

happy those who suffer, the proletariat, and to punish the rich and powerful masters in Jerusalem and Rome.

Rebellion of the Son

According to Fromm, the people intoxicated by the adoptionist theory were men and women, who were tormented and despairing, full of reactive hatred for their Jewish and pagan oppressors and exploiters, with no prospect of effecting a better, more just future in the socio-economic and political reality of the Roman Empire.²⁹⁵ Fromm speculates that a message, like that of the adoptionist theory, which would allow them to project into fantasy all that reality had denied them, must have been extremely fascinating for at least part of the Roman proletariat.

In Fromm's view, by the year 70 nothing was left for the Zealots, but to die in hopeless battle against the Roman armies in Jerusalem.²⁹⁶ But the followers of Christ, so Fromm argues, could dream of their goal, the kingdom of God, the return of Jesus, the adopted Son of God, the last judgment, without the socio-economic reality immediately showing them the hopelessness of their wishes for liberation. By substituting fantasy for reality, the Christian message satisfied the longings for hope and revenge. Although it failed to relieve the hunger and the enslavement of the masses in the Roman empire, it brought nevertheless a fantasy satisfaction of no little significance for the oppressed and the exploited.

According to Fromm, following the Freudian Theodor Reik, the adoptionist belief-- a man is raised, adopted by God--is a new form of the old myth of the rebellion of the son against the patriarchal father, an expression of hostile impulses toward the father god.²⁹⁷ In Fromm's view the Christian proletarians hated intensely the Jewish and Roman authorities that confronted them with "fatherly," that is, patriarchal power. The priests, scholars, aristocrats, governors, kings, in short, the ruling Few who excluded the Christian as well as the Jewish and pagan proletariat from the enjoyment of life and who in their emotional sphere played the role of the severe, forbidding, threatening, tormenting father, found their reflection in the Almighty Father God.

Therefore, the Christian proletariat not only hates the earthly fathers, but also the divine Father and this the more so, since this Father God was always the heavenly ally of their mundane oppressors, who justified the power of their exploiters and who permitted them to suffer and to be in chains. The Christian proletarians themselves wanted to rule and to be masters. But according to Fromm, it seemed to the Christian proletarians hopeless even to try to overthrow the powerful One--the emperor--and Few--the nobility--and to destroy them by force in the socioeconomic and political reality--in society, state and history. So the Christians, according to Fromm, satisfied their wishes for emancipation in fantasy.

In Fromm's perspective, the Christian proletarians did of course not dare consciously to slander the powerful Father God.²⁹⁸ The Christians reserved their conscious rational hate for the earthly authorities. They did not turn their reactive hatred against the transmundane elevated divine Father, the divine being himself. But the Christian proletariat's unconscious hostility to the heavenly Father found nevertheless expression in their adoptionist Christ fantasy. In Fromm's view, the Christians put a man at God's side and so made him a co-regent with God the Father. This man Jesus who became a god, and with whom as humans they could identify, represented according to Fromm as later on to Marcuse, their Oedipus wishes.²⁹⁹ This man Jesus was a symbol for the Christians' unconscious hostility to God the Father.³⁰⁰ If a man could become God, the latter was thereby deprived of his privileged patriarchal position of being unique and unreachable. For Fromm, the early Christians adoptionist belief in the elevation of the man Jesus to god is the expression of an unconscious wish for the removal of the divine father and of all earthly fathers as well. For Fromm as for Bloch the man Jesus moves into the x-dimension, which was for thousands of years reserved for the patriarchal and matriarchal God hypostases.³⁰¹ Christianity/^{is}For Fromm as for Bloch the end of religion and the beginning of humanism.³⁰²

In Fromm's perspective, while in the adoptionist doctrine the hostility to God found its expression in the Rightwing Christology that later on, in the third and fourth century, increased in popularity and became dominant in the Christian church--

the doctrine about the Jesus who was always a god--was expressed the elimination of these hostile wishes toward God.³⁰³ According to Fromm as later to Machovec, Christology from above becomes ideology, legitimization of the power of the One and the Few.³⁰⁴

According to Fromm, the Christian proletarians identified with Jesus, the adopted son of the heavenly Father.³⁰⁵ The early Christians could identify with Jesus the son, because he was a suffering human being like themselves. For Fromm this identification, this mimesis, is the basis for the fascinating power and effect upon the proletarian masses in the Roman empire of the idea of the suffering man Jesus, elevated to a god. The Christian proletarians could identify only with a suffering being, since they themselves suffered so much. Thousands thought of this crucified man Jesus as elevated to God, that meant that in their unconscious mind, this crucified god was themselves.

In Fromm's view the figure of the suffering saviour Jesus was determined in a threefold way.³⁰⁶ First the figure of the saviour was determined by the fact that the Christian proletarians could identify with him. The pre-Christian Jewish apocalypse mentioned a victorious, strong Messiah. He was the representative and the symbol of the wishes and fantasies of a class of people who were oppressed, but who in many ways suffered less, and still harbored the hope for social and political victory. According to Fromm, the proletarian class from which the early Christian community developed and in which the Christian missionary activity of the first two centuries had greatest success, was too miserable in order to be able to identify with such a strong and powerful Messiah. The Messiah with which the Christian proletariat could identify, could only be a suffering, crucified one.

In Fromm's view, the figure of the suffering saviour of Christianity was determined by the fact that the Christian proletariat shifted some of their death wishes against the Father God to the Son.³⁰⁷ According to Fromm, in the Babylonian and Egyptian myths of a dying God--Adonis, Tammuz Attis, Osiris--god himself was the one whose death was fantasied by the believers.³⁰⁸ In Fromm's as in Hegel's view in the early Christian myth, the father is killed in the son's crucifixion.³⁰⁹

According to Fromm the fantasy of the crucified son had still a third function.³¹⁰ Since the believing enthusiastic Christian proletarians were imbued with rational hatred and death wishes, consciously against the ruling One and Few, unconsciously against God the Father, they identified with the crucified son. So in Fromm's and later in Marcuse's view, the Christian proletarians themselves suffered death on the cross and atoned in this way for their death wishes against the earthly fathers and the heavenly Father.³¹¹ Through his death Jesus expiated the guilt of all the Christian proletarians who hated and wanted to kill their fathers on earth and their Father in heaven consciously or unconsciously. Because of their total oppressed situation, aggression and death wishes against the Father were particularly active in the Christian proletarians and called for such atonement as granted in their identification with the crucified son. But according to Fromm, the focus of the early Christian fantasy of the crucified son, in contrast to the later Catholic Rightwing Christology or Christology from above lies not in a masochistic expiation of the Christians through their self-annihilation, but rather in the displacement of the father by the identification with the suffering, crucified Jesus.

