



The necessity to find ever-new solutions for the contradictions in his existence, to find ever-higher forms of unity with nature, his fellow men, and himself, is the source of all psychic forces which motivate man, of all his passions, affects and anxieties.¹⁴⁴

At this point, a few comments are in order to clarify further Fromm's concept of the essential nature of man. It is obvious that Fromm heavily depends upon Darwin's theory of natural evolution to explain how man has grown out of the stage of simple animal existence. Although Fromm does not state it specifically, he definitely accepts as valid the Darwinian assumption that all of man's characteristics might be accounted for in terms of the gradual modification of anthropoid ancestors by the process of natural selection. Furthermore, Fromm is an empiricist in his delineation of the physical limitations and uniqueness of man. Man's utter dependence upon nature for his physical existence and the undeniable fact of his eventual death are empirically observable facts, and Fromm treats them for what they are. It is also an empirical fact that man is aware of himself, has the faculty of reasoning, and longs for certain ultimate values. Fromm does not bother to inquire whether or not self-awareness, reason, and search for meaning are shared by some animals. He simply presupposes that they belong only to the psychological experience of man.

¹⁴⁴SS, p. 25.

And yet, as we have noted before, Fromm leans heavily to humanistic philosophers and religious thinkers for his delineation of what man ought to be, namely, the productive goal of mankind. What man ought to be cannot be effectively proved by science, for the knowledge of the productive goal of man is existential knowledge and therefore is not available to detached observation. Here Fromm makes a distinction between the essential nature of man and the productive goal of man. Man's essential nature can be known through science, but the true goals of his existence can be adequately dealt with only existentially by humanistic philosophy and religion. There are good reasons for Fromm's attempt to rely upon the two different disciplines with regard to man. Science by definition requires detachment. Man as a creature of this world needs to be studied scientifically. But the adequate understanding of man cannot be reached by science, for the full knowledge of man requires participation in man himself. In fact, in Fromm's estimation, the detachment that scientific knowledge requires is a great threat to the humanizing process of our society. Man knows what he ought to be only when he participates in himself.

That this synthesis of scientific knowledge and existential knowledge is essentially unavoidable is clearly demonstrated by the scientist himself. From a purely empirical and detached point of view, man is a creature whose

existence is determined by invariant causal interrelations. But when the scientist speaks of man's future and destiny, he discards his purely empirical point of view by providing man with the freedom to determine his own destiny. Man's existential knowledge of himself is even more complicated by the fact that it includes the burden of making moral decisions. Norbert Wiener, for example, strongly insists that computers cannot decide for man the choice of purposes, moral decisions, and esthetic appreciation.¹⁴⁵ Thus, the scientist himself, in his discussion of man's freedom and sense of values, leaves the realm of scientific explanation.¹⁴⁶ It is precisely this point that Fromm recognizes full well. A purely objective study of man is an inadequate one, because it cannot take into account some things of man that are not readily available to empirical knowledge.

The essential nature of man, according to Fromm, then, is three-fold: (1) his finite character; (2) his infinite character; and (3) his need for finding ever-new solutions to complex problems caused by his dialectical nature. "What

¹⁴⁵Norbert Wiener, God and Golem, Inc. (Massachusetts: M. I. T. Press, 1964), p. 73.

¹⁴⁶For an excellent analysis of science and the dilemma of freedom and determinism, see Langdon Gilkey, "Evolutionary Science and the Dilemma of Freedom and Determinism," The Christian Century, LXXXIV (March 15, 1967), 339-343.

constitutes the essence," writes Fromm, "is the question and the need for an answer."¹⁴⁷

2. The problem of human existence

According to Fromm, man has a need which is unique to himself: the need for finding the ever-new unity with nature, fellow men and himself. It is precisely here that the problem of human existence is found. Fromm goes on to analyze the content of this need which is five-fold.

a) The five human needs

The first of these is the "need for relatedness."¹⁴⁸ Man has lost his primal union with his fellow men when he emerged out of nature. Being aware of himself, man knows that he is alone, that he has been cut off from others and accidentally thrown into this indifferent world which is also an accidental product of nature. Man cannot bear this state of being and must strive toward reunion with others on a higher level.

The necessity to unite with other living beings, to be related to them, is an imperative need on the fulfillment of which man's sanity depends. This need is behind all phenomena which constitute the whole gamut of intimate human relations, of all passions . . .¹⁴⁹

This need for relatedness to fellow men has a paradoxical character: in his relation to others, man must retain within

¹⁴⁷HM, p. 117.

¹⁴⁸SS, p. 30.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

himself his own freedom and individuality simultaneously. Fromm is convinced that without individuality, man has nothing to relate; without being related to others, man's individuality will soon degenerate into subhuman existence. Man must hold both relatedness and individuality in paradoxical tension. In short, relatedness means " . . . union with somebody, or something, outside oneself, under the condition of retaining the separateness and integrity of one's own self."¹⁵⁰

The second human need is the "need for transcendence."¹⁵¹ Man's self-awareness, reason, and imagination inform him that the origin of his life is purely accidental. His life and death are forced upon him without his consent. But due to his distinctive humanness, man cannot remain satisfied with his precarious and meaningless existence. "Being endowed with reason and imagination, he cannot be content with the passive role of the creature, with the role of dice cast out of a cup."¹⁵² Herein lies man's need for transcendence. He must constantly transform his environment into the realm of purposefulness and usefulness.

