



CHAPTER III

LOVE TOWARD OBJECTS OUTSIDE THE SELF

1. The Potentiality for Love in the Subject

Fromm defines love as "an orientation of character which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole, not toward one 'object' of love."¹ This contrasts with the belief of most people that love is constituted by the object rather than by the faculty to express it. According to Fromm, if a person loves only one other person or a select group of persons, his love is not genuine love but a symbiotic attachment or an enlarged egotism. Fromm compares those who do not see that love is a power of the soul rather than a discovery of a lovable object to a man who wants to paint but who instead of learning the art of painting simply waits for the right object which he thinks he will paint beautifully when he finds it.² In contrast to such a view, Fromm asserts that "if I truly

¹Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 46.

²Ibid., p. 46.



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love one person I love all persons, I love the world, 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 through you the world, I love in you also myself.'¹

Just as the case with character-conditioned hatred, love is rooted in a basic attitude which is constantly present. One might call it a basic sympathy or "readiness to love." This potentiality for love is a character trait just as is the readiness to hate. Even though they must be considered separately when dealing with them abstractly, both of these potentialities are present in each person in varying degrees. Even as hatred is the passionate wish for destruction, so love is the passionate affirmation of its object. Love is not an "affect" but an active striving. Its aim is the happiness, development and freedom of its object. If one's own self is crippled, this passionate affirmation is impossible. Genuine affirmation is always rooted in strength. "The person whose self is thwarted, can only love in an ambivalent way; that is, with the strong part of his self he can love, with the crippled part he must hate."²

¹Ibid., p. 46.

²Erich Fromm, "Selfishness and Self-Love," Psychiatry, Vol. 2, No. 4, Nov. 1939, p. 519.



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From the foregoing, one might reach the conclusion that every affirmation is a kind of love regardless of the worth of the object loved. The question would then arise as to whether or not one could love that which was evil. Fromm attempts to deny this implication. He insists that what he means by love is not entirely subjective. It is related to objective values. "Love is affirmation of life, growth, joy, freedom and by definition, therefore, the evil which is negation, death, compulsion cannot be loved."¹ It is certainly true that there can be a subjective feeling of pleasure and excitement in relation to destructive acts or objects, and this feeling can be conceived of and called by the conventional term of love. But Fromm believes that when this feeling is analyzed, the mental content of such a person reveals a state which is very different from that which he calls love. In the case of such semantic difficulties, the answer can only be arbitrary. What is most important is that we know what kind of union we are talking about when we speak of love. Fromm speaks of love in an unqualified way only in reference to the mature, productive union in which the integrity of each person in the relationship is maintained and given nourishment for growth.

¹Ibid., p. 519.



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2. Perversions of Love

Two previously mentioned phenomena, masochism and sadism, are frequently presented as love. In the case of masochistic love, a person escapes from his unbearable feeling of aloneness and separation by submerging his individuality in that of another person who is felt to be stronger. The masochist hopes to find in another person the center of strength that is lacking in himself. In such instances, the person makes himself the passive instrument of somebody or something outside himself. This type of surrender has frequently been praised in both religious and secular circles as the highest form of love. Actually, it is a form of idolatry, and leads to the annihilation of the self. That it has been conceived as love only makes it more dangerous.

The active sadistic form of love expresses itself in various forms of domination. This drive is also rooted in a deep anxiety over being alone. But in this case, the sadistic person attempts to escape his aloneness by incorporating another person, by making him a part of himself. The sadistic person is as dependent on the submissive person as is the latter on the former. There is a great difference in the way these two types act on their world, but in a deeper emotional sense, the difference is not so great.



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Both types represent one thing: "fusion without integrity."¹

3. Characteristics of Mature Love

In contrast to these symbiotic forms of union, mature love is defined as "union under the condition of preserving one's integrity." Love is an active power in man which breaks through the walls which separate one man from another. Love permits man to overcome the sense of isolation and separateness, and yet permits him to remain himself. "In love the paradox occurs that two beings become one and yet remain two."²

Fromm, following Spinoza, defines love as an activity rather than as a passive effect of some compulsive need. It is a "standing in," rather than a "falling for." In a general way, the active character of love can be best described in terms of giving rather than receiving. The act of giving is actually much more complex and ambiguous than it may at first appear to be. The person who has not developed beyond the stage of the receptive, exploitative, or hoarding orientation experiences the act of giving primarily as an act of "giving up," of being deprived of, or

¹Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving, p. 20.

²Ibid., p. 21.



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of sacrificing. The marketing character is willing to give, but only in exchange for something else. For such a person, giving without receiving is the same as being cheated. People whose main orientation is non-productive feel such giving to be an impoverishment.

For the productive person, however, giving has an entirely different meaning. For the productive person, giving is the highest expression of potency. "In the very act of giving, I experience my strength, my wealth, my power. This experience of heightened vitality and potency fills me with joy. I experience myself as overflowing, spending, alive, hence as joyous. Giving is more joyous than receiving, not because it is a deprivation, but because in the act of giving lies the expression of my aliveness."¹

The main gift that one person can share with another person is that of "aliveness." The productive person has the capacity to give deeply from himself. This does not mean that he necessarily sacrifices his life for another, but rather that he gives to those around him of that which is alive in him. He gives "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."² The productive person does not give in

¹Ibid., p. 23.

²Ibid., p. 24.



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order to receive but finds rather that giving in itself is an exquisite joy. When such love is given, it evokes a response of love in the recipient. "In the act of giving something is born, and both persons involved are grateful for the life that is born for both of them. Specifically with regard to love this means: love is a power which produces love; impotence is the inability to produce love."¹

Besides the element of giving, Fromm cites four more basic elements that are common to all forms of love. These are care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge.

The caring element in love is most apparent in a mother's love for her child. If a woman declared her love for her child and yet failed to bathe, feed, and care for the child tenderly, we would hardly remain convinced of her "love" for the child. Love is an active concern for the growth of the loved object. And where this care and concern are lacking there is no love.²

Another important aspect of love is responsibility. Responsibility is "my response to the needs, expressed or unexpressed, of another human being."³ The true meaning of responsibility differs from a sense of duty which is imposed

¹Ibid., p. 25.

²Ibid., pp. 26-27.

³Ibid., p. 28.



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from the outside. To be responsible means to be able to respond from within to the needs of another. "The loving person responds. The life of his brother is not his brother's business alone, but his own. He feels responsible for his fellow men, as he feels responsible for himself."¹

Responsibility can easily deteriorate into domination and possessiveness unless a third component of love, namely respect, is present. Respect means the concern for another person to grow toward the fulfillment of his own individuality. "It denotes, in accordance with the root of the word (respicere: to look at), the ability to see a person as he is, to be aware of his unique individuality."² If the love expressed toward another is genuine and healthy, then it desires that the loved person develop as he is, rather than as I might want him to in order to serve some selfish purpose. Respect is only possible if one has achieved independence. It is undermined if through weakness, I must dominate or exploit another.

A fourth component of healthy love is that of knowledge of the loved person. It is not possible to respect a person without knowing him. Care and responsibility would be comparatively impotent if they were not guided by knowledge.

¹Ibid., p. 28.

²Ibid., p. 28.



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On the other hand, knowledge can be empty or vicious if it is not motivated by a loving concern. The knowledge which is an aspect of love does not remain on the periphery, but penetrates to the very core of the loved person. Such knowledge is only possible when a person can transcend the bounds of his own needs and can see the other person in his own terms. This is the knowledge that arises when through love a person transcends the bounds of his own separateness and becomes fused with another.

One path of knowledge to the "secret of man" is primarily sadistic. We observe children following this path of knowledge in an overt manner. They tear things apart or break things up in order to know them. Or they cruelly pull the wings from a butterfly in order to force its secret. But such a way of knowing destroys life even while it seeks its meaning.

The other path to knowing "the secret" is through love. "Love is active penetration of the other person, in which my desire to know is stilled by union. In the act of fusion I know you, I know myself, I know everybody--and I 'know' nothing. I know in the only way knowledge of that which is alive is possible for man--by experience of union--not by any knowledge our thought can give."¹ Sadism is also

¹Ibid., pp. 30-31.



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motivated by the wish to know the secret. But the sadist, even after tearing the object apart, remains as ignorant as before. Love is the only way of knowledge which answers this quest. "In the act of loving, of giving myself, in the act of penetrating the other person, I find myself, I discover myself, I discover us both, I discover man."¹

Care, responsibility, respect and knowledge are mutually interdependent. Fromm describes them as a "syndrome of attitudes which are to be found in the mature person." Such a person has abandoned his narcissistic dreams of omniscience and omnipotence. He has developed his own potentialities in a comparatively productive way, and he wants to have only that which he has worked for. He has acquired a sense of his own worth combined with a knowledge of his limitations, and he has a genuine humility based on an inner strength which only productive activity and love can give.²

4. Parent-Child Love Relationships

The relationship of the growing child to its parents is very significant for the development of mature love relationships. At first, of course, the small child is not yet aware of itself or the world outside of itself. He receives

¹Ibid., p. 31.

²Ibid., pp. 32-33.



the warmth, food and security of the mother without recognizing her as the source of these satisfactions. The outside reality has meaning only in terms of satisfying or frustrating his inner needs.

As the child develops, he begins to perceive external objects in their actual relation to him. He begins to differentiate his inward satisfaction of being fed from the breast of the mother. He learns to perceive many other objects as having an existence of their own. He begins to handle things and to give them names. He learns how to handle people. He learns that mother will smile when he eats, that she will comfort him when he cries, and that she will praise him when he has a bowel movement. "All these experiences become crystallized and integrated in the experience: I am loved. I am loved because I am mother's child. I am loved because I am helpless. I am loved because I am beautiful, admirable. I am loved because mother needs me. To put it in a more general formula: I am loved for what I am, or perhaps more accurately, I am loved because I am."¹

Until the age of eight and a half to ten, the problem for most children is that of being loved. The child up to this age does not as yet love. He gratefully responds to

¹Ibid., p. 39.



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being loved. Around this age however, the child becomes an active agent in love relationships. For the first time in the child's life, he thinks of giving something to his mother or father. The idea of love is transformed from being loved to loving. It often expresses itself in the form of a gift to the parents. Gradually, the needs of another person, the "ohum" or "buddy," become as important as, if not more important than one's own. A new sense of union and sharing is realized. Even more important, "he feels the potency of producing love by loving--rather than the dependence of receiving by being loved--and for that reason having to be small, helpless, sick--or 'good.' Infantile love follows the principle: 'I love because I am loved.' Mature love follows the principle: 'I am loved because I love.' Immature love says: 'I love you because I need you.' Mature love says: 'I need you because I love you.'"¹

The capacity for love is closely related to the development of different objects of love. During the first few years the child usually has his closest attachment to the mother. However, he gradually becomes more independent of the mother. He learns to walk, to talk, and to venture further away from home on his own. The relationship to mother, while remaining very important, loses some of its significance

¹Ibid., pp. 40-41.



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and the relationship to father becomes increasingly important.¹

In order to comprehend this transition from mother to father, it is necessary to consider the essential differences between motherly and fatherly love. Fromm uses the designations 'mother love' and 'father love' as ideal types of relationships, and he does not mean to imply that every mother and father loves in just these ways. In this sense, motherly love may be described as unconditional. The mother loves her child just because it is her child. The child does not have to deserve this love or to live up to any specific expectations. Furthermore, if mother does not have this unconditional love for the child, then he can do nothing to acquire it. "If it is there, it is like a blessing; if it is not there, it is as if all beauty had gone out of life--and there is nothing I can do to create it."²

The relationship of the child to the father is quite different. "Mother is the home we come from, she is nature, soil, the ocean." The father does not have such a natural relation to the infant, and his importance cannot be compared to the mother. But while father does not represent the natural world, he does signify the other pole of human existence: the world of thought, of man-made things, of law

¹Ibid., p. 41.

²Ibid., p. 39.



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and order, of discipline, of travel, and adventure. "Father is the one who teaches the child, who shows him the road into the world."¹

Mother has the function of making the child secure in life, while it is the father's task to guide him as he emerges from the family matrix. The infant needs the unconditional care and love of the mother. The growing child, after six years, needs the father's love, authority, and guidance. Ideally, the mother's love will not inhibit the growth toward independence. But if the mother is over anxious and over protective, she will infect the child with her anxieties and induce a state of helplessness in her child. The father's love should be guided by principles and expectations, but it should also be patient and tolerant of any failures in their realization. It should give to the growing child an increasing sense of competence which enables the child to develop his own skills and authority and eventually dispense with that of the father.

The basic causes of neurosis are to be found in these early childhood relationships. One neurotic development can result from a boy having an overindulgent or domineering mother and a weak and uninterested father. In such a case, the person will most likely remain fixed at an early mother

¹Ibid., p. 42.