For the full understanding of the psychic background of the belief in Christ, Fromm feels that he must consider the fact, that in the first two centuries of the Christian community's existence the Roman Empire was increasingly devoted to the emperor cult.³¹² This cult transcended all national boundaries. According to Fromm, the emperor cult was psychologically closely related to monotheism: the belief in a powerful, righteous, and good Father.³¹³ If the pagan philosophers and lawyers often referred to Christianity as atheism, in a deeper psychological sense, so Fromm argues, they were right. This is so, since this faith in the suffering man Jesus elevated to a god was a fantasy of a suffering, oppressed social class that wanted to displace the ruling powers in Rome--God, emperor and father--and put themselves in their place. In Fromm's view, if the main accusation of the pagan philosophers and lawyers against

the Christians included the charge that they committed Oedipus crimes--incestuous intercourse between brothers and sisters--then this accusation was actually senseless slander.³¹⁴ But in Fromm's perspective, the unconscious mind of the slanderers had understood well the unconscious meaning of the Christ myth, its Oedipus wishes, and its concealed hostility to God the father, the emperor, the nobility, and all Roman authority.³¹⁵

Subjective Freedom

According to Hegel, the right of the particularity of the subject to find itself satisfied, or what is the same, the right of subjective freedom constitutes the turning and centerpoint in the difference between Greek and Roman Antiquity and Modern Time.³¹⁶ In Hegel's view, this right of free subjectivity in its infinity is expressed in early Christianity.³¹⁷ This right of subjective freedom has been made in early Christianity into the universal real principle of a new form of the world. To the more concrete configurations of the Christian principle of free subjectivity belong love, the romantic element, the purpose of eternal happiness of the individual, as well as personal morality and the conscience and furthermore the other forms, which partly in the Middle Ages and Modern Time will rise as principle of civil society and as moment of the political constitution of the modern constitutional state, and which partly will assert themselves in political history as well as in the history of modern art, of the sciences and of philosophy.

According to Hegel the principle of the independent in itself infinite personality of the individual, of subjective freedom, which rose internally in the early Christian religion and was therefore externally connected with the abstract universality of the late Roman World cannot enfold itself fully in the substantial form of the old patriarchal city states and empires.³¹⁸ The principle of subjective freedom is historically later than the Greek world. Likewise is the philosophical reflection, which descends into the depth of this principle later than the substantial idea of Greek philosophy. In Hegel's view, in the Christian religion more than in Judaism or any other positive

religion there rose the right of free subjectivity as well as the infinity of man's being-for-himself.³¹⁹ From the beginning of Christianity on, the social totality of state and society must receive the strength, to posit the free subjectivity of the individual in harmony with its own socio-moral unity. As the Greek philosophers were not able to comprehend the Christian principle of subjective freedom, so the Roman politicians were not able to integrate it into the Roman state.³²⁰

Fromm discovers once more in social-psychological categories the Christian principle of free subjectivity, which Hegel had described in philosophical categories.³²¹ Fromm finds this principle of subjectivity represented in the early Christian community's adoptionist idea of Jesus, its Leftwing Christology, its Christology from below. Fromm tries to comprehend the Christian principle of free subjectivity in terms of a revised Freudian interpretation of the Oedipus myth: the revolution of the son.

Already in his early years in the Frankfurt Institute, Fromm criticizes Freud for absolutizing the Oedipus complex--the hatred of the son against the father springing from their rivalry in relation to the mother.³²² Fromm shows that this Oedipus complex is not a universal human mechanism. Comparative sociological and ethnopsychological investigations have made it clear to Fromm with probability that the specific emotional attitude, represented in the Oedipus complex, is typical only for the family of the patriarchal society.³²³ It does not carry a universal human character. According to Fromm the absolutization of the Oedipus complex leads Freud to the decision to base the development of the whole mankind on the mechanism of the hatred against the father, without taking into consideration the material life process of the investigated groups.³²⁴

Freud knows that a culture, which leaves a large number of its participants unsatisfied in their fundamental needs and which therefore drives them into opposition, does neither have a chance to preserve itself permanently, nor does it deserve continuation.³²⁵ Here Freud comes very close to the young Marx, for whom the liquidation of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for its



real happiness. But Freud does not continue his line of thought, which would have led him to Marx. Fromm revises Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex in the sense, that while he emphasizes like the latter the son's hatred against the father, he de-emphasizes more and more the rivalry between father and son in relation to the mother as the motivation for the son's hatred against the father. Then Fromm builds the bridge between Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex, the hatred against the father, with Marx's theory of the hatred of the dominated against the dominating classes. This way Fromm is able to understand the Christian principle of subjective freedom in a new way.³²⁶ This Christian principle of free subjectivity is, to be sure in a secular form, the very core of the critical theory of society of the Frankfurt School.³²⁷ It is and remains also the very core of Fromm's critical theory of religion and society.³²⁸

According to Hegel the idea of free subjectivity, which Africans, Asians, Greeks and Romans did not have, has come into the world through early Christianity, according to which the individual as such is of infinite value.³²⁹ For the Christian Hegel this is so, since the individual is the object and the purpose of God's love and since the individual is destined to have an absolute relationship to God as absolute spirit. According to Hegel, following Master Eckhart, man is destined to have God's absolute spirit living in his subjective spirit.³³⁰ This means, that man as such is determined to the highest freedom.³³¹

Fromm agrees with Hegel and Christianity, that the human individual has infinite value.³³² This is the very core of Fromm's humanism. But Fromm differs from Hegel and his Christian humanism by denying that man's freedom and dignity are based on his being the object and purpose of divine love.³³³ For Fromm as for Horkheimer, the Christian dogma of a loving Father God is not acceptable in the face of the suffering on this earth before and after Auschwitz.³³⁴ According to Fromm, man must have an absolute relationship to the X-dimension.³³⁵ But Fromm cannot give to this X-sphere, like Hegel, the name God or absolute spirit.³³⁶ Fromm agrees once more with Hegel, that man is destined in himself and as such to the highest freedom.³³⁷ But this highest freedom is for Fromm not like for Hegel the result of God's love but of man's own forces and

energies alone and of his love to others and to himself.