The third basic need is the "need for rootedness."¹⁵³ Man's break with nature has brought pain and insecurity to

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 36.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 38.

himself; therefore, he is driven to establish in nature a uniquely human home which can replace the lost natural home. Man can be freed of pain and become secure in the world only if he finds new human roots in it. Fromm summarizes the point as follows:

Man's birth as man means the beginning of his emergence from his natural home, the beginning of the severance of his natural ties. Yet, this very severance is frightening; if man loses his natural roots, where is he and who is he? He would stand alone, without a home; without roots; he could not bear the isolation and helplessness of this position. He would become insane. He can dispense with the natural roots only insofar as he finds new human roots and only after he has found them can he feel at home again in this world.¹⁵⁴

The "need for identity"¹⁵⁵ is the fourth basic need of man. It is man's need to be both the author and object of his own actions. This need is based upon the fact that man is the only animal who needs to be aware of his unique individuality in order to stay uniquely human. To put it in Fromm's own words,

Because he is not lived, but lives, because he has lost the original unity with nature, has to make decisions, is aware of himself and of his neighbor as different persons, he must be able to sense himself as the subject of his actions. As with the need for relatedness, rootedness, and transcendence, this need for a sense of identity

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., p. 60.



is so vital and imperative that man could not remain sane if he did not find some way of satisfying it.¹⁵⁶

The fifth and final need is the "need for a frame of orientation and devotion."¹⁵⁷ Having self-awareness, reason, and imagination, man cannot remain satisfied with animal existence in this contingent world. He must know the meaning of his life. Without it, man goes insane. "Unless his life had some meaning and direction," says Fromm, "he would feel like a particle of dust and be overcome by his individual insignificance."¹⁵⁸ Therefore, he must make sense of the world about him. He must convert the confusing, accidental, and capricious elements of the world about him into some sort of coherent frame of orientation.

Man finds himself surrounded by many puzzling phenomena and, having reason, he has to make sense of them, has to put them in some context which he can understand and which permits him to deal with them in his thoughts.¹⁵⁹

Fromm identifies the need for a frame of orientation and devotion with religious need. In defining God as the fullest development of the potentialities of man, Fromm maintains that religion is " . . . any system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame

¹⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 60-61.

¹⁵⁸EF, p. 21.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁵⁹SS, p. 63.

of orientation and an object of devotion."¹⁶⁰ Therefore, man is perennially religious. "There is no one without a religious need," says Fromm, "a need to have a frame of orientation and an object of devotion."¹⁶¹

b) The problem of human existence

Fromm maintains that the distinctively human needs must be satisfied in order for man to function as human. There are, however, basically two different ways of satisfying these needs. The one is to satisfy them by returning to the easy security of the prehuman stage. "One is to find unity by regression to the state of unity which existed before awareness ever arose, that is, before man was born."¹⁶² Regression, furthermore, is more appealing because it demands no special effort on man's part, but as a solution it necessarily fails.

The other alternative is productiveness. Productiveness is nothing other than "the unfolding of his [man's] powers according to the laws of his nature."¹⁶³ And it is the only mode of relating to the world and to oneself which employs one's inherent potentialities.

There is only one way he can take: to emerge fully from his natural home, to find a new home--

¹⁶⁰PR, p. 21.

¹⁶¹Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁶²ZBP, p. 87.

¹⁶³MH, p. 20.

one which he creates, by making the world a human one and by becoming truly human himself.¹⁶⁴

Faced by these two alternatives man must choose the productive orientation. The true choice can be made, for, according to Fromm, man possesses the power of contrary choice.

In the majority of men . . . we deal with contradictory inclinations which are so balanced that a choice can be made. The act is the result of the respective strength of conflicting inclinations within the person's character.¹⁶⁵

However, faced with the possibilities of the nuclear holocaust, Fromm is later compelled to qualify his original optimism. If man does not wake up now to genuinely creative possibilities before him, he may find himself at a point of no return. If man should perish in the nuclear holocaust, it will not be because man was inherently evil, but because he failed to use his own powers. "I believe in the perfectibility of man," writes Fromm, "but I doubt whether he will achieve this goal, unless he awakens soon."¹⁶⁶

Let us now examine how in Fromm's thinking the five human needs are regressively and productively satisfied. In so doing, we may see how the productive orientation alone can fulfill successfully the true humanity of man. The need

¹⁶⁴SS, p. 25.

¹⁶⁵HM, p. 132.

¹⁶⁶ECI, p. 198.



for relatedness is regressively satisfied either by submitting oneself to powers other than his own or by dominating others as his own possessions. ✓

Man can attempt to become one with the world by submission to a person, to a group, to an institution, to God. In this way he transcends the separateness of his individual existence by becoming part of somebody or something bigger than himself, and experiences his identity in connection with the power to which he has submitted. Another possibility of overcoming separateness lies in the opposite direction: man can try to unite himself with the world by having power over it, by making others a part of himself, and thus transcending his individual existence by domination.¹⁶⁷

Neither submission nor domination can fulfill the paradoxical nature of relatedness; in the former, man fails to preserve his own distinctive individuality, and in the latter, he fails to preserve the individuality of the other person to whom he seeks to relate himself.

The person driven by any one of these passions actually becomes dependent on others; instead of developing his own individual being, he is dependent on those to whom he submits, or whom he dominates.¹⁶⁸

The need for transcendence is regressively satisfied by destructiveness. Through the act of destruction can man transcend the role of mere creature, for it, like the act of creation, gives man the power over the world and thus sets

¹⁶⁷SS, pp. 30-31.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 31.

him above life. The results of destructiveness are disastrous, for they entail the curtailment of the integrity and freedom of life itself.¹⁶⁹

The need for rootedness is regressively satisfied by incestuous fixation which is defined as "a deep craving in men not to sever the natural ties, to fight against being torn away from nature, from mother, blood and soil."¹⁷⁰ Fromm finds in the child's ties to mother the most elementary form of incestuous ties. In the average adult, observes Fromm, a deep longing for the security which his mother used to offer prevents him from becoming truly his own independent self.¹⁷¹ According to Fromm, primitive religions and religious rituals are also manifestations of this attempt to remain in nature. Ancestor worship provides a good example.

