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These difficulties arise from the fact that need statements can be both normative and empirical and that in the mouths of psychologists and social scientists they may be both normative and factual. The concept of needs spans, as it were, philosophy and those activities more concerned with practice, like psychology and politics.<sup>52</sup>

Fromm's position is extreme. He claims that "psychology must not only debunk false ethical judgements but can, beyond that, be the basis for building objective and valid norms of conduct".<sup>53</sup> It is one thing to argue that empirical factors are at least relevant in the making of moral decisions and another to claim that moral systems can be entirely built on the findings of empirical disciplines. Nor can the relationship between the activities of the philosopher and the psychologist be so easily explained. In Chapter Three, pp. 124-127.

I quote some statements by psychologists and social scientists in support of my argument that their remarks are normative. But this does not mean that the work done by the psychologist and the philosopher is of the same nature. Fromm, at times, over-states the (admittedly desirable) marriage between philosophy and psychology ignoring the fact that there are activities which distinguish the two.

In the philosopher's examination of the concept of need, a large part of his activities must be in the field of meta-ethics.

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<sup>52</sup> I expand on this in Chapter Three.

<sup>53</sup> Erich Fromm, Man for Himself, Foreword, p. VII.

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He will be attempting to assess what it is we are doing when we make statements about or have theories about human needs. This procedure hopefully will assist the philosopher in arriving at some account of what needs are. The task traditionally ascribed to the psychologist is that of collecting empirical data - concerned, for instance, with surveys, statistics, tests and so on, an area not usually covered at first hand by the philosopher. However, what Fromm seems to understate is the value of the philosopher's activities as a groundwork for the psychologist's task. The collection of empirical data relating to needs would have a much sounder basis if the researcher knew what to look for. The psychologist and the philosopher do not replace each other but rather supplement each other's activities in arriving at similar ends, and in failing to appreciate this fact, Fromm has largely ignored the significance of the fact that 'need' is a normative concept.

## (2) Needs and sanity

Fromm's account of needs is inextricably bound up with his claims concerning mental health and sanity. His experience as a psychologist and psycho-analyst leads him to make some very plausible and interesting claims concerning the relationship between need fulfilment and sanity. However, there are three main weaknesses in his account:

(i) It seems to me that Fromm conflates the two separate concepts of mental health and sanity. In doing this he makes the

notions of sanity and insanity wider than they actually are. Sanity is only one aspect of mental health. The person who is neurotic or the person who is mentally retarded as the result of injury or disease would not be called insane and yet we could say that he does not exhibit mental health.

(ii) In Fromm's account, it is not clear whether the concept of sanity is being used in a descriptive way, in a normative way or both. Most of the time it seems that Fromm is making claims about sanity, needs and need behaviour based largely on empirical observations. He seems to hold that sanity and need fulfilment contingently coincide rather than that the former can be defined in terms of the latter. However, Fromm also claims that "mental health... must be defined in terms of the adjustment of society to the needs of man..."<sup>E4</sup> If the connection between mental health (or sanity, since Fromm does not distinguish between them) and need fulfilment exists by definition, then Fromm's claims become fairly tame and uninteresting.

(iii) Fromm is too dogmatic about the necessity for fulfilment of his five basic needs. He argues that lack of fulfilment of any one of these needs will result in insanity. And yet we can find examples where one of these needs is not fulfilled and insanity does not result. For instance, a hermit or monk who lives alone would not fulfil his need for 'relatedness' and yet would surely not, on that account, be

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<sup>E4</sup> Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 72.

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called insane. It seems that the lack of fulfilment of one of the basic needs is not a sufficient condition for claiming that insanity or even a neurosis will result.

Now, Fromm could have an answer to this. He could qualify his account by distinguishing voluntary lack of fulfilment of a need from forced lack of fulfilment. In this way, Fromm would not have to include as insane all those individuals who seek to avoid the company of others, but could still explain the fact that forcing prisoners into solitary confinement for long periods of time often does result in insanity.

