



1) The "Higher Self"

For example, Fromm blames the adjusted person for betraying his "higher self." This results in an "inner emptiness and insecurity" in spite of his triumph in the battle for success. The person is better off who though less successful than his "unscrupulous neighbor" has attained to an "inner strength and integrity." This stronger person "will have security, judgment, and objectivity which will make him much less vulnerable to changing fortunes and opinions of others and will in many areas enhance his ability for constructive work."¹ Marcuse remarks that this style suggests the Power of Positive Thinking, a kind of whistling in the dark to which the revisionist critique succumbs. Marcuse does not object to the values that Fromm proposes in themselves, but rather to the context in which they are defined and proclaimed as genuine possibilities. "Inner strength" takes on that connotation of unconditional freedom that "can be practiced even in chains and which Fromm himself once denounced in his analysis of the Reformation."²

¹ Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 75.

² Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, p. 262.



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2) Contrasting Views of Therapy

This difference in depth can also be seen in the contrast between the Freudian and Neo-Freudian views of therapy. For Freud, the "personality" is but a "broken" individual who has internalized and successfully utilized repression and aggression. When one considers what civilization has done to man, the difference in the development of personalities is chiefly that between an unproportional and proportional share of that "everyday unhappiness" of the common lot of mankind. The proportional lot of this misery is all that therapy can achieve. Behind the many differences in the historical forms of society, "Freud saw the basic inhumanity common to all of them, and the repressive controls which perpetuate, in the instinctual structure itself, the domination of man by man."¹ The notion that "civilization and its discontents" had their roots in the biological structure of man deeply influenced Freud's concept of therapy and made him cautious and pessimistic with regard to its possibilities for cure.

Against such a "minimum program" for therapy, Fromm proclaims a higher goal: the "optimal development of a person's potentialities and the realization of his individuality." Marcuse objects to this type of statement most strenuously.

¹Ibid., p. 257.



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"It is precisely this goal which is essentially unattainable-- not because of limitations in the psychoanalytic techniques but because the established civilization itself, in its very structure, denies it."¹ One can either define "personality" and "individuality" in terms of their possibilities within the given form of civilization, which then becomes a psychology of adjustment no matter how idealized the name. Or one defines them in terms of their potentialities beyond the established form of civilization. "Today, this would mean 'curing' the patient to become a rebel or (which is saying the same thing) a martyr."²

It is true that man integrates a diversity of inherited and acquired qualities into a total personality. It is also true that personality develops out of the relation between the individual and his environment, human and non-human, under many and varying conditions. "But this personality and its development are pre-formed down to the deepest instinctual structure, and this pre-formation, the work of accumulated civilization, means that the diversities and the autonomy of individual 'growth' are secondary phenomena."³ The reality of the "unique individual" depends on the "scope,

¹Ibid., p. 258.

²Ibid., p. 258.

³Ibid., p. 252.



form, and effectiveness of the repressive controls prevalent at the given stage of civilization."¹ At our present stage the personality tends toward a conformist reaction pattern which is established by the hierarchy of power which functions by means of its technical, intellectual, and cultural apparatus. The analyst and his patient share in this alienation. Furthermore, this alienation does not become apparent as a neurotic symptom, but rather as the hallmark of "mental health" simply because it accords with the standards of the performance principle. When the process of alienation is discussed by Fromm, it is usually not treated as the whole that it is, but rather as only a negative aspect of the whole. In such a repressive culture, "personality has not disappeared: it continues to flower and is even fostered and educated--but in such a way that the expressions of personality fit and sustain perfectly the socially desired pattern of behavior and thought."² This failure by Fromm and the other revisionists to recognize the actual state of alienation turns their concepts of individuality and interpersonal relationships into mere ideology. In contrast, Freud, with his biological view of man, makes the deeper cut. For Freud the "mature person" and his "interpersonal relationships" are derivatives and appearances of the general

¹Ibid., p. 252.

²Ibid., p. 253.



fate. "The general repressiveness shapes the individual and universalizes even his most personal features. Accordingly, Freud's theory is consistently oriented on early infancy-- the formative period of the universal fate in the individual." "The subsequent mature relations 'recreates' the formative ones."¹

3) Contrasting Views of the Oedipal Complex

A similar transition can be seen in Fromm's treatment of the Oedipus complex. Fromm alters the meaning of the incest wish from one of "sexual craving" to the desire to remain protected and secure. We live with and from the mother, and in part we desire to remain under her protection. But the desire for freedom and independence wars with the desire to remain a protected child. Marcuse comments that this "ideological" interpretation of the Oedipus complex "implies acceptance of the unhappiness of freedom, of its separation from satisfaction."² In contrast, Freud's theory "implies that the Oedipus wish is the eternal infantile protest against this separation."³ The Oedipus wish is a desire for freedom, but it is "freedom from want" that is desired. "Since the (unrepressed) sex instinct is the biological

¹ Ibid., pp. 253-254.

² Ibid., p. 269.

³ Ibid., p. 269.



carrier of this archetype of freedom, the Oedipus wish is essentially 'sexual craving.' Its natural object is, not simply the mother qua mother, but the mother qua woman--female principle of gratification."¹ Here Eros, seeking gratification, rest, and integral satisfaction comes nearest to the death instinct (return to the womb), the pleasure principle nearest to the Nirvana principle. Here Eros fights its first battle against everything the reality principle stands for: "against the father, against domination, sublimation, resignation."² It is this "sexual craving" for the mother-woman that makes the Oedipus conflict the prototype of the instinctual conflicts between the individual and his society. "If the Oedipus wish were in essence nothing more than the wish for protection and security ('escape from freedom'), if the child desired only impermissible security and not impermissible pleasure, then the Oedipus complex would indeed present an essentially educational problem. As such, it can be treated without exposing the instinctual danger zones of society."³

For Freud the "higher" values of culture have been achieved at great cost to the individual. Consequently, the

¹Ibid., p. 270.

²Ibid., p. 270.

³Ibid., p. 270.



psychoanalyst should be careful in his preaching of these values without revealing their forbidden content. Fromm, according to Marcuse, does not heed this warning. He proclaims the "higher" values such as love and self-realization as though they were comparatively simple possibilities. For example, Fromm speaks of genuine love as rooted in productiveness. Its essence is the same whether it is the mother's love for the child, our love for man, or the erotic love between two individuals. In any of these relationships, productive love will manifest itself as care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge.¹ However, in this description, there is no analysis of "the instinctual ground and underground of love, of the long and painful process in which sexuality with all its polymorphous perversity is tamed and inhibited until it ultimately becomes susceptible to fusion with tenderness and affection--a fusion which remains precarious and never quite overcomes its destructive elements."² According to Freud, love in our culture can only be practiced as "aim-inhibited sexuality" with all of the inhibitions that a monogamic-patriarchal society can place upon it. Beyond carefully controlled manifestations, love is destructive to the fabric of the existing society. Consequently Freud

¹Erich Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 98.

²Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, p. 263.



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pessimistically concludes that "There is no longer any place in present-day civilized life for a simple natural love between two human beings."¹

d. Summary Critique of Fromm from the Freudian Viewpoint

The substance of Freud's psychoanalytic theory lies in the description of the vicissitudes of the basic instincts of sex and aggression. Only the study of these instinctual dynamics can reveal the full depth of the repression which civilization imposes upon man. Fromm on the other hand greatly reduces the role of these instinctual drives, and consequently, if sexuality does not play the constitutional role that Freud gave to it, then there is no necessary conflict between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. "Man's instinctual nature is 'purified' and qualified to attain, without mutilation, socially useful and recognized happiness."² Freud, however, saw in sexuality the full expression of the pleasure principle, and thereby he was able to discover "the common roots of the 'general' as well as neurotic unhappiness in a depth far below all individual experience, and to recognize a primary 'constitutional' repression underlying all consciously experienced and administered

¹Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, p. 77 note.

²Ibid., p. 267.



repression."¹ Freud took this view much too seriously "to identify happiness with its efficient sublimation in productive love and other productive activities."² He maintained throughout his writings that there was a great gap between the real freedom and happiness of instinctual satisfaction and the pseudo freedom and happiness that are practiced and preached in a repressive civilization.

Fromm, however, revives idealistic ethics as if Freud had never demonstrated their conformist and repressive features. "He speaks of the productive realization of the personality, of care, responsibility, and respect for one's fellow men, of productive love and happiness--as if man could actually practice all this and still remain sane and full of 'well-being' in a society which Fromm himself describes as one of total alienation, dominated by the commodity relations of the market."³ Self realization in our society can only occur when its aims are redefined in order to become compatible with the prevailing unfreedom and unhappiness. Productiveness, love, and responsibility become "values" only in so far as "they contain manageable resignation and are practiced within the framework of socially useful

¹Ibid., p. 267.

²Ibid., p. 267.

³Ibid., pp. 258-259.



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activities (in other words, after repressive sublimation); and then they involve the effective denial of free productivity and responsibility--the renunciation of happiness."¹

According to Fromm, man's health and survival depends on man's "ability to take himself, his life and happiness seriously; on his willingness to face his and his society's moral problem. It rests upon his courage to be himself and to be for himself."² Marcuse declares that such an injunction is pointless and deceptive in contemporary civilization. "In a period of totalitarianism, when the individual has so entirely become the subject-object of manipulation that, for the 'healthy and normal' person, even the idea of a distinction between being 'for himself' and 'for others' has become meaningless, in a period when the omnipotent apparatus punishes real non-conformity with ridicule and defeat--in such a situation the Neo Freudian philosopher tells the individual to be himself and for himself."³ To Fromm and the other revisionists, the repressions of the society become transformed into moral problems. Neurosis becomes, in the last analysis, a symptom of moral failure and the psycho-analytic "cure of the soul" becomes an education in the

¹Ibid., p. 259.

²Erich Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 250.

³Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, p. 266.



attainment of a "religious attitude."¹

In summary Marcuse points out how Fromm and other Neo-Freudians have reversed the direction of the Freudian critique. They have shifted the emphasis from the organism to the personality, from the material foundations to the ideal values. This cultural orientation encounters the institutions and relations of society as finished products. Their acceptance in this form shifts the psychological emphasis from infancy to maturity, for only at the level of developed consciousness does culture become a determining factor of personality above the biological level. Conversely, only by playing down the biological factors, by the mutilation of the instinct theory, is the personality definable in terms of the objective cultural values. "In order to present these values as freedom and fulfillment, they have to be purged of the material of which they are made, and the struggle for their realization has to be turned into a spiritual and moral struggle."² Fromm does not insist, as did Freud, on the enduring truth value of the instinctual needs which must be "broken" to enable the human being to function in interpersonal relations. By abandoning the instinctual base, Marcuse declares that Fromm and the other

¹Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, p.76.

²Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, p. 274.



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Neo-Freudians also abandon the foundation from which psychoanalysis makes its critique of society. They yield to the negative features of the very reality principle which they so eloquently criticize. Consequently, their critiques are deceptive and their solutions too easy.

3. Fromm's Rebuttal of Marcuse

a. Love Is Possible in Our Culture

In rebuttal to the preceding arguments, Fromm insists that Marcuse neglects the "human factor" and that he betrays a certain "callousness towards moral values." He further states that it is Marcuse's thesis that anyone who studies the conditions for happiness and love is betraying radical thought. Marcuse answers, however, that Fromm and the other revisionists do not really study the conditions for "happiness and love." Marcuse counters that it is not Fromm's values that he finds spurious but the context in which they are defined and proclaimed. "They are defined by Fromm in terms of positive thinking which leaves the negative where it is--predominant over human existence."¹ Fromm maintains that his concept of "productive love" rejects adjustment to "alienated society." But this is precisely what Marcuse

¹Herbert Marcuse, "A Reply to Erich Fromm," Dissent, Winter, 1956, p. 81.



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questions. He thinks that Fromm's concepts participate in the alienation and his remedies for it are shallow and deceptive.

Fromm, on the other hand, does not regard his point of view as merely capable of rendering a surface critique of our culture. At the same time he believes that genuine love and integrity are possibilities, albeit rare ones, within the framework of the capitalistic system. A salesman of a useless commodity cannot function without lying, but a skilled worker, farmer, physician, and many types of business men can try to practice love without ceasing to function economically. Even if the principle of capitalism is incompatible with love, there is still a large measure of freedom in relation to its structure. In saying this, however, Fromm does not wish "to imply that we can expect the present social system to continue indefinitely, and at the same time to hope for the realization of the ideal of love for one's brother."¹ Love is a marginal phenomenon in our society, and consequently people capable of love are necessarily the exceptions. Therefore, "those who are seriously concerned with love as the only rational answer to the problem of human existence must, then, arrive at the conclusion that important and radical changes in our social structure are

¹Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving, p. 132.



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necessary, if love is to become a social and not a highly individualistic, marginal phenomenon."¹

Marcuse has insisted that there cannot be any love, integrity, or inner strength in an alienated society. They can only be raised to an ideological level and thereby increase alienation by spiritually disguising it. Marcuse declares that any person who has integrity and is capable of love and happiness, in present-day capitalistic society, must either become a martyr or insane. Fromm agrees with Marcuse that the society is one of alienation in which the humanistic goals of happiness and individuality are rarely realized. But he disagrees with the view that these qualities are completely non-existent in our society, that to analyze their nature and conditions for development is merely ideological, and that to encourage their practice means to preach adjustment.² If love is an ideology, declares Fromm, then so is hatred. "Would Marcuse claim that hate, destructiveness, sadism, is an ideology? Obviously not. The only controversy which might arise is whether one explains them as being rooted in the sexual instinct, in the death instinct, or in other fundamental factors of human

¹Ibid., p. 132.

²Erich Fromm, "The Human Implications of Instinctivistic 'Radicalism'," Dissent, Fall, 1955, p. 349.



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existence."¹

b. Fromm's View Historical and Existential Rather than Biological

Fromm obviously roots love and hatred in other factors than does Freud and Marcuse. He prefers the Marxian position of an historical materialism over against that of Freud's biological materialism. According to Fromm, Freud's libido theory has been "overcome by Marx's historical materialism, in which the activity of the total personality in his relations to nature and to other members of society is the Archimedian point from which history and social changes are explained."² Such a position Fromm declares is not "ideological" but is based on the specific conditions of human existence. "Man, having awareness of himself, has transcended the natural world; he is life aware of itself. At the same time he remains a part of nature, and from this contradiction follow his basic passions and strivings, the need to relate himself to others, the need to transcend his own role as a creature by creating (or destroying), the need to have a sense of identity and a frame of orientation or devotion."³ The way in which these specifically human needs

¹Ibid., p. 349.

²Ibid., p. 344.

³Ibid., pp. 344-345.



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are met creates the difference between sickness and health. The fulfillment of the basic instinctual needs, including the sexual, is not a sufficient condition for happiness or even for sanity. The concept of "human existence" is not less real than that of the instincts, and it is not idealistic. "It is broader and conceived in terms of activity and practice--rather than of a specific physiological substance."¹

c. Differing Evaluations of the Sexual Drive

The argument between Fromm and Marcuse comes down to differing evaluations of the strength and significance of the sexual drives. This is illustrated by their contrasting interpretations of the place of sexuality in Freud's psychology. The argument centers around three basic points which Fromm asserts are fundamental tenets of Freud's thought and which Marcuse denies. They are 1) that happiness resides in the satisfaction of the sexual instinct, 2) that love in its essence is sexual desire, and 3) that man has an inherent wish for unlimited sexual satisfaction. Fromm writes that "happiness for Freud, is satisfaction of the sexual instinct, specifically of the wish for free access to all available females."² Primitive man, according to Freud,

¹Ibid., p. 345.

²Ibid., p. 342.



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has to cope with comparatively few restrictions while satisfying these basic drives. Furthermore, he can give vent to his aggression in ways which have been outlawed by more civilized communities. It is the repression of these powerful instinctual urges which gives rise to the growth of civilizations and at the same time to an increasing incidence of neurosis. According to Freud, "Civilized man has exchanged some part of his chances of happiness for a measure of 'security.'¹ Consequently, the emancipation of man lies in the complete and unrestricted satisfaction of his unlimited sexual desires.

Marcuse, however, argues that far from identifying happiness with the "unrestricted satisfaction" of the sexual instinct, Freud held that "unrestricted sexual liberty from the beginning" results in a lack of full satisfaction. Furthermore, the "value" of erotic needs "instantly sinks as satisfaction becomes readily obtainable." He considered the "strange possibility" that "something in the nature of the sexual instinct is unfavorable to the achievement of absolute satisfaction."² Furthermore, Freud did not define the "essence" of love as sexual desire, but as the inhibition

¹Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, p. 92.

²Sigmund Freud, Collected Papers, Vol. IV, trans. by Joan Riviere (London: Hogarth Press, 1956), p. 213 f.



and sublimation of sexual desire by tenderness and affection. He saw in this "fusion" one of the greatest achievements of civilization. "Consequently," Marcuse writes, "Freud could not have had the 'idea' (and I did not) that 'the emancipation of man lies in the complete and unrestricted satisfaction of his sexual desire.'"¹

Fromm, however, answers by giving several quotes from Freud's writings to prove his points.² 1) Happiness is found in the satisfaction of the sexual instinct; he quotes from Freud: "Man having found by experience that sexual (genital) love afforded him his greatest satisfaction, so that it became in effect a prototype of all happiness to him, must have been thereby impelled to seek his happiness further along the path of sexual relations, to make genital erotism the central point of his life."³ Furthermore, primitive man "knew nothing of any restrictions on his instincts."⁴ Therefore he could enjoy his happiness more than civilized man but not for any length of time. 2) Love is in its essence sexual desire. Fromm quotes from Freud:

¹Herbert Marcuse, "A Reply to Erich Fromm," Dissent, Winter, 1956, p. 79.