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attachment. He will develop into a person who is dependent on mother, feels helpless without her, and has the strivings characteristic of the receptive person, that is, to receive, to be protected, to be taken care of. He will lack the fatherly qualities of self-discipline, independence, and an ability to master life by himself. This type of person will seek mothers in most of the people he meets in later life. He may search for it in other women who offer the same motherly warmth and protection, or in men who can command him and tell him what to do.¹

Another neurotic possibility develops when the mother is cold, commanding, and emotionally aloof from the child. The child may then transfer the need for motherly protection to the father and subsequent father figures. The child will then tend to develop into a one sided father-oriented person, given to the principles of law and authority. This development is further intensified if the father is authoritarian and is attached to the son because of a need for love and a sense of power. In all of these neurotic developments, one principle, either the fatherly or the motherly, fails to develop. Or in the case of more severe neurotic disturbances, the roles of the mother and father become confused both with regard to persons outside and with regard to these roles

¹Ibid., p. 45.



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within the person.¹

By contrast, the mature person has reached the point where he has become his own mother and father. He has freed himself from external authority figures and has built them up from inside. Fromm maintains that this process differs from the Freudian concept of the super-ego in that the mother and father figures have not been incorporated but rather have been constructed on the individual's capacity for love, reason, and judgment. If a person only retained his fatherly conscience, he would become too severe and inhuman. If he only retained the motherly conscience, he would be prone to lose judgment and hinder the growth of himself and others about him. Despite the apparent contradiction, the mature person loves with both the motherly and fatherly conscience.²

5. Love and Sexuality

Sexual love differs from both neighbor love and parental love. Neighbor or brotherly love develops among equals; parental love is love for the helpless. Their common element is that they are not restricted to one person. "If I truly love my brother, I-love all of my brothers; if I love my

¹Ibid., p. 45.

²Ibid., p. 44.



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child, I love all my children; no beyond that, I love all children, all that are in need of my help."¹ In contrast to such expressions of love, erotic love is the desire for fusion with one other person. It is by its very nature exclusive rather than universal.

Often the exclusiveness of erotic love is misinterpreted as a possessive attachment. Frequently we find two people "in love" with each other but who feel no love for anyone else. Fromm describes such love as an "egotism a deux." They are two people who have solved the problem of separateness by enlarging their single individuality into two. They have the experience of overcoming their separateness, and yet, "since they are separated from the rest of mankind, they remain separated from each other and alienated from themselves; their experience of union is an illusion."² "Erotic love is exclusive, but it loves in the other person all of mankind, all that is alive."³ Erotic love is exclusive in the sense that a person can fuse fully and intensely with one other person only. Erotic love excludes love for others only in the sense of erotic fusion; it does not exclude the sense of deep brotherly love.

¹Ibid., p. 52.

²Ibid., p. 54.

³Ibid., p. 54.



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Sexual desire aims at fusion, and it can by no means be reduced to a simple physical appetite. It can be aroused in many different ways and by almost any strong emotion--of which love is only one. It can be stimulated by the anxiety of aloneness, by vanity, by the desire to submit or dominate, or even by the wish to hurt or destroy. When love inspires the wish for sexual union, there is a pervasive tenderness in the physical relationship and an absence of greediness, brutality, or submissiveness. If the desire for physical union is not motivated by love, "if erotic love is not also brotherly love," it never brings about more than an orgiastic or transitory sense of union. Sexual attraction can create for a moment "the illusion of union," but without love, the participants remain as far apart from each other as before. Tenderness, for Fromm, is not as Freud believed a sublimation of the sexual instinct. Rather, it is a manifestation of brotherly love and exists in physical as well as in non-physical forms of love.¹

For Freud, love was basically a sexual phenomenon. "Man having found by experience that sexual (genital) love afforded him his greatest gratification, so that it became in fact a prototype of all happiness to him, must have been thereby impelled to seek his happiness further along the

¹Ibid., p. 55.



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path of sexual relations, to make genital eroticism the central point of his life."¹ Brotherly love, for Freud, is an outgrowth of sexual desire. The sexual instinct is gradually transformed into an impulse with an "inhibited aim." Originally this "aim inhibited libido" was full of sensual love, and on the unconscious levels of man's mind it remains so still.

Fromm rejects such a view. He writes, "Love is not the result of adequate sexual satisfaction, but sexual happiness--even the knowledge of the so-called sexual technique--is the result of love."² The study of the most frequent sexual problems, frigidity in women and impotence in man, shows that fear of or hatred for the opposite sex are at the root of those difficulties which prevent a person from giving him or herself spontaneously to a sexual partner. "If a sexually inhibited person can emerge from fear or hate, and hence become capable of loving, his or her sexual problems are solved. If not, no amount of knowledge about sexual techniques will help."³

Fromm maintains that Freud's ideas on love and

¹Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, trans. by J. Riviere (London: The Hogarth Press, Ltd., 1953), p. 69.

²Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving, p. 89.

³Ibid., p. 89.



sexuality were greatly influenced by and helped to further basic preconceptions of man that were prevalent at the turn of this Century. One of the factors which influenced both the popular and the Freudian concepts was the reaction against the strict mores of the Victorian period. A second factor shaping Freud's theories was rooted in the prevailing concept of man which was based on the structure of capitalism. In order to prove that capitalism corresponded to the natural needs of man, one had to show that man was by nature competitive and full of mutual hostility. The economists "proved" this by describing man's unquenchable desire for economic gain. The Darwinists pointed to the survival of the fittest as the fundamental biological law. Freud described man in the same competitive terms by assuming that each man is driven by a limitless desire for sexual conquest which is only held in check by means of the pressures of the society.¹

Furthermore, Freud was deeply influenced by the materialism that pervaded the scientific circles of the 19th century. All mental phenomena was believed to be grounded in physiological processes. Consequently, for Freud, love, hate, ambition, curiosity, were all explained as various forms of the sublimated sexual instinct. Freud believed that

¹Ibid., p. 91.



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"the full and uninhibited satisfaction of all instinctual desires would create mental health and happiness."¹ But Fromm counters that "the obvious clinical facts demonstrate that men--and women--who devote their lives to unrestricted sexual satisfaction do not attain happiness, and very often suffer from severe neurotic conflicts or symptoms."² The satisfaction of instinctual needs not only fails as a basis for happiness, but does not even guarantee sanity.

Fromm compares Freud's concept of love with that of H. S. Sullivan. Just as Freud's concept of love is a description of the experience of the patriarchal male of nineteenth century capitalism, so Sullivan's description appears in terms of the alienated, marketing personality of the 20th century. Sullivan, in contrast to Freud, draws a strict division between love and sexuality. He gives to the love relationship the following definition: "Intimacy is that type of situation involving two people which permits validation of all components of personal worth. Validation of personal worth requires a type of relationship which I call collaboration, by which I mean clearly formulated adjustments of one's behavior to the expressed needs of the other person in pursuit of increasingly identical--that is, more and more

¹Ibid., p. 92.

²Ibid., p. 92.



nearly mutual satisfactions, and in the maintenance of increasingly similar security operations."¹ Fromm calls this description an "egotism a deux." It could as well be a definition of any cooperating team in which people pool their common interests in order to stand together against a hostile world. Fromm believes that "love as mutual sexual satisfaction" as described by Freud and "love as teamwork and as a haven from aloneness" as described by Sullivan, are the two "normal" forms that the pathology of love has taken in modern Western society.²

Besides these two major patterns as exemplified by Freud and Sullivan, there are many individualized forms of the pathology of love. Among the more common is the pattern of "infantile relatedness" where one or both "lovers" have remained attached to a parental figure and consequently transfer the feelings, expectations, and fears one once had toward the parent to the loved person in adult life. A second form of pseudo-love which is often experienced as the "great love" is that of idolatrous love. If a person has not reached the point where he has gained a sense of his own identity, he will tend to idolize the loved person. Such a

¹Harry S. Sullivan, The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry (W. W. Norton Co., New York, 1953), p. 246.

²Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving, p. 94.



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person is alienated from his own powers and projects them on to the loved person. He loses himself in the loved one instead of discovering himself. Idolatrous love is often described as the great love, but often it only demonstrates the loneliness and hunger of the idolator. Another form of pseudo-love is what Fromm calls "sentimental love." The main characteristic of this kind of love is that it is experienced primarily in phantasy rather than in relationship with another real human being. Still other forms of neurotic love derive from the use of projective mechanisms. By projecting on to the loved person our own shortcomings, we are able to ignore our own.¹

In contrast to these various forms of neurotic attachment, Fromm declares that "love is possible only if two persons communicate with each other from the center of their existence, hence if each one of them experiences himself from the center of his existence."² Love, experienced in this way, is a moving, growing, working together. Two people experience one another from the essence of their existence, and they become one with each other by being one with themselves rather than fleeing from themselves. Fromm concludes that the only proof of the presence of love lies

¹ Ibid., pp. 94-102.

² Ibid., p. 103.



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in "the depth of the relationship, and the aliveness and strength in each person concerned." "This is the fruit by which love is recognized."¹

6. Love of God

Fromm's basic thesis is that "our need to love lies in the experience of separateness and the resulting need to overcome the anxiety of separateness by the experience of union."² The religious form of love which in Western culture has generally been called the "love of God" also arises from this need to overcome the anxiety of aloneness. Consequently, in order to understand the history of various theistic concepts, it is necessary to comprehend some of the underlying psychological needs that religion has met throughout the history of men.

In man's earliest awakening to self-awareness, he sensed his emergence from "mother nature." And in his new realization of his aloneness and his movement toward death, he found security by going back or holding on to his primitive identification with nature. At this stage animals were transformed into totems, and animal masks were worn during battles and during the most solemn religious acts. At a

¹Ibid., p. 103.

²Ibid., p. 63.



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later stage, when human skill freed man from an immediate dependence on nature and developed a capacity for artistic expression, man created idols of clay, silver, and gold. Man projected his own powers and skills into the things he made, and thus in an alienated fashion worshiped his prowess and possessions.¹

Still later, man gave to his gods the forms of human beings. Apparently this happened only when man became even more aware of himself and had discovered that man is the highest and most dignified creature on the earth. Fromm maintains that there are two major phases to this stage of anthropomorphic god worship. He follows Bachofen and Morgan in insisting that there was a matriarchal phase of religion which at least in many cultures preceded the patriarchal phase. During this period the mother was the authority figure in the family and the society, and in the religious projection of this image, she became the goddess. In order to understand matriarchal religion one must keep in mind what Fromm has previously stated about the essence of motherly love. "Mother's love is unconditional, it is all-protective, all enveloping; because it is unconditional it can also not be controlled or acquired. Its presence gives the loved person a sense of bliss; its absence produces a sense of

¹Ibid., p. 64.



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lostness and utter despair."¹ The mother's love, in principle, extends itself equally to all of her children simply because they are her children. "All men are equal, because they all are children of a mother, because they all are children of Mother Earth."²

In the patriarchal phase, the mother is dethroned from her supreme position, and the father becomes the Supreme Being in both the structures of society and the myths of religion. As we have before noted, the nature of fatherly love is that it makes demands, establishes laws and principles, and is contingent on the ability of the child to fill these demands. Today, whether we consider Indian, Islamic, or Judeo-Christian traditions, we find ourselves in the middle of a patriarchal world with its male gods or where all gods have been eliminated with the exception of the One God. However, the element of motherly love has never been completely driven from the pantheon. In the Jewish and Islamic traditions it remains in the various currents of mysticism. In the Catholic religion it is symbolized by the Church and the Virgin. Even in Protestantism, in spite of the manifest patriarchal character of the Lutheran doctrine, there is a hidden matriarchal element. Fromm writes that

¹Ibid., p. 65.

²Ibid., p. 65.



"it is the peculiarity of Luther's faith that the figure of the mother has been eliminated from the manifest picture, and replaced by that of the father; instead of the certainty of being loved by mother, intense doubt, hoping against hope for unconditional love by father, has become the paramount feature."¹

The character of the love of God depends on the respective weight of the matriarchal and patriarchal aspects of religion. The patriarchal aspect causes me to love God as a father. Man assumes that he is just and strict, that he will reward and punish in accordance with our obedience toward him, and that he will choose his favorite people or his favorite son. In the matriarchal aspect, God loves as an all-embracing mother. The believer has faith that he cannot be divorced from her love regardless of how poor he is or how much he has sinned. Whatever happens, she will rescue, save, and forgive her child. "Needless to say, my love for God and God's love for me cannot be separated. If God is a father, he loves me like a son and I love him like a father. If God is mother, her and my love are determined by this fact."²

The difference between motherly and fatherly love is

¹Ibid., p. 67.

²Ibid., p. 67.



