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NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROPHETIC CHARACTER
OF THE DIALECTICAL RHETORIC OF ERICH FROMM**

A DISSERTATION

**SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS**

for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Field of Speech

By

BRIAN R. BETZ

Evanston, Illinois

June 1974



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To Beth—

**For the reality of the Art of Loving
you bring into my life everyday.
Thank you for you!**

To Brian Rory—

**For the vision of the good, the true,
and the beautiful.
May you grow to realize the prophecy
of Erich Fromm!**



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century has seen more technological advances than the combined efforts of all previous centuries. This rapid acceleration of man's seeming control over his environment has been quantitatively an astonishing achievement. However, this progress has not been without problems. With this technological growth there has arisen a proportionately greater need to set social goals giving direction and meaning to these advances, so that man may be truly served by a system meant to improve his human condition rather than become enslaved by it. The problem then is the widening cultural gap between quantitative growth and the directional quality given that growth, as judged according to human values.

Progress is always a value-laden concept. It proposes the ultimate question: "Progress toward what?" The answer to this question demands the answering of two further questions: "What is the good life for man?" and "How is it to be attained?" Answers to these questions have come from a variety of sources—religious leaders, philosophers, politicians, scientists, and polemic novelists. This study has chosen for analysis the social criticism of Erich Fromm, who, as psychoanalyst, sociologist, philosopher, and secular theologian, has analyzed present social structures and has proposed a restructuring of society based on his interpretation of the true meaning of human life.



Since Fromm speaks as only one critic among many on the socio-political scene, he must vie for influence among popular and elite groups within the vast theatre of social ferment. To be effective in redirecting society he must marshal all his persuasive power. For this reason it is quite appropriate that his work be studied by students of rhetoric.

E-inter:
etc.

If Fromm must be a rhetor as well as a social critic, it is important for him to analyze the social, political, and economic scene to judge its receptiveness to his message. From among the divergent social groups and classes, he must choose the audience he wishes to address. Formulating a profile of the social scene and his intended audience, he must enunciate a viable body of relevant values, casting his social planning in terms expressing these values and thereby making his proposal acceptable to his audience. Equipped with a full scheme of strategies, he must finally create for himself a platform from which to voice his message. All of which is to say that the social philosopher must interact rhetorically with society.

If the social philosopher does interact rhetorically with society, then a study of this interaction is significantly appropriate to the rhetorical critic. Herbert Wichelns supports this reasoning, as he states:

Rhetorical criticism lies at the boundary of politics (in the broadest sense) and literature; its atmosphere is that of the public life, its tools are those of literature, its concern is with the ideas of the people as influenced by their leaders. The effective wielder of public discourse, like the military man, belongs to social and political history because he is one of its makers. Like the soldier, he has an art of his own which is the



source of his power; but the soldier's art is distinct from the life which his conquests affect. The rhetorician's art represents a natural and normal process within that life. It includes the work of the speaker, of the pamphleteer, of the writer of editorials, and of the sermon maker. It is to be thought of as the art of popularization.¹

Thus the rhetorical critic may through his analysis of social philosophy contribute to the understanding of contemporary social change. To isolate these rhetorical strategies, the rhetorical critic must borrow from other disciplines their specific intellectual perspectives. This study has used the insights of social psychology, sociology, philosophy, political science, and psychology. No longer can the scholar afford the luxury of treating any particular facet of the human experience as his exclusive province. The collage of the human condition is too complex to be left to an academic "exclusivism" which can well lead to a tunnel-vision.

If the rhetorical critic assumes this broader academic posture, he need not apologize for his eclecticism as if he were an undesirable intruder. If, as Colin Cherry contends, society or culture is "people in communication,"² then whatever pertains to the social or the cultural pertains to the rhetorical critic. His goal, like any other scholar's, is to render existence more intelligible, that is to say, more human, for in knowing, man discovers more of himself and more of the cosmos. Whenever man communicates—with himself, with other men, or with the world of nature—he becomes more alive, more real, more a man.

Purpose and Procedures

This study has set as its purpose the analysis of the prophetic character of Erich Fromm's dialectical rhetoric of social criticism,





placing a particular emphasis on the strategic value of the concept of alienation. As a rhetorical analysis, this effort attempts to describe what Fromm has said, how he has said it, and finally the rationale underlying the what and how. This procedure assumes that rhetoric is an art form whose purpose is "informative and suasory discourse both spoken and written."³ Further, it assumes that in every art form there is the artist's rationale which directs and channels the energies of the artist in determining the specific art form. In this study of Fromm, the particular form is epitomized by the key term prophetic, the prototype of which is found in the writings of the Hebrew prophets.

The specific purpose here aims at discovering Fromm's rationale in developing his strategy of social criticism. In order to accomplish this analysis, it has been necessary to devote a sizeable portion of the study to theory building as the basis for the critical matrix for the analytic sections. Such theory building has been the focus in chapter two, where the origins of the prophetic office have been discussed under the terms: re-birth, vision, and mission. The sources of this inquiry have been the Hebrew prophets themselves, the theory of Kenneth Burke and Leland M. Griffin, and the observations made by Fromm himself. Chapter six investigates Fromm's own concept of the prophetic office as a form of social criticism. The theory building of chapter seven attempts to amalgamate the rhetorical implications implicit in the prophetic function and the dialectical method.