Hegel emphasizes in relation to Jesus' death on the cross its polemical side outward, to the world as society and state.³³⁸ For Hegel, in the death of Jesus not only the death of the alienated natural will is represented. All qualities, all interests and purposes toward which the estranged natural will is directed, all greatness and all validity of the untrue world is thereby immersed into the grave of the spirit. This is for Hegel the revolutionary element in early Christianity which gives to the world a completely different form.

But in the giving up of the alienated natural will in Jesus' death on the cross, this finite element, this being other is at the same time transfigured.³³⁹ This being other has namely besides the immediate naturalness still a broader scope and determination. To the existence of the human subject belongs essentially, that he is also for others. The subject is not only for himself. The subject is valid and objective also in the inner representation of the others, as much as he knows how to make himself valid for others and is actually valid for others. The subject's validity is the representation of the others and rests on the comparison with that what they respect and what is valid to them as being in itself, as absolute value. While now the death of Jesus, besides being the natural death, is also in addition the death of the criminal, the most dishonoring death on the cross, so is in it transfigured not only the natural element, but also the civil dishonor, the worldly disgrace, the cross. What in the representations of the Romans was the lowest, that which the state had determined to be the most dishonorable has been turned into the highest. Death is natural. Every man must die. But as in the death of Jesus the dishonor is made into the highest honor, all bonds of human life together are in their foundation attacked, shaken and dissolved. When the cross is elevated to the banner and that means to a standard, the positive content of which is at the same time the kingdom of God, then the inner spirit of the people is in its innermost foundation withdrawn from the life of society and state and its substantial foundations have been taken away. So the whole struc-

ture of society and state has no longer any reality. It is an empty appearance. It exists still for itself, but no longer in itself. Soon the Roman state must break down crashingly. That the Roman state is no longer in itself must manifest itself also in the immediate existence.

On its side, so Hegel continues his argument, the empirical power dishonors everything which has respect and dignity among men.³⁴⁰ The life of every individual stands in the arbitrariness of the emperor, which is limited by nothing internally or externally. But besides life all virtue, dignity, age, status, sex is dishonored through and through. The slave of the emperor was, after him, the highest power or had even more power than he himself. The senate dishonors itself as much as it is dishonored by the emperor. So the majesty of Rome's world domination, as well as all virtue, right, honored institutions and relations, the majesty of everything, which has validity for the world is drawn into the dirt. So the worldly regent of the world, the Roman emperor makes on his part the highest into the most contemptible and perverts fundamentally the spirit of the people.

Therefore, according to Hegel, in the interior of the Roman state nothing could any longer be posed against the new religion, Christianity, which on its part makes the most contemptible into the highest and elevates it to its banner.³⁴¹ Everything solid, social morality, whatever is valid in the opinion of the people and powerful is destroyed. For the status quo, against which the new religion is directed, remains merely the completely external cold force, the death penalty. But the dishonored life of the Christians, which feels itself in the interior to be infinite, no longer shies away from death. So the Roman state loses its last weapon against Christianity.

For Hegel, there is a further determination of Jesus' death.³⁴² In Jesus death not only a man, but God has died. God is dead--this is for Hegel the most terrible thought: that everything eternal, everything true is not; that the negation is even in God. With the death of God is connected the highest pain, the feeling of the complete irretrievability, the giving up of everything higher.

But for Hegel, the course of the Christ event does not remain standing still with

Jesus's death.³⁴³ A dialectical turn occurs. God preserves himself in the process of his death. God retains his identity in the non-identity of his death. God's death is the negation of absolute negation, the death of death. God rises again to life. This is the resurrection and the ascension of Christ. As everything in Christianity appears for the immediate consciousness of the Christians in the mode of reality, so also this elevation of Christ, this resurrection and ascension. For the Christian God does not leave the just Jesus in the grave. He doesn't let rot the saints. God justifies Jesus and himself. In resurrection and ascension is present for the perception of the early Christians this death of death, the overcoming of the grave, the triumph over the negative and the elevation into heaven.

But according to Hegel, the liquidation of the negative does not mean a taking off of the human nature, but man's highest verification even in death and in the highest love.³⁴⁴ For Hegel, the spirit is spirit only in this negation of the negation, a positive which therefore contains in itself the negative. In Hegel's perspective, when therefore the Son of Man sits to the right side of the Father, then in this elevation of the human nature its honor and its identity with the divine nature comes in its highest form before the eyes of men. Here lies the foundation for Hegel's Christian humanism and beyond that the Christian humanism of the Western Middle Ages and the Modern Age.

Fromm agrees in The Dogma of Christ completely with Hegel's determination of the death of Jesus as an event polemical toward Jewish and Roman society and state.³⁴⁵ For Fromm as for Hegel, the crucified Jesus is in mortal war with man's natural, that is, alienated will and the estranged world it produces. Fromm emphasizes as much as Hegel, with the help of Marx and Freud, the revolutionary element in the death of Jesus. Contrary to Hegel, Fromm seems to have doubts, if the death of Christ has indeed given the world a different form.³⁴⁶ Fromm makes out of Christianity what Hegel calls Hinduism--a religion of fantasy! Christianity is more fantasy than effective factor of social change.³⁴⁷ Like Hegel, Fromm sees that in Jesus death on the cross not only natural death but also the shame of the death of a criminal is transfigured.³⁴⁸



Fromm has as little doubt as Hegel, that in early Christianity a total transvaluation of all values of the Roman empire took place. Fromm, like Hegel, sees in Christianity an attack on the very foundations of the Roman family, society and state. For Hegel as for Fromm, the Christian message of the cross and of the kingdom of God is the expression of the deep alienation of masses of people from the institutions and values of the Roman empire. Since Fromm emphasizes the fantasy character of the Christian message he cannot appreciate sufficiently, like Hegel, Christianity as a realistic factor in the downfall of a Roman state, which has become more and more a mere facade. Fromm stresses much less than Hegel the damage the One and the Few in Rome had done to individuals and institutions, thereby preparing the ruin of the Roman Empire. Only the arbitrary behaviour of emperor and senate explain sufficiently the reactive hatred of the Christian proletariat against the powerelite. Fromm does not, like Hegel, appreciate the effectiveness of the Christians' passive resistance against and their great refusal of the Roman world in relation to the final bankruptcy and powerlessness of the Roman state.