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only one factor determining the relationship between man and his God. Another significant factor is the level of maturity reached by the individual worshipper. This can be traced best in the development of the patriarchal religion of the West. First we find a despotic jealous God who treats man as his property and is entitled to do with him as he pleases. God drives man out of paradise lest man eat of the tree of knowledge and thus becomes God himself. God decides to destroy the whole human race, except for the favorite son Noah, because they do not please him. But at the same time a new phase begins. God makes a covenant with Noah by which God himself is bound that he will never again destroy the human race. God is bound by his own principle of justice. On this principle, God must yield to Abraham's demand to spare Sodom if there are at least ten just men. But the development goes still further. God is gradually transformed from the figure of a despotic tribal chief into a just and loving father who becomes committed to the principles he demands of others. Finally, there is a transformation of God from the figure of the father into the fatherly principles of justice, love, and truth. "In this development God ceases to be a person, a man, a father; he becomes the symbol of the principle of unity behind the manifoldness of phenomena, of the vision of the flower which will grow from



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the spiritual seed within man."¹

Fromm distinguishes one further trend in Western theism, namely, the mystical way in which one no longer speaks about God, his name, or his attributes, but knows him from within. Fromm writes that "the prohibition to make any image of God, to pronounce his name in vain, eventually to pronounce his name at all, aims at the same goal, that of freeing man from the idea that God is a father, that he is a person."² One must not even give God a positive attribute. For if one calls God wise, strong, and good, it again implies that he is a person. We can only say what God is not. We can gain more knowledge of God by postulating that he is not limited, not unkind, and not unjust. "The more I know what God is not, the more knowledge I have of God."³

Fromm concludes that as monotheism matures it can lead to only one conclusion: that we do not mention God's name at all, that we do not speak about God. "Then God becomes what he potentially is in monotheistic theology, the nameless One, an inexpressible stammer, referring to the unity underlying the phenomenal universe, the ground of all existence; God becomes truth, love, justice. God is I, inasmuch as I

¹Ibid., p. 69.

²Ibid., p. 69.

³Ibid., p. 70.



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am human."¹ In Western theology, the attempt is made to know God by thought and to make statements about God. In mysticism, the attempt to know God by thought is given up and is replaced by the experience of union with God in love.²

Fromm discusses the differences between the Aristotelian logic and the paradoxical logic of Eastern and Western mystics to indicate some of the significant developments accentuated by these two views. The Western world has mainly followed the Aristotelian logic which is based on the law of identity, the law of contradiction, and the law of the excluded middle. Aristotle explains his position as follows: "the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject and in the same respect; we must presuppose, to guard against dialectical objections, any further qualification which might be added. This, then, is the most certain of all principles . . ."³

In contrast to the Aristotelian logic, Fromm describes what he calls paradoxical logic. This logic assumes that A and non-A do not exclude each other as predicates of X.

¹Ibid., p. 70.

²Ibid., p. 32.

³Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book Gamma, 1005 b 20, trans. by W. D. Ross in The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. by Richard McKeon (Random House, New York, 1941), p. 736.



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Paradoxical logic has been predominant in Chinese and Indian thinking. A characteristic expression of paradoxical language is that of Chuang-tzu: "That which is one is one. That which is not-one, is also one." In Taoist thinking the highest step to which thought can lead is to know that we do not know. "To know and yet (think) we do not know is the highest (attainment); not to know (and yet think) we do know is a disease."¹ It is only in such a perspective that God cannot be named. The ultimate One cannot be caught in a net of words. "The Tao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Tao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name."²

Fromm discusses this difference between Aristotelian and paradoxical logic in order to point out a significant difference in their respective relationships to God. Paradoxical logic teaches that man can perceive reality only in contradictions. We can never perceive in thought the ultimate reality-unity. This led to the consequence that one did not seek to answer the metaphysical question by thought. Thought can only give us the knowledge that it is not the ultimate answer. The only way in which the world can be

¹Iao-tse, The Tao Teh King, Sacred Books of the East, ed. by F. Max Mueller, Vol. XXXIX (Oxford University Press, London, 1927), p. 120.

²Ibid., p. 47.



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grasped is through an act or experience of oneness rather than through any logical process of thought. Thus paradoxical logic leads to the conclusion that the love of God is neither the knowledge of God in thought, nor the thought of one's love of God, but the act of experiencing oneness with God."¹

This difference of approach to God in Western and Eastern thought has had enormous consequences in the history of their respective philosophical and religious developments. In the Orient it led to the tolerance that we find in Indian and Chinese religions. If the emphasis is on the right act as the way of salvation, there is less possibility of conflict with those who may have made different speculations. A second major effect of the paradoxical standpoint was the emphasis on transforming man. This was in marked contrast to the Western development of religious dogma and theoretical science. "From the Indian, Chinese and mystical standpoints, the religious task of man is not to think right, but to act right, and/or to become one with the One in the act of concentrated meditation."²

The opposite has been true for the main trends of Western thought. Although right action was also considered important, the major attempt was directed toward discovering

¹ Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving, p. 78.

² Ibid., p. 79.



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the right thought about God. This led to the religious development of dogmatic formulations about the nature of God and to the punishment of the "non-believer" or heretic. It led to an emphasis on "believing in God" as the main characteristic of the religious attitude. The person who believed in God, "even if he did not live God," felt that he was superior to those "who lived God, but did not 'believe' in him."¹ Furthermore, the idea that one could find the truth in thought led not only to religious dogma but also to science. In science, the correct thought is again the most significant factor whether it is considered from the standpoint of intellectual honesty or in the application of scientific thought to technology. Fromm comments that "paradoxical thought led to tolerance and an effort toward self-transformation. The Aristotelian standpoint led to dogma and science, to the Catholic Church, and to the discovery of atomic energy."²

In Western religious thought, the love of God is essentially the same as belief in God's existence, justice, and love. In the Eastern religions and in the comparatively rare expressions of mystics in the West, "the love of God is an intense feeling experience of oneness, inseparably linked

¹ Ibid., pp. 79-80.

² Ibid., p. 80.



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with the expression of this love in every act of living. One such Western mystic, Meister Eckhart, expresses this experience as follows: "Some simple people imagine that they are going to see God as if he were standing yonder and they here, but it is not to be so. God and I: we are one. By knowing God I take him to myself. By loving God I penetrate him."¹

Fromm concludes his discussion by suggesting an important parallel between the love that one has for one's parents and the love for God. In the earliest stages of life, the child feels helpless and needs the all-enveloping love of the mother. She is the very ground of his being. Later he turns to the father for guidance and affection. He is motivated by a desire to acquire his father's praise and to avoid his displeasure. When a person has arrived at full maturity, he has freed himself from protecting and commanding powers of the parental figures; he has established the motherly and fatherly principles within himself. At this stage he has become his own father and mother. Fromm believes that the same development occurs on the larger plane of human history. Here we can see and anticipate the same development: "from the beginning of the love for God as the helpless

¹Meister Eckhart, trans. by R. B. Blakney (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1941), p. 182.



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attachment to a mother Goddess through the obedient attachment to a fatherly God, to a mature stage where God ceases to be an outside power, where man has incorporated the principles of love and justice into himself, where he has become one with God, and eventually, to a point where he speaks of God only in a poetic, symbolic sense."¹

In contemporary religion, we find many different levels of religious development. The word "God" denotes everything from a tribal chief to the absolute Nothing." In a similar way, the individual retains within himself all of the stages from the infant on. Man's love for God cannot be separated from his relationships to his parents. "If a person does not emerge from incestuous attachment to mother, clan, nation, if he retains the childish dependence on a punishing and rewarding father, or any other authority, he cannot develop a more mature love for God."² The primary question is how mature has the individual become. "The nature of his love for God corresponds to the nature of his love for man, and furthermore, the real quality of his love for God and man often is unconscious--covered up and rationalized by a more mature thought of what his love is."³

¹Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving, p. 81.

²Ibid., p. 81.

³Ibid., p. 82.



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Furthermore, if the social structure is one that is submissive to authority, either overt authority or the anonymous authority of the market and public opinion, then his concept of God must be equally infantile. In a religious culture like the Middle Ages, man might be compared "with children at the age of eight, who need father as a helper, but who begin to adopt his teachings and principles in their lives. Contemporary man is rather like a child of three, who cries for father when he needs him, and otherwise is quite self-sufficient when he can play."¹ In this infantile dependence on an anthropomorphic concept of God without an attempt to alter life according to the principles of God, we express a more primitive religion than that of the Middle Ages. When our worship takes this form, we are far from the mature religious life which incorporates the God principles of love, justice, and truth into itself and lives them.

7. Normative Humanism

In the foregoing sections, Fromm has been advocating or criticizing various psychological, sociological, and religious elements in contemporary culture from the perspective of what he calls the "productive orientation" or what in his latest major work, The Sane Society, he calls

¹Ibid., pp. 104-105.



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"normative humanism." I would like to conclude this brief exposition of Fromm's thought with a few remarks on Fromm's meaning of the term "normative humanism."

In The Sane Society, Fromm discusses the possibility that whole societies can suffer from various neuroses. He gives statistics on the rates of homicide, suicide, and alcoholism in Western cultures which indicate that "the countries in Europe which are among the most democratic, peaceful, and prosperous ones, and the United States, the most prosperous country in the world, show the most severe symptoms of mental disturbance."¹ The intent of the whole socio-economic development in the West has been to provide a materially comfortable life, relatively equal distribution of wealth, democracy and peace. And yet these countries seem to indicate the most severe signs of mental unbalance. "Could it be," Fromm asks, "that the middle-class life of prosperity, while satisfying our material needs leaves us with a feeling of intense boredom, and that suicide and alcoholism are pathological ways of escape from this boredom? Could it be that these figures are a drastic illustration for the truth of the statement that 'man lives not by bread alone,' and that they show that modern civilization fails to satisfy profound needs in man?"²

¹Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, pp. 8-10.

²Ibid., pp. 10-11.



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Fromm's idea of a "sane society" implies a normative premise which is different from the prevailing sociological relativism. Most contemporary social scientists tend to define pathology in terms of the individual's lack of adjustment to the ways of a given society. Implicitly, the society is considered "normal" as long as it functions. But to speak of a "sane society" makes sense only if we assume that there can be a society which is not sane. Fromm's assumption here implies that there are universal criteria of mental health for the human race as such and that any existing society can be judged in the way that it fulfills or denies the criteria of mental health.

The concept of "normative humanism" is based on a few fundamental assumptions. Fromm believes that the species "man" can be defined not only in terms of his anatomical and physiological characteristics, but in terms of basic psychological laws of emotional and mental functioning as well. It is true that the knowledge we have of man remains so incomplete that we cannot as yet give a satisfactory definition of man in the psychological sense. Furthermore, what has often been called "human nature" has only been one of its many manifestations. However, the science of man should gradually evolve a more correct picture of what deserves to be called the nature of man.

The various sciences of man must cooperate in order



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to discover "the core common to the whole human race from the innumerable manifestations of human nature, the normal as well as the pathological ones, as we can observe them in different individuals and cultures. The task is furthermore to recognize the laws inherent in human nature and the inherent goals for its development and unfolding."¹ In the diverse processes of history, man develops his potentials in an infinite number of ways, but Fromm believes that the main passions and drives in man are definite and ascertainable and that some of them are conducive to health and happiness and others to sickness and unhappiness. Any given social order does not create these fundamental strivings, but it does determine which of the limited number of potential passions are to become manifest or dominant.²

The normative humanist assumes that there are right and wrong, satisfactory and unsatisfactory solutions to the problems of human existence. If a man fully matures according to the basic laws of human nature, then he will have achieved a state of mental health. Mental illness results because of a failure in such development. Mental health does not consist in the individual's adjustment to a given social order, but rather, it consists in giving an answer to the

¹Ibid., p. 13.

²Ibid., p. 14



problem of human existence that is valid for all men.

Fromm attempts to avoid any narrow provincialism while constructing such a concept of mental health. Frequently, it is assumed that since a majority of people hold certain ideas or feelings it thereby proves their validity. Fromm, however, maintains that the sharing of vices by millions of people does not turn their vices into virtues. If we posit freedom, spontaneity, and genuine self-expression as reasonable goals of mental health, then an individual or a society lacking in these characteristics may be considered to be mentally defective. If the goal of mental health is not attained by the majority of members in any given society, then there develops what Fromm calls the "socially patterned defect." The individual remains unaware of it as a defect because he shared it with many others. The individual's security system is not threatened by the experience of being different. In fact, his very defect could be raised to a virtue in a particular culture. For example, the guilt and anxiety which Calvin's doctrines aroused in men became socially patterned and those individuals who felt least worthy were often most highly venerated.¹

Fromm maintains that specific physiological and psychological needs must be satisfied if man is to remain

¹Ibid., pp. 14-15.



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healthy and sane. The traits that he shares with the animals to satisfy his thirst, hunger, need for sleep and sex arise from chemical processes in the body. They can become all powerful when they are not satisfied. But mental health cannot be guaranteed even by the complete satisfaction of physiological needs. Sanity depends on the satisfaction of needs and passions which are specifically human: "the need for relatedness, transcendence, rootedness, the need for a sense of identity, and the need for a frame of orientation and devotion."¹ Fromm declares that all of man's major passions, his lust for power, his search for truth and love, his destructiveness as well as his creativeness are rooted in these specific human sources rather than in the various stages of the libido as Freud had postulated.

Just as man's physiological needs must be met in order to prevent death, so his basic psychological needs arising from the peculiarities of human existence must be satisfied in one way or another to prevent insanity. But the ways in which these needs can be met are many; they can be healthy or unhealthy. Man must relate himself to others. If, however, he relates to others symbiotically, he becomes weak, dependent, and hostile. If he can relate to others in a loving way, then he can maintain his independence and

¹Ibid., p. 67.