### (3) Objectivity

Fromm claims that his account, above all, is objective. He claims to arrive at conclusions regarding needs as they are objectively, not as they appear to be. (This is, of course, closely tied to the claim discussed above, that his account is 'scientific' or based on empirical considerations.)

What exactly can 'objective' mean in this case? Like Marx the social scientist, Fromm, the psychologist, believes that one can arrive at conclusions regarding human beings and the concepts and ideals they use to describe themselves, their behaviour and their world by an examination of what is observably the case. Fromm does differ from Marx, in that he does see philosophical analyses of concepts as a legitimate activity and in fact uses them (even if insufficiently as I have already argued). However, Fromm does

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hold that his account of needs is objective by virtue of the following:

(i) Fromm's basic needs are universal in character - that is shared by all.

(ii) The account is psychological and purports to use some empirical methods like those of the scientist - for example the use of patient case histories.

(iii) The practical nature of the account is thus stressed - i. e. the theory derives (in part) from practice and is in turn proved by what is 'observably the case'.

Fromm's approach to psychology and ethics is strikingly similar to Marx's and Marcuse's approaches to politics and ethics. All three strive to legitimatize their prescriptions for action by reference to empirical premises. Each fails to explain adequately how he (or anybody else) comes to distinguish real from false needs. Fromm's only explanation is in terms of the 'development of conscience'. However, Fromm's position seems stronger than that of Marx or Marcuse since he has actually attempted to spell out a list of basic needs which apply to all men at all times. To see if a need is real or false we can refer to these basic needs and see whether the need in question does reflect a basic need or whether it is something alien and imposed.

But Fromm is still subject to his own claims regarding false needs. What is implied, is that the analyst is 'superior'. If a patient insists that he does or does not see something as a need and the analyst argues the contrary, what guarantee is there that the analyst is not

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imposing his own system of false needs on the patient?<sup>55</sup>

The important question remains: Is complete objectivity never possible? To this question I think we must answer - No. No matter how much the philosopher or psychologist uses apparently objective empirical data, his interpretation of this data runs the risk of being quite 'subjective' and entails that the researcher's own background conditioning and environment will partly determine the way in which he sees and assesses things. To examine human needs by looking solely at what is 'objectively the case' concerning needs one would have to have 'stepped outside' the society in which one lives in order not to be prey to false needs oneself. In other words how can the analyst, philosopher or social scientist ever be sure he has overcome his own alienation and conditioning?

This does not mean that any attempt to discover the real needs of man is futile. The concept of needs is so important (particularly to socialist ethics and politics) that one must attempt to get as close to the concept as possible. But I think it is important to remember that philosophy cannot arrive at conclusions from the analysis of ethical concepts with the objectivity and precision of the scientist analysing chemical compounds. And if ethics is to be 'scientific' it is only by virtue of the fact that it strives for objectivity. This

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<sup>55</sup> Fromm's book on Freud, Sigmund Freud's Mission, (New York: Grove Press, 1933., shows that a psychologist's theories on obsessions, repressions, prejudices and so on, are seen through the veils of his own obsessions, repressions, prejudices, etc.

striving for objectivity follows only from procedures along the lines I am suggesting. That is - if one conducts an examination of needs by collecting empirical data - for example, patient case histories, economists' statistics, and so on, and tries to arrive at an adequate account of human needs, one runs a greater risk of being subjective and a lesser chance of being objective. Whereas if one offers a philosophical analysis of the concept of needs in an attempt at least to clear up some of the ambiguities and problems involved, and at most have a clearer idea of what the concept entails, one stands more of a chance of being objective.