²Erich Fromm, "A Counter-Rebuttal," Dissent, Winter, 1956, p. 82.

³Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, p. 69.

⁴Ibid., pp. 91-92.



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"Love with an inhibited aim was originally full sensual love and in men's unconscious minds is so still."¹ 3) Man has an inherent wish for "unlimited" sexual satisfaction. Freud writes, "suppose that personal rights to material goods are done away with, there still remain prerogatives in sexual relationships which must arouse the strongest rancour and most violent enmity among men and women who are otherwise equal."² This last quotation appears more ambiguous than the former two. This is caused by Fromm's use of the word "unlimited" in contrast to Freud's use of "strongest rancour" and "most violent enmity" over sexual deprivation. The use of the word "unlimited" is extravagant on the part of Fromm, but the quotations from Freud do indicate the very great significance he attributes to sexual power.

Furthermore, Marcuse omits to say what Freud meant by his statement that there is something in the nature of the sexual instinct which "is unfavorable to the achievement of absolute gratification." Marcuse fails to mention that in the very same paper Freud explains what he means by this. Freud believes that the full satisfaction of the sexual instinct is possible only if its sadistic and coprophilic components are satisfied. This is not possible in marital

¹Ibid., p. 71.

²Ibid., p. 89.



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love because a man who respects his wife must necessarily frustrate these desires. In a closing paragraph of the same paper Freud states his basic thesis very clearly. "It is not possible for the claims of the sexual instinct to be reconciled with the demands of culture."¹ Therefore, renunciation, suffering, and possibly extinction "are not to be eluded by the race of man."² This gloomy prognosis results from the peculiarities developed by the sexual instinct under the pressure of culture. On the other hand, "this very incapacity in the sexual instinct to yield full satisfaction as soon as it submits to the first demands of culture becomes the source . . . of the grandest cultural achievements, which are brought to birth by ever greater sublimation of the components of the sexual instinct."³

Freud's thesis is that primitive man enjoys a greater amount of happiness than civilized man because he is not susceptible to as much sexual repression as the latter. By the very fact that man stood erect, there was already a necessity for a certain amount of sexual repression, the denial of the coprophilic components, which prevented man from the attainment of full sexual happiness. "Freud's point is not

¹Sigmund Freud, Collected Papers, Vol. IV, p. 216.

²Ibid., p. 216.

³Ibid., p. 216.



to doubt that genital satisfaction is the source of happiness, but that man can never be quite happy because any kind of civilization forces him to frustrate the full satisfaction of his genital desires, especially the sadistic and coprophilic components."¹

Fromm, in contrast, does not believe that the instincts play such an overwhelming role in the life of man. When the instincts are constantly frustrated, then they obviously do become important, but this frustration is not a cumulative cultural process which eventually erupts in savage fury. Much more important for man's individual and social happiness, according to Fromm, is man's transcendence over the biological, his need for life orientation, rational direction, and loving relationships to overcome his sense of isolation. When man has in some way failed in these dimensions, then disruption and loss of meaning comes to the social life of man.

¹Erich Fromm, "A Counter-Rebuttal," Dissent, Winter, 1956, p. 83.



CHAPTER VI

A SYMPOSIUM ON FROMM'S VIEWS OF LOVE

1. A Comparison between Fromm, Niebuhr, and Marcuse

So far in this essay, I have presented the basic aspects of Fromm's psychology. This was followed by a Christian critique of Fromm's thought mainly by Reinhold Niebuhr, and this in turn was followed by a chapter presenting a Freudian critique of Fromm based on Herbert Marcuse's analysis. I would now like to extend this discussion by introducing a few personal comments on this debate and also to enlarge the evaluation by further commentary on Fromm's views of the human situation, self love, and love of neighbor.

a. The Inadequacy of the Freudian Interpretation of Culture and Symbols

First of all, I would like to continue the discussion between Fromm and Marcuse in order to gain a clearer perception of their similarities and differences in their contrasting interpretations of man and culture. Marcuse accepts the standard Freudian view that culture results from the repression of childhood sexuality. According to this theory, the natural polymorphous perversity of the libido in



childhood is constricted into specific body zones during the first five years of life. This brings about the familiar oral, anal, and genital developments of the libido. Repression of polymorphous instinctual gratification leads to the sublimation of libido into culturally acceptable forms. The sublimation of primary sexual energy provides the basic vitality for sustaining the higher life of culture.

Man, the animal that symbolizes, is actually the animal that sublimates. He replaces real gratification of the instincts with symbolical gratification. As Norman Brown comments, "The animal symbolicum is man enacting fantasies, man still unable to find a path to real instinctual gratification, and therefore still caught in the dream solution discovered in infancy."¹ In the oral phase the dream of union with the mother manifests itself in the substitute gratification of thumbsucking. Similarly, the retention or release of the feces provides the basis for symbolic manipulation in the child's relation to the parent. And finally during the genital stage, infantile sexuality reaches its catastrophic climax with the castration complex. At this point the child gives up the body, but not the fantasies. "Nonbodily cultural objects (sublimations) inherit the fantasies, and thus man in culture, Homo sublimis, is man

¹Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death (Middletown: Wesleyan U. Press, 1959), p. 168.



dreaming while awake (Charles Lamb's definition of the poet.)"¹

According to orthodox Freudian interpretation, the preceding analysis describes the basic dynamics of culture formation. It rests mainly on the repression of primary instinctual drives and the symbolic substitution for such gratification in the fantasy life of man. As suggestive as this view may be, it appears to this writer excessively narrow in both its concept of repression and its interpretation of symbol formation.

Even though man has developed the symbolic processes to the highest degree known in the animal kingdom, he is hardly the only creature that undergoes prohibition and frustration during infancy. Everyday observation enables one to see a mother bird or cat warning their young or keeping them from this or that. The admonitions may not always revolve around breast feeding and toilet training, but then this is hardly the sole area for frustration in childhood either. One may then wonder just why it is that only in the human psyche prohibition causes repression and substitute gratification by means of symbols. One would think that at this point the Freudians would at least mention the greater capacity of the human psyche for creating symbols over that

¹Ibid., p. 168.



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of animals with less natural intelligence. Perhaps such a fact is too obvious to mention, but this is unfortunate for it creates the impression that the explanation for the vast and diverse panorama of symbols and cultures can be exhausted by recourse to the mysteries of repression, the vagaries of sublimation, and free floating libido.

The mechanism of repression is no doubt a very active factor in human behavior but it is hardly the sole explanatory principle in the development of symbols and culture. One might cite the very simple fact that during the course of its evolution, the life process developed vision. And this has resulted in a capacity for certain image impressions on the animal mind. I would suggest that at least one other basis for symbols lies in this early animal capacity to receive images from the external world.

Furthermore, such writers as Sinnott and Progoff suggest a much wider base for symbol formation when they ascribe a goal seeking and an image forming capacity to the most primitive protoplasmic structures. Sinnott writes that "the protoplasmic pattern immanent in the egg or in any cell, to which the various stages in development and finally the structure of the mature individual will conform, is the prototype of a purpose, and finally of an idea, that is immanent in the cells of the brain."¹ Sinnott indicates the

¹Edmund Sinnott, Matter, Mind and Man (New York: Harper and Bros., 1957), p. 91.



stages by which the purposes that are eventually pursued by the conscious activity of man have emerged from their latent potential in the very structure of the egg. On the level of consciousness, they are expressed as an idea, but the biological basis of the idea is always in the nonconscious unfolding of the "protoplasmic pattern."

Progoff comments that these "ideas" which are the crystallization of the primary purposes working in the "egg" might better be described as images. "The bird building its nest has no idea of what it is doing, but it can truly be said that an image belonging not to the mind as such, but to the organism as a whole, is drawing the process of nest building forward."¹ This process of image formation, of imagination, is much more extensive than the fantasy life resulting from repression as conceived by such Freudians as Marcuse and Brown. "It is an integral part of, indeed is an essential instrument of the basic protoplasmic process of man."²

On the level of human mentation, this purposive and formative tendency inherent in the life process manifests itself in two different ways. "One is self-conscious awareness. The other is the spontaneous expression of the goals

¹Ira Progoff, Depth Psychology and Modern Man (New York: Julian Press, 1959), p. 124.

²Ibid., p. 125.



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that are latent in the living stuff of personality."¹ It becomes manifest as a continuous process of image-making which takes place at the deepest levels of the psyche. This represents the psychological side of the life process "by which the human organism grows toward the form and goal of his individuality."² At this point we should perhaps be a bit cautious concerning the definiteness of this image of growth, for certainly the effect of environment on human plasticity can lead to very complex results. But at least this perspective offers a wider basis for the consideration of the symbol and culture forming process than does the reductionist Freudian view.

b. A Critique of the Freudian View of Repression and Sublimation

Marcuse has criticized Fromm for offering only a surface critique of contemporary culture, in contrast to the Freudian depth analysis based on the instincts. But I have been trying to indicate that perhaps there is another type of "depth psychology" which offers a much wider and deeper basis for the process of symbolization. Undoubtedly the Freudians would label this as another "spiritualistic" interpretation. But one might hold to this "spiritual" view and

¹Ibid., p. 124.

²Ibid., p. 125.



still attack the Freudians for not being "physiological" enough. For although they claim to base their views on the vicissitudes of the instinctual life of man, they do so with little regard for the physiological functioning of the various organs involved. Consequently the process of sublimation is supposed to bring about a desexualization of the polymorphous perversity of the entire body with a consequent increase of libido concentration in the genital area. Supposedly this is over and above the normal sexual pleasure that might result there from the physiological production of the sexual hormones. But then on what basis do the Freudians explain the pleasure that women receive from the caressing and the sucking of their breasts? Does this mean that by some mysterious process the woman sublimates a greater amount of her sexual energy to the vicinity of her breasts than does a man, or does it mean that there is a closer neurological connection between the breasts and the whole life giving process in the woman over against that of man? The latter reason seems by far the most plausible. And if it is possible to explain this greater pleasure in the breasts of a woman over against that of man from their differing neurological structures, then might it not also be possible to explain the high degree of pleasure received from the genital region in both men and women on the foundation of the underlying neurological structures rather than



on some hypothetical concentration of libido?

Marcuse maintains that because of repression the human animal loses the overall body sexuality that would be his without such repression. The consequences of this are that even the so called normal man prefers genital sexuality to overall sexual tone for the body. But if this theory is true, then in terms of Freudian theory, the various uninhibited non-human animals should exhibit polymorphous forms of sexuality rather than having their sexuality too closely geared to genital sexuality. But do we find this to be true? It appears that just the opposite is the case. By and large, the lower we go in the animal scale, the more pronounced become the instinctual determinants for mating, that is for genital expression only. For example, in lower mammals like the rat, there appears to be a very direct pattern followed by the genital mating instinct. When a male rat that has been reared in isolation since puberty is placed in a cage with a female rat, a stereotyped sexual pattern follows within a very short time.¹ "There is no doubt that the rat, in addition to its sex drive and its sexual reflexes as such which are obviously unlearned, has an unlearned pattern of

¹Norman L. Munn, Psychology (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1946), pp. 212-213; F. A. Beach, "Comparison of Copulatory Behavior of Male Rats Raised in Isolation, Co-habitation, and Segregation," Journal of Genetic Psychology, 1942, 69, pp. 121-136.



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behavior with which to satisfy the drive."¹

The mating of monkeys is less stereotyped than the rat, and when the level of the higher apes is reached it is somewhat doubtful as to whether a mating instinct any longer exists. The chimpanzee, like the rat, has a strong sex drive, and it has several reflexes associated with this drive. But there no longer seems to be a standard pattern of either sexual approach or of copulatory position. Studies of chimpanzees from an early age to adulthood have shown that mating develops from a trial-and-error manner out of play behavior. The pattern which finally develops, including the position used, differs markedly from one animal to another and in the same animal from time to time.²

For quite obvious reasons, no direct observations of a similar nature have been carried out with human subjects. However, there is every reason to suppose that learning would be even more in evidence than in the chimpanzees. The varieties of human sexual behavior are so extensive that sexologists have written many volumes on them. We can safely conclude therefore that man has a comparatively unlearned sexual drive and unlearned sexual responses of the reflex

¹Ibid., p. 213.

²H. C. Bingham, "Sex Development in Apes," Comparative Psychological Monogram, 1928, no. 23, p. 165.



variety. It is very doubtful that he has a thoroughly determined genital mating instinct such as has the rat.

What then is the relevance of such findings to the debate between Marcuse and Fromm? It seems to point out this basic fact: that man, far from being the least polymorphous of the animals, is perhaps the most polymorphous, and this is the case not just in his childhood but throughout the years of his adult sexual expression. The lower animals rather than having less "libido" concentrated in their genitals apparently are more genitally determined. Consequently, the arguments presented by Freud and Marcuse that childhood repression leads to concentrated genital expression is refuted by the comparatively non-repressive, but highly organized genital expression of sexuality in rats. This indicates that the apparently "tough minded" depth psychology of Freud and Marcuse is lacking the instinctual foundation that it has claimed for itself. This position does not deny the importance of many of the Freudian insights into childhood sexuality, but it does indicate their limitations as total explanatory principles of man and his culture. Furthermore, the results of these laboratory findings point toward the accuracy of Fromm's general statement about man. "Human existence begins when the lack of fixation of action by instincts exceeds a certain point; when the adaptation to nature loses its coercive character;



when the way to act is no longer fixed by hereditarily given mechanisms."¹

c. A Critique of Marcuse's Utopianism

In passing, one further inconsistency between the cultural presuppositions of Freud and Marcuse should be mentioned. Marcuse remarks that utopia was and is a possibility at two possible points in human history. One point is at the very early, primitive, matriarchal cultures such as that of the Arapesh. As we have previously mentioned, the Arapesh world is comparatively free of domination and exploitation. The experience of the world is that of a "garden" in which various things including human beings can grow. It is an attitude "that experiences man and nature as joined in a non-repressive and still functioning order."² The other possibility for utopia is in the present or near future when technological civilization reaches its full height. We can, then, according to Marcuse, reduce the number of monotonous working hours to approximately four per day and spend the rest of our time in spontaneous play.

Such a view rests, of course, on the Freudian view of culture as resulting from repression. But it is interesting to note that the Freudian view of primitive non-re-

¹Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom, p. 32.

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



pressive culture is quite different than that presented by the Arapesh. A powerful patriarchal father retaining all of the women of the tribe for himself and finally being killed out of a jealous incestuous rage by his sons is hardly a utopian portrayal of pre-civilized life. It differs markedly from the "garden" picture presented by the Arapesh. Consequently, Freud could not possibly look forward to a time when such emotions would again be expressed in an uninhibited way. Undoubtedly, primitive tribes did exist with emotional patterns as gentle as the Arapesh and others were probably as hostile as those that Freud describes. But the reason for the difference could be found in many factors other than in the free play or inhibition of sexual aims. For example men who must hunt for food and clothing are quite likely to produce a different culture with more aggressive emotions expressed in it than those who can grow things in a garden. Consequently, it is not necessarily true, even from the Freudian point of view, that Marcuse's sexual revolution would bring in a promised utopia in the future which would be similar in tone to the admired Arapesh.

Freudians like Marcuse are too reductive. Just as the Medieval theologian could discover some trace of the Trinity in most natural objects, so do such Freudians find some evidence for sexuality almost everywhere. They attempt



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to explain all social and spiritual experience by something less. For example, after reading Marcuse's book, one would think that the serious problem of over-population, as well as that of industrialization, has been brought about by the excessive repression and concentration of libido in the genitals, and that therefore its solution can be brought about by a return to polymorphous perversity. Or on reading Norman Brown, one gains the impression that the many complex forms of interpersonal, international, and inter-racial aggression can be reduced to some displacement of anal sadism. Such Freudians would do well to remember that a perusal of man from the perspective of his "dash-hole" hardly comprises a study of the "whole" man.

For the Freudians, the many energies of culture depend on the sublimation of sexual energy. But again, the Freudians make very little mention of the differences in mental capacities for creating cultural products. Why for example, does the process of sublimation in myself produce no music, while in Beethoven or Mahler, it produces tremendous symphonies? Or why do the specific musical tones differ in expression and quality between the two artists? Is this all explained by some displaced sexual energy in the brain or in the ears? When pushed, these cherished notions appear absurd.