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integrity. As long as man remains incestuously rooted in nature, mother, or clan, he remains blocked from developing his individuality and reason. Only if man "develops his reason and his love, if he can experience the natural and the social world in a human way, can he feel at home, secure in himself, and the master of his life."¹ Fromm gives the following summary of his conception of mental health; he insists that it follows from the very conditions of human existence and is the same for man in all ages and cultures. "Mental health is characterized by the ability to love and to create, by the emergence from incestuous ties to clan and soil, by a sense of identity based on one's experience of self as the subject and agent of one's powers, by the grasp of reality inside and outside of ourselves, that is, by the development of objectivity and reason."²

Fromm admits that his concept of mental health confronts a theoretical difficulty when the development of the individual is compared too closely with the evolution of the race. Hundreds of thousands of years ago, man began with a truly "primitive" culture. His rational faculties were at most rudimentary, and his world orientation had little relation to reality and truth. Can we speak of this primitive

¹Ibid., p. 68.

²Ibid., p. 69.



man as lacking in mental health, when he is simply lacking in qualities which only further evolution could give him? Fromm answers that if an adult had the attitude and orientation of a one-month-old child, we would probably classify him as schizophrenic. For the baby, however, the same orientation is healthy because it corresponds to a definite stage in his psychic development. In the same way, the human race starts out with a primitive orientation. Consequently, one could call all forms of human orientation healthy when they correspond to the different levels of human development. In contrast, one would call mentally ill those "fixations" and "regressions" which represent earlier states of development after the human race has already passed through them.¹

There is of course one major difference between the child and primitive man. Namely, the month-old child does not have the organic basis for a more mature attitude. Man, in contrast, has had all of the organic necessities for cultural maturity for hundreds of thousands of years. Man's evolution depended entirely on his ability to accumulate and transmit knowledge from one generation to the next. Human evolution results from cultural transmission rather than organic change. If we remove an infant from primitive

¹Ibid., pp. 70-71.



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culture and place him in a highly developed culture, then he will learn and develop as the other children of the advanced culture. "In other words, while the one-month-old child could never have the spiritual maturity of an adult--whatever the cultural conditions are--any man from the primitive stage on, could have the perfection of man at the peak of his evolution provided he were given the cultural conditions for such maturity. It follows that to speak of primitive, incestuous, unreasonable man, as being in a normal evolutionary phase is different from making the same statement about the infant."¹

But Fromm believes that this difficulty is great only if we deal with it in a broad historical form. The problem is much less complicated when we consider the concrete problems confronting contemporary man. Fromm asserts that "we have reached a state of individuation in which only the fully developed mature personality can make use of freedom; if the individual has not developed his reason and his capacity for love, he is incapable of bearing the burden of freedom and individuality, and tries to escape into artificial ties which give him a sense of belonging and rootedness."² Regression from the freedom so far attained into various forms of rootedness such as the state or the race represents

¹ Ibid., p. 71.

² Ibid., p. 72.



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either a lack of full human development or mental illness. Such phenomena are regarded as pathological by Fromm because they do not correspond to the state of evolution already attained by man and because they have unquestionably destructive results.

Fromm declares that his concept of mental health is an objective one. It has been arrived at by an examination of the "human situation" and the human necessities and needs arising from it. Consequently, mental health must not be defined as the "adjustment" of the individual to the society, but rather, "it must be defined in terms of the adjustment of the society to the needs of man, of its role in furthering or hindering the development of mental health."¹ The mental health of the individual depends primarily on the structure of society. "A healthy society furthers man's capacity to love his fellow men, to work creatively, to develop his reason and objectivity, to have a sense of self which is based on the experience of his own productive powers. An unhealthy society is one which creates mutual hostility, distrust, which transforms man into an instrument of use and exploitation for others, which deprives him of a sense of self, except inasmuch as he submits to others or

¹Ibid., p. 72.



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becomes an automaton."¹ The task of social criticism is to determine the degree and direction of these positive and negative influences.

In the twentieth century, our major dangers are war and robotism. If man is to gain the full realization of his humanity, he must first do what he can to abolish poverty, political slavery, and the threat of atomic disintegration that hangs over us all. "We must take the responsibility for the life of all men, and develop on an international scale what all great countries have developed internally, a relative sharing of wealth and a new and more just division of economic resources. This must lead eventually to forms of international economic co-operation and planning, to forms of world government and to complete disarmament."²

Fromm believes that the only alternative to the danger of robotism is "humanistic communitarianism." The problem is not primarily that of sharing profits or ownership, but rather the sharing of experience. "Income must be equalized to the extent of giving everybody the material basis for a dignified life, and thus preventing the economic differences from creating a fundamentally different experience of life for various social classes."³ We must retain the industrial

¹Ibid., pp. 72-73.

²Ibid., p. 360.

³Ibid., p. 361.



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method, but we must decentralize work in an attempt to give it human proportions. There must be co-management of all the work in an enterprise in order to permit active and responsible participation. Changes of ownership must be made to the extent necessary to prevent the profit motive from directing production into harmful channels.¹

In the political sphere, thousands of small face-to-face groups must be formed which are well informed, which discuss, and whose decisions are integrated into a new "lower house."² There must be a cultural renaissance which combines work education for the young, adult education, and a new system of popular art and secular ritual throughout the nation. Man must be restituted to his supreme place in society. He must never become merely a means, a "thing" to be used by others and himself. "Man's use by man must end, and economy must become the servant for the development of man. Capital must serve labor, things must serve life. Instead of the exploitation and hoarding orientation, dominant in the nineteenth century, and the receptive and marketing orientation dominant today, the productive orientation must be the end which all social arrangements serve."²

Today, man is confronted with the alternative of

¹ Ibid., p. 361.

² Ibid., p. 361.



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developing different kinds of robotism, either of the capitalistic or the communistic variety, or of establishing a humanism which corresponds to the visions of our greatest teachers. If man can surpass his "humanoid" history and become fully human, he will still have many problems. No perfect state of harmony and completion would result. For it is man's fate that his existence is beset with contradictions. This would be true even in a world society in which man controlled the threat of war and where he had made things his servants rather than his idols. In such a world, he would still have to be adventuresome, courageous, imaginative, loving, capable of suffering and of joy, but his powers would be in the service of life rather than in the service of death. Most contemporary facts, however, indicate that man is moving toward robotism. In the long run this will mean insanity and destruction. Even so, Fromm hopes that "all these facts are not strong enough to destroy faith in man's reason, good will and sanity. As long as we can think of other alternatives, we are not lost; as long as we can consult together and plan together, we can hope."¹

¹Ibid., p. 363.



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PART II

AN EVALUATION OF FROMM'S CONCEPT OF LOVE



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CHAPTER IV

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO FROMM

1. Love of Self and Love of Neighbor

In presenting Fromm's views, we have seen that he regards love-of-self and love-of-neighbor as conjunctive phenomena. A strong healthy love and respect for one's own self is the prerequisite for extending such love to those about us. Fromm assumes that his position is like that of Jesus, and he interprets the Biblical injunction to "love thy neighbor as thyself" as implying that self-love is essential to the love of the neighbor. We must love our neighbor even as we love ourselves. The love for our neighbor is indissolubly connected with the love for one's own self.¹

However, this view of love and this interpretation of the Biblical injunction has been thoroughly criticized by some Christian theologians. It is to this Christian critique of Fromm's love ethic that we shall now turn.

a. Ramsey Contra Fromm: Love the Neighbor as You Formerly Loved Yourself

Paul Ramsey, for example, in his book Basic Christian

¹ Erich Fromm, Man for Himself, pp. 128-129.



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Ethics, interprets the phrase "love thy neighbor as thyself" quite differently than does Fromm. The injunction would appear to emphasize both the self regarding and the neighbor regarding principles in human relationships. But Ramsey declares that this interpretation completely misses the point. We quite naturally love ourselves. Therefore the Christian injunction tells us to love others as we have previously loved ourselves. Christian love is the anti-thesis of the view proposed by Fromm. It is the total inversion of self-love. "The commandment requires the Christian to aim at his neighbor's good just as unswervingly as man by nature wishes for his own. Thus Christian ethics draws its standard from man only by inverting it."¹

Ramsey contends with thinkers like Fromm who would attempt a coalition ethic by fastening upon the words "as yourself," interpreting them as "a tribute to the positive ethical value of love for self in Christian ethics."² Ramsey remarks that all Jesus does is to point to the existence of such self-love. He does not include the command "You shall love yourself."

The Christian ethic, as Ramsey sees it, revolves

¹ Paul Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p. 100.

² Ibid., p. 100.



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around the basic conception of "obedient love." Other ethical concepts such as justice, obligation, virtue, etc. are to be seen in the light of the meaning of obedient love. Obedient love is an ultimate which cannot be defined in terms of non-Christian ethical categories. The norm of Christian ethics is to be found "only in the Biblical conception of righteousness, and not elsewhere in some moral norms derived from reason, operating apart from the Hebrew-Christian religious heritage."¹ The only meaning we have of obedient love is to be found in the life and death of Jesus Christ; he is the sole source for our illumination.

Christian love not only implies an inversion of the natural love we have for ourselves, but it also is non-resisting and non-preferential in its consideration of the neighbor. Ramsey believes that Tolstoy understood this basic element in Christian love. The Christian can have no selfish reason for preferring one person to another. Tolstoy defines Christian love as a preference for others over oneself with the further implication that before a man can truly love he must refrain from preferring some people to others for one's personal welfare.

Ramsey maintains with Tolstoy that in one to one neighbor relationships the Christian should be non-resistant

¹Ibid., p. 3.



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and should have only the interests of the neighbor in mind. But Christians may change their views with regard to resistance when the fate of more than one neighbor is at stake. "Itself non-preferential so far as concerns only the agents own 'personal welfare,' Christian love for the neighbor's sake may actually prefer certain persons to others."¹ By this means, Ramsey brings preference into an essentially non-preferential ethic of love. Ramsey calls his ethical position "enlightened unselfishness" and summarizes his position in the following way: "Love, which by its nature would be non-resistant where only the agents own rights and the perhaps unjust claims of a single neighbor are involved, may change its action to resistance by the most effective possible means, judicial or military, violent or non-violent, when the needs of more than one neighbor come into view."²

Ramsey states that the total emphasis of the Christian ethic is to be placed on love for God and love for one's neighbor. A person cannot act from a basis of self-love, self-assertion, or self-preservation. Even preference of one person or group over another must never be given from selfish motives but only from consideration of what love for one's neighbor means in a given situation. Ramsey's introduction of preference saves his position from the

¹Ibid., p. 158.

²Ibid., p. 165.



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anarchic chaos that is implied in Tolstoy's ethic. In fact, even though it begins with a radical Christian position, one can even make a case for fairly conservative institutions from its base.

b. Niebuhr's Early Interpretation of Christian Ethics

Reinhold Niebuhr is another contemporary Christian theologian who at least in his earlier writings interpreted the ethic of Jesus to mean a full love for our neighbor and a denial of love for ourselves. In his An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, Niebuhr declares that the twin pinnacles of Jesus's teaching are complete forgiveness for our fellow-men, whether they are our friends or our enemies, and complete self-denial and lack of concern for ourselves.¹ Jesus bids us to forgive our neighbor not seven times, but seventy times seven.² We must, if we are to adhere to this ethic, go the second mile, bless them that curse us, and do good to those who hurt us. "In all of these injunctions both resistance and resentment are forbidden. The self is not to assert its interests against those who encroach upon it, and not to resent the injustice done to it."³

¹Reinhold Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935), pp. 35-63.

²Matt. 18:21.

³Reinhold Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, pp. 45-46.



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Again we are not to be concerned for ourselves. Every form of self-assertion is condemned. Even though the basis of our self-love is at heart the very will to survive, we must deny it: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not life more than meat and the body more than raiment."¹ Or if we try to expand our ego through our possessions, we are again admonished: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth . . . for where your treasure is there will be your heart also . . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Therefore, "go and sell all that thou hast, and give it to the poor."²

Jesus makes a particular denunciation of pride; he condemns egoism in all of its forms whether it be over material, intellectual, or spiritual accomplishment. He denounces the Pharisees since all of their good works they do in order to be seen by men. They love the uppermost rooms at feasts and the chief synagogues. "Pride is the form of egoism which corrupts the spirit of all those who possess some excellency of knowledge or achievement which distinguishes them from the crowd, so that they forget their common

¹Matt. 6:25-32.

²Matt. 6:19-24.



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humanity and their equal unworthiness in the sight of God."¹

Furthermore, no consideration for a prudential morality is permitted. Every ethical philosophy that seeks to relate life to life at the level of nature is based on the illusion that a simple harmless balance exists between life and life, ego and ego. Niebuhr thinks that it is the attitude toward the force of egoism that distinguishes the ethic of Jesus from every naturalistic and prudential ethic. Egoism is not regarded as harmless because it is embedded in a preestablished harmony (Adam Smith), nor as impotent because reason can transmute its anarchies into a higher harmony (Utilitarianism), nor as the basic reality of human existence (Thomas Hobbes).²

Jesus makes a case for the self-realization of the ego at only one point in the Gospels and then it is only to be developed through self-denial: "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." The loss of self in relation to God or to one's fellowman, by means of sacrifice and forgiveness, is the only Christian way to attain full stature as a human being.