Fortunately for his critics, Fromm has a penchant for reflective, analytic commentary upon his own work. His introspection is, no doubt, a result of his psychoanalytic practice. In reading Fromm, one cannot



help but perceive a thinly veiled autobiographical character in much of his theorizing, for one senses that his intense involvement with his material could come only from a deeply personal experience. The compulsion of the prophet is in constant evidence in Fromm's works. Thus Fromm writes both as rhetor and rhetorician.

The three stages in the prophetic development serve as the structure of the analysis of Fromm's prophetic origins. Chapter two examines his re-birth or awakening. Chapters two, three and four analyze his vision, his encounters with his god-sources—Spinoza, Goethe, Freud, and Marx. Chapter six treats the final stage of his mission.

Chapters eight and nine focus on the analysis of the strategy of alienation as a polemic term. Chapter eight presents an analysis of the immediate value orientation Fromm employs in setting the stage for his polemic. Chapter nine analyzes the polemic nature of the term itself, its historical traditions, its specifically rhetorical features, and lastly, Fromm's dialectical counterpart, de-alienation, or the "sane society."

Assuming that the rhetorical art is the product of the rhetor's artistic plan, the rhetorical critic can examine the rhetorical idiom—terms, orientations, strategies—to discover the particular configuration of the rationale which gave form to the idiom. This procedure concerns itself essentially with analyzing and describing forms. Here the critic treats the analysis of the formation process of the message and interests himself in process for process' sake.

Statement of Problems

This study of Fromm's prophetic rhetoric has generated three



problem areas, one procedural and two substantive. Recognizing that criticism is essentially methodological, the present work has developed a critical matrix by which to carry out the analysis. The procedural problem has called for an adaptation and synthesis of critical methodologies suggested by other critics. The quality of the analysis will then be determined by the quality of the synthesis.

Leland M. Griffin's admonition to the critic of today's leftist rhetoric is well taken here: "The critic of contemporary left rhetoric, in his search for compatible instruments of analysis and speculation, may well look to Burke for models and modes of 'humanistic contemplation.'"⁴ The compatibility of Burke's method of analysis and Fromm's method of expression becomes even more evident when it is noted that both men share a basic Marxist and Freudian orientation which stresses a synergistic, dialectical view of reality.

The two substantive problems arise from the procedural problem of methodology. The first deals with the definition of the rhetorical dimensions of prophecy and the second with the execution of the analysis proper. Although the nature of prophecy has been the concern of scripture scholars and theologians for centuries, the precisely rhetorical nature of prophecy has received very little scholarly attention. The responsibility of this study has been, therefore, to draw from sociological, political, and theological inquiries the rhetorical implications of social prophecy.

The second substantive problem, the application of the derived methodology to analyze Fromm's rhetorical posture, goes to the very heart of this study. Fromm's works in many cases are extremely redundant.



In some instances he has simply taken lengthy passages from earlier works and incorporated them verbatim into newer works. Also, since his first book in English, Escape from Freedom (1941), his terminology has undergone an evolution, as has the specific focus of his criticism. Many critics judge that his works of the past ten years lack the directness of insight and the quality of substance found in his earlier writings.

The final analytic phase of this study faces the problem of clarity and completeness necessary in elucidating Fromm's rhetorical rationale. This study shares many of the problems faced by Griffin in his study of movement rhetoric which he describes as a "difficult, and perhaps, quixotic, undertaking."⁵ The present author can only heartily concur.

Significance of the Study

If there is a case to be made for the significance of this study, it must rest on the importance of three features of the study, viz., social criticism as a literary genre, Fromm as a social critic, and the concept of alienation as a social problem.

The act of social criticism is essentially the expression of social conscience in meeting problems which affect the human condition of society. This act of conscience involves three principal functions: (1) establishing a critical orientation which defines the nature of "reality" and establishing the hierarchy of a value system, (2) the analysis of the social structure and its effects on the character of the individuals of the given society, (3) the judgment of the causes and effects of social problems and the prescription for social change needed to ameliorate the problem conditions.



Certain social conditions must obtain before social criticism is either possible or practical. The particular society must have sufficient economic, political, and social stability so that its basic self-maintenance needs are satisfied, and so that there is a solidification of social goals to be challenged. The society must have reached the level of literacy and education which makes the transmission of ideas possible. Also there must be a sufficient network of communication for the dissemination of the critic's message. Finally, a professional intellectual class must exist among whom there are dissatisfied individuals or groups.

The focus of the social critic's concern has traditionally centered on economics, political structure, social-cultural patterns, but in the final analysis the ultimate concern has been with the power structure within the society, how is power used, by whom, and over whom?

Social criticism dates back to the very beginning of history. Every political and social regime has had its opponents, and some of the earliest of these were the Hebrew prophets, who strongly influenced Fromm. Probably one of the most celebrated examples of a flourishing social criticism has been the Athenian democracy. Recently, however, historians have questioned how encompassing and how effective this criticism was in Greek society. Because the unsettled socio-economic scene of medieval Europe made the need for physical survival primary, no widespread criticism developed much before the latter part of the eighteenth century. There then appeared social protest movements and social criticism to a degree never seen before. As the industrial



revolution increased the complexity of life and the severity of social problems, cries of protest increased proportionately.