For Fromm as for Hegel, God dies in Jesus' death on the cross.³⁴⁹ For Fromm and for Hegel, God is dead. God is dead also for Marx and Freud.³⁵⁰ But while for Hegel the death of God is the most terrible tragedy of human history, for Fromm as for Marx and Freud, it is not only this but also man's most ultimate liberation.³⁵¹ Fromm does not agree with Hegel, that the death of God means the end of everything higher in man's life.³⁵² Fromm differs most deeply from Hegel and all other Christian humanists, by considering humanism possible without God. Contrary to Hegel, for Fromm the course of the Jesus event ends with the death of Jesus and of God. No dialectical turn takes place. Contrary to Hegel and the whole Christian tradition, for Fromm God does not preserve himself in his death, but loses his identity in the non-identity, the total estrangement of death. God's death is not the death of death. For Fromm, God does not as for Hegel rise again to life. Fromm can as little as Horkheimer, Adorno or Marcuse share in Hegel's faith in resurrection and ascension.³⁵³ Hegel is the last great philosopher of the West who has something consoling to say about death. Accord-

ing to Fromm as to Horkheimer, the just man Jesus remains in his grave as the unjust man.³⁵⁴ The saint rots with the criminal. God does not justify Jesus and himself.³⁵⁵ For Fromm, there is not as for Hegel a death of death, the overcoming of the grave, the triumph over the negative, the elevation from the finite to the infinite. Fromm stands as much as Hegel for the highest verification of human nature in the greatest love and even in death. But Fromm cannot find this verification of free subjectivity in Christianity. Fromm agrees with Hegel that the human subject is only a free human subject insofar as it negates the negative-evil. Fromm does as little as Hegel, deny that the human subject contains the negative in himself. While Hegel finds in the elevation of the Son of Man to the right side of the Father the highest affirmation of the human nature and man's mystical identity with God, Fromm can see in it merely the degradation and the elimination of the Father. While for the Christian humanist Hegel as for Master Eckhart, the living God is the presupposition for the living man and vice versa, for the non-theistic humanist Fromm as for the Marxist Gardavsky, the presupposition for the living man is the death of God.³⁵⁶ Fromm has noticed that the death of God in the 19th century may be followed by the death of Man in the 20th century.³⁵⁷

While Fromm's theory of religion has its foundation in The Dogma of Christ of 1930, it reaches its climax in The Heart of Man of 1964 and in You Shall be as Gods of 1966.³⁵⁸ Fromm does not, as Marcuse suggests, betray the radical beginnings of his theory of religion in the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research, after he departs from The International Institute for Social Research at Columbia University, New York in 1939 in order to start his private psychoanalytical practice, but rather preserves them and even radicalizes them in its further evolution.³⁵⁹ The very fact that Fromm republished The Dogma of Christ in the United States over thirty years after its first appearance in Germany, in 1955, 1958, and 1963 without changing the least its Hegelian, Marxian and Freudian methodological synthesis, shows clearly that he remained throughout the development of the dialectical theory of religion faithful to the critical spirit of the Hegelian, Marxian and Freudian Frankfurt School of phi-

losophy and sociology.³⁶⁰ While Fromm retains and even sharpens the radical Hegelian, Marxian and Freudian elements in his critical theory of religion from 1930 to the 1960s and 1970s, he at the same time also deepens it continually by recourse to Hegel's philosophy of religion, more precisely to its anthropological basis: the disunion between man's immediate existence and his mediate essence.³⁶¹ This recourse to Hegel's dialectical anthropology, insofar as it is contained in his philosophy of religion, does not only not diminish the radical character of Fromm's theory of religion, but even increases it beyond the radicality of Marx's and Freud's critical theory of religion.

Disunion and Reconciliation

According to Hegel, in the Christian religion the need for man's reconciliation had to rise more intensely than in any other positive religion, since it itself begins from man's absolute inner disunion as portrayed in its radical interpretation of the Jewish myth of man's fall as his separation from nature and his initiation of history through an act of disobedience against the creator-God.³⁶² In Hegel's view the Christian religion begins with pain, since it tears apart the natural unity of the human spirit and destroys its natural peace.³⁶³ In Christianity, as Hegel sees it, man appears as being evil by nature: as man is in his immediate existence, in his actual unity with nature in Paradise, the animal garden, he ought not to be.³⁶⁴ According to Hegel, in Christianity man is after the fall in his innermost being a negativum with himself.³⁶⁵ In the Christian religion, as man's spirit is driven into itself, it finds itself in contradiction with the infinite absolute essence. Christianity is essentially the promise of the reconciliation of this disunion in man between existence and essence. While this inner dichotomy in man between existence and essence is particularly intense and radical in the Christian religion, it is present nevertheless also already in Judaism and other world religions, if also to a lesser degree.³⁶⁶ Likewise the promise of the reconciliation of man's inner self-estrangement between his existence and essence is given not only in Christianity, but in different forms in other world religions as well.



In Hegel's view, in man's consciousness, insofar as he knows of an object and reflects himself into himself against this object, he is aware of this object as the other of himself and of himself as being limited by it and as finite.³⁶⁷ Man finds himself as being finite. It appears to Hegel, that nothing further can really be said about this determination of human finitude. Man finds his end everywhere. The end of one person is there where the other person begins. Already by men having an object, be it a table, a chair, a book or any other thing--they are finite. Where this object begins, the subject is not. The subject is therefore finite. Men know themselves to be finite in many respects, for instance in terms of the physical, biological side. Life is finite. As life men are externally dependent on others. Men have needs. Men have the awareness of this limitation. This feeling of limitation men have in common with the animals. The mineral and the plant are also finite. But they do not have the feeling of their limitation. It is the privilege of living beings to know their limits. This is even truer still for spiritual beings. Men and animals have fears, anxieties, hunger, thirst, sexual needs. In the self-feeling of man and animal there is a break, a negation and there is a feeling of this negation.