This ethic of Jesus is extremely rigorous; it is practically impossible to maintain except for the rather

¹Reinhold Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 44.

²Ibid., pp. 38-39.



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isolated occasions when the self forgets itself in relation to God or man. The ethic of Jesus is concerned almost solely with the vertical dimension of man; we must so act toward God and our fellowman because that is the way God acts toward us. The strict demands that Jesus makes on us are not because of socio-moral reasons, but rather because of vertical reasons. We are to forgive our fellowman, because God forgives; we are to love our enemies, because God is universal and impartial in his love.

Jesus has very little to say about the relativities of politics or economics, or about the essential balances of power that necessarily exist in even very intimate human relationships. The absolutism, perfectionism, and universalism of the love ethic is set over against both the natural self-regarding impulses and the natural defenses the self sets up because of the egoism of others. The Christian ethic does not deal with these immediate moral problems of every human life--of attempting some kind of armistice between the various contending factions. "It does not establish a connection with the horizontal points of a political or social ethic or with the diagonals which a prudential individual ethic draws between the moral ideal and the facts of a given situation. It has only a vertical dimension between the loving will of God and the will of man."¹

¹Ibid., p. 39.



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Niebuhr distinguishes between mutual love and the sacrificial love of Christian agape. Mutual love can be reciprocated. It is a form of love in which the good of the self is included in the love that is given to the neighbor. Since man's self-love is inordinate, it becomes a constant problem in our attempts to extend a self-less sacrificial love to our neighbor. Sacrificial love, on the other hand, is the pure self-giving love of God manifested in Jesus Christ. This sacrificial love, in contrast to mutual love comes from God. It flows through us and outward toward our neighbor without considering the worth of the neighbor or reward for the self. Only such a love from God can redeem the fragmented self-interested mutual love that man extends to man.

Niebuhr's phrase "impossible possibility" indicates the limitation of man's own capacity to love when it is compared to the perfect love of God. Christ himself demonstrates the impossibility of Christian love to survive in human history. Christ can symbolize pure disinterested agape only by remaining aloof from the contentious forces of history. Christ's life and death reveals what man's life cannot be, but at the same time it reveals what man's life should be. Niebuhr describes the symbolic meaning of Jesus's life and death in the following words.



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The Cross symbolizes the perfection of agape which transcends all particular norms of justice and mutuality in history. It rises above history and seeks conformity to the Divine love rather than harmony with other human interests and vitalities. This harmony is a desirable end of historical striving; but it can never be a final norm. For sinful egoism makes all historical harmonies of interest partial and incomplete; and a life which accepts these harmonies as final is bound to introduce sinful self-assertion into the ethical norms.¹

There are obvious differences in perspective on the meaning of self-love and neighbor love as they are discussed by Fromm on the one hand and by Ramsey and Niebuhr on the other. Fromm has placed an emphasis on the need for self-love as a prerequisite for the genuine love of anything else. This appears to be diametrically opposed to the ethic of Jesus as interpreted by Ramsey and Niebuhr. I shall now discuss Niebuhr's direct critique of Fromm's views and attempt to discover points of disagreement, agreement, and verbal confusion between the contrasting perspectives.

2. Niebuhr's Critique of Fromm

As might be expected, Niebuhr's major critique is directed at Fromm's concept of self-love. Love, for Fromm, is a phenomenon of abundance. Its premise is the inner strength which enables a person to give. It creates in

¹Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), Vol. II, p. 74.



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Niebuhr's words "the picture of a reservoir which can overflow only if it is filled to the brim."¹ But Niebuhr is skeptical of such a view of the self. It neglects the interested and indeterminate nature of the self to those around it. "The self is a center with an indeterminate series of periphera into the world. There are no exact boundaries between the self and its various communities of family, nation, etc."² A preoccupation of the self for itself always sets premature limits to itself. In contrast, the more the self forgets itself and lives for a larger world, the more truly and richly does it become itself. He that loseth his life shall find it.

a. Niebuhr's View of Self-Love and Self-Hatred

The Christian ethic, like Fromm's humanistic ethic, attempts to give an estimate of the proper functioning of the total personality. The Christian, however, does not feel that it is so easy to measure the total personality. Fromm, according to Niebuhr, does not fully realize that no matter how productive our life orientations might be, we are still self-interested participants and we tend to corrupt our love and understanding of others more than we realize.

¹Reinhold Niebuhr, "Review of Man for Himself," Christianity and Society, Spring, 1948, p. 27.

²Ibid., p. 27.



Fromm does not see that "the desire for security or for prestige is, like all human desires, indeterminate," and consequently that "there is no point at which the self, seeking its own, can feel itself self-satisfied and free to consider others than itself."¹ The self, according to Niebuhr, is always more biased in its own behalf than it would readily admit. "This is why self-knowledge is more ambiguous than the proponents of scientific objectivity in the study of human nature realize, and why self-love is more dubious than Dr. Fromm realizes."² Niebuhr suggests that if Fromm were to trace the dimensions of this self-interest, he might discover why the Christian faith regards the sense of being judged from beyond the self as a necessary part of true self-knowledge.

Furthermore, Niebuhr's view of self-hatred differs from that of Fromm. "From the Christian standpoint the self-hatred which is supposed to make love impossible is actually the consequence of a too anxious preoccupation with self."³ This view appears to be in direct opposition to that of Fromm. He regards narcissism or preoccupation with

¹Reinhold Niebuhr, The Self and the Dramas of History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 139.

²Reinhold Niebuhr, "Review of Man for Himself," p. 27.

³Ibid., p. 27.



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self as grounded in a more fundamental self-hatred. In a moment, I would like to indicate how part of this apparent opposition can be resolved.

Niebuhr senses that the debate between Fromm and himself is partly verbal. He suggests at one point that it might not be a bad idea for both the proponents and the critics of "self-love" to drop the term as too inexact. He states that the Christian critique is directed primarily against the self's preoccupation with itself. This preoccupation narrows and impoverishes the life of the self and the other selves with which it comes into contact.¹

b. The Distinction between Neurotic and Existential Anxiety

But Niebuhr also believes that something more than semantics is involved. The difference in perspective resolves itself into a distinction between neurotic and existential anxiety. "The point of the debate lies in the difference between the psychiatric analysis of various particular types of insecurity from which particular people suffer and the Christian conception of the precarious situation in which all human life stands and the efforts which all men make to overcome the basic insecurity of human existence by abortive attempts to establish a security which is incompatible with

¹Ibid., p. 27.



the very character of human existence."¹ Niebuhr sees anxiety as a pervasive phenomenon in the life of man. This anxiety is bearable if man has faith in God. But man is prone to rebellion and disobedience against God. This lack of faith results in pride of many different kinds. Niebuhr equates this pride with self-love. It is man's attempt to be more certain of himself than he actually can be. He insists that Fromm neglects this basic element of human nature, and consequently constructs a misleading utopian image of man.

3. Points of Agreement and Difference between Fromm and Niebuhr

a. Christian Caution Regarding the Term Self-Love

The basic conflict between Niebuhr and Fromm comes down to their contrasting concepts of self-love and self-hatred. Niebuhr thinks of self-love as the human propensity for egoism, self-preoccupation, and arrogant dogmatism. He would agree with Freud that love of self and love of neighbor are opposed directions in the movement of love. Fromm, in contrast, regards self-love as the necessary self-strength, self-respect, and self-acceptance which enables the self productively to love another person.

¹Ibid., p. 27.



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Although both Niebuhr and Ramsey shy from the term self-love neither do they go to the opposite extreme, as did Luther on occasion, to the effect that we should hate ourselves. They are comparatively mute about the term "self-hatred" and sense its morbid potentiality. They insist that the Christian emphasis is on love for the neighbor, but they do not declare that we therefore should hate ourselves.

Ramsey suggests the use of the term self-acceptance as a median-term between either the affirmation or the negation of the self. He speaks of Fromm's insistence on self-love over against the hatred of the self or the flight from the self in these terms. "Unwillingness to be oneself, flight from self, is not overcome alone, if at all, by willing defiantly to be oneself or by positive self-love. Between these two attitudes stands a third, the product of Christian faith: simple willingness to be oneself before God, self-acceptance which, stripped of self-love, can still love the neighbor for the sake of nothing else."¹

Paul Tillich has also made the suggestion of replacing the ambiguous term "self-love" with "natural self-affirmation" or "paradoxical self-acceptance." But Fromm

¹Paul Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics, pp. 103-104.



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objects to this alteration even though he sees merit in it. He believes that "in the term 'self-love' the paradoxical element in self-love is contained more clearly. The fact is expressed that love is an attitude which is the same toward all objects, including myself."¹ Furthermore, through the use of the term self-love, Fromm retains a polar relationship to his opposite term self-hatred.

b. The Similarity between Fromm's Concept of Self-Hatred and Niebuhr's Concept of Anxiety

Niebuhr regards all human forms of self-love with suspicion, and as we have before noted, he regards self-hatred as the result of a "too anxious preoccupation with self." Fromm, on the other hand, considers the preoccupation of self with self as the result of inner self-hatred. However a closer harmony can be found between these apparently conflicting views. For if Niebuhr's use of the term anxiety is equated with Fromm's use of the term self-hatred, then in both instances the result is a preoccupation with the self. Fromm calls this phenomenon "selfishness" or "narcissism" and Niebuhr calls it "self-love." The explanations and the terminology differ, but in each case the phenomenon is generally the same.

¹Erich Fromm, Art of Loving, Footnote, p. 57.



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c. The Similarity between Fromm's Concept of Self-Love and Niebuhr's Concept of Grace

There is also a similarity between Niebuhr's concept of grace and Fromm's concept of self-love. Both are necessary before the individual can love the neighbor. There is a great difference however in the way that each man conceives of the development of this inner state of health. Fromm has so frequently emphasized the need for man to stand alone and free from any external support that he often speaks of self-love as though it were self-caused. In Man for Himself, he refers to self-love as the necessary prerequisite for loving the neighbor, but he does not stress the love that must be received before any self can love and accept itself. In his later writings such as in the Art of Loving, Fromm does indicate the importance of loving parents or their surrogates for the emotional health of the growing child. Niebuhr, meanwhile, emphasizes the love that must be received before the self can love itself or another person, but he believes that only God can confer this love. Fromm wishes to remain free of theological support, and Niebuhr insists that an ethic of love is impossible without it.

Fromm has no theological counterpart to Niebuhr's doctrine of man's sin and God's grace. His concept of self-love arises from his empirical therapeutic experiences. He has found that as the patient learns to love and respect



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himself, that he also learns to respond to his neighbors with greater love and objectivity. A greater degree of self-acceptance, of being willing to face one's weaknesses and strengths with emotional integrity, brings with it a greater capacity to see and love others for what they are. Niebuhr's concept of sin emphasizes man's tendency to make himself the center of existence rather than God. In these categories, individuals such as Fromm, and perhaps also his patients, appear as rebellious sinners.

Carl Rogers has criticized Niebuhr's view of "original sin" from a perspective that is very close to that of Fromm.¹ It is quite clear that "original sin" for Niebuhr means "self-love, pretension, claiming too much, grasping after self-realization." But Rogers finds it difficult to imagine the experiences from which such a conceptual framework has grown. He writes that the core of the difficulty of most people that come to him is that they despise themselves and regard themselves as worthless and unlovable.² This inner self-hatred is frequently covered by various kinds of facades and pretensions, but Rogers "could not differ more deeply from the notion that self-love is the

¹Carl Rogers, "Reinhold Niebuhr's The Self and the Dramas of History, A Criticism," Pastoral Psychology, June, 1958, p. 17.

²Ibid., p. 17.



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fundamental and pervasive 'sin'.¹

Rogers suggests one line of rapprochement by stating that the experience of a relationship in which the patient is loved comes very close to what the Christian theologians call agape. Rogers, of course, is speaking about a concrete interpersonal relationship and he does not draw any conclusions as to a possible metaphysical source of agape. He simply finds that in the relationship of love and understanding that exists between the patient and the therapist that the patient can "feel a dawning respect for, acceptance of, and finally, even a fondness for himself."² As he begins to feel more worthwhile and lovable in himself despite whatever shortcomings he may possess, he also increases his feelings of love and tenderness for others despite their shortcomings. Consequently, he can begin to move toward the more socialized self he would like to become. When seen from the inside rather than from a superficial or external basis, the problem of such people is self-hatred rather than self-love.

Perhaps we can gain a greater degree of agreement between these views if we ask ourselves whether both Niebuhr and Fromm are attempting to achieve the same internal state

¹Ibid., p. 17.

²Ibid., p. 17.