Indeed, ancestor worship is one of the most widespread primitive cults in our society and it does not alter its picture if we call it, as the psychiatrist does, neurotic fixation to father or mother. Let us consider such a case of ancestor worship. A beautiful, highly talented woman, a painter, was attached to her father in such a way that she would refuse to have any close contact with men; she spent all her free time with her father, a pleasant but rather dull gentleman who had been widowed early. Aside from her painting, nothing but her father was of any interest to her. The picture she gave of him to others was grotesquely different from reality. After he died she committed suicide and left a will stipulating only that she was to be buried by his side.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁷¹Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁷²PR, p. 29.

Man's need for identity is regressively satisfied by "herd conformity."¹⁷³ Herd conformity is defined by Fromm as the process of man's blind submission to the prevailing cultural patterns. In such submission, one's individual identity is defined by what others expect of him. Its motto is "I am as you desire me."

To put it briefly, the individual ceases to be himself; he adopts entirely the kind of personality offered to him by cultural patterns; and he therefore becomes exactly as all others are and as they expect him to be. The discrepancy between "I" and the world disappears and with it the conscious fear of aloneness and powerlessness.¹⁷⁴

Fromm observes that the danger of herd conformity is most acute in our modern mechanized society;¹⁷⁵ with neither the feudal system nor the Church to give him the sense of identity, man is left insecure, but, at the same time, like medieval man, he is unaware of his true potentialities.

¹⁷³SS, p. 62. The loss of identity has a long history. In the primitive society, the individual was defined by the clan: "I am we" (Ibid., p. 61). In the medieval society, the individual was identified with his social role in the feudal hierarchy (Ibid.). The sense of genuine individuality was momentarily recovered by the selected few during the period of the Renaissance; man was regarded as "the center and active subject of his powers and experienced himself as such" (Ibid.). However, the majority of mankind continued to remain herd-oriented and thus failed to develop identity based on his true potentialities.

¹⁷⁴EF, p. 185-186.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p. 185

Today man cannot think critically, feel genuinely, or will his own will, for none of his thinking, feeling and willing is done by himself but rather by his society.

This substitution of pseudo acts for original acts of thinking, feeling, and willing, leads eventually to the replacement of the original self by a pseudo self. The original self is the self which is the originator of mental activities. The pseudo self is only an agent who actually represents the role a person is supposed to play but who does so under the name of the self.¹⁷⁶

The need for a frame of orientation and devotion is regressively satisfied by irrationality. Man has no freedom to be without a certain frame of meaning, but his frame of meaning can be based upon illusions and subjectivity. In defining this particular need of man primarily as religious experience, Fromm sees man's irrational frame of orientation in all forms of theistic religions which he describes as "authoritarian."¹⁷⁷ Authoritarian religions, according to Fromm, emphasize the theme that "man is controlled by a higher power outside of himself."¹⁷⁸ Such pessimism has hindered men from pursuing equality and justice for all men.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶Ibid., p. 205.

¹⁷⁷PR, p. 34. The good form of religion is humanistic religion. Its aim is "to achieve the greatest strength, not the greatest powerlessness; virtue is self-realization, not obedience" (Ibid., p. 37).

¹⁷⁸Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., p. 33.



Thus far, we have examined Fromm's contention that man's needs cannot be successfully fulfilled by the regressive orientations. They can be fulfilled only productively. We shall now examine the productive ways in which these needs are satisfied. The need for relatedness is productively fulfilled only by love. Love alone can do justice to the dialectical nature of relatedness.

. . . mature love is union under the condition of preserving one's integrity, one's individuality. Love is an active power in man; a power which breaks through the walls which separate man from his fellow men, which unites him with others; love makes him overcome the sense of isolation and separateness, yet it permits him to be himself, to retain his integrity. In love the paradox occurs that two beings become one and yet remain two.¹⁸⁰

In this genuine form of relatedness, man does away with illusions and grasps true reality about himself and others. There is no need for the individual to inflate the image of others or of himself, because love allows him to be in the other and to be himself at the same time.

The need for transcendence can be productively fulfilled only by "becoming a 'creator.'"¹⁸¹ By this Fromm means more than the capacity for the procreation of life, for after all, other animals have that capacity also. Rather, creativity means man's capacity to transform his environment

¹⁸⁰AL, pp. 20-21.

¹⁸¹SS, p. 36.



into the realm of purposefulness and usefulness. Therefore, being a creator presupposes care and activity. Through these creative activities, can man refuse to tolerate the passive role of creatureliness and thus transcend his fate.

The need for rootedness can be productively fulfilled by producing in oneself the sense of "brotherliness."¹⁸² Brotherliness is the affirmation of the equality and ultimate importance of human life. Men "are all equal, have the same rights and claims, and the only value that counts is that of life."¹⁸³ Such an attitude toward the humanity of man can be illustrated by the mother who loves her children not because one is better than the other, but simply because they are her children, and in that respect they are all alike and have the same right to love and care.¹⁸⁴ Fromm further observes that brotherly rootedness is the result of the fullest development of the power of reason and love.

Only when man succeeds in developing his reason and love further than he has done so far . . . will he have found a new, human form of rootedness, will he have transformed his world into a truly human home.¹⁸⁵

The need for identity is productively fulfilled by developing the fully individuated self through cutting oneself off from his primary ties with his immediate environment.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 38

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 60.