Furthermore, Marcuse's utopian ideas for open and



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unrestrained sexual activity are brought to a different and perhaps "all too happy" result in Aldous Huxley's portrait of the Brave New World. In this society people always get what they want, and they are conditioned never to want what they cannot get. They are well off, safe, and never ill. They are without an awareness of death. They are not plagued with mothers and fathers and they have no wives, children, or lovers to feel strongly about. The sexual code demands total promiscuity; the only taboo is against a long and faithful relationship. The motto of such a society is, "When the individual feels the community reels." In a sardonic commentary on the religious authority figures in the Brave New World, Huxley anticipates with a quite different meaning from that of Marcuse the industrial and sexual revolutions commenced by Ford and Freud. Since Ford and Freud are worshipped as incarnations of deity in this religious dispensation, Huxley writes, "Our Ford--or Our Freud, as, for some inscrutable reason, he chose to call himself whenever he spoke of psychological matters--Our Freud had been the first to reveal the appalling dangers of family life. The world was full of fathers--was therefore full of misery; full of mothers--therefore of every kind of perversion from sadism to chastity; full of brothers, uncles, aunts--full of madness and suicide."¹ Consequently, the

¹Aldous Huxley, Brave New World (New York: Bantam Books, 1952), p. 37.



family unit and any warm family ties associated with them have been abandoned in favor of artificial birth and conditioning processes.

Huxley's commentary on the relation of sexuality to civilization is directly opposed to that of Freud. For Freud, the processes of civilization inevitably inhibits free sexual expression. In his novel, Eyeless in Gaza, Huxley presents the case for the opposite view.

"Civilization and sexuality," Anthony was saying: "There's a definite correlation. The higher the one, the intenser the other."

"My word," said Beppo, fizzling with pleasure, "we must be civilized."

Anthony continues, "Civilization means food and literature all round. Beefsteaks and fiction magazines for all. First-class proteins for the body, fourth-class love-stories for the spirit. And this in a safe urban world, where there are no risks, no physical fatigue. In a town like this, for example, one can live for years at a time without being made aware that there's such a thing as nature. Everything's man-made and punctual and convenient. But people can have too much of convenience; they want excitement, they want risks and surprises. Where are they going to find them under our dispensation? In money-making, in politics, in occasional war, in sport, and finally in sex. But most people can't be speculators or active politicians; and war's getting to be too much of a good thing; and the more elaborate and dangerous sports are only for the rich. So that sex is all that's left. As material civilization rises, the intensity and importance of sexuality also rises. Must rise, inevitably."¹

Huxley writes elsewhere that, "As political and economic

¹Aldous Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza (New York: Bantam Books, 1954), p. 192.



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freedom diminishes, sexual freedom tends compensatingly to increase."¹

Huxley and Fromm are in agreement concerning the trends in contemporary Western civilization. Both believe that the values arising in a technical society are much more conducive to fostering the mentality of Brave New World than in promoting Marcuse's utopia. Fromm writes that the need for "immediate consumption of commodities and the immediate consummation of sexual desires is coupled in the Brave New World, as in our own. It is considered immoral to keep one 'love' partner beyond a relatively short time. 'Love' is short lived sexual desire, which must be satisfied immediately."² The ideal of modern man is to have no conflicts, no doubts, no decisions which have to be made. He must be incessantly busy, either through working or having fun. He must avoid being alone at all costs. He feels no need to be aware of himself, because he is constantly absorbed in pleasure. He is a system of desires which should find immediate satisfaction. He must work to fulfill his desires, and yet these desires are constantly stimulated and directed by the economic machine. "Most of these appetites are synthetic; even

¹Aldous Huxley, Brave New World, p. xvii.

²Erich Fromm, "The Human Implications of Instinctivistic 'Radicalism,'" p. 346.



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sexual appetite is by far not as 'natural' as it is made out to be. It is to some extent stimulated artificially, and it needs to be if we want to have people as the contemporary system needs them--people who feel 'happy,' who have no conflicts, who are guided without the use of force."¹

Marcuse believes that if we give free play to our sexual urges, we will rid ourselves of much of the destructive guilt that results from repressive mores. However, in Brave New World, we have a situation where the problem of guilt is reversed. In this society, the inhabitants are conditioned to feel guilt only if the sexual relationship becomes extended. Nor do we have to enter such an imaginary future realm to see the possibility of such guilt. We have a similar example among some American soldiers in Germany at the close of World War II. At this time, sex was a readily available commodity. Some soldiers felt guilt when they indulged in sexual relationships which were taboo in terms of their previous moral and religious orientation. On the other hand, the men who restrained themselves from such indulgence frequently felt guilty because they did not maintain the pace of "virile manliness" set by the men who freely indulged. These men were damned if they did and damned if they didn't. The problem of guilt inevitably revolves about the structures of authority and punishment, and these may

¹Ibid., p. 346.



intrude upon sexual behavior in diverse and even opposite ways.

d. Points of Agreement between Marcuse and Fromm

Actually, the solutions to the problems of society as discussed by Fromm and Marcuse do not differ so widely in all respects as the previous debate would indicate. For example, although Fromm's solutions to the problem of monotonous labor in industry sound to Marcuse like superficial "industrial psychology" and "scientific management," while Marcuse's utopia begins to sound like Brave New World to Fromm, still both men agree on many of the same fundamental values, and it would be unfortunate if these similarities were overlooked in the heat of debate. Marcuse only briefly mentions the great economic and sociological changes that would be required to bring about his cultural revolution, but when he does so, he speaks of the "rational reorganization" of industry. Fromm's statements for such a reorganization may be naive, but he at least makes an attempt to outline such a "rational reorganization." Since both men are socialistic, it does not appear likely that if Marcuse explicitly stated his plans for altering present industrial methods in detail that they would differ radically from those that Fromm has advocated.

Similarly, in the realm of sexuality, the differences, although real, may again appear exaggerated. For certainly,



Marcuse would repudiate an end result such as Brave New World as readily as would Fromm. His concept of natural erotic growth is formulated with the hope of retaining the joyful sense of the body, rather than expending it in empty alienated forms of labor or pleasure. Whether or not his theoretical basis for this retention is as sound as he claims is open to the questions that we have previously raised against Freudian theory. On the other hand, Fromm's views are hardly those of a repressed Puritan. He cites the need for erotic love whether it is expressed sexually or whether it is manifested in what he calls healthy or "productive" self-love. In both men, there is this feeling for growth and joy in the potentialities of man's body and mind. In this matter, as well as in those of industrial relations, both men seem to be moving in similar directions even though Marcuse's views appear as the more radical of the two.

e. Niebuhr's Critique of Utopianism Relevant to Both Fromm and Marcuse

Perhaps one of the reasons why Fromm's writings appear so idealistic to Marcuse arises from Fromm's tendency to write about productive love as though it were an unambiguous possibility in our society. It is at this point that the Niebuhrian critique becomes increasingly relevant over against some of the more sweeping assertions made by Fromm with regard to the potentialities of human nature. Oddly



enough, the Niebuhrian critique of human nature is even more relevant when we consider the utopian views of Marcuse. In order to clarify the relation between these three men, let us consider their positions with regard to man, first, as he exists in contemporary society, and secondly, as he may become in some future society.

Niebuhr views the anxious and sinful creature around him with compassion, but he constantly warns us of the potential destructiveness arising out of man's precarious capacity to freely transcend his natural bounds. For man attempts to overcompensate for his anxiety by insisting on various forms of certainty. These security mechanisms manifest themselves as authoritarian dogmatisms in which man invests all the fervor of his private and collective egos. Man wants to be more certain of himself than he has any possibility of being. Consequently, he invests his emotional security in various forms of religious and political structure which become dogmatic, divisive, and therefore mutually destructive.

Fromm states practically the same thing only in the psychoanalytic terminology of non-sexual incestuous bonds. He interprets destructive religious, political, and personal behavior in terms of man's incapacity to free himself from less mature forms of family and group life. When man does realize his freedom, but finds himself alone in an alien



world, he desires to "escape from freedom" and return to less individualistic patterns of thought and action. But Fromm also takes a more affirmative view of human nature. I have already indicated the worth of his affirmation over against some of the more morbid Christian interpretations of man. Fromm believes in the essential goodness of man, in his capacity to reach full freedom, and finally in man's capacity to reach out in unselfish love for his fellow man. But he frequently states this belief in very unambiguous, optimistic declarations about the capacities of man. It is this quality in his writing that both Niebuhr and Marcuse find objectionable and idealistic. Peculiarly, it is this affirmation of the basic goodness of man, that causes Fromm to be such a severe critic of the existing economic and political order. But it is also because of this optimism that Fromm tends to overlook or to over-simplify man's elastic drive for power and his capacity for egoistic self-deception.

Marcuse writes from a perspective that is most imbedded in the naturalistic psychology of Freud. He interprets man's activities within the framework of the pleasure principle, the instincts, and their vicissitudes under the pressures of civilization. He is the most pessimistic of the three writers when he considers the present state of man, and he severely criticizes Fromm for his "surface critique" of modern



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culture.

However, when the future possibilities of man's existence are considered, Marcuse becomes by far the most utopian. Fromm, while maintaining an optimistic view of human nature, remains quite pessimistic about the future state of man in society. He has tried to indicate some roads to "communitarian" fulfillment, but at the close of The Sane Society, he recognizes that the hour is late and that the hopes for new political, economic, and psychological relationships are indeed slim. Furthermore, he recognizes that even if the "sane society" were to become an actuality, that only then would man be able to uncover the truly human problems of living. Niebuhr, while recognizing the elements of grandeur in man, remains the most skeptical of man's efforts and pretensions in either the present or the future. Apparently, the Christian critic by removing his "utopia" to a point "above" or "after" history thereby allows himself a more pessimistic, "tough minded" view of man on earth.

Fromm emerges from this comparison as a humanist standing between the supernaturalism of Niebuhr and the naturalism of Marcuse. I have indicated by means of this contrast with Niebuhr and Marcuse some aspects of Fromm's view of the human situation that I consider valuable and other aspects that I find over-simplified or utopian. I



would now like to concentrate in more critical detail on Fromm's view of man's place in the modern world.

2. An Evaluation of Fromm's View of the Human Situation

a. A Brief Critique of Fromm's "Normative" Description of Man

One of the central concepts of Fromm's view of man as it is presented in his last major work, The Sane Society, is that there are certain "normative" attributes in man. According to Fromm, "the real problem is to infer 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 Fromm admits that "we cannot yet give a satisfactory definition of man in a psychological sense."² He implies that whatever the psychic core of the human race may be, it is apparently not yet known. One may then with good reason wonder how Fromm knows that such a normative core exists, and in the opinion of Patrick

¹Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 13.

²Ibid., p. 13.



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Mullahy, Fromm "does not and cannot know at this stage of human knowledge."¹ Mullahy declares that Fromm's "Science of Man" is a philosophical doctrine going back to the Greeks, particularly to Aristotle. And that it is generally recognized today that "philosophic methods are not a rival of, or substitute for, the methods and procedures of the empirical sciences engaged in discovering matters of fact. If there is a psychic core common to the human race, and if it is discoverable, then the only reliable methods of inquiry are those of the empirical sciences."²

I would join Mullahy in his wonderment of how Fromm knows that there is such an essential core to human nature despite the "innumerable manifestations" of human nature, and I would wonder, furthermore, on just what basis Fromm can speak of "the normal as well as the pathological" manifestations in individuals and cultures without clearly analyzing his presuppositions. I disagree, however, with Mullahy's strictures on ways of knowing man other than those of the empirical sciences, particularly if these sciences are narrowly defined. For the comparative sterility of academic psychology up to Freud's discovery of unconscious

¹Patrick Mullahy, "Philosophical Anthropology and Empirical Science," Psychiatry, Vol. 18, 1955, p. 400.

²Ibid., p. 400.



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factors was due to the reduction of most investigations to that which was empirically observable and measurable. Rather than attempting a statement about the essential nature of man, which would be a very difficult task in the light of the countless definitions that have been given of man's "essence," I would rather at this point indicate the limitations of a word symbol like "normative" when applied to the non-symbolic living processes of human behavior. At best we have only a word symbol which is different from and can only in a very indirect way indicate the very complicated phenomena that are occurring. There is a tendency for such a word to assume a kind of "essential" reality that exaggerates the actual capacity of the symbol. I shall reserve my own alternative to this approach until the final chapter.

b. The Ambiguity in Fromm's View of Man and Society

There is an ambiguity in Fromm's writings with regard to his comments on 1) man as a product of the social process and 2) man as having an essential nature. This contrast becomes particularly evident between his earlier writings like Escape from Freedom and his later position of normative humanism in The Sane Society. But the ambiguity is evident even in his earlier expressions. For instance, in Escape from Freedom, he writes, "Although there are certain needs, such as hunger, thirst, sex, which are common to man, those drives which make for the differences in men's characters,



like love and hatred, the lust for power and the yearning for submission, the enjoyment of sensuous pleasure and the fear of it, are all products of the social process."¹ But certainly such a blanket remark needs some qualification or at least some explication of the interrelationship between man's basic biological drives and the social process. Such a statement is bound to draw down upon it the wrath of a Freudian like Marcuse. And apparently it was meant to, for Fromm's anti-Freudian polemic becomes evident in the next sentence. "The most beautiful as well as the most ugly inclinations of man are not part of a fixed and biologically given nature, but result from the social process which creates man."²

1) Fromm's Critique of Freud's Relativism

Fromm maintains that the Freudian position based on the repression of primary instinctual drives finally arrives at a completely relativistic view of man. For the cultural agent within the individual, namely the superego, is dependent on the specific repressive content of the particular culture involved. Fromm apparently thinks that he counters this trend when he gives to the social forces a quality of creativity. "Society has not only a suppressing function--

¹Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom, p. 12.

²Ibid., p. 12.



although it has that too--but it has also a creative function. Man's nature, his passions, and anxieties are a cultural product."¹

But is this not an ironic twist? For as Lionel Trilling has commented, it is Freud's insistence on the instinctual base of man's activities that provides the means for his cultural critique. Freud has reminded us that "there is a hard, irreducible, stubborn core of biological urgency, and biological necessity, and biological reason, which culture cannot reach and which reserves the right, which sooner or later it will exercise, to judge the culture and resist and revise it. It seems to me that whenever we become aware of how entirely we are involved in our culture and how entirely controlled by it we believe ourselves to be, destined and fated and foreordained by it, there must come to us a certain sense of liberation when we remember our biological selves."²

With this comment by Trilling, we have again come round to the debate between Marcuse and Fromm. The Freudians believe that their position, grounded in the instincts of man, gives them a sound leverage for a radical critique of culture. Fromm, on the other hand, has accused

¹Ibid., p. 13.

²Lionel Trilling, *Freud and the Crisis of Our Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 54.



the Freudians of cultural and ethical relativism. This certainly appears bewildering when we consider the great significance that Fromm attaches to the cultural processes. Before going on to analyze Fromm's position, I would like to repeat my general position with regard to the Freudians. I would grant the significance of instinctual factors in human life, but I would not grant them the overwhelming significance attributed to them by the Freudian school. I hope that I have at least indicated some of the shortcomings of the Freudian position in the preceding commentary. This would apparently place the writer in the camp of Fromm and the other Neo-Freudians. But let us continue the investigation to see if such a result does actually ensue.

2. Fromm Even More Relativistic than Freud: Man as a Social Product

In his eagerness to disprove the relativistic implications of the Freudian instinct theory, Fromm goes to the opposite extreme by describing the nature of man as a product of culture. But such a position is even more relativistic than the Freudian. For the Freudians claim that there are at least some biological elements in the nature of man that cannot be altered by man's cultural developments. But if this is not so, then the possibilities for man become even more infinite. Rather than countering the cultural relativism of Freud, this position of Fromm makes it even more



apparent. At this point, the moral problem becomes severe; there is no fixed point for judgment and evaluation of the behavior of man. Fromm then, it appears, precipitates the very problem that he sought to avoid. He becomes even more relativistic than the Freudians.

3) Fromm Inadequately Relates the Social Process to His View of Essential Human Nature

But this is certainly a very lopsided view of what Fromm has attempted to communicate to modern man. Coupled with his insistence on man's nature as a cultural product, he has declared that there are essential qualities in man himself that are normative and good. Fromm agrees with those philosophers who have believed that the nature of man was essentially good and that hostility is a product of the circumstances under which man has lived. "Man is not necessarily evil but becomes evil only if the proper conditions for his growth and development are lacking. The evil has no independent existence of its own, it is the absence of the good, the result of the failure to realize life."¹

Those who oppose such an optimistic view of man's nature declare that man has elements within him that are innately evil. They maintain that "Man's nature is such as to make him inclined to be hostile to his fellow man, to be

¹Erich Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 218.



envious and jealous, and to be lazy, unless he is curbed by fear."¹ This, of course, comes closer to the Freudian view of man, and Fromm's position can be contrasted with Freud, even as that of Pelagius can be with Augustine, and Rousseau with Hobbes. Fromm describes Freud, and with good reason, as the Luther of contemporary psychology. The idea that hostility is an inherent part of man's nature runs through the ideas of representative thinkers of the modern era from Luther to the present. On such views, Fromm comments, "We need not discuss whether this assumption is tenable. At any rate, the philosophers and psychologists who held this belief were good observers of man within their own culture, even though they made the mistake of believing that modern man in his essence is not a historical product but is as nature made him to be."²

Behind this quotation is Fromm's belief that the nature of man is essentially good and that only a corrupt society in certain periods of man's history brings about the possible interpretation that man is basically evil. One might then ask from what supra-cultural height Fromm can make this judgment. How can he claim that his view is normative for man? Furthermore, how does Fromm square his

¹ Ibid., pp. 210-211.