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for man. I believe that despite the divergence of their approaches, there is an overlapping in their central intentions. Both are attempting to describe what man needs for his psychological, religious, and ethical well being. Both are agreed on the need for man to develop his capacity to love his neighbor. But Fromm describes this inner potentiality as one of self-love, while Niebuhr describes it as a state of grace. Both would finally agree that man can love only after he has first been loved. Fromm arrives at his conclusion through an analysis of non-metaphysical, interpersonal relationships, while Niebuhr believes that man can love only if God has first loved man. God accepts us; consequently we can accept ourselves.

d. Similarities and Differences between Fromm's Implicit Metaphysics and Niebuhr's Metaphysics

And yet although the language is very different, there is also an implicit metaphysics in Fromm's philosophy and one that has striking similarities to that of Niebuhr. For Fromm believes that there is an essential structure to man which can be approached through what he has called either the "normative" or the "productive" orientation. It is that state in which man relates to himself, to others, and mystically to the "All" or the "One" with love and reason. Fromm admits that this is a rare attainment, and he devotes most of his energies to describing man's failure to attain



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such a state. Many of the non-productive orientations such as the selfish, the sadistic, the arrogant, and the sensuous bear a close resemblance to Niebuhr's description of man as sinner. Furthermore Niebuhr defines the wrath of God as "the world in its essential structure reacting against the sinful corruptions of that structure; it is the law of life as love, which the egotism of man defies, a defiance which leads to the destruction of life."¹ Fromm, I believe, would agree with this statement completely. He would also agree with Niebuhr that Jesus fulfilled this essential structure of man. He would not declare, however, that Jesus was the only man who so manifested this essential nature of man.

Niebuhr, however, conceives of God as personal and as transcending even the essential structures of existence. Consequently when these structures are transgressed, we sin against a knowing, suffering, but forgiving God. It is by this knowledge that man is brought to despair, contrition, and forgiveness. "It is in this contrition and in this appropriation of divine mercy and forgiveness that the human situation is fully understood and overcome. In this experience man understands himself in his finiteness, realizes the guilt of his efforts to escape his insufficiency and dependence and lays hold upon a power beyond himself which both completes his incompleteness and purges him of his false and

¹Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. II, p. 56.



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vain efforts at self-completion."¹

Fromm, following Feuerbach, believes such religious imagery to result from a projection of man's own powers. According to this view, when man asks God for forgiveness, he in fact is requesting a kind of self-forgiveness. Man projects unto an idealized image of God all of his own yearnings and potentialities. It is not possible for man to live up to such idealized expectations. Consequently, in the course of man's history, he creates mythologies which demand perfection but which also grant him forgiveness for his imperfections. Niebuhr's metaphysical assertions would be placed in such a category by Fromm. They must be accepted on faith. In contrast, Fromm's interpretation can be traced through the fantasy life of man.²

¹Ibid., p. 57.

²Fromm's most elaborate discussion of religious projection is found in his early work Das Entwicklung des Christusdogmas (Vienna: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1931). Fromm comments on the symbolic reflections of the social transition from the revolutionary first century of the Christian movement to the institutionalized religion of the Roman Empire in the third century. Christ originally symbolizes the rebellion of the masses against the rulers, or in psychoanalytic terms the rebellion of the Son against the ruling Father. During the early years of the Christian movement a complete alteration of the existing order was expected. However, as the Church was assimilated into the Roman Empire, Christ also becomes assimilated into the Fatherhood of God. The Nicene Creed asserts that Christ and the Father were always one. Consequently, even though the Father is not removed, rebellion is unnecessary for the Father and the Son are one. The ruling class retains the revolutionary figure of Christ, thereby appeasing the masses, but the revolutionary content of the movement has been absorbed in the Roman hierarchy. Thus rebellion is replaced by subordination, and for the masses the good life is relegated to the "after-life."
See pp. 50-55.



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Despite the differences between Niebuhr's theological and Fromm's psychological approach, perhaps both men would agree to the following summary of what constitutes strength and weakness in the human self. Both would agree that the self must be liberated from self-hatred and certain neurotic defenses against anxiety before it can affirm the life within itself and the other selves around it. However, even when the self reaches a comparatively high degree of freedom from particular forms of neurotic anxiety, it still confronts the existential situation. One can say at this point that if the self has become free for love and rationality, it has also become more free to accept existential anxiety. Consequently, the self is less likely to succumb to those various forms of absolutism which give at best a spurious security and often when the dogmas clash a very destructive insecurity. The self in this state retains a healthy skepticism over against all panaceas for existential anxiety. The self will be wary of putting too much faith in Communism, or Capitalism, or Socialism, or "Christianity," or in its own powers. It will have gained a better understanding of the fragmented lights with which it views the world.

e. Fromm and Niebuhr on the Morbid Tendencies in the Christian Tradition

One may wonder whether Niebuhr's metaphysical superstructure is a necessary part of his creative insight into



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existential anxiety and man's pretenses in alleviating himself of that anxiety. So often the God concept of Biblical and post Biblical thought has introduced in the name of righteousness or love a dogmatic and perfectionistic note that has only increased man's penchant for absolutes. Niebuhr attempts a resolution of this dilemma by placing God and his perfection above history as an indicator of our own finitude. But in Christian terms this perfect God has become manifest in history and has demanded of man, "Be ye perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." This perfection is conceived of in terms of love and sacrifice for the neighbor. It produces a conflict between the image of Christ's perfection and the comparatively egoistic norms developed from man's empirical experience and pragmatic reflection. It is this conflict that Niebuhr continually attempts to resolve or hold in juxtaposition.

The great evil in the Christian scheme is the pride that a person develops in himself and his achievements. Any expression of it is contrary to the will of God. The only love that harmonizes with this interpretation of the Christian will of God is the love we give to our fellowman. Niebuhr defines God as "the conscious impulse of unity between life and life." Consequently, when we act for ourselves, we act contrary to God's will. Yet in countless daily acts, we expand our ego; we assert ourselves; we go contrary to this



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will of God. The sensitive soul, in this situation, becomes an ethical centipede. No matter how hard he tries to deny himself, he finds it impossible to do so. The Christian believes that God will forgive his shortcomings. But still, if he is sincere, he will attempt to eliminate, to the best of his ability, all pride from his self. If he does not do this, but rather lapses into a lethargy of conscience, believing that God will forgive him anyway, he falls into heresy and becomes dishonest to the foundations of his creed. If he does strive rigorously to deny his ego, it is quite likely that he will become neurotic.

In a more recent publication, Niebuhr has admitted that there is a morbid tendency in the religious critique of the egoistic impulse.¹ He believes that it is well that modern culture has been engaged in a debate between the religious tradition and the presuppositions of the Enlightenment. "For the religious traditions without challenge tend to produce morbidity in regard to the universality of the egoistic impulse and to lack discrimination between ordinate and inordinate forms of it, since there is no objective standard for ordinacy, at least not one which can be applied universally."² In contrast to his earlier interpretation,

¹Reinhold Niebuhr, "Human Creativity and Self-Concern in Freud's Thought," Freud and the 20th Century, ed. by Benjamin Nelson (Meridian Books, New York, 1957), pp. 259-276.

²Ibid., p. 273.



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here we find that the indeterminacy of the ego becomes a basis for a cautious judgment against inordinate tendencies of the ego rather than as a basis for a wholesale condemnation. The ego is now seen as the center of creativity as well as of selfishness.

When Niebuhr arrives at such a conclusion, he again comes close to Fromm's concept of the productive orientation. Fromm's insistence on the negative view of the self in Protestant thought and his equally insistent declaration for a healthy affirmation of the self has no doubt been largely responsible for his wide acceptance by contemporary readers. This has been a valuable and needed contribution, but it can also prove misleading unless it is balanced with Niebuhrian caution. Without such caution most of us will tend too quickly to identify ourselves with Fromm's "normative" and "productive" man. This tendency again indicates the accuracy of Niebuhr's main thesis that "this anxious particular self universally insinuates concern for its power and prestige, for its glory and approbation into its creative responsibilities and loyalties."¹ Thus, even though we welcome Fromm's rebuttal of extremely morbid views of the self and self-love, we again see the need for the Niebuhrian critique of Fromm's comparatively optimistic phraseology.

¹Ibid., p. 272.



CHAPTER V

A FREUDIAN RESPONSE TO FROMM (HERBERT MARCUSE)

1. Marcuse's View of the Human Situation

We now turn to a quite different approach to the human situation and one that leads to a different critique of the views of Erich Fromm. If Niebuhr brings the Christian perspective of a righteous, loving God down upon the processes of history and the writings of Humanists, one might say that Marcuse approaches the human situation from below and is interested in illustrating the airy illusions and pretensions of writers like Fromm from the subterranean, instinctual depths of human life. Marcuse attempts an analysis of the repressive aspects of Western civilization particularly as it affects man's labor and man's sexual behavior. We shall here struggle to give the highlights of this unusual and rather complicated Freudian based philosophy before exhibiting its critique of Erich Fromm.

a. Civilization as a Manifestation of Neurosis

Marcuse is one of the few post-Freudian thinkers to take seriously Freud's indictment of civilization as a manifestation of neurosis arising from the repression of



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instinctual drives. And he draws the further conclusion, moving beyond Freud, that if man is to grow healthy again he must develop a non-repressive way of life. Of course, in many ways, Marcuse believes that instinctual repression has been worth the price. By harnessing our energies to the development of a technological civilization, we have practically completed the conquest of nature and have satisfied the needs of a greater number of people than ever before.¹

But our intensified technological progress is apparently tied to an increasing lack of freedom. Throughout industrial civilization, the domination of man by man grows in scope and efficiency. This trend is no mere transitory regression on the path of progress. Our concentration camps, mass exterminations, world wars, and atom bombs are no mere "relapse into barbarism," but are rather the unrepressed implementation of the achievements of modern science, technology and domination.² Ironically, this enslavement and devastation occurs at the height of civilization when both the material and intellectual attainments of men could bring into being a truly free world, a world without repression.

Perhaps, writes Marcuse, these evil and recalcitrant

¹Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (The Beacon Press, Boston, 1955), p. 3.

²Ibid., p. 4.



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factors of contemporary life indicate the obsolescence of the established institutions of civilization and the need for an emergence of new forms of civilization. Perhaps repressiveness is more vigorously maintained the more unnecessary it becomes. If repressiveness belongs to the very essence of civilization, then Freud's question as to the price paid for it becomes irrelevant for there is then no alternative. But Freud's own theory, Marcuse maintains, provides good reasons for rejecting his own identification of civilization with repression. Therefore, on the very grounds of Freud's theoretical position, Marcuse proposes to reopen the question. "Does the interrelation between freedom and repression, productivity and destruction, domination and progress, really constitute the principle of civilization? Or does this interrelation result only from a specific historical organization of human existence?"¹

In Freudian terms the conflict is poised between the pleasure principle of the organism and the reality principle that impinges from without. Are these two principles so irreconcilable that it necessitates the repressive transformation of man's instinctual structure? "Or does it allow the concept of a non-repressive civilization, based on a fundamentally different experience of being, a fundamentally

¹Ibid., pp. 4-5.



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different relation between man and nature, and fundamentally different existential relations?"¹ Marcuse then proceeds to the discussion of a non-repressive civilization, not as an abstract and utopian speculation, but as a concrete and realistic possibility. In order to justify his position, Marcuse attempts to demonstrate two postulates: "first, Freud's theoretical conception itself seems to refute his consistent denial of the historical possibility of a non-repressive civilization, and, second, the very achievements of repressive civilization seem to create the preconditions for the gradual abolition of repression."²

1) Freud's Contradictory Use of "Eros" and "Sexuality"

Marcuse points to a major distinction in Freud's theoretical framework by showing the contradictory way that Freud uses the two terms "sexuality" and "Eros." In Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud speaks of the conflict between sexuality and civilization. But in other works such as Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, Freud speaks of Eros as the effort "to combine organic substances into ever larger unities."³

¹Ibid., p. 5.

²Ibid., p. 5.

³Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, trans. by James Strachey (New York: Liveright, 1950), p. 57.



How then does the notion of the asocial character of sexuality jibe with the growth toward unity that seems to characterize the movement of Eros? Marcuse demonstrates that the contradiction is not solved by attributing the explosive connotations to an earlier concept of sexuality and the more constructive aspects to a later concept of Eros for Eros actually becomes an inclusive word carrying both meanings.¹ Furthermore, the contradiction cannot be eliminated by locating the constructive cultural force of Eros only in the sublimated modes of sexuality. For according to Freud, the drive toward ever larger unities of life belongs to the "biological-organic nature of Eros itself."²

2) The Potential Reconciliation of This Contradiction

Marcuse suggests that this inner contradiction in Freud's thinking reflects the inner unreconciled tension in Freud's theory. "Against his notion of the inevitable 'biological' conflict between pleasure principle and reality principle, between sexuality and civilization, militates the idea of the unifying and gratifying power of Eros, chained and worn out in a sick civilization."³ Furthermore, "this idea would imply that the free Eros does not preclude lasting

¹Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, p. 42.

²Ibid., p. 43.

³Ibid., p. 43.