Fromm does, to a large extent, avoid bias (more than Marcuse, for instance). Fromm has, as it were, laid his cards on the table, with his analysis of the concept of need, and in particular in his account of basic needs. Having done this, there is no going back, that is, one meets and deals with conflicting political systems and their success or failure in need-fulfilment by reference to standards already laid down which cannot be manipulated. If a society calling itself socialist fails to fulfil the needs of its members (by reference to these standards then one must condemn this failure in the same way that capitalism's failure is condemned). Throughout Fromm's writing it is clear that the ethics of his humanism preclude political considerations. He is equally ready to criticize all political extremes. Fromm's own optimistic philosophy places great faith in man and he criticises all philosophies which advocate the exploitation rather than the trusting of man:

**It is this lack of faith in man which antiliberal and clerical ideas have in common with Lenin's concept; on the other hand faith in man is the basis for all genuinely progressive movements throughout history ... 56**

**I have tried to make it clear that I consider the concept of need to be an important concept in ethics and political philosophy and that a philosophical discussion of the concept should be the basis of conclusions made regarding political systems and need-fulfilment. Once an attempt has been made to determine just what human needs there are, we can at least then examine in what ways political systems do, or do not, take account of human needs. This seems to be a preferable approach to the manipulation of the concept of need into discussions of political systems.**

**(4) The Transition from False to True Needs**

**Fromm believes that a system which fulfils man's needs rather than creating false needs is possible, but he is not explicit enough about just how need structures are changed so that a desirable system is arrived at.**

**Fromm is fairly optimistic about the possibilities for change. Man's apparent insanity and self-destruction are "not strong enough to destroy faith in man's reason, good will and sanity".<sup>57</sup> And, in the final chapter of The Sane Society Fromm spells out ways in which at least a saner society might be achieved. But still the issue seems to be simplified. Even if all the values Fromm holds**

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<sup>56</sup> Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 239.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 363.



were held by others, might not social conditioning have reached such a stage that men cannot lose their alienation and false needs?

Fromm claims that Marx

did not recognise the irrational forces in man which make him afraid of freedom, and which produce his lust for power and his destructiveness. On the contrary, underlying his concept of man was the implicit assumption of man's natural goodness, which would assert itself as soon as the crippling economic shackles were released ... In this respect, Marx and Engels never transcended the naive optimism of the eighteenth century. 58

Marx may be naive but it is not clear that Fromm is less naive.

Given that Marx and Fromm share a basically optimistic view of human nature, Fromm faces the same problem that faced Marx and Engels - how can one make the oppressed see their oppression?

#### An opposing view considered

I should now like to consider an account of needs which argues against the view I have been discussing. It is put forward by Paul Taylor,<sup>59</sup> who argues against the idea that 'need' is a normative concept and against the scientific ethics advocated by Fromm.

Taylor is a representative exponent of a view of needs completely at variance with the views I have discussed. In putting forward his own view of needs, Taylor specifically criticises the sort of claims involved in Fromm's account of needs.

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58 Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 234.

59 Paul W. Taylor, "'Need' Statements," Analysis, Op. cit., pp. 106-111.

Taylor claims that a 'need' statement can be one of four types:

(1) one which describes a state of affairs in which something is required or demanded by a prescriptive rule of law e. g. 'You need a membership card to enter the Club House.'

(2) one in which the 'something-that-is-needed' is a necessary means to the attainment of a goal of the person who is said to have the need e. g. 'The student needs a dictionary.'

(3) one which refers to the conative dispositions of human beings or animals. A need in this sense is a 'desire', 'wish' or 'motive', e. g. 'Children have a need for love and affection.' (These needs can be conscious or subconscious.)

(4) a need statement which is purely normative e. g. 'We need leaders who cannot be bribed.'

Taylor claims that those who try to establish a scientific ethics fail to see that:

(i) Statements about human needs may be both factual assertions which are empirically verifiable (types (2) and (3)) and pure recommendations (type (4)).

(ii) To verify statements of types (2) and (3) is not eo ipso to establish the rational justification of making recommendations of type (4).

(iii) Even if it can be shown that man has basic needs in sense (2) and (3), it is not logically odd or self-contradictory to refrain

from recommending the fulfilment of one of these needs. What human beings need might not be for their own good.

(iv) Whether human needs ought to be met must be established on grounds independent of the 'need' claims themselves.

(v) There is no logical or contextual implication holding between (2) and (3) and (4).

