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COMMENTS ON THE FROMM MANUSCRIPT

-- Paul Tillich

My basic criticism of the paper of Mr. Fromm is directed against the title! It says: "The Psychological Causes of War." The war is caused by the encounter of powerstructures, the bearers of history and its dynamics. These conflicts are unavoidable as long as there is no overarching unity within which the particular powerstructures have found a common center. Whether this is an inner historical possibility is an open question. A nuclear war contradicts the meaning of war, since it cannot create a large unity, but destroys the bearers of centered historical action. Therefore it is quite imaginable that by a silent or open agreement, all involved will abstain from using it, even if a war situation is given. And it is a clear ethical demand that nobody should start such a war, which is not a war, but a mere catastrophe. These assertions about the cause of war and the nature of atomic war are implicitly a rejection of the attempt to explain war by a particular psychopathological perversion, even if this perversion is interpreted as an extreme expression of a universally human tendency. There are certainly suicidal and sadistic tendencies in men's estranged nature (Mr. Fromm rightly denies that they belong to men's essential nature) and such tendencies can use the war situation in order to be actualised. But it is a confusion of cause and occasion if they are made responsible for the outbreak of war.