Social criticism has assumed many literary forms, for example, the speeches of the prophets and Socrates, the pamphlets of Tom Paine, the essays of Emerson, the novels of Upton Sinclair and Orwell, the plays of Brecht, the poetry of Shelley, Heine, or Whitman, the sociology of C. Wright Mills, David Riesman, or Jerry Rubin. Regardless of the literary form, the impact of the social critic has been real, and it has been telling.

The second measure of the significance of this study is the importance of Fromm as a social critic. While the measurement of Fromm's impact as a social critic is a highly elusive matter, some indication of Fromm's significance can be measured in terms of the number of his published works, the number of printings of individual books, and the number of books and articles which have been written about him.

A voluminous writer, Fromm has authored twenty books and published over fifty articles during the thirty-eight years he has lived in the United States. This has been in addition to writing done during his earlier years in Germany for which he received international recognition.

An index to the receptiveness of his reading audience may be achieved by noting several of his best selling books, which will form the substance of analysis for this study. Fromm's first volume written in the United States, Escape from Freedom (1941), judged by Fromm's biographer in Current Biography to be a "landmark in psychology,



intellectual history, and political philosophy,"⁶ had gone through some thirty-four printings by 1970. The Sane Society (1955) had reached seventeen printings by 1967. A third volume, The Art of Loving (1956), which has been adopted by many of the university community as a vade mecum for humanizing personal existence, was in its twenty-ninth printing by 1970.

Fromm, the man and his writings, has stirred much discussion and controversy among academicians as well as among popular writers. Seven doctoral dissertations in the United States and Latin America have explored the relevance of Fromm's writings. These scholarly works have investigated Fromm from the viewpoints of psychology, political science, sociology, and theology. A variety of over forty scholarly and popular articles have discussed Fromm's work, and six full length books have been written in praise or rebuttal to his views. Fromm's books have been acknowledged as significant by reviews in such respected publications as the American Journal of Psychoanalysis, the American Journal of Sociology, the American Sociological Review, the Atlantic Monthly, Commentary, Commonweal, the Critic, Ethics, the New Republic, the New Statesman, Psychiatry, Saturday Review, and Science and Sociology. By almost any quantitative measure, it can be safely said that Fromm as a writer has had an impact on American society.

Beyond this quantitative measure of importance, the quality of a man's writing suggests an index to his importance. By his topics one may know him. John Schaar, certainly no Frommian devotee, has said of Fromm: "No writer has tried harder to teach men the way to freedom without loneliness, reason without rationalism, self-love without



selfishness, authority without repression, religion without theology."⁷
To this might be added that always and everywhere Fromm seeks the humanity of man, seeks a social order where man's potentialities may find full realization.

A third measure of the significance of this study can be found in the social relevance of the concept of alienation. Lewis Coser and Irving Howe judge that "no Marxist concept has been more fruitful than that of 'alienation.'"⁸ Richard Schacht in his book, Alienation (1970), has developed the most extensive and thorough study to date of the concept. He traces its linguistic and intellectual background in Hegel and his predecessors through to Marx and the contemporary Marxists, and further examines its polemic and analytic function in sociology, existential philosophy and theology. The fact that so many writers of varying backgrounds have used the concept points to the importance of the term as a key to social problems.

In 1970 Prentice-Hall, Inc. published Ronald V. Urick's Alienation: Individual or Social Problem? in the series, "Inquiry into Crucial American Problems." Ranking alienation with drug abuse, cities in crisis, poverty, crime, voices of dissent, and other issues as leading problems confronting contemporary America, the editors describe the series: "Each book presents an in-depth study of a particular problem, selected because of its pressing intrusion into the minds and consciences of most Americans today."⁹

Boundaries of the Study

Because of the wide range of possibilities available to the



rhetorical critic, certain boundaries must be set in the interest of greater efficiency and precision, as well as greater clarity. To achieve a workable focus on Fromm's rhetoric, this study has limited its consideration to Fromm's specifically prophetic character. The selection of alienation as the key to his prophetic appeal has further limited the focus. A final boundary has been established through the analytic method which has attempted only to describe the rationale of Fromm's rhetorical strategy and has not endeavored to judge Fromm's work in terms of its effectiveness, ethical standards, or comparison with other social critics.

Conclusion

This study, along with similar critical studies, must admit its abiding limitation, i.e., that here there can be no finished statement. Every closing line is but an introduction to a sequel. Such a limitation is a frustration, but at the same time a source of satisfaction, for it must be recognized as an inevitable quality of man's never-ending intellectual quest. Were a critic to accept his own word as final, he would subject himself to a self-defeating complacency.

Because this study has chosen to review Fromm's writings from certain set perspectives, the resulting insights can hope to be only partial. The success of such a study can be measured not so much by the completeness of the final product, but rather by the quality of the stimulus to further investigations which it offers to writer and reader alike.



If one grants that criticism is an art, then he must also accept the inevitability of a free flow of design in the method. The critic, like the artist, does not "find" meaning, rather, he makes it. This is not to insinuate a critical agnosticism behind which the critic can shield himself in the face of his objectors, but rather simply to recognize the epistemological reality that all knowing is distorting. And since only a part of "reality" can ever be abstracted, in knowing there is always unknowing, always the gaps, the voids. Thus is the critic's dilemma for which there can be no adequate apology save in acknowledging the fact.