This process of one's becoming independent of nature is defined as "freedom from" instinctual determination and traditional authorities. To be more specific, a fully individuated man is a man who is freed from "the ties that connect the child with its mother, the member of a primitive community with his clan and nature, or the medieval man with the Church and his social caste."¹⁸⁶ However, mere negative freedom alone is not sufficient for man to become a fully individuated self. It must be supplemented by positive freedom, "freedom to." This is none other than the power to express one's own nature, to realize one's inherent potentialities. "Positive freedom on the other hand is identical with the full realization of the individual's potentialities, together with his ability to live actively and spontaneously."¹⁸⁷

The need for a frame of orientation and devotion is productively fulfilled by the power of reason. "The further his reason develops," writes Fromm, "the more adequate becomes his system of orientation, that is, the more it approximates reality."¹⁸⁸ Fromm here is definitely presupposing a harmonious relationship between reason and reality; what reason experiences is identified with the truth itself;

¹⁸⁶EF, p. 25.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., p. 270.

¹⁸⁸SS, p. 64.



in short, it is "a human faculty which must embrace the whole of the world with which man is confronted."¹⁸⁹

Thus the problematic nature of human existence in Fromm's thinking seems quite clear. It is rooted in the fact that man's constant urge to search ever-higher solutions is met by two alternatives: regression and progression. Though the latter alternative is the only way that makes man truly human, the former alternative is more immediately attractive to man. Herein lies the problem of human existence.

Here it is sufficient to point out one weakness of Fromm's discussion of the uniquely human needs. He does not successfully validate the point that those needs are actually unique to man. Nowhere does Fromm show any convincing evidence that they are not substitutes for instinct and secondary drives. Without such an attempt on the part of Fromm, it is possible to interpret that he is essentially Freudian despite his insistence to the contrary. Fromm's definition of each human need is too arbitrary and loosely formulated to deny the charge successfully. In order to convince his careful reader, he must be more specific than he has been so far as to what evidence he is using for supporting his contention that man has those unique needs which he describes at length.

Throughout his discussion of the human needs and the problem of human existence, it is evident that Fromm seeks to

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

Suzuki, Y., 1971a: An Examination of Doctrine of Man of Erich Fromm and Reinhild Niebuhr, University of Virginia, Dissertation 1971, 355 + 4 pp.

maintain the following central principle, although nowhere does he state it explicitly: the paradoxical relationship between man and society. That is to say, Fromm wants to claim simultaneously the two seemingly contradictory statements concerning man: (1) man makes himself productive by realizing his inherent potentialities, and (2) man is made productive by the relationship others give to him.

Our point may be substantiated by pointing out the fact that Fromm, in his discussion of both the human needs and productiveness, includes relatedness and identity as their essential elements. Man must keep his individuality and, at the same time, relate himself to others. If man loses his own individuality, he has nothing to relate. Without being related to others, his individuality becomes sub-human existence. Put somewhat differently, man makes his society a better one by fulfilling his inherent potentialities. Society, by the same token, contributes to man's productiveness by providing the kind of environment which is conducive to the realization of his potentialities.

Man is alone and he is related at the same time. He is alone inasmuch as he is a unique entity, not identical with anyone else and aware of his self as a separate entity. He must be alone when he has to judge or to make decisions solely by the power of his reason. And yet he cannot bear to be alone, to be unrelated to his fellow men.

His happiness depends on the solidarity he feels with his fellow men, with past and future generations.¹⁹⁰

The central importance of the paradoxical relationship between man and society for Fromm's doctrine of man is further substantiated if we recall our discussion of the background of Fromm's thought. Fromm, on the one hand, strongly insists that man is a social being; he is what society makes him to be. We can see this effort of Fromm in the following three points. First, his main objection to Freud is directed toward the latter's assumption that there exists an unalterable contradiction between human nature and society. And this objection is based upon Fromm's deep conviction that society is responsible for creating the proper attitudes which are essential for man to be truly human. Second, Fromm makes essentially the same point when he appropriates Marx's concern with the objectively given conditions which give shape and direction to human character. He agrees with Marx that these conditions indeed determine the quality of man. Finally, the importance of the good society is evident in Fromm's understanding of the acquisition of human character. Character, unlike temperament, can be controlled and transformed in the processes of assimilation and socialization. In all of these three areas, Fromm affirms that society is responsible for the quality of man.

¹⁹⁰MH, p. 43.



Fromm, on the other hand, insists that man must maintain his individuality. Man is the initiator and actor of his own acts. This further implies that man is responsible for the quality of society. Again, he emphasizes this point in three ways. First, man, as the initiator of his actions, is clearly presupposed in his appropriation of Feuerbach's theory of projection. Here man is described as being constantly in search for expressing his self-transcendence. He seeks to realize the infinite in his own life. Man is definitely a doer, an actor.

Second, Fromm's eager appropriation of Zen Buddhism definitely makes him regard man as the initiator and actor of his own actions. Fromm accepts Zen Buddhism as the best expression of the idea that the true life of man is achieved when, and only when, man realizes, through his own powers, his innate potentialities. Despite his passing references to the role of the Zen master as the one who helps man experience satori, Fromm's emphasis here is definitely focused upon the idea that the student of Zen attains satori out of his own free will.

Third, Fromm's Hasidic interpretation of the prophetic writings of the Old Testament makes him affirm that man is the initiator. Man is the creator of justice and peace in society. He must change the conditions in which dehumanizing forces are allowed to exist. Man alone is responsible



for this change, for, after all, according to Fromm, the Old Testament maintains that God is really man. In short, what is affirmed is that man determines the quality of society both in the present and the future.