According to Hegel, for man the stone is limited.³⁶⁸ But the stone is not limited for itself. Man is beyond the determination of the stone. The stone is that with which it is immediately identical. That which constitutes the determinate being of the stone, is for it not as a not-being. The limitation-feeling of the animal is comparison of its universality, its species being with its existence in this determinate moment. The animal as a living being is for itself a universal. The animal feels its limitation, as negated universality, as need. Man is, like the animal, essentially negative unity, negative identity with himself. Man has the certainty of his unity with himself, the self-feeling of himself, of his relationship of himself. This self-feeling of his being related to himself is contradicted by the feeling of a negation in him. At the same time the human subject also feels himself as power against his negation and liquidates this accidentality: he satisfies his need. According to Hegel, all drives in man, as in the animal, are this affirmation of his self. This way the



animal restores itself against the negation in itself. The living being, man or animal, is only in the superceding of the limitation. The living being reconciles itself in the negation of the negation, namely the limitation, with itself. The need in the living being appears at the same time as object outside of itself. As the living being seizes the object, it restores itself.

According to Hegel, when a philosopher or a theologian, like his archenemy Friedrich Schleiermacher, says that religion rests on man's feeling of dependence, inner break, negation, limitation, then also animals must have religion, since they share with man this feeling in case of hunger, thirst, sexual desire, etc.³⁶⁹ But animals do not have religion. Therefore man's inner feeling of limitation, negation, dependence, break, frustration cannot be the subjective basis for religion. In Hegel's view for man, contrary to animals, this limitation, negation, dependence, break is only insofar as he goes beyond it and transcends it. Man broadens through his representations and reflexions his desires, which do not constitute a closed circle, as are the instincts of the animal, and leads them either into the bad infinity of monotonous, repetitive satisfactions or into the good infinity of man's identity with himself in the others and in the wholly Other, the Absolute.³⁷⁰

For man, in opposition to the animal, in the consciousness of his limitation lies already his being beyond it, his having transcended it.³⁷¹ According to Hegel, religion is not grounded subjectively in man's feeling of his limitation, but in his being beyond his limitation, negation, frustration, unfreedom, in his having transcended it: in his de-limitation, affirmation, concrete identity, reconciliation with himself, in his freedom. In Hegel's view, man's feeling of limitation is a comparison of his nature with his existence in this moment in time and history. Man is aware that his immediate existence is not appropriate to his essence; his existence does not come up to his true human nature.

According to Hegel's philosophy of religion, it is man's being beyond the contradiction between his existence and his true nature, which is the subjective basis for the religious consciousness and its objectivations in doctrine, cult, religious or-

ganization, ethics and social ethics.³⁷²

For Fromm as for Hegel, the beginning of all positive religions, be it Christianity or Judaism or any other religion--is the painful disunion in man's natural spirit and the longing for reconciliation with himself which rises from this inner contradiction.³⁷³ Fromm takes over completely Hegel's interpretation of the Jewish myth of the fall of man as his estrangement from nature and God in an act of disobedience and as the beginning of history.³⁷⁴ For Fromm as for Hegel, man's natural unity and peace is broken.³⁷⁵ Fromm agrees with Hegel, that man is evil in his immediate natural existence in the sense that man ought not to remain in this natural condition. For Fromm and Hegel man had to enter his inner contradiction. But likewise, man must overcome his inner dichotomy. He has a deep need for reconciliation with himself. In the view of both thinkers, man finds this reconciliation with himself in religion.

Like Hegel, Fromm does not share the opinion of early bourgeois materialists, romantic phenomenologists like Schleiermacher or Marxists and Freudians, that religion rests in the feeling of dependence, inner break of self-feeling, negation, frustration, non-identity, unfreedom, like fear, anxiety, hunger, thirst, sexual desire. For Fromm as for Hegel, religion is something specifically human and as such does not rest in qualities which man and animal share, but in a quality in which they differ and which is as such specifically human. Fromm agrees with Hegel, that religion is grounded in man's ability to broaden by imagination and reflection his desires, to break open more and more the circle of animal instincts and to transcend the limitations, negations, frustrations, breaks of self-feeling toward the good infinity of self-identification and self-reconciliation in the openness of the others and the entirely Other or the X-dimension.³⁷⁶ For Fromm as for Hegel man's feeling of limitation, dependence, unfreedom is a comparison of his nature with his immediate existence and the awareness of their inappropriateness, their contradiction and alienation. Fromm sees like Hegel in man's ability to transcend the dichotomy between his nature and his existence, his particularity and his universality, his immediate subjectivity and his

species being the continual dynamic source for the positive world religions--be it Buddhism, Judaism, or Christianity. So does Horkheimer.³⁷⁷

As Fromm defines the essence of man like Hegel and Marx not as a given quality or substance, but as a contradiction inherent in human existence, he finds this dichotomy in two sets of facts.³⁷⁸ For Fromm, first man is an animal, yet his instinctual equipment in comparison with that of all other animals, is incomplete and not sufficient to insure his survival unless he produces the means to satisfy his material needs and develop speech and tools.³⁷⁹ In Fromm's view, secondly man has intelligence, like other animals, which permits him to use thought processes for the attainment of immediate practical aims. We may speak of instrumental understanding. But man has still another mental quality--substantial reason, which the animal lacks. Already Thomas Aquinas, Kant, and Hegel differentiated between understanding and reason.³⁸⁰ According to Fromm, by reason man is aware of himself, of his past and of his future, which is death.³⁸¹ Man is conscious of his smallness and his powerlessness. Man is aware of others as others--as friends, enemies, or as strangers. Man transcends all other life, because he is in the power of his reason, the first time in the evolution of nature, life conscious of itself. In Fromm's view, man is in nature, subject to its dictates and accidents, yet he transcends nature because he lacks the unawareness which makes the animal a part of nature--as one with it. Man is confronted with the frightening conflict of being the prisoner of nature, yet being free in his thoughts. According to Fromm as to Hegel, human reason and self-awareness has made man a stranger in the world, separate, lonely and frightened.

The contradiction Fromm describes is essentially the same as the classic view which also Hegel shared, that man is both body and soul, angel and animal.³⁸² Man belongs to two worlds in conflict with each other. What Fromm wants to point out in his theory of religion is that it is not enough to see this conflict as the essence of man, as that by virtue of which man is man. According to Fromm, it is necessary to go beyond this phenomenological description and to recognize that the very conflict in man demands an answer and a solution. What can man do in order to cope with this

fright inherent in his existence? What can man do to find a harmony to liberate him from the torture of his inner contradiction, from the torture of loneliness, and to permit him to be at home with himself in the world, to find a sense of unity, to be free.