The concluding lines of Edwin Black's Rhetorical Criticism can serve to underline what has just been said:

An orientation, together with taste and intelligence, is all that the critic needs. If his criticism is fruitful, he may end with a system, but he should not, in our present state of knowledge begin with one. We simply do not know enough yet about rhetorical discourse to place our faith in systems, and it is only through imaginative criticism that we are likely to learn more.¹⁰



Footnotes

Chapter I

¹"The Literary Criticism of Oratory," Studies in Rhetoric and Public Speaking in Honor of James A. Winans, ed. [Alexander Drummond] (New York, 1962), p. 218.

²On Human Communication (Cambridge, 1966), p. 4.

³"Rhetoric: Its Function and Scope," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXIX (December, 1953), p. 407.

⁴"Rhetorical Structure of 'New Left' Movement: Part I," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, L (April, 1964), p. 115.

⁵Ibid., n. 12, p. 115.

⁶Anonymous, "Erich Fromm," Current Biography (1967), p. 130.

⁷Escape from Authority (New York, 1964), p. 4.

⁸"Images of Socialism," Voices of Dissent (New York, 1958), p. 31.

⁹"Preface," Alienation: Individual or Social Problem? (New York, 1970), no page number.

¹⁰New York, 1965, p. 177.



CHAPTER II

THE MAKING OF THE PROPHET

History witnesses that there have always been certain individuals who have felt the need to proclaim salvation to the world. This salvation has assumed many forms. In some cases it has been religious, in others political, socio-economic, or psychological. In each case the promise has been for a new way of life. These proclaimers of salvation have all shared a common desire to agitate for social change by a criticism of the status quo, by an emphasis of their particular value system, and by a call for hope through renewal. They have come to society as the conscience of the people, approving and rebuking, directing and threatening, and in the final analysis, demanding a new and better world. These "inspired" men and women are the prophets of their age—both religious and secular.

*Das
People
Hische.*

The prophetic office typified among the ancients in the lives of men such as Isaiah, Socrates, and Buddha still exists in the modern world. If anything, the modern day has seen more prophets than the days of the ancients. The present study has chosen one such modern prophet, Erich Fromm, as the subject of rhetorical analysis, working from the assumption that a better understanding of the suasive art of the modern prophet will afford a better understanding of the social dynamics of the period.

The present chapter and those following examine those events



in Fromm's life which have contributed to his formation as a prophet. The rationale for this procedure rests on the assumption that the circumstances of the individual's early life determine to a great extent the individual's later life. Thus if the rhetorical analyst can gather details about these formative early events in a prophet's life, he possesses a better perspective from which to draw his insights on the rhetorical function of the prophet.

Three Stages of Evolution

A study of the Old Testament reveals a three-stage evolution in the genesis of the prophet. The prophet-to-be first experiences a ritual re-birth, second, a vision awakening him to the message he is to preach, and, third, the sense of being sent out to his mission. While each stage can be discovered logically, it should not be assumed that each takes place in a distinguishable time sequence. Quite the contrary, for in the lives of some prophets the three stages may be accomplished in a single time and place. As far as the theory is concerned, it is not important to establish neatly defined moments, but what is important is that the genesis of the prophet be understood as an all-consuming transformation of an individual who becomes possessed with an urge to reform society.

The first stage: ritual re-birth

The first of the three stages, the ritual re-birth, has been suggested by Kenneth Burke's remark that the individual "is not equipped to be a 'prophet' until he has been reborn"¹ This re-birth frequently takes place during a traumatic experience which serves a



17
Berkeley
traumatic
consciousness

two-fold purpose: first, to awaken in the person a new consciousness of the social evils of the day, and secondly, to wrench him from his present state and thrust him into the social conflict of his age. Such traumatic re-birth can be exemplified in Isaiah's thunderous call from the Temple sanctuary or Paul of Tarsus's being knocked from his horse.

Burke further suggests that re-birth may offer to the prophet the occasion to regress to an embryonic seclusion where he might carry out a symbolic gestation into the prophetic role. Such was the case in Paul of Tarsus's three year retreat into the desert from which he emerged as the Apostle of Christianity. Whatever the specific form the re-birth trauma may take, the results are the same--the prophet finds himself so enmeshed, so transformed that he emerges from his experience a new being, inextricably committed to the purposes of his new vocation.

The second stage: the moment of vision

If the first stage brings about the emergence of a new being, the second stage, the moment of vision, gathers up this new being and gives the maturing dimension of insight into the transformational process. In this maturation, the prophet contacts and communicates with his god-source who transfuses him with the truths which constitute his message--what his goals will be, what means he must employ to reach those goals, and what his value orientation must be.

2. K. 3. 3

The moment of vision must not be understood solely as an informative experience, for the vision also solidifies and strengthens the prophet's sense of destiny--he has been to the mountain, as had Moses; he has heard the charges of Yahweh against the people for their sins, as had Amos;² confronted with the demands of prophesying, he has struggled



in vain to resist, as did Jeremiah;³ and he has been cleansed and signed with the live coal of realization, as was Isaiah.⁴ Once the prophet has experienced the fulness of his vision, he can only echo the words of the prophet Amos, "Who can refuse to prophesy?"⁵

3.