(iv) When social scientists and psychologists make statements of types (2) and (3) they are making them not as recommendations but as confirmable matters of fact. In other words, the kind of marriage of psychology and ethics, advocated by Fromm, will not work, according to Taylor.

(i) The examples which Taylor offers do not seem to support any strict division into those 'need' statements which are 'purely recommendatory' and those which are empirically verifiable matters of fact. Consider that the statement, "We need leaders who cannot be bribed" is not made during a speech at a union meeting, but rather after the collapse of the union. Here the statement would not have largely recommendatory significance but would probably be a factual claim to the effect that if a union is to survive its leaders must be trustworthy. Again, the statement "The student needs a dictionary", could be said by a teacher (who has no knowledge of whether in fact the student does have a dictionary) to a parent. Here the statement would be recommendatory and not simply a factual assertion. The emphasis of the statements cited by Taylor can be normative or empirical. The fact that the emphasis can change shows the difficulty



in establishing a strict division into factual needs and normative needs. As I have already pointed out, statements containing reference to what I have called 'animal needs' would be more likely to be empirically verifiable than statements concerning the need for love, for instance, but we can imagine examples where the reverse would hold. Of two statements made about a child who is nervous and irritable, 'The child needs love' and 'The child needs more fats in his diet', the first may be more readily empirically verifiable than the second which may be a hypothesis in need of much testing. It is impossible to categorize needs or need statements into those which are empirically verifiable and those which are purely recommendatory. Rather we should view most 'need' statements as having both a normative and factual aspect. 'Need' statements based on Fromm's list of basic needs would involve empirical verification but Fromm's basic needs are all needs which refer to human goods and hence they also involve the recommending of action. Which of these predominates may depend on the context in which the statement is uttered. Empirical investigation into needs and statements about needs is not sufficient:

'need' is a normative concept and, as such, needs are not to be determined just by research into what is observably the case ... this normative aspect of 'need' will prove of great importance in seeing how far sociologists or psychologists can settle questions of need ... 60

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<sup>30</sup> R. F. Dearden, "'Needs' in Education," British Journal of Education, Op. cit., p. 7.

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And in fact sociologists and psychologists cannot hope to settle questions of need by empirical methods alone.

(ii) Taylor's second objection would seem applicable if it were made regarding an account of 'want' statements rather than of need statements. That is, it seems quite reasonable to claim that the fact that x wants y does not eo ipso establish the rational justifiability of recommending that x be given y. In fact Taylor sees the concept of 'need' as very similar to the concept of 'wanting'. Wherever a goal or purpose is presupposed, according to Taylor, "... what people need is always relative to what they want".<sup>31</sup>

At the beginning of this chapter I outlined what I believe to be some important differences between statements concerning wants and statements concerning needs, namely that statements concerning needs, (a) do not necessarily refer to conscious volitions; (b) refer to accepted standards or norms; (c) carry the suggestion that lack of fulfilment will result in harm; (d) do not always involve a corresponding want; (e) imply general aims, purposes, requirements which others could be expected to share; (f) are less likely to be justified than statements about wants; (g) refer to something that it would be injurious for an individual to do without; (h) may be more easily verifiable by someone other than the person who has the need.

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<sup>31</sup> Paul Taylor, "'Need' Statements," Analysis, p. 107.

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All these considerations support the claim that 'needs' differs from 'wants' in that the former is a normative concept, (although, as I am suggesting, empirical questions are also relevant to talk of human needs.) Taylor ignores these differences and thus obscures the fact that 'wants' is not a normative concept.

(iii) Taylor's third objection is that there is no logical error or self-contradiction involved in refraining from recommending the fulfilment of man's needs even if it can be shown that man has basic needs such as those described by him in (ii) and (iii). I do not really see what force this objection has. Many would claim that there is nothing logically odd or self-contradictory in consciously choosing to do that which is morally wrong. I do not necessarily agree with this but if Taylor wishes to imply that since there is nothing logically odd there is, therefore, nothing morally odd about refraining from recommending that needs be fulfilled<sup>52</sup> then he must offer some arguments in defence of this position.

