proof of God--a political proof of God.<sup>117</sup>

For Fromm, the author of The Dogma of Christ, the knowledge of God is as for the bourgeois enlighteners, mentioned by Hegel, a matter of feeling rather than of reason, of the contingent rather than of the substantial subjectivity.<sup>118</sup> In a certain sense, Fromm can be called a bourgeois agnostic. But Fromm, working between 1929 and 1932 in the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research--and being during this time a strict Marxist and Freudian, as the materialists in Hegel's time, does not ascribe objectivity to God.<sup>119</sup> For Fromm, God is not a reality in and for himself, which he still was for the bourgeois agnostic enlighteners.<sup>120</sup> Like Ernst Bloch, Fromm sees in the belief in the objective reality of God mere superstition.<sup>121</sup> Fromm's theory of religion is like that of the materialists in the beginning of the 19th century and like that of Marx and Freud empiristic, historicistic and naturalistic. Fromm has drawn the logical conclusion from bourgeois agnosticism, which is atheism.<sup>122</sup> Fromm participates in the reductio ad hominem characteristic of all secular enlightenment movements in Antiquity and Modern Time. For Fromm as for Horkheimer, God is the product of human feeling, certainly not only of weakness, fear, egotistic hope, greed and will to power, but also and maybe much more so of joy, of the longing for life, peace, brotherhood, internationalism, solidarity, freedom, love, justice, reason.<sup>123</sup> Fromm, like Hegel, admires the great masters of medieval metaphysics and theory, particularly Maimonides and Eckhart.<sup>124</sup> But unlike the great masters, including Hegel, and very much like

Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse, Fromm is not able to prove that God is, but only that there is a feeling of God in man: that there is religion.<sup>125</sup> While Hegel was still a believer and an enlightener, Fromm like Marx and Freud, is exclusively a humanistic enlightener.<sup>126</sup> While the critical political theologians of today continue Hegel's theology and humanism, Fromm promotes exclusively his humanism, his idea of a free man living in a free society.<sup>127</sup>

### Religious Relationship

Hegel has in his teaching of God, which is part of his philosophy of religion first of all God before himself separate from the world as nature and history.<sup>128</sup> But then Hegel is also concerned in his philosophy of religion with God's relationship to men, the religious relationship. According to Hegel, for the medieval theologians and metaphysicians this religious relationship did not really belong to the teaching of God.<sup>129</sup> In the Lutheran Hegel's view, the modern protestant theology is more concerned with the religious relationship, that is, religion, than with God.<sup>130</sup> The modern theologians demand that man must have religion. That is the main thing. But the bourgeois theologians posit it as entirely indifferent, if man knows something of God or not. The modern theologians may also consider the knowledge of God as something entirely subjective. In reality, the bourgeois theologians cannot know what God is. According to Hegel, contrary to this protestant theological position, the Medieval theologians and metaphysicians considered and determined more the essence of God than the nature of religion. Hegel is certainly willing to recognize the truth, which lies in the fact that God cannot be considered in separation from man's subjective spirit. But according to Hegel this is so, not because God is something unknown, but because God is essentially spirit, a knowing subject.

Hegel is not able to speak of God in separation from man since God is for him like for the mystic Eckhart the absolute subject, objectifying himself in man's spirit and returning to himself in his externalization.<sup>131</sup> According to Hegel, older theologians like Eckhart were able to comprehend most intimately the depth of the





Divine Reality in the power of faith and the dialectical notion: the dialectical unity of universality, particularity and singularity.<sup>132</sup> In Hegel's view, the contemporary protestant theologians know only critique and history.<sup>133</sup> They have entirely pushed aside philosophy and true science. Hegel quotes Eckhart against the agnostic protestant theologians:

"The eye, with which God sees me, is the eye with which I see him, my eye and his eye are one. In justice I am weighed in God and he in me. If God was not, I would not be, if I was not, he would not be. But this is not necessary to know, since this is a matter, which can easily be misunderstood, and which can be comprehended only in the notion."<sup>134</sup>

For Hegel as for the Dominican Eckhart, there exists a dialectical relationship between God's absolute spirit and man's finite spirit, which can be comprehended in faith and through the dialectical notion.<sup>135</sup>

God and man need each other. Neither God nor man can be understood in isolation from each other. God can only be understood through man and man can only be understood through God. According to Hegel, the dialectical relationship between God and man is the very foundation of religion.<sup>136</sup>

Fromm, in spite of his great sympathy and admiration for Meister Eckhart and his critical attitude toward Luther and Calvin, is nevertheless much closer to the protestant theologians of Hegel's time than to the Medieval Catholic theologians.<sup>137</sup> Like the protestant theologians, Fromm is more concerned with religion than with God. Fromm demands that man should be religious.<sup>138</sup> But in Fromm's perspective as in that of the bourgeois theologians, it is rather indifferent, if a man knows something about God or not. Certainly for Fromm any definite knowledge about God is something entirely subjective. While Hegel, like Eckhart, cannot speak about God in separation from man, and about man in separation from God, Fromm cannot speak about God at all, but trusts nevertheless that he can speak truthfully about man in separation from God, whom he does not know and who is not even real for him. Fromm's position is that of radical humanism.<sup>139</sup> While Fromm sees no longer like Eckhart and Hegel the dialectical relation-

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ship between God's absolute spirit and man's subjective spirit, he admits nevertheless a religious relationship of man toward an entirely indeterminate X-reality.<sup>140</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno speak of the wholly Other than the world as nature and history.<sup>141</sup> For Fromm this relationship of man toward the X-reality or the wholly Other is the foundation of religion.<sup>142</sup>

### Necessity

In Hegel's view even if the philosopher of religion was exempt from the obligation to begin his philosophy of religion with the proof, that God is, he would still have to prove at least, that religion is and that it is necessary.<sup>143</sup> Unlike the positivistically oriented social sciences in their concern with positive religion, the dialectical philosopher of religion cannot be satisfied with beginning his exploration of religion with the religious phenomena immediately at hand and given.<sup>144</sup>

Hegel points to the argument of traditional theologians, that a proof for the existence of religion is entirely superfluous, since all nations do de facto have religion.<sup>145</sup> According to the enlightener Hegel, this proof for the necessity of religion on the basis of the empirical universality of religious phenomena is not valid, since it is a mere assumption. According to Hegel, people in general do not treat the little word "all" adequately. In Hegel's perspective, there are de facto nations of which he can hardly say, that they have religion or are religious at all. The highest those nations are devoted to, is the sun or the moon, trees or animals, or whatever else may catch their imagination in the sensuous nature.