Sending;

The third stage: the mission

In the third stage what had been implanted at the moment of vision as a sense of "mission," comes to full realization in the acting out of the prophetic office. The new man through re-birth, engulfed by the compulsive urge and armed with the message of his vision, sets forth as "one sent" to bring salvation to his people. These are the three stages that will provide the perspectives from which this study will proceed in analyzing Fromm's genesis as a social critic, here described in terms of the prophetic idiom.

Amos
ad
Fromm

Fromm's Ritual of Re-birth

The transformation accomplished by Fromm's ritual re-birth can be traced to three elements of his youth. Of these, two were tense traumatic events and the third a psychological state which he endured throughout his entire childhood.

Fromm's own recollections of his childhood picture him as burdened with oppressive neurotic feelings, which may have contributed more than any one element to his re-birth as a prophet. These neurotic feelings sharpened his awareness of his need to be reborn. He has described himself as an emotionally isolated, "lonely, pampered boy,"⁶ an only child "with an anxious and moody father and a depression-prone mother."⁷ His feelings of strangeness and clannishness were heightened

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a) ad



by the separateness fostered by his orthodox Jewish training. As a Jewish boy, he had felt the scorn of anti-Semitism from his Christian schoolmates. His sensitivity prompted him to search for the "strange and mysterious reasons for human action."⁸ What might well have been a psychological handicap, proved in the long run to be an asset, for he grew acutely sensitive to his own mental and social alienation. Reacting to this alienation, he searched for a vision which would end division, give meaning to life, and excite an expectancy for love, brotherhood, and peace. Fromm testifies to the fact that his early emotional pain did much to generate the focus of his life's work: "I believe that one cannot speak meaningfully of alienation unless one has experienced it in oneself and in others."⁹

In addition to this pervading sense of personal estrangement, two incidents during his early years contributed to his re-birth as a prophet.¹⁰ The first incident occurred when he was twelve years old. This event, although seemingly insignificant when viewed in itself, had so deeply affected him that some fifty years after it had taken place, Fromm could still vividly recall his feelings and could consider the event meaningful enough to record it among his recollections of his formative years. The incident concerned the suicide of a beautiful, young woman artist, a friend of the family. Fromm mentions that he nurtured a strong infatuation for the woman, who was twenty-five and he was only twelve. When she took her own life immediately after her father's death, Fromm was crushed by disbelief and loss. What further disturbed him was the woman's stipulation in her will that she be buried in a plot next to her father's grave. For a boy as sensitive as Fromm,

b) Selbst



this suicide brought fear, confusion, and an abiding sense of wonder at such a wasteful, senseless act by an attractive and talented girl whose life seemed so full of promise. For his brooding questions the young Fromm had no answers; yet the questions remained restlessly churning in his mind and were destined to send him to Freud for an explanation of the Oedipus complex. This event, in addition to contributing to his study of Freud, also led him to question the psychological dimensions of human love.

The third occurrence effecting Fromm's re-birth as a prophet, was a series of events centering around the First World War. Fromm attests to the War's significance: "Perhaps all these personal experiences would not have affected me so deeply and lastingly had it not been for the event that determined more than anything else my development: the First World War."¹¹

In the summer of 1914 the war had broken out, and Fromm was fourteen years old. What began for him with youthful exuberance over the German national military effort, mobilization, and the proclamations of victories, soon waned, as he began to understand the contradictions implicit in war. One such contradiction was stirred by his Latin teacher who, while alleging a concern for peace, nevertheless maintained as his maxim, "Si vis pacem, para bellum." ("If one seeks peace, he must be prepared for war.") It was no surprise then that when the news of the declaration of war was announced, this self-styled lover of peace reacted so jubilantly. Such inconsistency in equating national security and the means of deterring war with armament did violence to Fromm's logic.

For him the words of the prophet Micah were the only answer:



"They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall they learn war any more."¹²

Fromm also describes the national hysteria of anti-British hatred which flooded Germany during the war years. For the students who had learned earlier in their English classes the strength and honor of the English Empire, the British had suddenly been transformed into cheap mercenaries, blood-thirsty men dedicated to the destruction of the innocent and all-too-trusting German heroes. The German propaganda repulsed Fromm, for in it he saw national deceit, a fantasy foisted upon the people which could accomplish only the denigration of German integrity. The rise of Nazism and the effectiveness of the national propaganda machine recalled for him the earlier national hysteria. In Escape from Freedom (1941) he formulated an answer to his childhood question, as he analyzed the psychology of Nazism.

Fromm recalled further how he was jolted out of his boyish enthusiasm for German nationalism. The incident took place during his English language class where the students had refused to learn the British national anthem. In the face of this resistance, the instructor stood calm and met their challenge: "Don't kid yourselves; so far England has never lost a war!" Fromm reflects on his reaction to the statement:

Here was the voice of sanity and realism in the midst of insane hatred--it was the voice of a respected and admired teacher! This one sentence and the calm, rational way in which it was said, was an enlightenment. It broke through the crazy pattern of hate and national self-glorification and made me wonder and think, "How is it possible?"¹³

Fromm's appraisal of this dramatic scene underlines three key concepts



of his work: realism and rationality put into practice to produce sanity.