² Erich Fromm, "Selfishness and Self Love," p. 516.



view that man is an extremely plastic and variable creature with his view that man is essentially good? Does the goodness of man reside in his plasticity? Fromm would agree to a degree. But man's plasticity seems not only to include many healthy elements but also to cover a multitude of sins. How can love, reason, and spontaneity be described as essential to man any more than sadism, destructiveness, and dishonesty? Fromm has not yet made a convincing case for the goodness of man's essential nature. Nor has he reconciled this essentialist view with his emphasis on man as a product of the social process. The various elements in man's behavior patterns are interwoven in such complex and interdependent ways that it appears to this observer that it is impossible to speak of an essentially good or evil nature. One cannot lay the fault at the feet of the social process without implicating the participants in the process. Words like essentially "good" or "bad" are too gross to be of much descriptive help. They are headlines that do not give us the shadings and nuances in the small print beneath. Unfortunately, Fromm's thought structure and language are often much less ambiguous than the actual intellectual and emotional patterns that he describes.

Fromm's position does not treat adequately two fundamental points: 1) the grounds for his assertions that man's nature is fundamentally good, and 2) the relationship of



this "good" man to the society in which he is involved. Fromm attempts to find a solution to the initial problem because of the apparent void in value judgment in contemporary psychology. I have indicated that if the social aspect of Fromm's remedy for Freud is accented it only makes the problem more acute. Consequently, in order to avoid an ethic of adjustment, Fromm must make a case for an essentialist view of man that is not immersed in the instinctual formulations of the Freudians, but which still provides a center of ethical constancy for the individual amidst the seas of biological and sociological forces.

4) Vagueness in Fromm's Description of Normative Human Behavior

For Fromm, normative human behavior is not merely the absence of severe neurosis or psychosis or a statistical average of how people behave within a certain class or culture. Rather, normality, in the sense of such great Western humanists as Aristotle, Spinoza, and Dewey, is described as an unfolding of man's inherent potentialities under the balanced control of reason. The normal or productive person in this humanistic sense is capable of realizing his potentialities. This capacity is what Fromm calls freedom. Freedom is the ability "to realize that which one potentially is, to fulfill the true nature of man according to the laws



of his existence."¹ This freedom is the necessary condition of happiness as well as virtue. The productive person and the free person are one. He perceives the world realistically, and guides himself by reason and self-awareness. He has gained a sense of maturity, spontaneity, and a genuine sense of self; he loves, thinks, and works productively. The conscience of the productive person is not the voice of irrational authority as represented by the Freudian super ego. Rather, it is "our own voice," the rational conscience of our own well being. It is independent of external sanctions and constantly tries to call us back to the fulfillment of our true self-interests and potentialities.

If man loses those capacities which make him truly human by submitting to various forms of authoritarian power, he becomes a passive automaton submissive to the parent, the state, the machine, or whatever form the oppressive power might take. In such situations, whether manifested as a broad social defect or as an individual neurosis, man ceases to function as a rational being.

He may be intelligent, he may be capable of manipulating things and himself, but he accepts as truth that which those who have power over him call the truth. He loses his power of love, for his emotions are tied to those upon whom he depends. He loses his moral sense, for his inability to question and criticize those in power stultifies his moral judgment with

¹Erich Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 247.



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regard to anybody and anything. He is prey to prejudice and superstition for he is incapable of inquiring into the validity of the premises upon which rest such false beliefs. His own voice cannot call him back to himself since he is not able to listen to it, being so intent on listening to the voices of those who have power over him.¹

In contrast, Fromm describes the productive orientation as a different "mode of relatedness" in all realms of human experience.

It covers mental, emotional, and sensory responses to others, to oneself, and to things. Productiveness is man's ability to use his powers and to realize the potentialities inherent in him. If we say he must use his powers we imply that he must be free and not dependent on someone who controls his powers. We imply, furthermore, that he is guided by reason, since he can make use of his powers only if he knows what they are, how to use them, and what to use them for. Productiveness means that he experiences himself as the embodiment of his powers and as the "actor"; that he feels himself one with his powers and at the same time that they are not masked and alienated from him.²

I have quoted at some length because I think that it is important to gain some feeling for the writing. This is one of Fromm's attempts to state the quality of the healthy personality. It is his expansion on the genital character of Freud. The expansion broadens the concept of healthy human behavior, and it is much more sympathetic to the rational and social motives of man. Nevertheless, it lacks the definiteness and particularity of Freud's libido theory.

¹Ibid., p. 247.

²Ibid., p. 84.



Fromm makes his description of the productive character in order to escape from the plight of social relativism, but the description itself, besides giving a bit of uplift, is vague and amorphous. Furthermore, it illustrates that extreme affirmation of the human self which Keeskemati labels the cult of the all powerful "I." We shall examine his critique of Fromm a bit further on, but at this juncture I would only like to indicate that ambiguity in Fromm's writings which makes it appear that the left hand of sociological pressure does not always know just what the right hand of individual assertion is doing--and vice versa.

Fromm attempts to differentiate between the external influences that impinge upon the self and those normative elements within the self that arise spontaneously. But this differentiation often sounds like a dichotomy with the result that the actual relationship is rarely clarified. For Freud this problem was relatively simple; he did not distinguish between spontaneous ideals which are a part of the self and the internalized commands that rule the self. That which arose from within the self was in the main the driving non-rational energies of the id, whereas the ideational content was represented by those internalized controlling images provided by the parents and other representatives of the society. But Fromm's distinction between the rational and the authoritarian conscience adds a new dimension. The



questionable aspect in Fromm's scheme is the nature of these spontaneous emotions and ideas in the self and their relationship to external factors.

The realization of the self is accomplished by the active expression of man's emotional and intellectual potentialities. These potentialities are present in everyone, but they become real only to the extent that they are expressed. In other words "positive freedom consists in the spontaneous activity of the total, integrated personality."¹ Fromm gives a number of illustrations of spontaneous activity. He differentiates it from compulsive activity to which the self is driven out of fear and powerlessness; it also differs from the activity of the automaton who behaves in accordance with patterns uncritically accepted from outside. "Spontaneous activity," by contrast, "is free activity of the self and implies, psychologically, what the Latin root of the word, sponte, means literally: of one's free will."² Fromm then gives a number of illustrations of individuals who exhibit spontaneous activity, such as the artist, the child, and most of us during rare moments when we have "the fresh and spontaneous perception of a landscape, or the dawning of some truth as the result of our thinking, or a

¹Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom, p. 258.

²Ibid., p. 258.



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sensuous pleasure that is not stereotyped, or the welling up of love for another person."¹ In such moments, we gain a vision of what human life could be like if such experiences were not such rare phenomena.

On reading such remarks, one gains a feeling that there is a fire beneath the descriptive smoke. If one has had a similar experience, he cannot deny the validity of that which Fromm tries to indicate, and yet there is a feeling of vagueness about the concept. We are apt to forgive Fromm because the very concept "spontaneous" is really too protean to conceptualize in any adequate way. And yet we find ourselves wondering about such questions as the relationship of determinism to this free activity, of how this sense of spontaneity is related to antecedent factors both within and outside the self, and whether or not these spontaneous emotions and ideas are always the expression of the essentially good normative self. I am quite certain, for example, that the totalitarian designs of domination as conceived by a Hitler or a Stalin arose with the same sense of newness and spontaneity as did the conceptions of some of the artists living under them, and often perhaps with similar, if perverted, feelings of elation.

¹Ibid., p. 258.



5) Progoff's Description of Formative Imagery Clarifies the Relation of the Social Process to Individual Spontaneity

Without going into the innumerable problems and dilemmas involved in a discussion of the relations and meanings of freedom and determinism, I would like to suggest that a possible amplification of Fromm's concept of the spontaneity of the self in its relationship to the environment is found in Progoff's discussion of the organic psyche. By using as illustrations the growth of a tulip toward its beautiful and intricate unfolding, and a hummingbird gathering materials for the building of her nest, Progoff deduces that there are formative protoplasmic images which guide the behavior of such living creatures. By a protoplasmic image, he does not of course mean the consciously held idea or picture in the mind that we usually associate with the word image. Rather, it is a formative tendency enacted by the living organism. Life has goals for the growth and survival of the species even though it does not exist in the clearly conscious way that it does in human mentation. Perhaps, we can get closer to Progoff's use of the term image when we think of how we use the term "self-image." This can call to mind specific concepts of ourselves behaving in certain ways, but it can also refer to a more generalized feeling about ourselves and our attempts to remain balanced, healthy,



and growing either with or against the environmental forces around us.

Along with these more generalized life tendencies in man which are very similar to the life cycles in other mammalia, there is in the human psyche many other more specific forms of imagery which are related to the more generalized forms because of the needs of the organism to survive. These exist on both conscious and unconscious levels.

Imagery is in movement constantly at all levels of the psyche. It is in flow on the one hand at levels that are close to consciousness and from which it may be easily translated into rational terms. And it is in flow also at deeper basic levels, where the symbolism is much more obscure and its immediate relation to the environment is obscure indeed. Imagery moves on all the various levels of the psyche and in a variety of forms, but there is an encompassing, unifying principle directing the flow. This principle is the essence of the individuality of each organic psyche. It is the one integrating principle working toward the wholeness of the person; and all the separate and segmental psychic processes draw their guiding pattern from it.¹

When the growth process deviates from this centralizing principle, there is a splitting and fragmentation which must be healed before the individual can again grow integrally.

As children, we come into a world that we do not choose, and we absorb the feelings, thoughts, and patterns of action of our parents and others who surround us at this very impressionable age. The child's dreams may be even

¹Ira Progoff, Depth Psychology and Modern Man, pp. 165-166.



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more expressive of the parent's life than of his own. The way that the child thinks of himself is in large part derived from the way others think of him. He builds his style of life largely from the attitudes that the significant people in his childhood require of him. It is from these images that he builds his early self-conception. They are the images of the environmental self. "They act to draw forth psychic energy and to bring the individual into the vortex of events in his social world. But they are not images that are drawn from the treasure house of his own psyche. They may be excellent images. They may work very well in making a comfortable life possible for him, but they are not his own images. They are someone else's. They are society's images of him."¹

As the child matures, a conflict develops between the image of himself as imposed upon him by those in his early environment and the gradually forming image that he gains from his own potentialities and talents. This inner conflict is projected outward, and the individual frequently sees his struggle as one directed not only against his parents, but also against many other forms of authority in the society. This conflict may be more or less severe depending on the divergence between the old authorities and the emerging self

¹Ibid., p. 174.



image, but it is always real and painful to some extent. The patterns of the environmental self are deeply engraved, and they are not easily replaced. But they must be replaced if the new image is to assume a dominant role in the individual's growth. "The result of this can be a tension of almost unbearable intensity, so painful that the eventual answer is usually a compromise in which some elements of the old self remain in the personality as mementos of the past while new creative patterns of development emerge as well. To the observer this gives the impression of a seesawing in the personality as the old and new intermingle throughout the life of the growing personality."¹

Such a description provides a more adequate basis for viewing Fromm's concepts of "spontaneity" and the "normative" self. In Fromm, these elements are often described by what they are not, or else by comparatively vague terms like love, reason, and productivity. Frogoff's description is necessarily over-simplified, but it helps to give a better portrait of the emerging individual self and its developmental needs as it encounters social pressures.

c. A Critique of Fromm's Analogy between Individual and Racial History

Another questionable aspect of Fromm's interpretation

¹Ibid., p. 179.



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of the human situation is his historical concept of individuation. Fromm follows Bachofen in his interpretation of primitive cultures. He speaks of the primal bonds of the matriarchal society, of its closeness to the soil, and of the projection of such relationships into mythology in the forms of mother gods. As society progresses, it becomes patriarchal and the gods follow suit. In the modern period, man has arrived at a period of maturity where he has broken free from previous religious ties. He has come to realize the projection of his powers and relationships on to the heavens and that he must now stand alone and for himself in the universe without external powers to guide his path. This historical procedure according to Fromm corresponds to the life history of each individual as it passes through its various stages of growth toward full maturity and independence.

Such assertions are certainly very sweeping, and yet Fromm offers very little evidence to back them up. One might as easily posit a more flexible thesis for the creating of gods and goddesses. It is possible that from the very earliest origins of man both patriarchal and matriarchal societies have existed and have reflected the structures of their societies in mythological expression. In various agricultural communities it is not unlikely that the dependency upon the earth and the settled nature of the



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community could give rise to both matriarchal social and religious expression. In contrast, nomadic tribes of the desert were much more dependent upon the leadership of the men and naturally followed male deities. In the extremely complicated development of ancient mythologies, one might find countless exceptions to this suggestion, but this alternative at least points to the difficulty of maintaining a simple developmental view of matriarchal, patriarchal, and mature religious and social expressions simply because this scheme so happily coincides with Fromm's general thesis for freedom from incestual bonds in the individual person.

A further implication of Fromm's historical sketch is that only in modern times has man outgrown his "primary bonds" and attained the possibility of full emergence as a person. Fromm cites two aspects of the process of individuation, namely the growing consciousness of self, and the growing responsibility for choice. But certainly this process is at work in the maturing of many primitive men who believe in very ancient mythologies as well as in modern man who seems to be comparatively free from the mythological bonds. Benedict has cited impressive parallels for both of these aspects of freedom in the lives of primitive peoples. For example, Kafir children pose their problems of individual self consciousness: "Is this body my real me?" "Have I changed from yesterday?" "What is it in me



that does the thinking?" Benedict further states that "many many primitive tribes recognize private and individual motivation in an extreme fashion and accept it, far more than does civilized man as something not to be interfered with or criticized. It is virtually impossible in many tribes to convey the idea that a man would ever act for any reason than because as a free person it was his own will and choice to act in that manner."¹

By the standards that Fromm has given, many of these primitive peoples have attained positive freedom. When the societies are studied under which they have lived, one discovers that they have attained such freedom under the conditions that Fromm advocates for civilized man. "By education they have fostered self-confidence and mutuality so that they are genuinely able to act, in Dr. Fromm's terms, as selves and not as pseudo-selves, and their social order is organized so that the purposes of the person are not in conflict with the purposes of the whole community."² If this is true of many primitive peoples, then human freedom and individuation is not simply a product of the maturing of the race. Some societies have minimized human freedom, and these

¹Ruth Benedict, "Escape from Freedom: A Synoptic Series of Reviews," Psychiatry, February, 1942, p. 112.

²Ibid., p. 112.



can be studied with profit. Through their organization and education, these societies have driven men to develop selves which are ridden with anxiety and aggression. "Others have allowed men to develop a self which embraces freedom as the best of life, without any idea that it is a burden to be escaped."¹ In either case, the contrast is not necessarily that between primitive and modern.

Fromm's basic thesis is that the more man emerges from his original oneness with man and nature, the more he becomes an individual. As he realizes his individuation, he also realizes his isolation. He is then confronted with the alternative of uniting himself with the world in the spontaneity of love and productive work or else fleeing from his individuality by forming ties that give him security but destroy his freedom and individual integrity. This historical interpretation is again based on the questionable analogy of the growth of the infant toward maturity, and it is placed on such a vast historical and ideological scale that it is very difficult to judge whether Fromm is right or wrong. However, I have already commented on Benedict's very different interpretation of primitive culture. So also, a different interpretation can be given to the sociological and psychological condition of contemporary man. Perhaps Fromm

¹Ibid., p. 112.



is trying to say that with the growth of industry and technology, there is an increasing mobility, complexity, and impersonality in man's social relations. Man has lost much of the intimacy, warmth, and perhaps individuality that was often appreciated within the close circle of the primary group. Consequently, there is a growing sense of isolation and emptiness that gnaws at the heart of contemporary man. If we can, we must alter the structures of society to regain a sense of human intimacy and work with the recalcitrant and possibly destructive factors in our individual selves so that our relationships may again glow with the warmth of human kindness and creativity on a world scale. Such an interpretation would value much of Fromm's cultural critique, but it would place it in a far more flexible historical context.

One other very important factor that Fromm, because of his sociological bias, emphasizes far too little is the role of physical science in altering the contemporary world picture. The discoveries of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton burst through the cosmology of the Middle Ages. Man was confronted with a vast limitless universe in which man himself was removed from a position of central importance. Formerly, the world portrayed the drama for the salvation of his immortal soul. Now, man was reduced to a position of cosmic insignificance. The universe appeared cold and



alienated from the interests of men and gave him a sense of littleness, insignificance, and purposelessness. This is the cosmic backdrop for the contemporary dramas of man, and one that Fromm does not adequately indicate when he discusses the sense of isolation in our lives. Furthermore, since science has provided the theoretical basis for our technological civilization, it has also played a major role in shaping the problems of the machine and the market that Fromm attempts to evaluate.

The shattering of the medieval mythology by science has perhaps contributed more to the sense of "freedom" and "isolation" that Dr. Fromm talks about than any one other single ideological factor. It is in this area of mythology that Fromm's concept of a maturing human race has some meaning. For certainly modern man is generally less affected by the projected mother and father images of former religious belief. And undoubtedly, these projections had their beginnings in the childhood of individuals during the childhood of the race. But this does not preclude the possibility of comparatively original and independent thought and action within the framework of the primitive community, just as it does not assure us that an atheistic renunciation of religious mythology by modern man necessarily corresponds with a mature mental outlook. Individuals can be relatively free from incestuous attachments to parents and still relate to



comparatively immature, primitive religious objects. And some individuals who are emotionally immature can hold to very sophisticated religious views. This again indicates the ambiguity of too simply stating a correspondence between individual growth and historical development. Of course, mature contemporary individuals can also hold to the religious views of Dr. Fromm, and then undoubtedly the fullest maturity will be attained.