What follows from all this is that the central principle of Fromm's doctrine of man is to keep the following theses in paradoxical tension: (1) man as an individual, initiator, and actor and (2) man as a product of society. The question we must ask, however, is whether Fromm is successful in maintaining this principle consistently. In his discussion of the sickness of man and the cure for it, is he able to show concretely what impact man and society create upon each other? As we probe Fromm's thought further, we shall attempt to answer this question.

3. The sickness of man

Thus far we have discussed the essential nature of man and the problematic nature of human existence. In the following section we seek to delve further into Fromm's doctrine of man by examining his concept of the sickness of man.

1. Two presuppositions underlying Fromm's concept of the sickness of man

There are two presuppositions of which we must be aware in our examination of Fromm's concept of the sickness of man. They can be concisely stated as follows: man is responsible for his own sickness and he is essentially good.

a) Mar's responsibility for his sickness

Fromm's presupposition concerning man's responsibility for his own sickness will become clear as we investigate Fromm's theory of human character. According to Fromm, character is one of the two components which make up personality. Personality is defined as follows:

By personality I understand the totality of inherited and acquired psychic qualities which are characteristic of one individual and which make the individual unique.¹⁹¹

The inherited psychic qualities are further defined as temperament.¹⁹² Since man does not choose his temperament but inherits it, Fromm claims that "differences in temperament have no ethical significance."¹⁹³ Furthermore, if we know the temperament of an individual, we can predict how he will react, though we cannot predict to what he will react.

If a person has choleric temperament, for instance, his mode of reaction is "quick and strong." But what he is quick and strong about depends on his kind of relatedness, his character.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹MH, p. 50.

¹⁹²Fromm follows Hippocrates and distinguishes four temperaments: choleric, sanguine, melancholic, and phlegmatic. Fromm holds that these four temperaments are symbolized by four elements as follows: "choleric=fire=warm and dry, quick and strong; sanguine=air=warm and moist, quick and weak; phlegmatic=water=cold and moist, slow and weak; melancholic=earth=cold and dry, slow and strong" (Ibid., p. 51).

¹⁹³Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁹⁴Ibid., p. 52.

Character, on the other hand, denotes the acquired psychic qualities of man. That is to say, unlike temperament, character is determined by society; it is a social product. Here it is necessary for us to observe that Fromm distinguishes character from behavior traits. This distinction is necessary, because as courageous behavior may be motivated by selfish ambition, suicidal impulses or the sheer lack of prudence, so a behavior trait in itself is not indicative of one's true motive.¹⁹⁵ Fromm is indebted to Freud, who saw character as a system of strivings which underlie, but are not identical with, behavior itself.¹⁹⁶ Freud fails, however, in Fromm's estimation, in constructing a sound characterology due to his strict biologism. "Freud believed that the sexual drive was the source of energy of the character. . . . He interpreted the dynamic nature of character traits as an expression of their libidinous source."¹⁹⁷ Here again we observe one of the basic points at which Fromm departs from Freud. For Fromm, man is essentially a social being; the fundamental basis of character is found not in libido but in specific kinds of a person's relatedness to the world."¹⁹⁸ To say this is to affirm that

¹⁹⁵Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., p. 58.

character can be transformed. Fromm's argument becomes clear when we examine the two functions that character plays.

Its first function is permitting the individual to act consistently. Due to this particular function of character, man does not have to deliberate the course of his action every time he acts and thus is spared from many inconsistencies which will be caused by the precarious nature of such decision-making. In this sense, character is considered to be "the human substitution for the instinctive apparatus of the animal."¹⁹⁹ The second function of character is providing the individual with motives for doing what his social position requires him to do. In short, character makes man "want to do what he has to do and the core of which he shares with most members of the same social class or culture."²⁰⁰ Without this function, society will cease to exist due to the lack of coherence. It is precisely this acquirement of human character that holds man accountable for his sickness. In other words, unlike temperament, character can be controlled and transformed by man. The acquirement of character, according to Fromm, can be explained by the processes of assimilation and socialization. "Character can be defined as the

¹⁹⁹Ibid., p. 59.

²⁰⁰Ibid., p. 60.

(relatively permanent) form in which human energy is canalized in the process of assimilation and socialization."²⁰¹

Assimilation is defined as the process of acquiring and assimilating things, and socialization is defined as the process of relating oneself to fellow human beings.²⁰² And, furthermore, "both forms of relatedness are 'open' and not as with the animal, instinctively determined."²⁰³ Therefore, it is the great problem of ethics to develop a critical characterology, for differences in character "are expressive of the degree to which an individual has succeeded in the art of living."²⁰⁴

b) The essential goodness of man

Fromm's second presupposition concerning the sickness of man is that man is essentially good; therefore, human sickness lies in the aberration of his original goodness. Here Fromm is confronted by a two-fold task. The first is to show why man can be termed essentially good, and the second is to delineate the model of the ideal man.

As to the essential goodness of man, Fromm can be ambiguous at times. In identifying the essence of man with a contradiction which demands the search for new solutions which, in turn, create new contradictions, Fromm often regards

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 59.

²⁰² Ibid., p. 58.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

man neither as good nor evil, but as full of potentialities to be both. And yet, his implicit affirmation of the goodness of man becomes clear whenever he begins to deal with the prescription for the sickness of man. In dealing with the cure for sickness, Fromm always defines sickness as the deviation of man's essential goodness. "If life's tendency to grow is thwarted," writes Fromm, "the energy thus blocked . . . is transformed into life-destructive energy."²⁰⁵

Indeed, all man wants, according to Fromm, is to:

. . . relate himself to the world lovingly . . .
[to] use his reason to grasp reality objectively,
[to] experience himself as a unique individual
entity, and at the same time one with his fellow
man, [to be] one who is not subject to irrational
authority, [but who] accepts willingly the
authority of conscience and reason.²⁰⁶

To say this, of course, is to affirm the essential goodness of man. This point is affirmed even more explicitly, as we have already seen, in his distinction of the primary potentiality and the secondary potentiality; man's potentiality to grow and to become productive is the primary potentiality, whereas his regressive potentiality is the secondary potentiality. Although both potentialities reside in man, under "normal circumstances" the former becomes manifest over the latter.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ibid., p. 216.