If it can be shown that a man will fail to measure up to accepted standards (as Benn and Peters maintain) if his need is not fulfilled, and that others have the capacity for fulfilling or facilitating the fulfilment of the need, then there is something morally odd about inaction. It makes no difference if the standard in question is the

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<sup>52</sup> I shall return to this point in Chapter Three.



preservation of life or of having relationships with other people (except in degree). If it is clear that a genuine need exists (and for Fromm, for example, genuine needs all relate to human well-being) then there is something odd about not recommending its fulfilment. Benn and Peters go further than this: "When we state a man's needs, we prescribe, explicitly or implicitly, what must be done to satisfy them."<sup>53</sup> I would not want to make a claim as strong as this. When we state a man's needs we do not necessarily indicate precisely in what manner his needs should be fulfilled; rather it is usually the case that we indicate which sorts of action would fulfil his needs.

(iv) Taylor's fourth and fifth objections reveal I think that when he claims there is no logical oddness in not recommending the fulfilment of needs he wishes to imply that there is no moral oddness since the validity of needs claims ought, in his opinion, to be established on grounds independent of the needs claims themselves. I would not wish to disagree with the claim that not every statement which refers to a need does reflect the existence of a genuine need. I have already discussed the idea of 'false' needs. But Taylor wants to argue that normative import always comes from somewhere other than the need statement. It is hard to imagine what sort of process we would have to go through before arriving at an actual recommendation regarding a human need. Taylor's argument would seem to

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<sup>53</sup> S. I. Benn and R. S. Peters, Social Principles and the Democratic State, p. 142.

involve that we first of all go through a series of empirical investigations which bring us to a point where a statement concerning 'need' is appropriate and that we go through a separate set of moral considerations which may or may not lead one to recommend that the need be fulfilled.

I should want to argue that there is an entailment between a statement describing the existence of a genuine human need and a statement recommending its fulfilment. This entailment is what is involved in Benn and Peters claim that to show that a man needs something is to prescribe that the need be fulfilled. This results from an analysis of the notion of 'need' which is much more plausible and consistent, I believe, than that offered by Taylor.

(v) The last of Taylor's criticisms of 'scientific ethics' involves reference to the function of psychologists and social scientists. Taylor argues that when they make statements of type (2) and (3) "they are making them not as recommendations but as confirmable statements of matters of fact:"<sup>64</sup> But fortunately many psychologists and social scientists are not as confused about what they do as Taylor is. For example, C. A. Mace argues that "Many of the most general of the theoretical concepts of psychology" (and the social sciences) "are evaluative."<sup>65</sup> 'Needs' is a concept frequently used and talked about in many diverse disciplines and the normative element of the

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<sup>64</sup> Paul W. Taylor, Op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>65</sup> C. A. Mace, "Homeostasis, Needs and Values", Op. cit., p. 201.





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concept should be constantly stressed.

In this chapter, I have argued that 'needs' is a concept which involves normative and empirical considerations. The normative element in talk of needs has been revealed in a comparison of needs and wants, an examination of every day need statements and a discussion of basic needs.

Erich Fromm's account has been seen to develop much of what Marx said about needs, and in addition to offer useful suggestions concerning scientific ethics, need behaviour and basic needs and their relationship to sanity. However, Fromm (like Marx), falls (i) to clarify many of the conceptual problems associated with the concept of needs, and (ii) to appreciate the dual aspect - normative and empirical - of the concept. There remain unanswered philosophical questions concerning needs. The following chapter aims at answering some of these.



## Chapter 3

### OBLIGATIONS FOR NEED FULFILMENT

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I propose to develop what has been implicit in the preceding chapters, that is, the claim that needs ought to be fulfilled. This is the conclusion to be drawn from the two accounts of needs I have discussed, but Marx and Fromm offer little, (if any) philosophical argument in support of it. The following discussion of needs is not inconsistent with what I have claimed to be the valuable aspects of Marx's and Fromm's accounts of needs. Rather it is a philosophical development which aims at filling in some of the gaps in the account of needs so far presented. In particular, I shall attempt to give some answers to the question: "Why ought needs to be fulfilled?"