3. An Evaluation of Fromm's View of the Self

a. Fromm's Distinction between the Real Self and the Alienated Self Appears Groundless and Misleading

Before considering the love relationships between one's self and other selves, I would like to evaluate Fromm's interpretation of the self. Perhaps the first thing noticeable about Fromm's comments on the self is that there is no clear cut definition of the self, nor any exhaustive treatment of its characteristics. He does, however, distinguish between primary and secondary characteristics of the self. Generally, the former refers to the good, essential self, whereas the latter refers to the evil, alienated self. Apparently, those who are capable of love, reason, and creative activity are aware of their real self. Whereas those who have only a secondary sense of self lack these qualities and in their place reside hatred, boredom, and the countless



ills that the ego is heir to. The person who is alienated from his true self "does not experience himself as the center of his world, as the creator of his own acts--but his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys or whom he may even worship."¹ The alienated person has no true sense of self, and he remains essentially unrelated to himself, to his fellows, and to his work.

Since Fromm describes most Western men as alienated and lacking any true sense of themselves, one might expect a more serious attempt to define the essential self. But such expectations do not find fulfillment in Fromm. It would be extremely difficult to define the essential self, but if Fromm attempts a verbal distinction (between a primary and secondary self) he should certainly make a greater effort to substantiate his claim. Obviously, many people in the contemporary world are deprived of the opportunity for rich, vivid experiences, but the dull, flat quality of their experience as selves seems to be equally real. I find, along with Mullahy, that "the self of an intellectually and emotionally impoverished, alienated man appears to be just as real as that of a da Vinci, and the alienated man's experience seems to be just as much a manifestation of human nature

¹Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 120.



as are the most ecstatic flights of a Shelley."¹ Consequently, "any quasi-metaphysical distinction between a real self, and a social self or a secondary sense of self, seems groundless and misleading."²

Fromm seems to speak of the real self as though it is a nucleus, a core, or a fountain from which pure love, reason and productivity will constantly flow if they are not blocked by so many secondary characteristics. But one may legitimately ask why such qualities belong to the true self in contrast to envy, greed, hatred, and the many other unsavory but equally real attributes of human beings. Fromm, of course, insists that all of these evil characteristics are the result of a secondary or alienated social self. But this is a solution in name only. Fromm's linguistic distinction between primary and secondary selves remains unconvincing. As Mullahy has remarked, "Fromm has simply ascribed his 'humanistic' philosophy to human nature while slighting or explaining away, by means of the notion of secondary potentialities, the terribly real evil qualities of human nature. It is very tempting to do this; but it flies in the face of human experience and is not supported or justified

¹Patrick Mullahy, "Philosophical Anthropology and Empirical Science," Psychiatry, 1955, p. 403.

²Ibid., p. 403.



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by scientific findings.¹

All experience, alienated or unalienated, psychotic or normal, appears to be equally real. Furthermore, the individual always exists in relationship to some external environment or other. The significant people in this environment may activate in Fromm's terms either "good" or "evil" potentialities in the young self. But neither adjective comes near to being an adequate description of the self. The relation of the self to itself and to other selves is complex and ambiguous and can hardly be reduced to simplistic terms of value. This is particularly true when the dichotomy is always made between the "good" individual self and the "evil" environing society. At this point one wonders of Fromm, as of Rousseau, just how the society becomes so evil, if not by means of its "innately good" participants. The potentials for both social and individual destruction reside in the self and they are as real and as primary as anything that Fromm might find good and creative.

Fromm criticizes Sullivan's theories of the self as being too infected with the alienation of contemporary man. "The self for him (Sullivan) is nothing but the many roles we play in relation to others, roles which have the function of eliciting approval and avoiding anxiety which is produced

¹Ibid., p. 403.



by disapproval. What a remarkably fast deterioration of the concept of self since the nineteenth century, when Ibsen made the loss of self the main theme of his criticism of modern man in his *Peer Gynt*.¹ But Mullahy's critique again finds the mark by insisting that Sullivan did not say that the self is "nothing but" the many roles that we play in relation to others. But rather, that "the self, with its particular structure or organization or pattern is the limit or containing manifold of the many roles we play-- otherwise called 'me-you patterns'--which is quite different from the invidious, reductive implications of 'nothing but.'²

It is ironic that Fromm should disparage the function of the self in Sullivan's psychology. For Sullivan gives many concrete descriptions of psychological mechanisms within specific individuals whereas Fromm's writings are notoriously devoid of such concreteness. It is not without significance that Harold Greenwald could not locate any published case histories by Fromm for his book, Great Cases in Psychoanalysis.³ Undoubtedly, Fromm has placed the major portion of his energies on sociological and cultural

¹Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 143.

²Patrick Mullahy, "Philosophical Anthropology and Empirical Science," p. 404.

³Harold Greenwald, Great Cases in Psychoanalysis (New York: Ballantine Books, Inc., 1959), p. 10.



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problems, but it would have been most beneficial to both Fromm and his audience if he had brought in case material for purposes other than to illustrate his abstract concepts. It would have helped to break through the stereotyped effect that much of Fromm's writing produces. For Fromm's writing abounds in generalizations about the nature of Man. And even though he does illustrate such psychological tendencies as sadism, masochism, and productivity, he does not give concrete flesh and blood life histories which would indicate the torturous complexity from which these tendencies are drawn.

In contrasting Sullivan and Fromm, we find one of those philosophical paradoxes in which one man, Sullivan, places great concern on the concrete interpersonal relations of one individual with another, but who perhaps neglects a theory of individuality apart from this interaction. Sullivan is correct, of course, in that no individual can possibly grow as a self-contained entity. But there are unique forces at work in each individual participating in interpersonal relations, and Sullivan could have placed a greater emphasis on them. Fromm, on the other hand, seldom describes the concrete factors involved in either an individual development or in an interpersonal relationship. He does, however, place a strong theoretical emphasis on the need to recognize the uniqueness and spontaneity of our



individual selves.

b. Fromm's Naive Revision of the Social Structure Based on a Utopian View of the Self

One of the basic essentials of mental health for Fromm is the capacity to sense one's own identity, to be able to experience oneself as an "I". Man is productive only as long as he experiences himself as the sole source of his acts, impulses, and insights. When some outside force consciously or unconsciously directs his thoughts, feelings, and activities, man becomes unhappy and alienated from himself. Any submissive form of worship, love, or exclusive form of group loyalty is indicative of this secondary, social, alienated self.

Society forces these various forms of alienation on to man. For example, one man must labor at monotonous and alienating labor for the profit and pleasure of another man. Consequently, according to Fromm, if we can develop a sane socialist society, the essential goodness, independence, and spontaneity of every man will manifest itself. Fromm believes that if the existing management-labor split were overcome by inaugurating an industrial structure where there is a combination and alternation of managerial and operative functions that man would become free from external industrial and political controls. However, it is extremely



doubtful that the operatives in industry could collectively discharge the many functions that are now run by management. The knowledge and specialization required are too great for that. Furthermore, men's lives are tied to the existing economic and political order of things--to the structures of labor, business, government, the professions, etc. Is it possible that the millions of people now functioning in the existing society could be coordinated to produce the sweeping reforms desired by Fromm? This is most improbable, particularly since the desired reforms would precipitate a great loss of economic efficiency and consequently force modern man to give up many of the material comforts he holds dear. But if individual men could not cooperate out of their own free will to bring about these gigantic changes, then the only alternative would be to organize man by force. And if this were done, man, alienated as he now is, would probably lose even the freedoms that he does possess. Fromm's scheme for introducing a greater measure of creativity and productivity into the life of the modern working man might backfire and result in an enforced slavery.

Even if Fromm's general reforms were carried out without an initial loss of individual freedom, the problem of power and control would remain. As Kecskemeti has commented, "man would still have to play other roles than that of the



pure 'creator'.¹ He would still be subject to abuse and manipulation, and the new controls might become more destructive than those we have at present. "If the control functions now vested in management were transferred to the operatives, new forms of regulating and coordinating the behavior of individuals and groups would have to be adopted, and I think these new controls, which would be essentially political, would interfere with individual freedom far more drastically than the mechanisms of the 'mixed' free enterprise system in its present form do."² Fromm does not appreciate this possibility. "He dogmatically postulates that with the fusion of operative and management functions, there will be nothing in life but love, rationality, and creativeness. It is a beautiful dream." ". . . the awakening would be terrible."³

Kecskemeti asks "what explains the recklessness with which Fromm postulates the disappearance of perennial human problems at the magic touch of the good fairy, 'communitarian socialism'?"⁴ He perceives that in many of Fromm's analyses, not just of capitalism and socialism, but also of

¹Paul Kecskemeti, "The All-Powerful 'I'," Commentary, February, 1956, p. 178.

²Ibid., p. 179.

³Ibid., p. 179.

⁴Ibid., p. 179.



authority, religion, nationalism, etc., that there is an excessive fear of being dominated. Kecsckemati does not hesitate "to call this fear neurotic." Fromm has contributed a worthy analysis of the craving to submit to authority. "But the fear of being dominated can be just as neurotic as the urge to submit to domination; if the latter induces man to ignore his own powers, the former leads to an equally unrealistic denial of his limitations. Fromm's development of the concept of the 'I' experience and its reverse, alienation, reflects a morbid fear of domination and a craving for the unlimited sovereignty of the individual."¹

Fromm is correct in condemning alienation, but he is wrong when he asserts the "I" experience beyond realistic proportion. He is on firm ground when he diagnoses that "depersonalization" is a serious impairment to the sense of identity. But it does not follow from this that the healthy self must always have an explicit feeling of being "the center of his world" and the "creator of his acts." "The 'I' may be there, in all its living fullness, when it forgets itself; it may be dead and depersonalized while proclaiming that it is the center of the world and the originator of its every act."² The feeling that I am the sole "creator of

¹Ibid., p. 179.

²Ibid., p. 179.



my acts" can only be illusion. And here I think that Kecskeneti arrives at a position which theoretically combines the divergent emphases of Fromm and Sullivan while at the same time providing a meaningful critique of Fromm's position. He writes, "in order to perform the slightest meaningful act, man must stand in an inextricable pattern of give-and-take between the 'I' and the 'not-I' and it is neither truthful nor sane to assert that in this give-and-take it is always the 'I' that plays the originating and leading role. To refuse credit to the 'not-I' for what it contributes to my acts is a sign of morbid jealousy. It is neurotic in the full sense of the word, for that contribution exists whether I admit it or not."¹

I would only elaborate on Kecskeneti's critique in order to bring out one contrasting dimension in Fromm's thought. Kecskeneti is correct when he criticizes Fromm's tendency to inflate the powers of the self apart from its social matrix. For when Fromm is writing about the individual, he does give the "leading" role only to the self, to the "all-powerful 'I'." He does this, not in the sense that the "I" is always in control, for there are many neurotic ties which prevent this, but in the sense that the self is the center of all goodness and originality in contrast to the evil, alienating forces that effect the self

¹Ibid., p. 179.



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from the outside. Consequently, the self is considered to be the seat of productive value, and society as the enemy of this value. On the other hand, when Fromm writes about the broader aspects of society and culture, he speaks about the sustaining and creative elements in the social process. His refutation of the Freudian view of the repressive function of culture is made on this basis. What Fromm takes away with the right hand of his individualism, he gives back with the left hand of his socialism. But since he does not bring these two views into meaningful correlation, they give rise to misguided utopian views about both the individual and the society in which he lives. Fromm's theoretical solution, of course, is the socialist "sane society" in which the "sane individual" can live. The split in his thinking becomes evident, however, when he considers his social solutions to be relatively simple possibilities and when he thinks that most destructive human problems will be dissolved when these possible solutions become actualities.

c. Fromm's Description of the Humanistic and Authoritarian Conscience Presents an Oversimplified Dichotomy in the Self

The dichotomy between society and the individual becomes particularly evident in Fromm's distinction between the authoritarian conscience and the humanistic conscience.



"The authoritarian conscience is the voice of an internalized external authority, the parents, the state, or whoever the authorities in a culture happen to be."¹ In contrast, the "humanistic conscience is not the internalized voice of an authority whom we are eager to please and afraid of displeasing; it is our own voice, present in every human being and independent of external sanctions and rewards."² The humanistic conscience is the reaction of our total personality to the fulfillment of our potentialities or to the failure to fulfill them. "Humanistic conscience is the expression of man's self interest and integrity, while authoritarian conscience is concerned with man's obedience, self-sacrifice, duty, or his 'social adjustment'."³ Fromm cites the following dream as an illustration of the conflict between the authoritarian and humanistic conscience.

A well known writer was offered a position where he would have had to sell his integrity as a writer in exchange for a great deal of money and fame; while considering whether or not to accept the offer, he had this dream: At the foot of a mountain, he sees two very successful men whom he despises for their opportunism; they tell him to drive up the narrow road to the peak. He follows their advice and, when almost on the top of the mountain, his car falls off the road, and he is killed. The message of his dream needs little interpretation: while he slept,

¹Erich Fromm, Man for Himself, pp. 143-144.

²Ibid., p. 158.

³Ibid., pp. 159-160.



he knew that the acceptance of the offered position would be equivalent to destruction; not, of course, to his physical death, as the symbolic language of the dream expresses it, but to his destruction as an integrated, productive human being.¹

Frequently, the guilt feelings that are experienced in terms of the authoritarian conscience are rooted dynamically in the humanistic conscience. "A person may feel consciously guilty for not pleasing authorities, while unconsciously he feels guilty for not living up to his own expectations of himself."² Fromm makes a worthy attempt to establish the autonomy of the humanistic conscience. But it would appear to this writer that the content of the authoritarian conscience can be separated from the humanistic much more easily in print than it can be in the living person. It would be extremely difficult in most of us to unravel those things that our early authority figures desired for us and those things that we desire for ourselves. The educational shaping of the child is begun in a sense even before birth and it develops in many subtle ways throughout one's life. Often the early training is severe and harsh, and we can see an inner rebelliousness developing. But the very character of the rebelliousness is partially shaped by the impinging external forces, and so again we have something

¹Ibid., pp. 164-165.

²Ibid., p. 165.



less than Fromm's humanistic autonomous self.

The situation might be further complicated by an individual who has diverse potentialities--let us say as a scientist and as an artist. If he follows the career of the artist he may have a dream expressing the destruction of the scientist in him or vice versa. This could be the case no matter what the parents or other authority figures in the individual's life had intended. But if the parents had wished for him to become a scientist, it would only complicate matters further no matter which path he took. This illustration adds just a few additional possibilities to the oversimplified dichotomy between the authoritarian and the humanistic conscience. But when one considers the many impressions both from outside and from inside the living person and the veiled ways these might be expressed in dreams, it bids us to be very cautious in our assertions about the desires and aims of our "true" selves which supposedly are "independent of external sanctions and rewards." Fromm is correct with his insistence that there is "something there" which acts, reacts, and has an internal dynamism of its own which we can call the self. But he misses the mark when he insists on the independence of this "humanistic" self from external influence, and he misses again when he claims that it is essentially or primarily good.

Fromm's equations between the good and spontaneous



over against the evil and authoritarian often appear too oversimplified to have much relevance. If we observe a small two year old child, for example, who continually attempts to take hold of the steering wheel while his father is driving, we find that the father must constantly suppress such curiosity and general activity (Freudians please note that no repression of sexuality is involved) in order to insure the survival of both the child and himself. Here is a case, obviously, where the spontaneity of the child, though not harmful in itself, can lead to very destructive results. Eventually the child will develop his knowledge and motor skills to the point where he will no longer have to be suppressed. He may even be taught to drive the car, and he may gain an inner sense of freedom and strength when he has mastered this challenge. But the relationship between the father and child through the years of early suppression, to that of guidance and teaching, to the eventual mastering of the skill has too many twists and turns in it to be easily divided into evil, authoritarian and good, spontaneous relationships.

In such cases, Fromm's concepts do not do justice to the complexity of experience in either its immediate or historical perspectives. They begin, in Dollard's phrase, at about the thirty-yard line. They assume the existence of motives in the individual that are clearly conditioned by



social factors. In this sense, even though Freud's theoretical bias toward sexuality may appear lopsided, his careful etiological approach to instinctual development is usually more revealing than that of Fromm. In contrast to Freud, Fromm's psychological concepts of masochism, sadism, productivity, etc., often appear as the primary colors in a color wheel. We are informed that these colors are never found in such a pure state in real life, and that actually all the colors are mixed with one tone dominating, let us say a muddy grey for the marketing personality, and some rich full hue for the productive. But Fromm rarely follows Freud in the latter's assiduous attempt to trace biographically the torturous sinuosities of the individual psyche as it confronts the problems of its sexuality, aggressiveness, self-love, etc. Consequently, Fromm's categories often appear to be aloof and abstracted from or tacked on to the gnarled ambiguities of life. This process can have value if its limitations are recognized and if the categories thus formulated are not simply used to describe simple possibilities and simple antagonisms between the authoritarian and the humanistic, the evil and the good. But if such limitations are not recognized, they become more dangerous for they misrepresent the potentialities of the self in relation to itself and to the society in which it resides. I would now like to illustrate this tendency in Fromm's writings by



considering his description of the self to other selves.