²⁰⁶SS, p. 275.

²⁰⁷MH, p. 218.

c) The model of the productive man

If man is to become productive under normal conditions, of what does his productivity consist? To delineate the contents of the model of the productive man is Fromm's second task concerning his affirmation of the essential goodness of man.²⁰⁸

Productiveness is most concisely defined as "man's ability to use his powers and to realize the potentialities inherent in him."²⁰⁹ Consequently, the productive man is he who has developed his potentialities to the fullest.²¹⁰ In view of the fact that according to Fromm, human character is determined by the process of assimilation and socialization, we shall examine the nature of productiveness in relation to these two channels of human energy.

(1) The productive orientation in terms of
assimilation

In terms of assimilation, the productive orientation is most conspicuously manifested in man's work, because, as

²⁰⁸In relation to the productive orientations, Fromm also lays bare the content of the regressive orientations. They are four-fold: the "receptive orientation," the "exploitative orientation," the "hoarding orientation," and the "marketing orientation" (Ibid., pp. 62-72).

²⁰⁹Ibid., p. 84.

²¹⁰Fromm maintains that the concept of satori of Zen Buddhism is identical with the psychological concept of the productive orientation. "Satori is the true fulfillment of the state of well-being." (ZBP, p. 115).

we have already seen, the productive man is a creator and originator in his relation to the world. Fromm finds the most illuminating example of productive assimilation in the creativity of the genuine artist. For him the artist is "the most convincing representative of productiveness."²¹¹ But the ability of productive assimilation is by no means limited to men of unusual talents but is available to all men who engage themselves in efforts to enhance the humanity of man.

In any kind of creative work the creating person unites himself with his material, which represents the world outside of himself. Whether a carpenter makes a table, or a goldsmith a piece of jewelry, whether the peasant grows his corn or the painter paints a picture, in all types of creative work the worker and his object become one, man unites himself with the world in the process of creating. This, however, holds true only for productive work, for work in which I plan, produce, see the result of my work.²¹²

Fromm maintains that productiveness must be distinguished from activity, for the latter may be caused by the reaction to anxiety, irrational passions, and other non-productive orientations. Thus Fromm writes:

In the concept of productiveness we are not concerned with activity necessarily leading to practical results but with an attitude, with a mode of reaction and orientation toward the world and oneself in the process of living. We are concerned with man's character, not with his success.²¹³

²¹¹MH, p. 84.

²¹²AL, p. 17.

²¹³MH, p. 87.



By arguing that productive work has to do with attitude and not with outward activity, Fromm identifies productive work with rational thinking. Rational thinking includes both the thinking subject and the object of his thinking. Therefore, in the process of rational thinking the thinker "is motivated by his interest for the object; he is affected by it and reacts to it; he cares and responds."²¹⁴ At the same time, his thinking must be objective in the sense that he needs to "see the object as it is and not as he wishes it to be."²¹⁵ Fromm neatly summarized the paradoxical nature of productive thinking as follows:

Productive thinking, then, is determined by the nature of the object and the nature of the subject who relates himself to his object in the process of thinking. This twofold determination constitutes objectivity, in contrast to false subjectivity in which the thinking is not controlled by the object and thus degenerates into prejudice, wishful thinking, and phantasy. But objectivity is not, as it is often implied in a false idea of "scientific" objectivity, synonymous with detachment, with absence of interest and care. How can one penetrate the veiling surface of things to their causes and relationships if one does not have an interest that is vital and sufficiently impelling for so laborious a task? How could the aims of inquiry be formulated except by reference to the interests of man?²¹⁶

²¹⁴Ibid., p. 104.

²¹⁵Ibid. Fromm elsewhere defines objectivity as seeing the objects' "uniqueness and relationship with other things and phenomena as well as seeing the whole of the object" (Ibid., p. 119).

²¹⁶Ibid., p. 105.

Fromm further maintains that rational thinking involves not only the dialectical relation of subjectivity and objectivity, but also rational faith. Here the adjective "rational" must be emphasized in order to distinguish from irrational faith, which is defined as man's blind "submission to something given" as the authority of his life.²¹⁷ Rational faith is defined as certainty about the reality of the possibility based upon reflective thinking and empirical observation.

. . . faith is the conviction about the not yet proven, the knowledge of the real possibility, the awareness of pregnancy. Faith is rational when it refers to the knowledge of the real yet unborn; it is based on the faculty of knowledge and comprehension, which penetrates the surface and sees the kernel. Faith, like hope, is not prediction of the future; it is the vision of the present in a state of pregnancy.²¹⁸

Rational faith in terms of assimilation then can be best illustrated by the scientist who always starts with a rational vision based upon empirical observation and well reasoned speculation.²¹⁹ That is to say, rational faith does not exclude rational doubt; rather, the latter is an integral part of the former, because it questions the validity of any assumption which is not based upon one's reason and objective observation. Fromm writes:

²¹⁷Erich Fromm, The Revolution of Hope (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), p. 14. Hereafter RH.

²¹⁸Ibid., pp. 13-14.

²¹⁹MH, p. 25.