Fromm's opposition to this war and to all wars grew more and more solidified as the casualty reports began to list uncles, cousins, and older schoolmates. War's realism was beginning to strike closer to home. At the same time what had been propagandized as a "War for Freedom" forced on Germany was being challenged. Pamphleteers as well as members of the Reichstag voiced their opposition to the war. Fromm's anti-war sentiments were further reinforced by stories of young men slaughtered in the trenches. Disillusionment spread as the earlier promises of swift victory, the protestations of German innocence, the accusations against a fiendish enemy, the offers of peace—all proved to be lies. So it was that the massive effort of the national propaganda machine taught Fromm to distrust national purpose as a rationale for the inhumanity of war.

War's brutalizing effects upon his homeland only deepened Fromm's love of humanity, justice, and truth, taught him through the rabbinical traditions. He reflects on the transformation which took place within him: "The longer the war lasted, the more I changed from a child to a man."¹⁴ By the time the war had finally ended, Fromm found himself a "deeply troubled young man who was obsessed by the question of how war was possible, by the wish to understand the irrationality of human mass behavior, by a passionate desire for peace and international understanding. More, I had become deeply suspicious of all official ideologies and declarations, and filled with the conviction 'of all one must doubt.'¹⁵



What has been considered here as the first stage in Fromm's development as a prophet ended with his experiences of the First World War. His re-birth had shattered the protective shell of childhood and had delivered him a new man. The fantasy of nationalism had disappeared, leaving him suspicious of pseudo-patriotic dogma. His neurotic youth had equipped him with a sensitivity to the world about him superior to that of the normal man. The same feelings of isolation enriched him with a passionate obsession to find answers to questions concerning society's role in determining man's behavior. Finally, his compulsive nature endowed him with an insatiable appetite for work to answer the questions which so obsessed him.

Just as natural birth is but the beginning of life and growth, symbolic re-birth represents only the beginning of the further growth of the prophet. Re-birth transforms the prophet to the extent that he becomes a new being, equipped with a readiness to be filled with the prophetic vision. Re-birth means an intensification of the prophet's sensitivity to the problems of evil as well as to his potentialities for effecting good in society. The re-born prophet thirsts for answers to questions arising from his birth trauma. This condition of deep need leads the prophet to the second stage of growth, the moment of vision.

Fromm's Moment of Vision

ad 2:

The potentiality of symbolic re-birth is actualized in the moment of vision. An open receptiveness to new frames of reference, motives, and goals readies the prophet for his ultimate stage of growth, which is his mission to preach salvation.

Although Fromm's vision afforded him information, it should not



be construed as the mere accumulation of facts, but rather the formation of a new Weltanschauung proper to the role of prophet. The pervading tone of Fromm's new Weltanschauung was characterized by the spirit of the Hebrew prophets, which he has described as "a passionate, moral conviction and the uncompromising search for truth and the courage to express it."¹⁶ This tradition of the Hebrew prophets has, according to Fromm, been handed down through the writings of Spinoza, Goethe, Freud, and Marx. And of these four, Marx stands out as the most insightful, possessing a "poetic quality which is rarely to be found in philosophical or political writings."¹⁷ Freud impressed Fromm as an admired and enormously creative thinker, yet never as a man or writer to touch him as had the prophets or Marx.

This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the impact on Fromm of the Hebrew prophets, Spinoza, and Goethe. Later chapters will treat Freud's and Marx's influence.

The Hebrew prophets

Fromm was reared in an Orthodox Jewish middle-class family with a long line of rabbis on his father's side. The world of rabbinical literature awakened his awareness to the possibilities of life lived in the fulness of love and justice. So different from the greed for power and wealth prevalent in contemporary society was the religious atmosphere in which he grew up, that one biographer has noted:

In many respects Fromm grew up in a world closer to the late middle ages than to the twentieth century--but he was also part of the latter--and the experience of the opposition between the two was one of the creative forces in his life. (Italics added.)¹⁸



Within this religious training the Old Testament writings formed the vital core. In reference to his early contact with the Scriptures, he recalls:

. . . [they] touched me and exhilarated me more than anything else I was exposed to. Not all of them to the same degree; I was bored by or even disliked the history of conquest of Canaan by the Hebrews; I had no use for the stories of Mordecai or Esther; nor did I--at that time--appreciate the Song of Songs. But the story of Adam and Eve's disobedience, of Abraham's pleading with God or the salvation of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Jonah's mission to Nineveh, and many other parts of the Bible impressed me deeply.¹⁹

The early chapters of Genesis with their story of Eden planted the seed for his growing concern over the question of good and evil in human existence and of the meaning of salvation. The prophets, however, offered Fromm the main focus of his biblical formation, for in them he discovered the message of hope for which he had been searching:

But more than anything else, I was moved by the prophetic writings, by Isaiah, Amos, Hosea; not so much by their warnings and their announcement of disaster, but by their promise of the "end of days," when nations "shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more;" when all nations will be friends, and when the "earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." The vision of universal peace and harmony between all nations touched me deeply when I was twelve and thirteen years old. (Italics added.)²⁰

Fromm learned to interpret the message of the prophets through his study of the Talmud, the book of traditional laws and rabbinic commentary. His Talmudic teachers, whom he describes as all "representative of the humanistic wing of Jewish tradition,"²¹ made a lasting



impression on his social and moral thinking. Each man brought a distinct coloration to Fromm's intellectual experience. While in Frankfurt he studied with Martin Buber, although he acknowledges no significant influence on him by Buber.²² During the same period he was tutored by his mother's uncle, Ludwig Krause, a quiet traditionalist scholar, "little touched by modern thought,"²³ who displayed a love of opera as well as of the Law. From Rabbi Krause Fromm learned a tireless dedication to study and scholarly sincerity, the example of a man without ambition for fame or position.