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civilized societal relationships--that it repels only the supra-repressive organization of societal relationships under a principle which is the negation of the pleasure principle."¹

b. The Repressive, Alienated Labor of Civilization

1) "Surplus Repression" and the "Performance Principle"

Marcuse introduces two terms which he finds instrumental in defining the underlying dynamics of Western civilization. They are the concepts "surplus-repression" and "performance principle." The term "surplus-repression" reveals concisely the Marxist-Freudian perspective through which Marcuse analyzes the processes of civilization. Marx had found that "on the one hand the daily sustenance of labour-power costs only half a day's labour, while on the other hand the very same labour-power can work during a whole day, that consequently the value which its use during one day creates, is double what he [the employer] pays for that use."² The portion of the worker's labour-time which was unnecessary for his own sustenance and unpaid for by his employer Marx called surplus labour. It was on the basis of such labor that the surplus value was created which

¹Ibid., p. 43.

²Karl Marx, Capital (New York: The Modern Library), p. 216.



made capitalism a profitable venture for the employer and which eventually made it surplus-repressive for the laboring class.

Marcuse differentiates between "surplus-repression" with its implications of socio-economic domination as conceived in Marxist categories and the instinctual repressions which are necessary "for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization"¹ as conceived in Freudian categories. Marcuse interprets his task as an "extrapolation" of Freud's biological concepts into their sociological content. "The Freudian terms, which do not adequately differentiate between the biological and the socio-historical vicissitudes of the instincts, must be paired with corresponding terms denoting the specific socio-historical component."²

According to Marcuse, the specific socio-historical reality of the West is under the domination of the "performance principle." With this concept, Marcuse emphasizes that our particular civilization is "stratified according to the competitive economic performances of its members."³ Every society requires certain modes of repression, but these modes will vary in form and degree. For example, repression differs "according to whether social production is oriented on individual consumption or on

¹Op. cit., p. 35.

²Ibid., p. 35.

³Ibid., p. 44.



profit; whether a market economy prevails or a planned economy; whether private or collective property."¹ These diverse social forms make an enormous difference in the content of the reality principle, for every form of the reality principle must be embodied in specific institutions, laws, values, and relations which require their own particular "modification" of the instincts. The specific form of the reality principle will change at different stages in the history of the civilization. Furthermore, "while any form of the reality principle demands a considerable degree and scope of repressive control over the instincts, the specific historical institutions of the reality principle and the specific interests of domination introduce additional controls over and above those indispensable for civilized human association."² Marcuse uses the term "surplus-repression" to denote "these additional controls arising from the specific institutions of domination."³ In modern Western civilization Marcuse believes these additional controls have arisen around the pervasiveness of the performance principle.

The performance principle of an acquisitive and antagonistic society undergoes a constant process of expansion

¹Ibid., p. 37.

²Ibid., p. 37.

³Ibid., p. 37.



and rationalization. "For a long way, the interests of domination and the interests of the whole coincide: the profitable utilization of the productive apparatus fulfills the needs and faculties of the individuals."¹ However, the more specialized it becomes, the more alienated man becomes from his labor. Men no longer live their own lives but perform pre-established functions. While they work, they do not fulfill their own needs and faculties but work in alienation. Consequently, labor time which takes up the largest part of an individual's life time becomes painful time for alienated labor is far removed from gratifying man's need for pleasure.

2) Man Can Now Eliminate Surplus Repression

Nevertheless, man's work day, according to Marcuse, is rapidly approaching a point where comparatively little of his time must be spent in alienated labor. This reduction of the working day to a point "where the mere quantum of labor time no longer arrests human development is the first prerequisite for freedom."² In fact Marcuse would prefer the reduction of modern man's working day immediately even though this would involve a regression to a lower standard of living. He believes that the argument that makes liberation conditional on an ever higher standard of living all

¹Ibid., p. 45.

²Ibid., p. 152.



too easily serves to justify the perpetuation of repression. The very definition of the standard of living in terms of "automobiles, television sets, airplanes, and tractors is that of the performance principle itself."¹ If we could become free of such concepts our norms would become different. They would revolve around the universal gratification of the basic human needs and the freedom from guilt and fear.²

Under optimum conditions, the prevalence, in mature civilization, of material and intellectual wealth would be such as to allow painless gratification of needs, while domination would no longer systematically forestall such gratification. In this case, the quantum of instinctual energy still to be diverted into necessary labor (in turn completely mechanized and rationalized) would be so small that a large area of repressive constraints and modifications, no longer sustained by external forces, would collapse. Consequently, the antagonistic relation between pleasure principle and reality principle would be altered in favor of the former. Eros, the life instincts, would be released to an unprecedented degree.³

3) Marcuse Does Not Believe That Release from Repression Would Bring a Reversion to Savagery

If such a liberation from the repressions of labor and channeled sexuality did occur, would civilization inevitably erupt and revert to savagery? Would the absence of want and repression drain all energy which could promote material and

¹Ibid., p. 153.

²Ibid., p. 153.

³Ibid., pp. 153-154.



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intellectual production on a higher scale? Freud's answer to this is affirmative. "His answer is based on his more or less silent acceptance of a number of assumptions: that free libidinal relations are essentially antagonistic to work relations, that energy has to be withdrawn from the former in order to institute the latter, that only the absence of full gratification sustains the societal organization of work."¹

In order to meet Freud's argument of "instinctual repression--socially useful labor--civilization," Marcuse attempts to transform it to the correlation "instinctual liberation--socially useful work--civilization." Marcuse can make this change because of his belief that the prevalent instinctual repression resulted "not so much from the necessity of labor, but from the specific social organization of labor imposed by the interest in domination--that repression was largely surplus-repression."² The elimination of surplus-repression would eliminate the organization of human existence as an instrument of labor rather than labor itself. "If this is true, the emergence of a non-repressive reality principle would alter rather than destroy the social organization of labor: the liberation of Eros could create new

¹Ibid., p. 154.

²Ibid., p. 155.



and durable work relations."¹

c. The Repressive, Alienated Sexuality of Civilization

1) Freedom from Repressive Labor Will Assist the Resexualization of the Body

Not only has man become a mere instrument in the sphere of his labor, but he has also mobilized the full force of civilized society against sexual gratification in a similar way. In this area man was "to be a higher being, committed to higher values; sexuality was to be dignified by love."² The body as a means of pleasure "was tabooed and remained the ill reputed privilege of whores, degenerates, and perverts."³ Marcuse would encourage the reversal of this divisive tendency. As the division of labor becomes reoriented toward the gratification of freely developing individual needs, so also the taboos and sublimations of bodily pleasure must be lessened.

Since the body would no longer be used as a full-time instrument of labor, the body could be resexualized. It would no longer have to undergo the repression of the libido to specific body zones, which finally ends in what we consider to be the "mature" or "genital" personality. "The

¹Ibid., p. 155.

²Ibid., p. 201.

³Ibid., p. 200-201.



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regression involved in this spread of the libido would first manifest itself in a reactivation of all erotogenic zones and consequently, in a resurgence of pregenital polymorphous sexuality and in a decline of genital supremacy."¹ The body in its entirety, no longer suffering from its own form of surplus-repression, would become an object of cathexis, a thing to be enjoyed. The music of Eros would move throughout the body rather than being concentrated in the genitalia. The ramifications of such an alteration of libido would have enormous significance for the existing institutions of society. In Marcuse's words, "this change in the value and scope of libidinal relations would lead to a disintegration of the institutions in which the private interpersonal relations have been organized, particularly the monogamic and patriarchal family."²

The prospect of a disintegration of existing institutions seems to confirm the expectation that instinctual liberation can only lead to a society of "sex maniacs." But Marcuse believes otherwise. For the process that Marcuse outlines does not mean simply the explosive release of pent up libido, but rather its transformation. We must move from a sexuality constrained under genital supremacy to an

¹Ibid., p. 201.

²Ibid., pp. 201-202.



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erotization of the entire personality. There must be a spread of libido rather than an explosion of it. This spread will cover both private and societal relations which are now fragmented by an overly repressive reality principle. This transformation of private libidinal relations can come about however, only through an alienated, mechanized means of labor and production which releases man for the major part of each day to the activities of free play.

The reason that we consider the possibility of a free libidinous society with such apprehension is because of the fact that when repressed sexuality has broken loose it has generally done so in explosive chaotic ways. But this is because of the excessive restraints placed on sexuality. "The libido continues to bear the mark of suppression and manifests itself in the hideous forms so well known in the history of civilization; in the sadistic and masochistic orgies of desperate masses, of 'society elites,' of starved bands of mercenaries, of prison and concentration-camp guards."¹ Such a release of sexuality provides the necessary outlet for unbearable frustration. But this explosive release tends eventually to tighten the very restrictions against which it rebels. Consequently, the fear of violent sexuality "has been used time and again as a prop for

¹Ibid., p. 202.



suppressive regimes."¹ In contrast to this vicious alteration between suppression and explosive release, Marcuse believes that "the free development of transformed libido within transformed institutions, while eroticizing previously tabooed zones, time, and relations, would minimize the manifestations of mere sexuality by integrating them into a far larger order, including the order of work."² If not repressed, sexuality would tend to its own sublimation. "The libido would not simply reactivate precivilized and infantile stages, but would also transform the perverted content of these stages."³

2) Marcuse's Utopianism

Marcuse insists that we can return to some forms of primitive utopia by working through to the logical end our alienated forms of labor and sexuality. He cites Margaret Mead's description of the Arapesh as an example of such a primitive utopia, based on a reality principle far different from our own.

To the Arapesh, the world is a garden that must be tilled, not for one's self, not in pride and boasting, not for hoarding and usury, but that the yams and the dogs and the pigs and most of all the children may grow. From this whole attitude flow many of the other Arapesh traits, the lack of conflict between the old and young, the lack of any expectation of jealousy or

¹Ibid., p. 202.

²Ibid., p. 202.

³Ibid., p. 202.



envy, the emphasis upon co-operation.¹

The most significant element in this description is its fundamentally erotic orientation toward the world. Nature is not considered as an object of domination and exploitation, but rather as a garden in which different plants, animals, and particularly children can grow. "It is the attitude that experiences man and nature as joined in a non-repressive and still functioning order."² But while such a social structure has been ordered in a prehistorical and precivilized past, Marcuse is concerned with introducing such a concept into a fully mature civilization in hope of transforming its future. In order to do this, there must be a "transformation of sexuality into Eros, and its extension to lasting libidinal work relations."³ And this presupposes "the rational reorganization of a huge industrial apparatus, a highly specialized societal division of labor, the use of fantastically destructive energies, and the co-operation of vast masses."⁴

According to Marcuse, Utopia could exist at two hypothetical points. One would be located at the primitive beginnings of history where there might be a non-oppressive

¹Margaret Mead, Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies (New York: New American Library, 1952), p. 100.

²Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, p. 216.

³Ibid., p. 216.

⁴Ibid., p. 217.



distribution of scarcity. This may have existed in the matriarchal phases of ancient society. The second possibility for utopia would arise after the conquest of scarcity by means of the rational organization of the fully developed industrial society. The development of the instincts might be very different under these two conditions. They would have one very significant feature in common, however. "The instinctual development would be non-repressive in the sense that at least the surplus-repression necessitated by the interests of domination would not be imposed upon the instincts."¹ The quality of life arising from such a freedom of repression would reflect in its primary aim to satisfy the basic needs of life, sexual as well as social, in the areas of food, housing, clothing, and leisure. "This satisfaction would be (and this is the important point) without toll--that is, without the rule of alienated labor over the human existence."² Under primitive conditions alienation has not yet arisen because of the primitive character of the needs themselves. Under "ideal" conditions in a mature industrial civilization, alienation would be completed by the general automatization of labor, the exchangeability of functions, and the reduction of labor time to a minimum.

¹Ibid., p. 152.

²Ibid., p. 152.



2. Marcuse's Critique of Fromm's View of Love

a. The Marxist Background of Fromm and Marcuse

Both Marcuse's position and that of Fromm reflect the Marxist background from which they develop. Marx, in turn, had utilized Hegel's ontological concept of dialectical process for the purpose of sociological criticism. One of the fundamental concepts of Hegel's Phenomenology is that the mind is not a simple, independent entity separate from the external world, but a complex process which develops from simple sense awareness through dialectical phases which develop more and more of its potentialities until an absolute self-consciousness is reached which includes all of its previous phases.

For Hegel, the mind could only become conscious of itself by becoming aware of the objects that its activity brought into existence. The artist can only realize who he is by producing works of art. The slave develops a self-consciousness while carrying out the plans of his master. The mind develops by putting itself into that which originally appears as opposed and alien to it. Hegel calls this mental process of going outside itself in order to develop, Entausserung or alienation. Without this power of self-division, man would have remained on the level of the animal without civilization.