Historically, rational doubt is one of the main-springs of modern thought, and through it modern philosophy, as well as science, received their most fruitful impulses. Here too, as in personal development, the rise of rational doubt was linked with the growing emancipation from authority, that of the church and the state.²²⁰

(2) The productive orientation in terms of socialization

Productiveness in terms of socialization is essentially three-fold: love, humanistic conscience, and rational faith. Convinced that love alone can productively fulfill man's need for relatedness, he says that love is "the mature answer to the problem of existence"²²¹ Love of which Fromm speaks is mutual love. "The most fundamental kind of love, which underlies all types of love," writes Fromm, "is brotherly love."²²² The essence of brotherly love is love for humanity. That is to say, love is not confined to the individual's relationship to a specific person; rather, it is the affirmation of the humanity of man to be supremely important.

Brotherly love is love for all human beings; it is characterized by its very lack of exclusiveness. . . . Brotherly love is based upon the experience that we are all one. The differences in talents, intelligence, knowledge are negligible in comparison with the identity of the human core common to all men.²²³

²²⁰Ibid., p. 201.

²²¹AL, p. 18.

²²²Ibid., p. 48.

²²³AL, p. 47.



He further maintains that this was exactly what Moses, Lao-Tse, Buddha, Zarathustra, and Jesus said in their own peculiar ways. In this there is absolute continuity among them. Fromm thus ignores completely whatever the differences that exist among them.²²⁴

Such humanism of Fromm leads him to the inevitable position that love of others and love of oneself are absolutely identical. There is no doubt in his mind that Meister Eckhart said exactly this in the 14th century. Ignoring the fact that the latter based love on the imitation of Christ,²²⁵ Fromm summarizes his thought on love as follows, thus making him a radical humanist like Fromm himself:

If I truly love one person, I love all persons . . .
I love life. If I can say to somebody else, "I love you," I must be able to say, "I love in you everybody . . . I love in you also myself."²²⁶

From this the following conclusion of Fromm is inevitable:
"If it is a virtue to love my neighbor as a human being, it must be a virtue--and not a vice--to love myself since I am a human being too."²²⁷

²²⁴HM, p. 118.

²²⁵Arthur Cushman McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), II, 370.

²²⁶AL, p. 46.

²²⁷MH, p. 128.



Fromm maintains that in defining self-love as a pest, Calvin, he believes, is largely responsible for identifying self-love with selfishness and love of others with the true form of love.²²⁸ The consequence of the Calvinistic view of self-love has made an enormous impact upon the development of modern Western society. For example, Kant, recognizing the importance and necessity of self-preservation, still held quite inconsistently that "love for oneself, striving for one's own happiness, can never be a virtue."²²⁹ Such claims for selfless life naturally brought equally one-sided reactions in the glorification of selfishness in the thoughts of men like Stirner and Nietzsche. "But," says Fromm, "while they take the opposite position to that of Calvin and Kant with regard to the value of selfishness, they agree with them in the assumption that love for others and love for oneself are alternatives."²³⁰ Furthermore, the Calvinistic idea that self-love and love of others are mutually exclusive has caused even graver confusion in our modern society.

"Don't be selfish." becomes one of the most powerful ideological tools in suppressing spontaneity and the free development of personality. Under the pressure of this slogan one is asked for every sacrifice and for a complete submission; only those acts are "unselfish" which do not serve the individual but somebody or something outside himself.²³¹

²²⁸Ibid., pp. 119-121.

²²⁹Ibid., p. 122.

²³⁰Ibid., p. 123.

²³¹Ibid., p. 127.

Consequently, Fromm holds that self-love and selfishness must be distinguished. The latter is not the exclusive love of oneself; on the contrary, it is man's hatred of himself. "The selfish person does not love himself too much but too little; in fact he hates himself."²³²

It is to be pointed out that Fromm's criticism of Calvin's concept of love carries no significant validity. This is true not only because of his simplistic understanding of it, but also because of his failure to deal adequately with Calvin's existential experience that the substance of Christian love is in no sense accomplished by the positive shaping of life by the initiative of the pious man alone. Man simply cannot love others as much as himself as long as he relies on his own ability to love.²³³ That man cannot do what he knows he should is common human experience which is not easily refuted. At least, Calvin cannot be dismissed as a man who hated himself as Fromm does. In short, Fromm criticizes Calvin without meeting squarely the latter's serious challenge to one of the basic presuppositions of his own doctrine of man, namely, man's capacity for self-salvation.

²³²SS, p. 60.

²³³John Calvin, Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 2:1-8.

In the following few pages let us examine what Fromm's affirmation of humanity entails. First of all, love is an activity. It is an activity performed solely in freedom and independence, and not in compulsion. It therefore "is a phenomenon of abundance."²³⁴ It is "the use of man's inherent powers, regardless of whether any external change is brought about."²³⁵ That is to say, though love is an activity, it is a special kind of activity. Activity here must not be identified with the superficial idea of "doing something" or, in Fromm's own words, "the use of energy for the achievement of external aim."²³⁶ Fromm keenly observes that an active person, in the current meaning of the word, is often a victim of deep insecurity and loneliness or ambition and greed. Fromm, therefore, wants to make it explicit that love is an activity in the sense that, in the act of love, man knows himself as the initiator and actor of his own act.

. . . man sitting quiet and contemplating, with no purpose or aim except that of experiencing himself and his oneness with the world, is considered to be "passive," because he is not "doing" anything. In reality, this attitude of concentrated meditation is the highest activity there is, an activity of the soul, which is possible only under the condition of inner freedom and independence.²³⁷

²³⁴WH, p. 126.

²³⁵AL, p. 21.

²³⁶Ibid.

²³⁷Ibid., p. 21.