Another teacher in Frankfurt, Nehemia Nobel, taught Fromm the traditions of mysticism, both of Jewry and Western humanism. This contact may in part explain Fromm's deep attraction for Meister Eckhart,²⁴ author of The Cloud of Unknowing. After his move to Heidelberg for his university training, Fromm came under the influence of Rabbi Salman B. Rabinkov, whom he describes as ". . . rooted in the Hasidic tradition . . . a Socialist and a modern scholar."²⁵ Rabinkov's social concern gave Fromm an insight to the social relevance of Jewish tradition. From each of his Talmudic teachers Fromm received an awareness of the unique potentiality of human nature, which has carried throughout all his writings as the pivotal point of his rhetoric.

A later chapter will discuss Fromm's own description of the message of the prophets. The present coverage has merely recounted Fromm's contact with prophetic literature.

Baruch Spinoza

As has been mentioned above, Fromm views the writings of the seventeenth century Dutch philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, as an heir to



the legacy of the Hebrew prophets. Spinoza contributed to Fromm's vision in two ways--first, by the example of his life style with which Fromm could strongly identify, and second, by his thought which offered insights which have contributed to the essential prophetic strategies of Fromm's rhetoric.

Fromm & Spinoza

The first consideration is the similarities of life styles common to both men. Each had been reared in a strict orthodox Jewish home, receiving a thorough grounding in Jewish tradition. From this deep religious involvement both men estranged themselves during their early adult life. Each suffered from misunderstanding and jealousy, on the part of former colleagues. Each collaborated professionally with men who had formerly been Catholic priests. Beyond these seemingly casual similarities Fromm's primary identification with Spinoza arose from Spinoza's role of liberator, reminiscent of Moses, the first and greatest of the Hebrew prophets. Fromm acknowledges that from Spinoza he discovered that the "aim of life is liberation from bondage."²⁶ For Spinoza viewed man as a prisoner of the forces of society outside his conscious self, as well as of passions and desires within his unconscious. Fromm notes that these powers work furtively "behind our backs."²⁷ Dominated by such controls, men become the slaves of illusions and thus develop into "somnabulistic, unfree, determined, dependent, passive persons."²⁸ Fromm credits Spinoza with the distinction of being the ". . . first thinker who had a clear concept of the unconscious" For Spinoza this very existence of unconscious motivation constitutes human bondage.²⁹



Spinoza, the liberator, was also Spinoza, the rationalist, for only the power of reason, as he saw it, could free man from the shackles of both religious unrealities and social stereotypes. In their religious rationalism both Spinoza and Fromm turned to the writings of Moses Maimonades, the twelfth century Spanish rabbi, philosopher, and theologian, who called for an end to religious myths and for a God who could be "understood." Maimonades's courage in propounding such revolutionary heresy served as an example for both men to live by, as well as an intellectual perspective by which to guide their thinking. It is not surprising that Fromm has called Maimonades the "greatest Hebrew philosopher."³⁰

Maimonades

Fromm has well summarized Spinoza's life style as liberator and rationalist, describing him as a man dedicated to achieving for society as well as for the individual " . . . an ever-increasing awareness of the reality inside and outside man."³¹

Life style alone was not all that attracted Fromm to Spinoza, for underlying his life style were the intellectual perspectives which guided him as liberator and rationalist. Here it was that Fromm enjoyed the greatest identification with Spinoza--his dialectical orientation, his concern for the affective elements of persuasion, his stress of ethics, and his search for stability of intellectual inquiry through the formulation of laws.

Dialectical

As liberator, Spinoza found it necessary to choose a perspective by which to analyze human behavior in order to direct it. He selected a dialectical perspective by contrasting activity and passivity in human motivational patterns. Such a polar orientation he considered to be



essential for the understanding of man. With this particular orientation Spinoza had, Fromm notes, considerable influence on Marx, as well as Hegel and Goethe.³² Applying this contrariety to the understanding of emotions, Spinoza distinguished between active and passive emotions which lead to opposing character traits. Examples of active emotions would be fortitude and generosity, which prompt positive, self-initiating traits allowing the individual full self-direction and self-expression and also permitting free and insightful thought processes. The passive emotions render man subservient, a slave to his passions, distorting his thinking by appealing to illusions and irrationality.

As a persuader, Spinoza offers his audience a clearly defined dichotomy of choice between all that is good (activity oriented) and that which is bad (passivity oriented).