4. An Evaluation of Fromm's View of Neighbor Love

a. A Critique of Fromm's Concept of Equality as the Foundation for Mature Love Relationships

One of the prime pre-requisites, according to Fromm, for healthy love relationships between human beings is that of equality. Individuals must achieve a sense of inner independence, a freedom from incestuous bonds, before they can love or receive love in the true meaning of the word. A realization of full independence and uniqueness and a freedom from relationships of either domination or submission are necessary before one can love. "The uniqueness of the self in no way contradicts the principle of equality. The thesis that men are born equal implies that they all share the same fundamental human qualities, that they share the basic fate of human beings, that they all have the same inalienable claim on freedom and happiness."¹ The concept of equality does not mean that all men are alike. Such a concept of equality Fromm believes comes from the market place where the abilities of one person and his products may be offered as a fair exchange for those of another. "In the relation between the man who buys and the one who sells, the

¹Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom, p. 264.



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concrete differences of personality are eliminated. In this situation only one thing matters, that the one has something to sell and the other has money to buy it."¹

An implicit assumption underlying much reactionary thinking is that the liberal concept of equality presupposes an absence of difference between persons or social groups. Since there are obvious differences with regard to practically every aspect of human living, their conclusion is that the doctrine of equality is a myth. Conversely, Fromm writes that when liberals "are moved to deny the fact of great differences in mental and physical gifts and favorable or unfavorable accidental personality conditions, they only help their adversaries to appear right in the eyes of the common man."² In contrast to this view, Fromm declares that his own conception of equality along with that of the Judaeo-Christian tradition "means that all men are equal in such basic human capacities as those making for the enjoyment of freedom and happiness. It means, furthermore, that as a political consequence of this basis of equality no man shall be made the means to the ends of another man; no group, the means to the ends of another group. Each man is a universe

¹Ibid., pp. 264-265.

²Erich Fromm, "Sex and Character," Psychiatry (1943), p. 23.



for himself and is only his own purpose. His goal is the realization of his being, including those very peculiarities which are characteristic of him and which make him different from others. Thus equality is the basis for the full development of difference, and it results in the development of individuality."¹

From the writer's point of view, this ideal of a society where "no man shall be made the means to the ends of another man; no group, the means to the ends of another group" appears hopelessly unrealistic as a statement of the possibilities of human nature and human society. His further comment that "each man is a universe for himself and is only his own purpose" is hardly a feasible possibility for a pioneer or a hermit, let alone an individual emerging in the complex of an industrial society. To assert that such a goal is an actual possibility for contemporary man is at best to be irrelevant and at worst to be dangerously misleading with regard to the limitations of the human situation. It is because of the extremity of such statements that critics like Marcuse, even though his own solution is hardly more realistic, accurately accuses Fromm of idealistic moralizing and of sugar coating the problems that confront us. To insist on an awareness of oneself over against the

¹Ibid., p. 23.



alienating forces of the society is a valuable antidote, but to claim that this self can exist only for its own purpose is surely extreme.

To illustrate the implausible nature of Fromm's position, I would like the reader to consider the following hypothetical oversimplification. Imagine, if you will, a very intelligent man beginning a business partnership with a man of rather low intelligence. For the purposes of the argument, we shall regard both men as honest and moral in the Frommian sense. More than likely, within a very short period, the intelligent man would find it necessary to insist on the validity and foresight of his own ideas in contrast to those of his partner. Gradually, the intelligent man would be prone to run the enterprise and to control the actions of the other. The less intelligent man might even find a certain fulfillment for his life in serving the smarter man. He might even "love" the intelligent man and "love" to work for him, and he might even find his individual happiness in carrying out the tasks assigned to him. One wonders at this point just how Fromm would evaluate such a situation. Do terms like "masochistic," "sadistic," and "equal," apply to such relationships. It certainly goes against Fromm's concept of an ideal society where "each man is a universe for himself" and where "no man shall be made the means to the ends of another man." But might there not



be relations of dependence and of symbiosis that are "healthier" than Fromm's insistence on independence and equality. Life within any society must confront so many intricate interrelationships and necessary adaptations that the formula for growth and health can hardly be stated so simply. Fromm tends to remain on such an abstract or ideal plane of analysis that such complications are not considered.

Of course, the dangers of such oversimplified illustrations should not be overlooked, even though they often come closer to the truth than Fromm's abstractions. One danger in the preceding analogy would be the tendency to draw from it the conclusion that wealth and the management of an enterprise go hand in hand with superior intelligence. This is far from being a necessary truth. For certainly other, less admirable qualities, such as greed, luck, the drive toward domination, and narrowminded, shallow, materialistic values are perhaps even more significant. It is against these last mentioned human tendencies that Fromm's critique retains its relevance, even though the theoretical view of the self from which he makes his critique is of questionable worth.

With this warning against illustrative oversimplification, I would like to indulge in one further hypothetical possibility. Imagine, this time, an ideal neighborhood where all of the mothers have loved their children with a



perfect love and have consequently been capable of freeing them from the home in order that the children's freedom and independence might develop. Perhaps the mothers have even attempted to inculcate in them the principles of democratic socialism. But even within the framework of such an ideal egalitarian matriarchy, individual variation can lead to quite different results from those that Fromm would lead us to suspect. Just to indicate a few of the possibilities, we might say that one individual is bright but weak physically; another child is crippled; another has a very low intelligence, but is strong physically; another is physically strong and mentally bright; another is rather mediocre in both departments; one child likes to play the violin; another to tinker with cars; one chap's face might be handsome while another's is distorted and ugly. It would appear that even within the confines of this "ideal" neighborhood, we have enough ingredients for a genuine witch's brew. For even if democracy were practiced to a maximum, there would still be frustration, envy, repression, condescension, domination, submission, and the like.

The children growing up in the existing society of course confront a good many more possible handicaps. Many of them will not have had such enjoyable relations with their parents. Furthermore, they will have to face the great differences of economic income and social status as well as



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differences of race, religion, nationality, and the many other factors that give rise to prejudice. The solutions of democratic socialism would perhaps minimize and even resolve some of these problems, but it at the same time would give rise to others. For example, Fromm's utopian ideal that each man should be a "universe for himself" and that he should exist for "only his own purpose" would more likely extend the tyranny of the common man than it would improve the quality of the culture.

Fromm would do well to retain a bit of Aristotelian caution with regard to his socialistic intentions. Aristotle believed that the best compromise that could be worked out to insure the functioning of the state was to keep the center of power in a prosperous middle class which could act as a balance between the pressures of the upper class and the proletariat. Such contemporary political structures as representative government and economic levelers like the income tax are based on these principles, and they seem to this writer to be very valid policies for our society to pursue. Such processes appear to be the best means for contending pressure groups to muddle through extremely difficult social problems. In contrast, Fromm's naive view of human possibilities frequently causes him to throw caution to the winds as he invites us to his own particular form of utopia. It often sounds better on paper than does



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our own society, but because of existing human variation, specialization, and institutionalization it is very unlikely that such changes could be brought about persuasively, and because of human "cussedness" it is doubtful that the results would be as happy as Fromm describes if they were carried out.

b. A Critique of Fromm's View of Human Power

The investigation of the relationships between men necessitates a further inquiry into Fromm's conception of the potentialities and powers of man. In order to show that the powers for good are really primary and basic, Fromm gives the following illustration.

If we say that the tree is potentially present in the seed it does not mean that a tree must develop from every seed. The actualization of a potentiality depends on the presence of certain conditions which are, in the case of the seed, for instance, proper soil, water, and sunlight. In fact, the concept of potentiality has no meaning except in connection with the specific conditions required for its actualization. The statement that the tree is potentially present in the seed must be specified to mean that a tree will grow from the seed provided that the seed is placed in the specific conditions necessary for its growth. If these proper conditions are absent, if, for instance, the soil is too moist and thus incompatible with the seed's growth, the latter will not develop into a tree but rot.¹

According to Fromm this demonstrates that there is a "primary potentiality which is actualized if the proper

¹Erich Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 217.



conditions are present; the other, a secondary potentiality, which is actualized if conditions are in contrast to existential needs." "The terms 'primary' and 'secondary' are used in order to denote that the development of the potentiality called 'primary' occurs under normal conditions and that the 'secondary' potentiality come into manifest existence only in case of abnormal, pathogenic conditions."¹

It is on the basis of such thinking that Fromm founds his case for a "normative" humanism. In the description of the developing seed which is often thwarted by malevolent environmental forces, we have the basis for the conception of the good, essential self and an evil, secondary self which is brought into being when the environment is not ideal. But such thinking overlooks the great variation in the genetic structures of human beings. The seeds are not necessarily good and healthy in a physical sense, and they may be a significant cause of difference in mental and moral deviation. But even more important is the fact that the illustration considers the growth of only one isolated tree in its battle with the wind, sun, soil, etc., when the struggle of most trees must be waged primarily with other trees.

Such quibbling with an illustration may appear

¹ Ibid., p. 218.



unnecessary, unless one goes on to consider how Fromm develops the problem of power relationships between people. He carries through a similar dichotomy when he denotes two contradictory concepts of power. He speaks of power in the productive sense as the capacity to develop one's potentials, while destructive power is described as "power over" or the power to dominate. "'Power over' is the perversion of 'power to.'"¹ "The ability of man to make productive use of his powers is his potency; the inability is his impotence. . . . Where potency is lacking, man's relatedness to the world is perverted into a desire to dominate, to exert power over others as though they were things. Domination is coupled with death, potency with life."²

This distinction between "power to" and "power over" is again much more easily distinguished in print than it is in the complicated intermeshing of actual human relationships. Fromm's writing would lead one to think that there can be a passionate desire to grow, to develop one's potentialities, without having the full flowering of these potentialities impinge on the aims and powers of another. Speaking of trees once again, Fromm neglects to mention that most trees exist in forests and jungles where they must struggle for a place in the sun. Some trees have a greater capacity

¹Ibid., p. 88.

²Ibid., p. 88.



for growth than others and can quite easily rise above the majority of other trees. But many trees have no similar capacities, or if they do, they are thwarted because larger trees have spread their roots to absorb most of the nourishment from the soil or have sent their branches skyward to capture most of the sun and the rain. Likewise, when Fromm considers the society of human beings, he does not come to full grips with the disruptive force of diverse wills to power. He does not hold in meaningful conjunction the fact that the passionate affirmation to live among different individuals or different societies can lead to war, resentment, and destruction. He does not seem to realize that evil is frequently the result of two positive life forces, rather than a positive against a negative, and that "power over" frequently results from the "power to." By this neglect, Fromm escapes much that is ambiguous and tragic in life. It enables him to speak on the one hand about "individual productivity" and on the other hand about "social equality" without realizing that these two principles do not necessarily harmonize private and political relationships.

c. A Critique of Fromm's View of Neighbor Love

The questions that I have raised with regard to Fromm's concepts of equality and power have serious implications for his concept of love. Fromm writes that "the most



fundamental kind of love, which underlies all types of love, is brotherly love." "Brotherly love is based on the experience that we all are one. The differences in talents, intelligence, knowledge are negligible in comparison with the identity of the human core common to all men."¹ Brotherly love is love between equals; it maintains itself without domination or submissiveness. Such love can give of itself while retaining individual independence. Brotherly love between equals must be the basis of all healthy human relationships whether they are between parents and the emerging child, between man and woman, between friends, or between the individual man and all mankind.

Fromm writes that love is not primarily a relationship to a specific person. Rather, "it is an attitude, an orientation of character which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole, not toward one 'object' of love."² If a person loves only one other person and is indifferent to the remainder of his fellow men, his love is not love but merely symbiotic attachment or enlarged egotism. Most people, however, believe that love is constituted by the object rather than by some power or faculty in the self. "Because one does not see that love is an

¹Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving, p. 47.

²Ibid., p. 46.



activity, a power of the soul, one believes that all that is necessary to find is the right object--and that everything goes by itself afterward."¹ In contrast to this superficial attitude, Fromm draws the following conclusion from his own view. "If I truly 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.'"²

Fromm is on safe ground when he insists that love is primarily an attitude or an orientation of character in the potential lover, but the terrain becomes increasingly swampy when he begins to discount the importance of the "objects" of love, and he finally falls into abstract, universalistic quicksand when he states that "if I truly love one person I love all persons, I love the world, I love life." One might more accurately say that if I have a capacity for love, then I will be capable of loving other persons. And one could add that if the intellectual vision of a loving person were raised and enlarged to the point where it broke through tribal and partisan aims, then the love that is expressed toward those closest to the lover

¹ Ibid., p. 46.

² Ibid., p. 46.



might gradually embrace the stranger as well. But Fromm would do well to keep in mind the words of Goethe. "Mankind? It is an abstraction. There are, and always have been, and always will be, men and only men."

Love of one person does not presuppose a love of mankind. It does presuppose a disposition, a capacity to love, but when this love must extend beyond the immediacy of the individual person, family, or community, then prejudice and ignorance may enter as alienating factors. Fromm maintains that we must love all of mankind equally. But this appears to be impossible. The ability to love others resides in a kind of potentiality or readiness to love, but this potentiality, if it is genuine, will be most activated by those near to us. Also, of course, unless some distant people are used as scapegoats, that which is ambivalent and hostile will become most intensified with those near to us. But the affections that we build toward family and friends will obviously effect our potentiality for loving those more distant. Such emotions may help us to understand intellectually what a love for all men might mean, but personal love may also interfere or cause us to clash with those who would put a wider loyalty before devotion to our loved ones. Only a man who was equi-distant and aloof from those nearest to him could in actuality love all men equally.

By "love of mankind" Fromm means "the sense of



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responsibility, care, respect, knowledge of any other human being, and the wish to further his life. This is the kind of love the Bible speaks of when it says: love thy neighbor as thyself. Brotherly love is love for all human beings; it is characterized by its very lack of exclusiveness."¹ All of this is enough to warm the heart strings of most moral idealists. But I wonder if such sweeping statements and such grand emotions are genuine possibilities for the majority of mankind. One might relevantly inveigh against such remarks, Fromm's early commentary on the cult of "togetherness." He wrote then that "the very indiscriminate-ness of this 'liking people' shows its thinness or rather its compensatory quality."² But could not one write a similar diatribe of Fromm's view of love. The very indiscriminateness of this "brotherly love" shows its thinness or rather its compensatory quality.

If a person has experienced the members of his family and his friends as warm and close to him, he realizes that he does not share or give an equal amount of love to everyone. The potential may be there, but it can be realized with only a few. In fact our love for most of mankind is exhibited in a sense of "fairness" to them, of trying to be

¹Ibid., p. 47.

²Erich Fromm, "Selfishness and Self Love," p. 516.



just, honest, unprejudiced and helpful to them so that those who are underprivileged may be given opportunity to make their way in the world. But the word "fairness" is so disparaged by Fromm that one almost feels ashamed to mention the word.

1) Fairness Ethics

Fromm has some good reasons for this disparagement, although I do not think that they are sufficient. He writes that "the principle of fairness, no doubt, makes for a certain type of ethical behavior. You do not lie, cheat or use force--you even give the other person a chance--if you act according to the code of fairness. But to love your neighbor, to feel one with him, to devote your life to the aim of developing your spiritual powers, is not part of the fairness ethics. We live in a paradoxical situation: we practice fairness ethics, and profess Christian ethics. Must we not stumble over this obvious contradiction?"¹ One of the reasons that we do not stumble lies in the fact that we reinterpret our religious and humanistic tradition in the light of fairness ethics. "A good illustration of this interpretation is the Golden Rule. In its original Jewish and Christian meaning, it was a popular phrasing of the Biblical maxim to 'love thy neighbor as thyself.' In the system of fairness ethics, it means simply 'Be fair when

¹Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 173.



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you exchange. Give what you expect to get. Don't cheat!¹
 No wonder the Golden Rule is the most popular religious phrase of today. It combines two opposite systems of ethics and helps us to forget the contradiction."¹

In such a description of fairness, we are enabled to see the limitations of the principle, particularly as it is exhibited in the marketing attitude of modern society. But granting this, one is tempted to hastily add that we should at least hang on to this principle, particularly when so many ruthless individuals pay no heed to even this "quasi-ethical" idea. In one sense, the fairness ethic and the Christian ethic are contradictory. This is particularly the case if one is taken for the other. But in another sense, the fairness ethic is simply an attenuation of the Christian ethic. It is about the best that a world of conflicting power interests can make of the Christian ethic. Practicing ethical Christians, few though they be, along with Dr. Fromm may not like this fact, and they provide a service in calling attention to it. But the service ends when Fromm throws stones at the "half way" ethic of fairness. For in doing so, he again invites the utopian illusion that there is a pure white love somewhere rather than the muddy grey of our day to day world.

¹Ibid., p. 174.