Regressive and Progressive Religion

Fromm knows of two answers to this question. The first answer to the quest to transcend separateness and to achieve unity Fromm calls the regressive answer. If man wants to find unity, if he wants to be freed from the fright of loneliness and uncertainty, he can try to return where he came from, to nature, to animal life, or to his ancestors. Man can try to do away with that which makes him human and yet tortures him: reason, freedom, self-awareness. According to Fromm as to Hegel, man can try to escape freedom.³⁸⁴ According to Fromm the history of primitive religions is a witness to this regressive attempt, and so is severe psychopathology in the individual.³⁸⁵ In one form or another both in primitive religions and in individual psychology, Fromm finds the same severe pathology: man's regression to animal existence, to the state of pre-individuation, the attempt to do away with what Hegel calls the principle of free subjectivity, which is prepared in Far and Near Eastern religions and comes to its climax in Christianity, the attempt to liquidate that which is specifically human.³⁸⁶ In the civil society, the regressive answer to man's quest for reconciliation takes the form of fascism, most adequately expressed in Adolf Hitler's necrophilous character.³⁸⁷

For Fromm, the alternative to the regressive, archaic solution to the problem, the contradiction of human existence is the progressive solution, that of finding a new harmony not by regression, but by progression in the sense of the full development of all human productive forces, of the total humanity of man.³⁸⁸ While for Fromm there are many religions which form the transition from the archaic regressive to the progressive humanist religions, the progressive solution to man's inner contradictions was nevertheless visualized the first time in a radical form in that remarkable

period of worldhistory between 1500 BC and 500 BC, which the German existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers has characterized as the axis time.³⁸⁹

In Fromm's perspective, the progressive solution to man's inner dichotomy appeared the first time in the Egyptian religion, which Hegel had determined as the religion of riddle.³⁹⁰ It was articulated in Egypt around 1350 B.C. in the monotheistic teachings of the great Pharaoh Ikhnaton. According to Fromm, the progressive solution to man's inner alienation surfaced with the Hebrews around the time of Ikhnaton in the monotheistic teachings of Moses, in the Jewish religion, which Hegel named the religion of sublimity.³⁹¹ According to Fromm the same idea of man's progressive rather than regressive reconciliation was announced by Lao-Tse in China, by the Buddha in India, by Zarathustra in Persia and by the philosophers Heraclitus, Anaxagoras or Parmenides in Greece as well as by the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah in Israel around 600 to 500 B.C. Hegel had characterized the Chinese religion as religion of measure, Buddhism as the religion of inwardness, the Persian religion as the religion of light and darkness or good and evil, and the Greek religion as the religion of beauty and fate.³⁹²

According to Fromm, the new goal of man expressed in the axis time, that of becoming fully human and thus regaining his lost harmony, was expressed in the different religions in different concepts and symbols.³⁹³ For Ikhnaton, the goal of man was symbolized by the sun. Moses found the new goal in the unknown God of history. Lao Tse called the goal of man Tao--the way. Buddha experienced the goal as Nirvana. The Greek philosophers found the goal in the unmoved mover, the Logos, the nous or being. The Persians saw the goal as Zarathustra. The prophets spoke of the goal of man as the Messianic "end of the days."

In Fromm's perspective, all those theological concepts were to a large extent determined by the modes of thought, and in the last analysis by the practice of life and the socio-economic-political structure of each of these societies, in which the new progressive solution to man's estrangement from himself was expressed and articulated-- China, India, Persia, Israel, Egypt, Greece.³⁹⁴ The socio-economic base-structure produced a certain social character which created the new idea of man's reconciliation.

But while the particular form in which the new goal of man was expressed depended on various economic, social, political and historical circumstances, the goal was essentially the same. In Fromm's view, Ikhnaton, Moses, Lao-Tse, Buddha, Zarathustra, Heraclites, Anaxagoras, Parmenides as well as Isaiah and Jeremiah wanted to achieve the same goal: to solve the problem of self-estranged human existence by giving the right answer to the question which life poses it, that of man's becoming fully human and thus losing the terror of separateness and alienation.

In Fromm's view, five hundred years after Lao-Tse, Buddha, Heraclitus, Zarathustra, and Isaiah had developed the new idea of reconciliation as the goal of man, Christianity, which Hegel called the religion of freedom, began to carry the same thought to the Mediterranean countries and to Europe and later on into the Slavic and American world.³⁹⁵ A thousand years later, Islam pronounced the same liberating idea along the coasts of the Mediterranean. So a large part of mankind learned the new message of human enlightenment and emancipation.

But according to Fromm's critical theory of religion, as soon as man had heard the new message of reconciliation he began to falsify and to pervert it.³⁹⁶ Instead of becoming fully human himself, man idolized and ideologized God and the religious dogmas as manifestations of the new goal, the new message. Thus man substituted a figure or a word for the reality of his own liberating experience. But on the other hand man also tried again and again to return to the authentic aim--reconciliation, liberation. According to Fromm as to Marcuse, such attempts manifested themselves within positive religions, in heretic sects like the Brothers of the Free Spirit or the Edomites, in new philosophical thoughts and political philosophies, in the Hellenistic, modern bourgeois, Marxian and Freudian enlightenment movements.³⁹⁷ Fromm's own theory of religion is fundamentally another attempt to motivate modern man to resist regressive religions and philosophies and to return to his authentic aim--the full realization of all his productive forces and thereby to inner harmony with himself.³⁹⁸ Fromm's whole life work stands in the service of this goal of enlightenment and liberation--like that of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse.³⁹⁹ As the Persian re-



ligion once posed to man the alternative between light and darkness and the Jewish religion the alternative between blessing and curse, life and death, so Fromm and the other critical theorists of religion present to modern man like Rosa Luxemburg the alternative between socialism and barbarism, socialist humanism and fascism.⁴⁰⁰ He does this in the context of negative theology.⁴⁰¹