Secondly, "love is primarily giving, not receiving."²³⁸ Here Fromm maintains that it is in the very act of giving oneself that man experiences his true strength, wealth, and power. Love as primarily giving further implies that the productive man alone can love. Love is based upon the strength of the individual who can give.

Love is affirmation and productiveness. "It seeketh to create what is loved!" To love another person is only a virtue if it springs from this inner strength, but it is a vice if it is the expression of the basic inability to be oneself.²³⁹

What does one person give to another in love? Fromm's answer is clear: "He gives of himself, of the most precious he has, he gives of his life."²⁴⁰ Self-giving of which Fromm speaks here, means genuine concern for another person as one who shares common humanity. This attitude manifests itself in the act of sharing deep human experiences and emotions.

He gives him of that which is alive in him; he gives him of his joy, of his interest, of his understanding, of his knowledge, of his humor, of his sadness--of all expressions and manifestations of that which is alive in him.²⁴¹

Such genuinely human sharing enriches both the giver and the receiver. The giver brings to life something in himself. His gift in turn enriches the receiver who now in his abundance returns it manifold. The giver and the receiver now

²³⁸Ibid., p. 22.

²³⁹MH, p. 126.

²⁴⁰AL, p. 24.

²⁴¹AL, p. 24.

have brought something new to life, each by giving of himself. Here again the dialectical nature of human life becomes clear.

. . . in the giving he cannot help bringing something to life in the other person, and this which is brought to life reflects back to him; in truly giving, he cannot help receiving that which is given back to him. Giving implies to make the other person a giver also and they both share in the joy of what they have brought to life.²⁴²

Thirdly, love implies care, because it means "the active concern for the life and the growth of that which we love."²⁴³ Love as care means "to make something grow."²⁴⁴ As we see in a mother's concern for the life and growth of her child, Fromm maintains that love and labor are inseparable. "One loves that for which one labors," says Fromm, "and one labors for that which one loves."²⁴⁵ According to him, this is exactly what the author of the Book of Jonah had in mind. God's answer to Jonah at the end of the Book must be understood symbolically. Jonah must work toward the humanization of the people in Nineveh for their sake. The lives of these people are not their business alone, but his own.

Love also implies responsibility. Responsibility, according to Fromm, is a product of freedom; "To be 'responsible' means to be able and ready to 'respond.'"²⁴⁶ Thus, a

²⁴² Ibid., p. 25. ²⁴³ Ibid., p. 26. ²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 27. ²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

loving person responds to such human experiences of another as needs, sorrows, and joys, simply because the loving person, being one with the other in humanity, takes the experiences and emotions of the other to be really his own. Fromm finds the story of Cain to be an extraordinary illustration of this point. The famous question he put to God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" presupposes his uneasy awareness that the life of his brother is also his because of their common humanity.²⁴⁷ It points to be universal truth that man must feel responsible for his fellow men, as he feels responsible for himself.

Finally, love implies respect and knowledge. Respect is "the concern that the other person should grow and unfold as he is."²⁴⁸ It refuses to exploit another human being.

Respect. . . implies the absence of exploitation. I want the loved person to grow and unfold for his own sake, and in his own ways, and not for the purpose of serving me. I love the other person, I feel one with him or her, but with him as he is, not as I need him to be as an object for my use.²⁴⁹

Furthermore, love as respect is a product of abundance and strength.

It is clear that respect is possible only if I have achieved independence; if I can stand and

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 28.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

walk without needing crutches, without having to dominate and exploit anyone else.²⁵⁰

Respect for another person requires a sound knowledge of that person. Love as respect therefore means love as knowledge. "To respect a person is not possible without knowing him; care and responsibility would be blind if they were not guided by knowledge."²⁵¹ Man's knowledge of another person is for Fromm two-fold: objective and existential. Objective knowledge is knowledge based upon empirical observation. It includes the other person's personality, the state of his emotional feelings, and social and biographical background.

I have to know the other person . . . objectively, in order to be able to see his reality . . . to overcome the illusions, the irrationally distorted picture I have of him.²⁵²

Objective knowledge must be supplemented by existential knowledge; that is to say, in order for one to know another person, he must know "the depth of his true being."²⁵³ What the depth of man's true being really is, Fromm does not explain here. Whatever it may be, it is an "unfathomable secret"²⁵⁴ which man can discover only by the act of love. Only love can "penetrate into the secret of man's soul, into the innermost nucleus which is 'he.'"²⁵⁵

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid., p. 31.

²⁵³ Ibid., p. 29.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

Thus far, we have examined the nature of love, one of the three components of productiveness in terms of socialization. The other two components of productiveness are humanistic conscience and rational faith. Humanistic conscience is exactly the opposite of the authoritarian conscience.²⁵⁶ "It is our own voice present in every human being and independent of external sanction and rewards."²⁵⁷ What is the function of this voice? To state it simply, it judges man with the sense of ought and guides man to self-realization by providing him with the knowledge of productive life. "Conscience," says Fromm, "judges our functioning as human beings."²⁵⁸ Such knowledge, contrary to abstract knowledge, possesses an affective quality.

Actions, thoughts, and feelings which are conducive to the proper functioning and unfolding of our total personality produce a feeling of inner approval, of "rightness," characteristic of the humanistic "good conscience." On the other hand, acts, thoughts, and feelings injurious to our total personality produce a feeling of uneasiness and discomfort, characteristic of the "guilty conscience." Conscience is thus a re-action of our selves to ourselves. It is the voice of our true selves which summons us back to ourselves, to live

²⁵⁶"The authoritarian conscience is the voice of an internalized external authority, the parents, the state, or whoever the authorities in a culture happen to be" (MH, pp. 143-144).

²⁵⁷Ibid., p. 158.

²⁵⁸Ibid.