In many ways, this problem of fairness touches the foundation of Fromm's view of love. He has maintained a position contrary to Freud and to many other thinkers in Western thought that love is a conjunctive phenomena. The more that one loves himself, the more is he capable of giving love to others. Love of self and love of others, according to Fromm, are not disjunctive. He opposes the view that the more a man loves his neighbor the less love he has left for himself. Fromm has fought the Christian interpretation of Luther, Niebuhr, and Ramsey which carries a connotation to the Christian injunction "Love thy neighbor as thyself" of meaning to "Love thy neighbor as you used to love yourself." Undoubtedly Fromm would describe such an interpretation as masochistic, compliant, and submissive. But these men would answer that it is this kind of love that enables one, in Fromm's terms, "to love your neighbor," and "to feel one with him." Whereas, at least on theoretical grounds and despite his vehement protests, one could say of Fromm's conjunctive ethics that it implies merely a fairness ethics. I love my neighbor but I also love myself. From the utopian side this should harmonize everything. But in fact, it may frequently result in an uneasy balancing of one's self interest against the interest of another.

One of the difficulties of Fromm's analysis is that it remains on a highly abstract level of expression. It



would demand the powers of the poet or the novelist to come close to describing such phenomena as fairness in words, but even they would fall far short of actual experience. For example, the "fairness" of a parsimonious person, and the "fairness" of a warm, loving individual would make all the human difference in the world. These qualitative differences are missed by abstract analysis. It does not do away with the need for analysis, but it does indicate its limitations. Fromm would undoubtedly like to encourage the warm, loving, considerate elements of human nature into full manifestation, in contrast to that which is merely legalistic and marketing, and so would this writer. We would agree on the penurious quality of "fairness" in much of modern society, but there is apparently some disagreement as to whether or not the retention of the concept has some realistic worth.

2) Fromm's Over-Use of the Word Love

One of the aspects of Fromm's writing that seems particularly difficult to swallow is his insistence on the use of the word love. Fromm speaks of it so often that several reactions to it become evident. At first it is rather pleasant to hear this word caress our ears so frequently. Those in our culture who have constantly been warned about the evil nature of any form of self-love receive Fromm's comments with eagerness. They have the ring of health about



them. They appear particularly pleasant and sunny in contrast to the morbidity of the extreme Christian moralists. We may have a suspicion that the problem is not so easily resolved, but it is pleasant to hear nevertheless. And besides, our confidence is bolstered by the evidence from psychotherapy that supports the view that a growth in self-esteem or self-love enables the self to act more lovingly and helpfully toward the neighbor. This would seem to be conclusive evidence that love of self and love of the neighbor are conjunctive phenomena.

If we are cautious observers of the self, however, we become increasingly dubious of Fromm's comments concerning our capacity to love our neighbor. For although he declares that to truly love is a most difficult art, he still seems to believe that a love of the neighbor untainted by self-interest is an actual possibility. He thinks that this is not only possible with those close and dear to us, but he also states that "If I truly love one person I love all persons."¹ To this a number of reactions again occur. It seems to make either the love of mankind too easy, or it makes the love of one man too difficult. We may also think for a moment of how wonderful it would be if the world were filled with rational, loving, productive personalities who

¹Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving, p. 46.



loved each other truly. We might for a moment even include ourselves among the productive elect. But upon further self-reflection, it becomes evident that envy, resentment, hostility, pride, petty gripes, slight acts of conscious or unconscious sadism and masochism filter through even our most friendly human relationships. We overlook or forgive most of these unpleasant ingredients because of the basic feeling of warmth that prevails. But if this is true of our friendships, how little then can we love mankind? In one sense, perhaps, it is easier for "mankind" is not so close to us. It is an abstraction, and this is often much easier to love than the problematic personalities of particular men.

But still another response is possible. When Fromm speaks about truly loving mankind, we may, if we cannot persist in the illusion of so loving mankind, develop a sense of guilt over our incapacity for this full love. Ironically, then, Fromm tends to perpetuate the extreme moralism that he so vigorously sought to counteract in his attacks on writers like Luther. Granted, that Fromm insists that we love rather than hate ourselves as the basis for such universal love, the demand for such extreme love is there nevertheless. "If I truly love one person I love all persons." Inverted, this remark reads that unless I truly love mankind, I do not love one person. But what saints are there among us who are capable of truly loving even one person?



We suddenly find ourselves close to the moralistic injunctions of Christ, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." Fortunately, there are psychiatrists enough to warn us against such perfectionistic consultation. And we are further comforted when we look about us and find that even the advocates of complete productive living and loving appear to look and act, to fuss and to fume, and to love and to hate in about the same manner as more ordinary mortals.

Perhaps this is just another quibble over that amorphous term "love." For I would share with Fromm a deep concern for the future of mankind, and I would hope that man might raise his intellectual perspectives and his emotional sensitivity to the point where political structures might insure world peace and reduce the degree of human suffering. In a sense, this could be called a "love of mankind." But I would feel that such an expression would be an exaggeration of my subjective sentiments, and I would reserve the use of the word "love" for more intimate human relationships. I would not hesitate, for example, to call "love" the affection that a father in a very primitive community displays toward his wife and children even though this man's language and thought lacks the concept of "mankind." The way in which Fromm has posed the question makes such an evaluation impossible, since the man obviously does not love "mankind."



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I would admit, with Fromm, that there is grave danger of conflict when this man's tribal loyalties come into conflict with neighboring tribes. One can appreciate how Fromm while observing the clash of "tribal" loyalties at the international level desires to construct "normative" and "universal" concepts of love that would place humanistic obligations upon us all. But his method of accomplishing this linguistically makes his view appear pretentious and unrealistic in both the international and the more intimate spheres of human life.

Fromm's over-use of the word "love" reminds one of the Christian use of terms like "agape", "Christ in me," etc. For the Christian frequently performs acts of compassion which to the uninitiated appear to result from simple, warm-hearted, natural affection, but upon closer inspection they always reveal to us that it is not mere human altruism, but rather the "Spirit of Christ" or "Agape" or the "Holy Spirit" or some other Heavenly Force that is working and willing away within them.

Fromm, of course, would not want to be confined to a supernatural, sectarian movement like Christianity. Nevertheless, within the context of a naturalistic philosophy, Fromm speaks of a kind of universal love which has been discovered by such diverse personalities as Buddha, Mohammed, of all people, Jesus, and other "normative humanists." Such



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talk creates on less spiritually endowed mortals, who are often quite painfully aware of the ambiguous nature of their love, the same impression as does the Christian's talk of the "Holy Spirit," and it causes our impoverished, pagan hearts to wonder just what the nature of this pure love might be.

Perhaps what Fromm means by "love of mankind" on a bit more modest scale would be that it is essential that man have a basic predisposition for affection, a potentially good will, that can be actualized by those with whom he comes into contact. Furthermore, this potentiality can be actualized to consider people outside of a person's immediate clan or country. But this expansion of love to a love of mankind consists much more in an enlargement of intellectual perspective than in a heart that feels more intensely. And indeed, although at times Fromm deceives us with his exaggerated moral declarations, he also has ably assisted us in the enlargement of that perspective.

3) Love in Psychotherapy

Fromm, following Ferenczi's lead, has also brought the use of the word "love" back to the relationship of the analyst to the patient. This view counters the Freudian position of maintaining, as far as possible, an impersonal, objective attitude toward the patient. Fromm's critique of Freud on this matter shows how Freud's theories and attitudes were shaped by attitudes of science. These might be



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appropriate for the study of physical objects, but according to Fromm they are hardly therapeutic in the interpersonal relationship between the analyst and patient. This insistence on love between the analyst and patient is perhaps a needed emphasis over against the previous attitude. But again, it needs a word of caution. First of all, it may encourage the analyst to "trump up" a feeling of "love" when in actuality his feelings toward the patient are in fact less intense than what he would call love. Secondly, Freud had some good reasons for not displaying an over abundance of affection on his patients. For this emotion might only increase the dependency of the patient on the analyst and consequently prolong the treatment. Thirdly, one wonders about the moral taste of using the word love where the giver is financially rewarded so handsomely for his love. And finally, we must again realize how aloof from actuality we are in our use of symbols. For certainly, a warm hearted Freudian using a cold scientific terminology may communicate more affection than a cold hearted Neo-Freudian encouraging us with words of love. In any case, psychiatrists even when deeply concerned generally communicate a feeling more aptly described as "kindly neutrality" or sincerity rather than by what might be called love.

4) Love as a Central Experience

When Fromm describes the possibilities of genuine



love in contrast to the many neurotic relationships that are possible between two people, he again returns to the concept of the "core," the "center," or the "real self." "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. Only in this 'central experience' is human reality, only here is aliveness, only here is the basis for love."¹ There is validity to this expression of our inner selves as it relates to another human being. But it again becomes problematic if we try to universalize the experience as a union with the human core of the race. For this mutual experience of centrality can be experienced during the uniting of one's self with another self in many different ways, certainly in ways that do not necessitate the treatment of all men equally. If a person has experienced the members of his family and his friends as close to him, he knows that he does not treat all men equally. The potential may be there, but it can be realized only with a few. For one friend shares with another a delicate balance of similarity and difference which provides the basis for the necessary affection and stimulation. It is an experience of union or centrality with forms of diversity which give joy rather than with those which

¹Ibid., p. 103.



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destroy or leave one indifferent. Ideally, this might be said of our potentiality to love all men, or even all of life, but in fact little of it becomes actualized except for occasional expressions of it on paper or in pulpits.

The "center" to "center" relationship can be the kind that Fromm speaks of, namely, a love between two mentally healthy persons who desire to build a home and family together and who desire to live in peace with their neighbors. But this "core" feeling is also felt by soldiers and comrades going into battle to fight for something much less than a universal aim, or perhaps even more frequently and destructively, for universal aims which might be quite different than those proposed by Fromm. Or on a smaller scale, it could also represent the relationship of two thieves who worked very harmoniously with each other, or two Mafia members who hold each other in the curious esteem and affection that sometimes flourishes in the "brotherhood of hoods." Undoubtedly, Fromm would describe such relationships as sadistic, destructive, or symbiotic, but this is only to describe the relationship by its effect on the world society of man, not by the inner "core" or "real" experience. It would appear then that it is the common central aim that brings individuals together, rather than any necessary participation in an essential humanity or a universal human love.



5) Allegiance to "Mankind"

Fromm maintains that there is a close correlation between the degree of growth in an individual's emergence from the family matrix and his loyalties to larger political and religious institutions and ideas. One cannot deny the large measure of truth in such a concept, and yet when the problem of an individual's maturity is placed on the national and international scale it becomes increasingly difficult to evaluate with Fromm's concepts. For example, for Fromm, mature loyalty must be directed toward mankind as a whole and any loyalties to something less than this are designated as incestuous or masochistic. Generally, this would place one's commitment to international aims above those of national aims, and generally I would believe that such commitment would be the most mature. But there is also the type of person who is not only enthusiastic about the United Nations or some other representative international body, but who also bears to it a kind of fanatical allegiance even when such loyalty is dangerously unrealistic. I would confess, however, that such individuals are rare in comparison to those who are blindly nationalistic. By indicating the exception, I only mean to indicate some of the difficulties that are possible when we make too neat a correlation between individual ties to the family matrix and the loyalties that the same individual bears toward the wider institutions of



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his society. Fanatical allegiance to an international organization like the United Nations is at least in this time of history a relatively harmless and often constructive counterbalance to the narrower forms of fanaticism. The same attitude could become dangerous, however, if a monolithic world state were established.

We are already confronted with a forerunner of such a possibility in the movement of international Communism. Here we have the authoritarian fully clothed in liberal, humanistic apparel. The Communist ideology is fervently dedicated to "mankind." Within the framework of such an ideology, political maturity could also be defined in terms of extending one's loyalties beyond that of the immediate family or nation. Among the comrades in the Party, I am sure that there is much "center" to "center" relatedness coupled with a desire expressed ideologically for the universal equality of mankind. By casting some of Fromm's basic concepts into a Communist ideological perspective, I do not mean to infer that Fromm's writings could easily be used for Communist dogma. For there are many individualistic elements in Fromm that the Communists would abhor. Furthermore, Fromm would probably label these various forms of fanaticism as being in themselves results of individual immaturity. But I hope that by showing how some of Fromm's basic concepts can be applied to insidious political



intentions that I have at least indicated that the individual's struggle between maturation and incestuous family ties becomes increasingly difficult to evaluate when they are applied to wider social processes.

6) Ambiguities in Fromm's Religious Interpretations

Similar complications arise when we consider Fromm's interpretation of religion. Fromm describes man as having an existential need for a world orientation. And yet he condemns man for masochistically submitting to various religious world views. For example, Fromm condemns Luther and Calvin for their submissiveness and depreciation of the self before a tyrannical projection called "God". And yet he praises the Old Testament prophets as "normative humanists" even though they worship the same "God" as Luther and Calvin and are frequently possessed by similar temperaments. Fromm even includes Mohammed among his great "normative humanists" as a harbinger of love, reason, and unity in the world, and yet, Mohammed must certainly be considered as closer to Luther and Calvin in teaching and temperament than to other humanists mentioned by Fromm like Buddha, Socrates, and Lao-tse.

Mohammed and the Old Testament prophets did lash out against provincial idolatries and patriotism in favor of a more universal religious principle, but so did Luther and Calvin. In fact all of them fell on their knees before the



same Biblical God. But mysteriously, according to Fromm, this occurs to submissive, or even sado-masochistic personalities when he is considering Luther and Calvin, and to normative and humanistic individuals when he writes of the prophets and Mohammed. Of course, "normative" and "masochistic" phenomena occur in personalities in varying degrees, strains, times, and places. But if this is so, can Fromm be so assured that there is an essentially normative position, by which he can simply damn Luther and Calvin and raise the Old Testament prophets and Mohammed to the Frommian level of sainthood?

7) The Ambiguity and Vagueness of Fromm's Symbols

Does this mean that the only world orientation that a man can adhere to in a non-masochistic way is the one presented by Fromm? And even if this does present the best ideological framework for freedom and individuality, could not one relate to these very concepts in a masochistic way? Could not one's constant insistence on "individuality" and "self-love" be indications of the need for and dependency on such concepts rather than an indication of their possession? Apparently then, non-masochistic symbols do not necessarily free us from masochistic relationships for we might use the very symbols themselves as a crutch. This is not what Fromm has in mind but by seeing how such a phenomena is possible, it helps one to realize again just how ambiguous



our relationships to things, persons, and symbols actually are and to caution against the tendency in Fromm to think that something separated and clarified symbolically is necessarily so clear in actuality. Fromm realizes this, but his tendency to split phenomena into good or bad, productive or unproductive, equal or symbiotic obscures the point, and when he accents the positive side only, he gives us a false, perfectionistic view of the self, and a utopian view of society.

Unfortunately, Fromm's thought structures and language are often much less complex than the actual emotional and intellectual patterns that he describes. His writing does not reflect the protean subjective multiplicity that he must be aware of as an analyst. He has abstracted categorical character types from actual psychological processes. He realizes that these are abstractions, but then he continues to write in an oversimplified way, not giving full justice to the ambiguities, ironies, and tragedies of life. He tries to give to his character orientations a dynamic quality by pointing out their impure status in reality. However, this does not remove the impression of a block like, stereotyped view of human nature. Furthermore, he tends to identify his verbal abstractions with either the essential or nonessential in existence, and although this is a tendency in most writers, it behooves us thereby to issue a word of philosophic



caution and humility.

Fromm insists on a much greater plasticity in the human organism than does Freud, but nevertheless the psychological writing of the latter appears much more flexible. Freud's style may appear cold, but it also has the quality of good narration. He attempts to trace the dynamic ebb and flow of instinctual and phantasy life as it moves out from basically aggressive and sexual aims. One may disagree with the reductionist foundation of this Freudian psychology, and yet find a more vivid description of the minutiae of our behavior patterns, with all of its conflicting and tragic components. Fromm, in contrast, often writes as though loving, productive parents might not only diminish the conflicts of sexuality and authority with their children, but actually eliminate them. With Fromm, as with Rousseau, the self is basically good and society is bad. Thus an alteration of political and economic structures coupled with a change in parental attitudes could bring about a utopia. But his affirmations appear too affirmative; they are too good to be true. Fromm's view of the development of the self, unlike that of Freud, begins at about the "thirty-yard line." He does not adequately treat the anxieties, loneliness, and pain that are inevitable experiences for human beings during even the earliest years of life and which thereby set the pattern for later conflict within the family and the society at large.



CHAPTER VII

NORMATIVE OR FORMATIVE HUMANISM

1. A Contrast to Fromm's Approach

In this inquiry into the thought of Erich Fromm, I have so far presented his views and a criticism of some of the salient points in his psychology. One of the major affirmations in Fromm's thought is that man is essentially good and that whatever is evil and alienated in his life is a secondary distortion of his essential self. If man is not encumbered by the destructive and authoritarian forces of the society and family, but rather receives love and the room to grow, he will develop into a spontaneous, loving, rational personality. Fromm believes that in the lives of the great religious leaders of the past, such as Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, Lao-tse, Moses, Socrates, and others, we have a clue to the secret of the human fulfillment that could await us all. Fromm, as we have seen, calls this essentialist view of man "normative humanism."