Negative Theology

Fromm's critical theory of religion like that of Horkheimer and Adorno, reaches its climax and final conclusion in negative theology.⁴⁰² According to Horkheimer, the core statement of negative theology, that God is unknown, has its origin in Judaism.⁴⁰³ In Horkheimer's view this core statement of negative theology is also the end result of the Hegelian philosophy.⁴⁰⁴ It underlies furthermore as fundamental principle, so Horkheimer argues, the critical theory of society of the Frankfurt School.⁴⁰⁵ Fromm shows in his work, You Shall be as Gods, the roots of negative theology in the evolution of the concept of God in the Jewish tradition.⁴⁰⁶

According to Fromm, the concept of God in the Old Testament has its own life and evolution corresponding to the development of the Jewish people within a time span of twelve hundred years.⁴⁰⁷ Fromm finds a common element of experience referred to by the concept of God in the Old Testament. But there is also a constant progressive change occurring in this God-experience and hence in the meaning of the world and the concept of God. Horkheimer discovers the common element in the Old Testament experience in the fact, that the concept of God was for a long time the place where the idea was kept alive that there are other norms besides those to which nature and society give expression in their operation.⁴⁰⁸ According to Fromm, what is common in the Old Testament experience is the idea that neither nature nor history, the artifacts of man, constitute the ultimate reality or the highest value.⁴⁰⁹ There is only the One who represents the supreme value and the supreme goal for man: the goal of finding union with the world through full development of man's specifically human capacities of love and reason.



In Fromm's view the concept of God evolves nevertheless in the Old Testament and its evolution has three fundamental stages.⁴¹⁰ According to Fromm, in the first stage of this evolution God is visualized, particularly in the myths of God's creation and man's fall, as an absolute ruler, God has made nature and man. If he is not pleased with men, he can arbitrarily destroy again what he has created.

The second stage in the evolution of the God concept in the Old Testament begins, according to Fromm, with the Noah story.⁴¹¹ The decisive point here is the fact that God concludes a covenant, symbolized by the rainbow, with Noah and all his descendants. According to Fromm, the idea of the covenant between God and man may have an archaic origin, going back to a time when God was only an idealized man--maybe not too different from the Olympian gods of the Greeks--a God who resembles man in his virtues and in his vices and who can be challenged by man. But in the context in which the editors of the Bible have put the story of the covenant, its meaning, in Fromm's interpretation, is not that of regression to more archaic forms of the concept of God, but of a progression into a much more developed and mature vision. Fromm emphasizes that the idea of the covenant constitutes one of the most decisive steps in the religious development of Judaism. It is a step which prepares the way to the concept of the complete freedom of man, even freedom from God.

In Fromm's perspective, the third phase in the evolution of the Jewish God concept is reached in God's revelation to Moses.⁴¹² Even at this point, however, all anthropomorphic elements have not yet disappeared. What is new, nevertheless, is that God reveals himself as the God of history rather than the God of nature. It is most important in Fromm's view, that in the Moses stories the distinction between God and idols finds its full expression in the idea of the nameless God. Only idols have names. Moses's God of history has no name.

According to Fromm as to Horkheimer, this God of Moses who manifests himself in history cannot be represented by any image.⁴¹³ This prohibition of any kind of representation of God is clearly expressed in the Ten Commandments.⁴¹⁴ For Fromm as for Horkheimer, the second commandment of the Decalogue, which prohibits any image of the



to the present time is primarily the history of idol worship, from the primitive idols of clay and wood, against which the Jewish prophets fought, to the modern idols of the state, the leader, production and exchange and consumption-sanctified by the blessing of an idolized and neuroticized God, continually criticized by Fromm and other critical psychoanalysts and sociologists.⁴¹⁹

In Fromm's view as in Feuerbach's, man transfers his own passions and qualities to the idol.⁴²⁰ The more man impoverishes himself, the greater and stronger becomes his idol. The idol is the alienated form of man's experience of himself. The Hegelian-Marxian concept of alienation makes its first appearance--although not in the same words--in the Biblical concept of idolatry. Idolatry is the worship of the alienated, limited qualities of man. Marx speaks of commodity fetishism in capitalistic society.⁴²¹ The idolater, just as every alienated man, is the poorer, the more richly he endows his idol.⁴²² According to Fromm in worshiping the idol, man worships himself. But this self is a partial, limited aspect of man: his intelligence, his sexuality, his will to power, his will to pleasure, his physical strength, his business, his fame, etc. By identifying himself with a partial aspect of himself, man limits himself to this aspect. Man loses his totality as a human being and so ceases to grow. Man is dependent on the idol, since only in submission to the idol does man find the shadow, although not the substance, of himself.

In Fromm's perspective, while the idol represents only an isolated part of man, God stands for his totality.⁴²³ According to Fromm, the idol is a particular thing, a thingified aspect of man and as such it is not alive. The God of the Old Testament, particularly of the Prophets, on the contrary, is a living God. Man trying to be like God in the spirit of the Old Testament, is, according to Fromm, an open system, approximating himself to God and so reaching his own totality, the total man, all of whose productive forces are fully developed. Man submitting to idols is a closed system, becoming a thing himself, being reified. The idol is lifeless. God is living. For Fromm, the contradiction between idolatry and the recognition of God is, in the last analysis, that between the love of death and the love of life, between necrophilia

Absolute, is uniquely Jewish and one of the most fundamental principles of Jewish theology--which is precisely therefore a negative theology.⁴¹⁵

The evolution from the concept of God as tribal chief to the concept of a nameless God, of whom no representation is permissible, according to Fromm, finds its most advanced and radical formulation about 2500 years after Moses in the theology of Moses Maimonides, the most important Jewish philosopher and theologian of the Middle Ages.⁴¹⁶ According to Fromm, Maimonides developed in his main philosophical work, The Guide for the Perplexed, a Jewish negative theology. This negative theology declares it to be inadmissible to use positive attributes to describe God's essence, like existence, life, power, unity, wisdom, will. Maimonides's negative theology does allow, nevertheless, the employment of attributes of actions with regard to God.

The discussion of the evolution of the concept of God in the Old Testament and the later Jewish tradition leads Fromm to the conclusion that in the biblical and later Jewish view there is only one thing that matters, namely, that God is.⁴¹⁷ Jewish scholars attach little importance to the speculation about God's nature and essence. Therefore, so Fromm argues, there has been no theological development in Judaism comparable to that which grew up in Christianity during Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and even Modern Time. According to Fromm, one can understand the phenomenon that Judaism has not developed an effective theology only if one understands fully, that Jewish theology has always been a negative one, not only in the sense of Maimonides, but in still another: the acknowledgement of God is fundamentally the negation of idols. Jewish negative theology is essentially idology-struggle against idols. Fromm's critical theory of religion is essentially negative theology as idology-negation of idols.