In arguing that needs ought to be fulfilled, I firstly make some comparisons between needs and related concepts. Secondly, the distinction between genuine and false needs is discussed. Next I argue that needs are social and relate to human goods. An opposing view is critically examined. Finally, the relevance of both empirical and normative questions to need talk is stressed and the obligations on individuals and political systems concerning need fulfilment are argued for.

#### Needs and Related Concepts

In arguing that needs ought to be fulfilled, it is important to be sure that there is no possibility of confusing needs with other related



concepts.

### Needs and Wants

I have already argued (Chapter Two), pages 59-37, that needs can be distinguished from wants. To briefly recapitulate on the main differences: Whether or not someone wants something is a simple matter of fact whereas whether he needs something, in most cases, will involve both factual and normative questions.

Sparshott sums up this difference:

The facts that certain persons have certain desires, and that certain objects are apt to satisfy these desires, are simple facts. The status of needs is less clear .... The process of assessing needs is always one of estimation, if not of evaluation, and not merely one of recognition. <sup>1</sup>

Needs are normative; wants are not. It is needs which are related to human goods. Wants are not necessarily related to genuine needs and may be related to false needs. The fact that someone wants something does not eo ipso provide us with sufficient reason to say that he should have it but the fact that he needs something does, in the majority of cases, provide us with sufficient grounds for this claim. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> F. E. Sparshott, An Enquiry into Goodness, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> Although I claim that needs are more important to moral decisions than wants, I would not claim that the latter are irrelevant. I would agree with Sparshott that in many cases both should be taken into account (as in his example of the best teacher who devises lessons which relate to the students' needs and their wants).



### Needs and Rights

Some comment should be made on the connections between needs and rights. I have already indicated why it was that Marx stressed human needs and rarely spoke of rights (see Chapter One, pages 8 - 9). Talk of rights would have involved Marx in the 'abstraction' characteristic of bourgeois philosophy. Talk of human needs, on the other hand, seems more grounded in empirical questions, in the examination of man as he actually is.

However, it has been claimed that rights are more morally significant than needs. This is what H. J. McCloskey's<sup>3</sup> comparison of needs and rights amounts to. McCloskey argues that rights encompass a larger field than needs, that "Human beings have rights, which are pre-need and post-need".<sup>4</sup> He claims that in talking of self-developing or self-destructive activities:

it is of rights not needs that we speak, because we grasp that after the basic requirements of existence and physical and, to a lesser extent, psychological well-being are met, we are operating with a different concept, that of self-making, rather than engaging in the activity of making the potential actual, moving from potentiality to actuality as do the acorn which becomes an oak, the tadpole a frog. <sup>5</sup>

Firstly, it is not fair to imply that needs are concerned solely with "basic requirements of existence and physical, and to a lesser extent, psychological well-being". More and more psychologists,

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<sup>3</sup> H. J. McCloskey, "Human Needs, Rights and Political Values"; forthcoming in American Philosophical Quarterly.

<sup>4</sup> H. J. McCloskey, Op. cit., p. 19      <sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 14

political scientists, philosophers and others are talking about human needs in such a way that needs become a crucial part of our entire picture of man.<sup>5</sup> The notion of psychological needs is much more complex and wider-reaching than "psychological well-being" would suggest (as Marx's and Fromm's accounts show). Any complete account of needs must acknowledge the fact that needs are not static and that Marx was right in claiming that as social developments take place there is a corresponding increase in needs. Even if there are basic needs which all men share, there will be an increase in particular needs. McCloskey claims that there are rights to "education, family, property, privacy"<sup>7</sup>. But it could be argued that in our society privacy and education (if not family and property) are needs. We might say that privacy, for example, is necessary, for instance for the fulfilment of Fromm's basic needs of a sense of identity or orientation.