I would agree with Fromm that these great men of the past have much to teach us about the ways of life. But I would be more hesitant to believe that their teachings



indicate some common core of humanity that we can identify in our selves as our really good essential self. Fromm shrugs aside more pessimistic interpretations of human nature like those of Augustine, Hobbes, Freud, and Niebuhr with the comment that their gloomy diagnosis of man merely reflects the destructive society in which they live. Supposedly then, Fromm's Sane Society, if we could ever attain to it, would provide the basis for an essentially healthy, happy self. But one cannot so simply cast aside the insights of these other profound thinkers who give us a tragic view of man. It must at least give us pause where there has been so much disagreement and so many different interpretations of the same phenomenon.

Has Fromm given us any more reason to believe that man's potential for love and knowledge is any more "real" than his potential for hatred and blind prejudice? Could it be that man is neither good or bad, but simply alive, a living potential for many diverse developments? Could it be that the potential in man can be directed toward sexual promiscuity, hatred, and aggression, as well as toward love and knowledge? Obviously so, for these things have developed. All of these potentials have had, at one time or another, survival value for the human being. But then for whom should we decide, let us say between Freud and Fromm, as the most accurate interpreter of man? If we did attempt such an



interpretation it might be most accurate to say that man is very much as Freud describes him, although less sexual and with some of the aggressiveness due to environmental factors, but that man would very much like to become the normative, healthy, loving, rational human being that Fromm describes. Actually, however, I would like to bypass any judgment of man's essential nature, and rather attempt to suggest some central aims for which the humanists of most of the major religions can meaningfully unite. Even though we do not have any exact knowledge as to the essential nature of man, perhaps we can still indicate a "Formative Humanism" in place of Fromm's "Normative Humanism." To that end, I would like to suggest the broad outlines of a Symbol of Integration toward which man can struggle regardless of how his essential nature is interpreted.

2. The Integrator: A Proposal for a World Religious Symbol

Contemporary Western Civilization has attained a height of materialistic plenty hitherto only dreamed of by the race of man. It is only too evident, however, that in most parts of the world this materialistic prosperity is still only a dream. But even in the West it appears that something has gone wrong. Juvenile delinquency and adult moral laxity appear to increase year by year. There are undercurrents of



dissatisfaction with the social callousness and the religious bankruptcy of the culture. Erich Fromm's voice is one among many that provokes us to see the emptiness of mere economic prosperity. But although we hear the voices for a rebirth of spirit and meaning, we find the doctrines of these voices to be diverse. Each specific religion or ideology proclaims its specific position as The Solution, and we find whether it be Capitalism vs. Communism or scientific rationalism vs. some traditional religious faith that these doctrines conflict and that the results of the friction can be so disastrous as possibly to end the life of man on earth.

I do not here propose specific solutions to specific problems for obviously such a task is endless and ongoing. But I would suggest a possible common symbolic denominator to the major religious and sociological impulses of the day which can be simply expressed and yet which might be of real assistance in the integration of the significant ideas and attitudes of contemporary man. The future religious orientations of man must reach out, overarch, and transcend the boundaries of present day religions and ideologies. On the other hand, any new religious impulse cannot be merely synthetic--merely a conglomeration and compilation of the faiths of the past. Rather, it must be based on sources that are integral to man, that spring from the very energies of reality and the spirit of life.



The idea presented here will be considered by many to be heretical, but for others who have become disenchanted with traditional religious proclamations it may offer a new focus of meaning and purpose. In any case it has the potentiality to encourage new life orientations even if at the same time it discourages some traditional orientations. What I suggest then is a mutation of meaning in the traditional Christian symbol of the cross. I would suggest in the future that it not only symbolize the suffering death of Jesus Christ, but also a number of other fundamental human potentials that must continue to be activated if we are to survive. I would call this new symbol The Integrator, and I would assign to its various components the following meanings.

a. The Promethean Thrust

When we probe beneath the political and economic conflicts which harass modern Western man, we find that two major traditions have alternately intertwined and opposed each other. They are the Judeo-Christian religious heritage and the traditions nourished by the fount of Greek humanism. I suggest that the two intersecting lines of the Integrator represent the necessary balance and tension between these two major cultural forces. The vertical thrust would express the growing life energies and intellectual potentialities in



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man. The representative symbol for these attributes is surely the Greek god Prometheus. Prometheus for us represents the far seeking, wide ranging, creative and critical intellect that scans the distant reaches of outer space, that seeks to know the various phenomena of the earth and the life on the earth, and that probes into the recesses of its own psyche in order to understand the processes at work therein. Prometheus is the symbol of man as thinker and maker. He represents man's insatiable curiosity, his sense of wonder, his urge for the awareness of being, and the creative manipulation of the objects of his awareness for his own benefit. He is the god of empirical inquiry and theoretical speculation, but he is also the god of practical activity, of the technician and the craftsman.

This Promethean thrust is composed of two further symbolic elements, namely the Dionysian and the Apollonian. The lower Dionysian element signifies the basic physiological forces that are necessary for the continuance of life, while the upper Apollonian element represents the full development of man's imaginative and rational faculties. The Promethean thrust in man attempts to unite the energies and instincts of the Dionysian with the intellectual activities of the Apollonian. When the tensions represented within these forces are balanced we approach the uniqueness, creativity, and fire of the Promethean man. He represents the burning



energies of Eros flowering into the highest manifestations of the Psyche.

b. The Christian Reach

The horizontal arms of the Integrator symbolize the outgoing, forgiving quality of Christian love. Even as the vertical thrust represents the energies of Eros, so the horizontal reach displays the emotions of Agape. The Christian ethical emphasis, following its teacher, places the strongest possible emphasis on the self-sacrificing, tender, sympathetic, healing, and forgiving aspects of our relations with our fellowmen. It seeks the neighbor in distress and desires to lift him from his difficulties. All societies encourage these social sentiments to some degree as a basis for their own survival. But the Christian vision of love would lift the horizons of such affection to include even our enemies. Jesus bids us to love and to forgive everyone. "Forgive not seven times, but seventy times seven; Love your enemies." The ideal Christian should not assert himself against those that encroach upon him, nor bear malice toward those who treat him unjustly. Resistance and resentment are forbidden. If we adhere steadfastly to this ethic, we will walk the second mile, bless them that curse us, and do good to them that hurt us.



c. The Mystic Center

A third dimension to the Integrator is less apparent, but it is central to the entire meaning. The point at which the Promethean and Christian vectors cross may be called the Mystic Center. The Source of man's life and vitality is hereby indicated by the point, an almost non-symbolic symbol. Thus the comparatively non-symbolic Mystic Center radiates into the symbolic manifestations of the Promethean and Christian images. It is in the meditation upon the Mystic Center that the West is most likely to learn from the East, just as the East has already begun to utilize our Promethean technology. The various religions of the Orient, like Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism have concentrated on the inexpressible mystical elements within the self and in the world surrounding the self. The major traditions of meditation entering the West from the Orient find representation in the Yoga concentration from Hinduism and in the distillation of Buddhist and Taoist ways of life and perception that we find in the practice of Zen.

d. Justice

If the Integrator is conceived of as a symbol helping to indicate a Formative Humanism, then the concepts of Justice can also be related to the symbol. For the balance signified by the vertical and horizontal lines may indicate the relation of the individual to the community. What this



balance might mean within a specific community would be too varied and complex to comment on here. But on the broad international scene it finds some expression in the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights. As symbolizing Justice, the Integrator establishes contact with four more major cultural traditions that have especially accented the need for human justice. They consist of two theistic traditions, namely Judaism and Islam, and two humanistic traditions, namely Roman Stoicism and Confucianism. Thus the Integrator emerges with a feeling of justice and integrity within it. And even though many forms of vice and injustice could hide in its shadow, still within the meanings of the symbol itself, there are forces that move against injustice. The critical and rebellious Prometheus, the loving Christ, and the mystical reverence for life all war against the various forms of corruption to which flesh and imagination are heir.

To discuss thoroughly the meanings and interplay of the various traditions that I have so far alluded to would demand the writing of another thesis. Here I only hope to suggest a possible alternative to Fromm's "normative humanism," and to indicate how a comparatively simple symbol can indicate broad areas for research and discussion. The main intention here has been to take a major accent or two from each tradition and to suggest a possible juxtaposition for each within a more comprehensive religious orientation in



order to facilitate their integration into the emerging world community. This aim necessarily excludes many other facets that might be discussed in a more detailed treatment of each tradition.

3. The Balance of Tensions

The traditional conflict between secular empiricism and rationalism over against religious faith can be viewed in the light of these images. Prometheus by his reason, passion, and inventiveness rebelled against Zeus. Jesus on the other hand trusted and obeyed his Heavenly Father to the very end. But there are other dimensions in which these contrasting types can complement and assist each other rather than war against each other. Christian love, for example, can struggle to promote the human dimension in an age in which man becomes increasingly buried beneath his own technological constructions. Whereas many of the inventions of Prometheus, if lovingly used, can bring the communication between man and man to higher levels of interest and intensity.

The strains and tensions within the symbol are again apparent when we observe the rational, critical, and technical faculties of the Promethean intelligence which finds itself more at home in a phenomenal reality that it can analyze and manipulate, and compare these with the intuitional



teachings of the mystics that take us beyond or below our rational faculties to a union with the depths of the self, with the deepest energies of life and being, and perhaps with God. Furthermore, the tension between Christian love and mystical self-absorption with its possible amorality may not be as pronounced, but it is there nevertheless. To these conflicts and tensions within both the Integrator and life itself, the author can only suggest the answer of an inclusive "both/and" rather than an "either/or." The intellectual, ethical, and mystical experiences must retain a balanced and complementary relationship or they become trichotomous. Promethean intellectual processes are necessary for the realistic vision and creativity that raise man above his helplessness before nature. Christian love works toward a union between all men that overcomes the deep narcissistic and egoistic tendencies in them. And the mystical experience can give us the profound silence, bliss, and affirmation in the moving flame of life that radiates into Promethean and Christian activity.

If any one of these components is stressed to the neglect of others, we encounter potentially dangerous distortions of the human potential. When the Promethean component is over-accentuated to the neglect of other life requirements, the resulting character and cultural type tends toward a technological power structure that dominates and suppresses.



On the other hand, if the aims of Christian love and union between man and man are carried to extreme, to the exclusion of other life factors, then a comparatively subservient ideal of character arises. Rather than tending toward the psychological sin of sadism, to which the Promethean is prone, the Christian moves more toward a maudlin masochism. The Mystic way also has its dangers. Unchecked, it withdraws into other-worldly, narcissistic phantasies which have often been conjoined in the past with extremely ascetic practices. It is only by keeping some measure of interrelation and balance between the divergent tendencies that we can create individual and cultural health.

However, by placing this emphasis on balance and harmony, I do not wish to negate the values of excess for certain times and occasions. The balance indicated by the Integrator is not to be held uniformly. For example, the participation in the Dionysian ecstasy through music, nature, or the sexual act are necessary ways to regain or retain contact with the powerful primitive urges of life. We must have these moments of divine madness, or we shall surely go insane. But the symbol should help us to realize that some small measure of balance and sanity must be retained even while one gives oneself to the experience of a deep emotion. It is important to realize that there are many dimensions to human reality, and that we must not remain lost in any



one of them. It is as possible to be drowned in the Dionysian dimension as it is to dry up in the Apollonian way. When we become excessively sensuous, or intellectual, or loving, or mystical, or legal, perhaps the Integrator can help us to realize that each dimension is only one among the many other significant dimensions of life.

The proposal for such a symbol would indeed appear pretentious if it claimed to capture for itself all of the flow and sinuosities of life. It would not pretend to do so however. Rather, it would make broad simple strokes which help in the understanding of some of the most important spiritual forces operating in the world today. It would bring these forces into a meaningful conjunction, into a balance of tensions. The author believes that there are moments in history when such over-simplifications, provided they are recognized as such, are necessary and healthy. They can further man's quest for spiritual unity.

4. Some Inadequacies of the Symbol

The Integrator can symbolize how concrete problems are to be approached with love and understanding, but it is not adequate to represent the many minute psychological mechanisms that individuals might employ in relation to it. Some of these, psychologically speaking, are healthy, but others might be quite neurotic. For example, a small man



who feels insecure may think of himself primarily in Promethean terms in order aggressively to assert himself over others. Another person, who inwardly fears ostracism, may on the surface appear Christian in his affection for others, but in actuality might be merely compliant and afraid to offend. Another person's unselfishness may be an over-compensation for an inability to love. The mystic's retreat may signify his inability to cope with the social pressures of his world. The person who withdraws from his problems may hide in his Mystic Center. This type of person will live out the imagery of the symbol only in phantasy, while remaining on or retreating to a level of infantile narcissism. Or a man might become so compulsively concerned that the egoistic, altruistic, and narcissistic forces nicely balance in his life that he loses the spontaneity and naturalness of good living. In short, different neurotic character types would be drawn to one aspect of the Integrator more than to others, and they would use this for their own neurotic purposes.

This listing of neurotic possibilities by no means exhausts the number of potentially destructive relationships which could weave themselves around this symbol for their own purposes, but it does give some indication of their potential scope and prevalence. It points, as well, to the limitations of the symbol. A mere symbol cannot disentangle



the highly complex, individual dynamics of a neurosis, but it can perhaps help to indicate dimensions of life to the neurotic that he neglects at his peril. Furthermore, the meaning implicit in the Integrator symbolizes an attitude of love and understanding, of a union of the emotional and intellectual, of religious and scientific perspectives toward these various patterns of human behavior which could assist psychotherapy in its attempt to bring new life and health to the individual and society.

A symbol like the Integrator stands like an "unmoved mover" before the vision and heart of man. It possesses a certain constancy that contrasts with the fluid vitalities of life. This has both positive and negative aspects about it. Affirmatively, life has need of this constancy and balance. Our lives are projects and for this they need some permanence of aim. The Integrator could help to guide both individual and collective life to its fulfillment. On the other hand, the correlation between symbols and reality is always uncertain and never complete. Life flows around and through them, and we live with proximate norms. Consequently, just as it is necessary to have such symbols, so it is equally necessary to mock and parody them in order to know what they are not and thereby retain a certain freedom in relation to them. Our age is in need of symbols like the Integrator, but we must always be able to come away from or



pass beyond them into the fullness of life itself.

The Integrator arises from an act of mental crystallization. It does not by any means include or indicate all of the vast panorama of human experience, but it does provide a focal point for the interpretation and inclusion of many significant elements in the experiences of contemporary man. It is an idea that could assist in the formation of attitudes which will guide us toward possible solutions of some of the problems of intercultural conflict. It symbolizes at a religious and mythological level four basic psychological needs of man: 1) the need to fulfill the potentialities for human individuality and creativity; 2) the need for love to achieve social interdependence; 3) the need for contact with the revivifying force of Life itself; and 4) the need for structures of justice which will provide the basis for a comparatively harmonious world community.

5. The Relation of the Symbol to the Thought of Erich Fromm

Erich Fromm, as we have seen, has advanced a position that is similar in many respects, but which also has many differences to the one suggested here. The conception of the Integrator has been proposed as a possible alternative to Fromm's formulation of a "normative humanism." I have taken issue with this concept by citing the great variety of human



"natures" that have been described in the history of thought, and the further variety of character types, i.e., Buddha and Mohammed, that Fromm has designated as exemplary humanists. Consequently, I have proposed a symbol for a "formative humanism" without attempting to establish a particular view of the human self as being either essentially good or essentially bad.

However, I believe that Fromm's insistence on the love of self and love of neighbor, and his recent essay on Zen Buddhism represents a view that parallels the Promethean, Christian, and Mystical aspects of the Integrator. However, Fromm's writing generally has not recognized some of the tensions that exist between these diverse directions of the self. His view of the self is over-simplified and this gives much of his writing an unrealistic, utopian quality. His latest work on Zen Buddhism has this same tendency. For as deep and transforming as the experience of satori might be, it cannot give a "full awakening" that lasts a life time or that overcomes and harmonizes the many anxieties, conflicts, and tragedies that afflict human life. Fromm, however, tends to create the illusion that we can pass beyond our limitations and anxieties by means of psychoanalysis and satori. He continues to write about the attainment of "full" self-awareness and the freedom that overcomes human alienation, separation, and anxiety. This may be true of the gods, but



human beings only deceive themselves by speaking in such a manner.

Furthermore, Fromm has discovered rather late that symbols "distort" the reality of the world. It is fruitful that he has recognized this limitation of symbols to describe the ongoing processes of life, and as I have indicated, he would do well to apply this wisdom to such concepts as "normative humanism," and the "primary self," and so on. It is unfortunate, however, that Fromm "distorts" in his very realization of the symbol. For he does not further recognize that the symbol itself is also a part of reality and that it has a capacity for revelation as well as distortion.

In contrast to a word like "normative," the relation of the symbol to non-symbolic processes might be more easily recognized when such an obvious symbol as the Integrator is used. Certainly, the comparatively static characteristics of the symbol are apparent over against the dynamic movement and complexity of life itself. And yet, if this difference is recognized, the symbol can have the valuable effect of giving permanence, focus, and direction through the flux and flow of life. It can help to guide us toward a more complete realization of our human being. As a symbol, the Integrator does not act directly upon our major world power problems, but it does assist in the formation of character traits which are needed in our fragmented world. By setting



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before the mind's eye a new vision of man, the Integrator encourages a world religious orientation which is at once creative, critical, loving, mystical, and just.



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