According to Fromm an idol represents the object of man's central passion: the desire to return to blood and soil, the soil-mother, the craving for possession, power, fame.⁴¹⁸ The passion represented by the idols is, at the same time, the supreme value within man's system of values. In Fromm's perspective, the history of mankind up

and biophilia, between the death and life oriented social character, society and culture.⁴²⁴

According to Fromm, negative theology as idolology can show that an alienated man is necessarily an idol worshiper, since he has impoverished himself by transferring his living powers into things outside of himself, which he is forced to worship in order to retain a modicum of his self, and in the last analysis, to keep his sense of identity.⁴²⁵ Fromm observes, that the Biblical and later Jewish tradition have raised the prohibition of idolatry to a place as high as, or maybe higher, than the worship of God. According to Fromm, it is made very clear in the Jewish tradition that God can be worshiped only if and when every trace of idolatry has been annulled, not only in the sense, that there are no visible or audible external idols, but also that the attitude of idolatry, submission and alienation, has disappeared.

In Fromm's view, the Jews for historical reasons have given the name God to the X-dimension, which man should approximate in order to be fully human.⁴²⁶ The Chinese, Indian, Persian, Egyptian, Greek . . . religion has given other names to X, with the same intent as the Jewish religion.⁴²⁷ The Jews developed their thought to the point where God ceases to be definable by any positive attributes of essence--to negative theology.⁴²⁸ They have evolved their thought to the point where the right way of living--for individuals and for nations--takes the place of even a negative theology. Fromm agrees with Horkheimer, that what counts in Judaism is not how God is, but how man is.⁴²⁹ Fromm argues, that logically the next step in the Jewish development would be an ethical system without God.⁴³⁰ That is precisely what Fromm's theory of society and religion is.⁴³¹ But Fromm is fully aware of the fact, that it is completely impossible for a theistic religious system, like Judaism or also Christianity or Mohammedanism to take this step toward an ethical system without God, without losing its identity.⁴³² According to Fromm those like himself who cannot accept the concept of God find themselves outside the system of concepts that makes up the Jewish religion. But in Fromm's view, unbelieving Jews like himself, like Marx, Freud, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Jean Amery, Elias Canetti, Georg



Steiner, Bloch and many others, might however be quite close to the spirit of the Jewish tradition, provided they make the task of right living the foremost goal of life, although this right living would not be the fulfillment of the rituals and of many specifically Jewish commandments, but acting in the spirit of justice and love within the frame of reference of modern life.⁴³³ These unbelieving Jews will find themselves according to Fromm, close to the Buddhists, and to those Christians who, like Abbe Pire say:

"What matters today is not the difference between believers and non-believers, but that between those who care and those who do not care."⁴³⁴

Behind non-believing Jews like Fromm, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse--searching today for new meaning for individual and society--rises a more than three thousand year old faith-history of an intensity without comparison in world history, be it in relation to the faith itself or to the attempt to liquidate it.⁴³⁵ It is obvious from Fromm's critical theory of religion alone that the thorn of being chosen has also there bored itself into the flesh of the Jewish existence, where Jews try to supercede this determination, to rebel against it, to repress or to forget it or to transform it--as in the case of Fromm--into the program of a non-theistic dialectical anthropology and eschatology.⁴³⁶

In reality, Fromm in his critical theory does not transcend the negative theology of Judaism, but rather in the search for new meaning rediscovers in it the ethical content it always had.⁴³⁷ Horkheimer and Adorno have stated in their book The Dialectic of Enlightenment:

"Politics, which, be it also in a highly unreflected manner, does not preserve theology in itself, remains, no matter how skillfull it may be, in the last analysis mere business."⁴³⁸

For Horkheimer negative theology means the consciousness that the world is appearance, that it is not the absolute truth, the ultimate Reality.⁴³⁹ Negative theology is the hope, that the injustice which characterizes the world will not be the last word of history. Negative theology is the expression of the longing that the murderer may not triumph over the innocent victim. For Adorno, negative theology means not only



extreme asceticism against every faith in revelation and the most extreme faithfulness to the prohibition against images of the Absolute, far beyond that what this prohibition meant once in the Jewish tradition, but also the feeling he shares with progressive, reflective Christians: that in all seriousness, no man on this earth should hunger any longer; that in all seriousness there should be no wars any longer; and that in all seriousness no man or woman should any longer be sent to any kind of a concentration camp.⁴⁴⁰ In these very simple things Adorno sees that what critical theorists and believing Christians or Jews or Buddhists have in common, in a much stronger way than in the so-called theoretical positions. There is no doubt, Fromm shares fully in Horkheimer's and Adorno's conception of negative theology as longing for absolute justice, peace, love, solidarity, freedom.

Fromm finds in the negative theology, which rises from the evolution of the Jewish God concept, as well as out of the development of Christian mysticism of a Master Eckhart, the same revolutionary spirit of freedom, which characterizes the ^{nameless} God of the revolution against Egypt.⁴⁴¹ Fromm cannot express this revolutionary spirit better than by quoting the mystic Master Eckhart:

"That I am a man
I have in common with all men.
That I see and hear
And eat and drink
I share with all animals.
But that I am I is exclusively mine,
And belongs to me
And to nobody else,
To no other man
Nor to an Angel nor to God,
Except in as much as I am one with him."⁴⁴²

According to Fromm's last book To Have or To Be, later Medieval culture, to which Master Eckhart belongs, flourished because people followed the vision of the City of God.⁴⁴³ Modern civil society flourished because people were energized by the vision of the growth of the Earthly City of Progress. In the 20th century, however, so Fromm argues, this vision deteriorated to that of the Tower of Babel, which is now beginning to collapse and will ultimately bury everybody in its ruins. If the City of God and the Earthly City were thesis and antithesis, so Fromm argues in the spirit of Hegel's



dialectical logic, then a new synthesis is the only alternative to chaos and barbarism: 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, forty-six years ago in Frankfurt to its conclusion in New York in 1976, entirely devoted to this life-friendly City of Being.