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<sup>5</sup> "... some of the current trends in psychology and anthropology point toward increasing recognition of a number of universal human needs, not only biological but also social needs." (Christian Bay, The Structure of Freedom, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958, p. 226).

<sup>7</sup> "Society creates new needs in people. Some of the new needs lead in a constructive direction and stimulate further development. Of such a nature are the ideas of justice, equality and co-operation. Some of the new needs lead to a destructive direction and are not good for man." (Clara Thompson, Psychoanalysis,) quoted by Herbert Marcuse in Eros and Civilization, p. 173.

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Complete lack of privacy might prevent the individual from fulfilling basic needs and in this sense privacy is a need and not a right. In other societies, privacy may not be the means through which any basic needs are fulfilled.

The above suggestions concerning the relationship between needs and rights are tentative. To fully explore the question would be a separate endeavour. I merely want to suggest that attempts to diminish the importance of needs by arguing that rights are more important, depend on making the concept of needs narrower and less complex than it is in fact.

In arguing that needs should be fulfilled, it must be stressed that it is genuine human needs which should be fulfilled, not false needs.

#### Genuine Needs and False Needs

I have already pointed to some of the problems involved in Marx's and Fromm's accounts of false needs. It seems to me that there are two main questions which remain to be answered: Firstly, what about the good which a predominantly bad system can create? And secondly, can we distinguish false from genuine needs?

It has been claimed that capitalism fails to take account of man's real needs and causes him to seek to fulfil false needs. But in a situation where particular needs are constantly being created, not all of these new needs will be bad. For instance, in our society it can be shown that the accelerating pace of city life and general pressure on individuals is such that people suffer a great deal of tension and

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anxiety is produced. There is a need to disperse this tension and to stop it becoming acute. Different people may seek different solutions. A's 'solution' is the 'need' to drink himself into a state of drunkenness every night after work before he goes home. An alternative answer to the problem of tension in everyday life is stressed by an increasing number of doctors and psychologists who argue that people under stress need to learn how to relax. B, unlike A, does not resort to drunkenness, but attends yoga classes. C, on the other hand, is able to feel happy and relaxed by playing sport three nights a week.

The point of these three examples is that in each case, A's, B's and C's needs arise from a situation which is basically not good. The kinds of life-style and work which produce anxiety and tension obviously do not attach importance to creative work and co-operation between people. However, the particular needs of A, B, and C, are very different. B's and C's needs lead in a constructive direction, A's does not.

On a more general level there are some legitimate needs to which a predominantly bad situation can give rise. Increases in population and crowding may make it reasonable to talk of the need for privacy. Even though the situation from which this need has emerged is undesirable, the need is not in itself bad since it leads in the direction of human goods which might have been attainable in the past without privacy.

But it is from an overall viewpoint that capitalism has been assessed by Marx and Fromm and found wanting. Although some

legitimate needs are satisfied and, indeed, some overall goods produced, by capitalism, the kind of system where power and resources are concentrated in the hands of a few, depends for its existence on the creation of false needs. The system survives because not everyone recognises that their real needs are unfulfilled.

How do we begin to distinguish real from false needs? Is Marcuse right in suggesting that we can no longer distinguish which needs are false?<sup>8</sup> Perhaps there are cases where we can no longer distinguish them. But in attempting to distinguish false needs some guidelines can be drawn up. Firstly, false needs do not relate to human goods. Not only this, but the fulfilment of false needs works against the fulfilment of genuine needs. The person who 'needs' tranquilisers to get through each day relatively calmly, is prevented from facing his real problems and needs and hence from seeking to find a solution to them. Secondly, false needs are insatiable. By their very nature, they work against the individual and his real needs. The pursuit of fulfilment of false needs is futile because they are not related to human goals and human satisfaction.

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<sup>8</sup> "Indeed in the most highly developed areas of contemporary society, the transplantation of social into individual needs is so effective that the difference between them seems to be purely theoretical. Can one really distinguish between the mass media as instruments of information and entertainment and as agents of manipulation and indoctrination? Between the automobile as nuisance and as convenience? ..."  
(Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man, p. 24)