Hegel comments on a number of occasions when the



opposition between mind and its products was particularly severe. One such occasion was at the collapse of the ancient city state when the individual retreated into himself. He then opposed his subjective religious life to that of his external world under the Caesars. Again during the Enlightenment, men lost their simple religious views and were torn between faith and reason. Hegel uses the word "Entfremdung" or estrangement for these torturous divisions. But it is only by means of such divisions that man can move on to new realizations. The Phenomenology traces the mind's dialectical development from simple unreflective forms of experience through the process of self-estrangement to the final realization of absolute self-consciousness.

Marx transposes and extends the Hegelian dialectic of mind into economic stages. The main significance of Hegel for Marx is that the former conceived of the "self-genesis of man as a process" and conceived of "objectification as loss of the object, as alienation and as the transcendence of this alienation."¹ Thus Hegel "grasps the essence of labour and comprehends objective man . . . as the outcome of man's own labor."² But despite such agreement on the nature of the historical process, Marx remains

¹Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House), p. 151.

²Ibid., p. 151.



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fundamentally critical of Hegel. Marx comments that "the only labour which Hegel knows and recognizes is abstractly mental labour."¹ This abstract "uncritical" tendency in Hegel's thought resolves the actual conflicts of men on an ideal plane which leaves the oppressive economic and political structures of Hegel's time fully sanctioned as they were.

Marx insists that the historical dialectic does not conclude with the monarchic state in which Hegel's political theory takes repose. For this society is in itself oppressive and must therefore be negated. The proletariat is estranged and enslaved. Their impoverished condition is analogous to the estranged, divided mind in the Hegelian process that has not yet achieved self-consciousness. For Hegel, the estranged mind confronts a world that is alien to it, even though it is a world that it has labored to construct. Similarly, men living in a capitalist society are confronted by a social order which results from what they do and yet exerts an oppressive burden upon them. Man must move from a social structure in which his labor constructs a system that imprisons him to a society in which a man transforms that which is alien to him into something that he realizes as his own product. This path eventually

¹Ibid., p. 152.



leads Marx to concentrate on the exploitation of the product from the hands of the worker by the capitalist class. Alienation is thus seen to result from private property. The problems of power and domination are reflexes of private property. Consequently, if this basic evil is eliminated, a communist utopia will emerge in which man's labor is free and unalienated.

The development of property structures, according to Marx, follows the pattern of family structures. In this belief, Marx follows the views of Lewis Morgan, the American anthropologist, who made his study of the matriarchal society of the Iroquois Indians the basis for a generalization to the matriarchal foundation of all primitive societies. Marx died before expressing his views, but Engels fulfills Marx's bequest "to present the results of Morgan's researches in connection with the conclusions arrived at by his own... materialist investigation of history and thus to make clear their whole significance."¹

Morgan had found that the Iroquois did not hold property individually but rather by the family group. In the most primitive stage, there was no way of identifying

¹ F. Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, Foreign Language Publishing House, Moscow, p. 5.



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the individual father. Consequently, inheritance and descent was recognized only through the female line. Gradually, however, marriage between single pairs developed. Consequently, fatherhood became distinguishable and the fathers began to insist on the right to hand down their property to their sons. The family was then formed along patriarchal lines, and the proliferation of property structures as we know them today began to evolve.

The anthropological findings of Morgan corresponded closely with Bachofen's theory of ancient Mutterrecht in Greece and Rome as reflected in their mythologies. Bachofen thought that the transition of ancient matriarchy to patriarchy could be traced in the Orestia of Aeschylus. The emergence of patriarchy was symbolized by Orestes, who was acquitted by Athena even though he had committed matricide. Marx and Engels developed their social theory on the pattern indicated by Morgan and Bachofen. The entire cycle moved from a primitive matriarchal communism to a patriarchal property structure with its attendant evils of domination, inherited wealth, and bloody competition, and eventually back again to a matriarchal communism on a higher level.

In Eros and Civilization, Marcuse attempts to deepen this dialectic of civilization by placing it in the Freudian structure of history. In this view, a patriarchal stage in



which a dominant male jealously guards his harem of females and keeps his sons away from them precedes the early matriarchal period. The sons, unable to endure their sexual deprivation, finally kill the old male and take the women for themselves. The killing of the father brings ambivalent feelings of guilt and adoration. The father is consequently raised and worshipped as a totem or a god. At the same time, the sons gradually tire of quarreling over who is to take the father's place and begin the civilizing process of solving their disputes by means of law and morality.

These laws or taboos are directed mainly toward unrestrained access to the women. This in turn heightens the significance of the women and the matriarchate follows. "The low degree of repressive domination, the extent of erotic freedom, which are traditionally associated with matriarchy appear, in Freud's hypothesis, as consequences of the overthrow of patriarchal despotism rather than as primary 'natural' conditions."¹ Matriarchy, however, is gradually superseded by a new patriarchy which although not as powerful as that imposed by the primal father is still strong enough to inaugurate its own social and religious institutions. In this movement, the primeval father is elevated to the Father God with unlimited cosmic power. The

¹Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, p. 65.



deep layers of guilt felt toward Him help to sustain the repressive features of the society. In the perspective of this primitive history, Marcuse constructs his radical theory which proposes to re-eroticize the body and to transform the surplus repressive structures of labor in order to bring about the social utopia envisioned by Marx and Engels.

Fromm, on the other hand, maintains that the Freudian view of individual and cultural development is incorrect. He doubts Freud's theory of ancient patricide and remains closer to the views of Marx and Engels that primitive society was matriarchal. Fromm de-sexualizes the Oedipal complex and sees it primarily as a struggle for the emerging individual to free himself from both the protective and authoritarian elements of the family matrix. He claims to be closer to Marx also in his general interpretation of human nature. He thinks that Marx's historical materialism is a superior focus of interpretation than that of the instinctivistic materialism of Freud and Marcuse. Man is life aware of itself; he remains a part of nature, and yet he has transcended the natural world. It is from this distinctively human situation that such fundamental human requirements as man's need to relate himself to others and the need to sense his own identity arise.

Marcuse, however, insists that the Neo-Freudian school promotes the very same values that Freud denounced



as repressive. This is achieved by reducing the part that the instinctual dynamic plays in mental development. "Thus purified, the psyche can again be redeemed by idealistic ethics and religion; and the psychoanalytic theory of the mental apparatus can be rewritten as a philosophy of the soul."¹ Marcuse maintains that Fromm abandons the instinctual roots of individual and social development for the "mature person" and his "cultural environment." Supposedly, such a change of emphasis would accent the influence of society on the individual. However, Marcuse maintains that just the opposite happens. "Whereas Freud, focusing on the vicissitudes of the primary instincts, discovered society in the most concealed layer of the genus and individual man, the revisionists, aiming at the reified, ready-made form rather than at the origin of the societal institutions and relations, fail to comprehend what these institutions and relations have done to the personality that they are supposed to fulfill."²

Marcuse has attempted to deepen his Marxist position by accepting the Freudian view of man and culture, but he has used Freud's theory in order to transcend Freud's tragic historical perspective. Fromm has accepted many Freudian insights but proposes a contrasting affirmative

¹Ibid., p. 240.

²Ibid., p. 241.



view of the self, a view that finds the self not as deeply rooted in the instinctual drives as does Freud, but which discovers it as self-aware and historical and closer to the traditional Marxist view. We turn now to Marcuse's critical evaluation of Fromm and Fromm's rebuttal.

b. Marcuse's Commentary on Fromm's Early Writing

Marcuse first notes that the implications of Fromm's early theories are quite similar to his own. In them, Fromm attempts to free Freud's views from the patricentric, authoritarian, and acquisitive society in which Freud lived. Fromm finds that the libidinal basis of man is highly modifiable and that the chief determining factors are economic. These libidinal structures remain constant and repressive so long as the society remains constant. But once the existing society has begun to crumble, then the libidinal forces no longer act as cement maintaining the existing order but become dynamite.¹

In a succeeding essay,² Fromm considered the socio-psychological significance of Bachofen's theory of matriarchy for the existing patricentric culture. He credits Bachofen

¹Erich Fromm, "Ueber Methode und Aufgabe einer analytischen Sozialpsychology," in Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, I (1932), pp. 28-54.

²Erich Fromm, "Die sozialpsychologische Bedeutung der Mutterrechtstheorie," in Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, III (1934), pp. 196-227.



with seeing the fundamental differences between men and women, particularly with regard to their attitude toward children. Woman is closer to nature than man. She is Mother Earth and all of her children arise from her and stand equally before her. Man, in contrast, stands above nature. He does not experience the creation of life as deeply, but rather concentrates on taking hold of the life already in existence. Mother's love tends toward an equal treatment of the children. The father, however, is the bearer of the moral standards. His attitude is based on principles rather than love, and his relationship to his children is usually more demanding and repressive. Consequently, in a patriarchal society stronger guilt feelings and stronger rebellious feelings are aroused. The domination that the father holds over his sons extends itself throughout the structures of the society between the rulers and the ruled. In contrast, matriarchy produces less guilt feeling and greater freedom to enjoy life in a non-repressive way. Marx, basing his thought on both Bachofen and Morgan, believed that extreme patriarchal societies would destroy themselves and out of that destruction a socialist matriarchy would emerge.

In this essay, Fromm again affirms the liberating role that sexuality can play in destroying the existing society. He writes:



Sexuality offers one of the most elemental and strongest possibilities of gratification and happiness. If these possibilities were allowed within the limits set by the need for the productive development of the personality rather than by the need for the domination of the masses, the fulfillment of this one fundamental possibility of happiness would of necessity lead to an increase in the claim for gratification and happiness in other spheres of the human existence. The fulfillment of this claim requires the availability of the material means for its satisfaction and must therefore entail the explosion of the prevailing social order.¹

We see in this quotation Fromm's similarity to Marcuse's position, but also the possibility of the differences that later emerge. For Fromm has still retained sexual gratification "within the limits set by the need for the productive development of the personality" and as we have previously indicated Fromm's concept of the "productive personality" claims for itself a larger framework than the development and transformation of instinctual drives.

In a further criticism of Freudian theory,² Fromm comments that the analyst-patient relationship as defined by Freud is a specific expression of bourgeois, liberalist toleration. However, the psychoanalytic insights into sexual desire penetrate still deeper than this bourgeois tolerance. The analyst, in this situation, frequently

¹Ibid., p. 215. Translated by Marcuse in Eros and Civilization, p. 243.

²Erich Fromm, "Die gesellschaftliche Bedingtheit der psychoanalytischen Therapie," in Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, IV (1935), pp. 365-397.



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develops an ambivalent attitude toward his neurotic or socially deviant patient. For the analyst still generally acts in conformity with bourgeois taboos, and this frequently gives rise to at least an unconscious contempt for the deviant. Fromm maintains that Freud's attitude of "tolerance" and emotional coolness toward the patient manifests this hidden bourgeois contempt for the human behavior, particularly the sexual behavior, tabooed by his society.

Fromm then contrasts Freud's attitude with that of Ferenczi who insisted on a cherishing, affirmative attitude toward his patients. Ferenczi believed that the analyst had to become the loving parental surrogate to the patient in place of his actual defective parental ties. Here the goal was not the fulfillment of the endless demands placed upon the patient by the authoritarian-patricentric culture, but rather there was the attempt to help the person to his human right to happiness.¹

However, with this claim for happiness, Marcuse notes, psychoanalysis confronts a fateful dilemma. "The 'claim for happiness,' if truly affirmed, aggravates the conflict with a society which allows only controlled happiness, and the exposure of the moral taboos extends this conflict to

¹Ibid., p. 396.



an attack on the vital protective layers of society."¹ This goal becomes practicable only in a society where toleration is a fundamental element of personal, economic, and political relationships. But where this is not the case, "the affirmative attitude toward the claim for happiness then becomes practicable only if happiness and the 'productive development of the personality' are redefined so that they become compatible with the prevailing values, that is to say, if they are internalized and idealized."² This change in meaning deflects the explosive content of the psychoanalytic critique of society. Consequently, when such prospects as "individual happiness" and "productive development" are defined as genuine possibilities within this society, these very ideas become deceptive instruments of repression.

c. Fromm's Critique is Superficial

Fromm, of course, is also critical of society. He by no means accepts the status quo of the existing society. He is severely critical of the prevailing capitalistic values and institutions. He does not merely glorify "adjustment psychology" and he is severely critical of those who

¹Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, p. 244.

²Ibid., pp. 244-245.



do. Present day society is condemned for impeding the realization of the productive personality. He critically analyzes the deification of success, the pervasiveness of competition, and the hostility it engenders. Fromm proposes his own humanistic psychoanalysis and communitarian socialism in opposition to the prevailing patterns of the capitalist society.

But this critique, according to Marcuse, is directed only against surface phenomena. It accepts the basic premises of the criticized society. Fromm directs a major portion of his critique against the market economy and the personality that it engenders. But that is as far as he goes. "The critical insights do not lead to a transvaluation of the values of productiveness and the 'higher self'--which are exactly the values of the criticized culture."¹ Marcuse would call into question the "performance principle" itself and the "higher values" of this culture. Both are the result of "surplus-repression." Revisionists, like Fromm appear to be critical but they do not really go to the roots of the problem. "The affirmation absorbs the critique."²

¹Ibid., p. 261.

²Ibid., p. 261.