While he used dichotomies for rhetorical purposes, Spinoza also recognized the synergistic character of human existence and discovered what many psychologists were slow to appreciate, namely, that ". . . intellectual knowledge is conducive to change only inasmuch as it is affective knowledge."³³ Had Freud, for instance, been aware of this principle he would not have had to revise his therapeutic technique of "interpretation," which, as he first employed it, neglected the necessary affective communication with the patient. This realization of the inter-working of intellectual and affective knowledge also destroys the dichotomy which is often presented between rational and emotional arguments and which frequently obscures rhetorical analysis made along the lines of such exclusive categories.



Spinoza's deep concern for moral responsibility in human behavior p. 112-113
follows the prophetic tradition of social criticism. His quest for freedom was his proffering of "salvation," and this was the goal of his whole ethical system. Salvation for Spinoza's ethical man was to be more than a freedom from, rather a freedom for. Man is bound, in Spinoza's view, to seek out true reality—the good, the true, and the beautiful. This reality is to be found within man himself who possesses also in himself the means of discovery. Structuring this very positive concept of man, Spinoza offered as the ideal for man's transformation the "awakened, aware, active, independent"³⁴ person. Along these lines Fromm has modeled his ideals of human health and perfection for the sane man in the sane society.

In describing Spinoza's orientation Fromm makes several distinctions which clarify his position. First, Spinoza avoids an absolute determinism by acknowledging that some factors of man's existence are beyond his control, but man still possesses the innate capacity to liberate himself from bondage to freedom. "The conquest of freedom is possible by reason, by adequate ideas, by awareness, but it is possible only if man makes the effort with more labor than most men are willing to make." (Italics added.)³⁵ In this last statement Fromm side-steps the accusation of philosophical Pelagianism. He suggests that his ideal of freedom may actually be accomplished by only a small minority of men.

Fromm discovered in Spinoza a synthesis of human behavior which rejected the relativism prevalent today and advocated especially by those in the cultural school of psychoanalysis, e.g., Kardiner, Horney, and Sullivan. Fromm criticizes this relativism: "Happiness is looked



upon as a matter of taste and preference, irrespective of the quality of the particular desire."³⁶ This he contrasts with the humanistic tradition of which Spinoza was a part and which emphasizes that " . . . happiness, while not at all identical with obedience to norms given by an external authority, nevertheless is also not 'relative' but subject to norms which follow from the nature of man."³⁷ Spinoza's acceptance of a universal concept of human nature and his search for synthesis through laws mark him as a philosopher of the Enlightenment, and following Spinoza's lead, Fromm has formulated the fundamental principle that " . . . human nature, though being the product of historical evolution, has certain inherent mechanisms and laws, to discover which is the task of psychology."³⁸

In summary, Spinoza afforded Fromm a vision of the prophetic office as seen in his role of liberator and revolutionary. The vision of prophetic promise took shape in the awareness of man's positive, creative powers of reason, the moral necessity to discover the whole of freedom within himself, and the possibility that such goals were knowable and convertible into laws of human nature. In such liberation through awareness man can find freedom, and in freedom his salvation.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Goethe has been called the greatest of the German poets, but beyond the artistry of his poetry he brought to eighteenth century Germany a renewed vitality during a period of intellectual and political depression. A man of restless exuberance, calm optimism, and widely divergent interests and abilities, he displayed an acute sensitivity to



reality about him. With Goethe Fromm could find much to identify—as a man and as a thinker.

Goethe, like Fromm, was born and grew up in Frankfurt-Am-Main. As a boy, Fromm lived in the shadow of the famed Goethehaus and grew to discover in the literary hero of his native city an intense kinship of spirit which would synthesize the goals of his life's work.

Goethe, as a human figure, was complex and in many ways contradictory. While searching for mystical religious experience and offering a strongly moralistic tone in his writings, he could nevertheless carry on a lifelong succession of love affairs, seemingly drawn to every beautiful woman he met. His revolutionary spirit showed itself in the mood of Sturm und Drang, daring to defy the literary conventions of traditional poetic form and to express immediate personal reaction of thought, emotion, and impression. What Fromm perceived in Goethe's liberated literary spirit, he would later translate into his own spirit of social criticism, demanding that each man reject the dwarfing forces of enculturation, stereotyping, and self-destruction and accept spontaneity permitting him to relate personally to himself and the world about him.

In Goethe's play, Götz von Berlichingen, Fromm saw dramatically presented a plea for justice and freedom, and this same plea Fromm has chosen as a continuous theme throughout all his writings. Goethe's ceaseless optimism concerning man's capabilities to perfect himself reflected his acceptance of the principle of human growth through evolutionary processes. Fromm describes this optimism:

The philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (especially Goethe and Herder) believed that the humanity (Humanität) inherent in



man leads him to even higher stages of development; they believe that every individual carries within himself not only his individuality but also all of humanity with all its potentialities. They consider the task of life to be the development toward totality through individuality; and they believed that the voice of humanity was given to everybody and could be understood by every human being.³⁹

Fromm's own optimism and his vision of the free, productive individual are strongly reinforced in Faust, where, as he notes, "Goethe gave the most outstanding expression to this concept of the 'ever-striving man.'"⁴⁰ From Goethe Fromm learned also the interaction of the individual with the world about him:

Knowledge is not obtained in the position of the split between subject and object, but in the position of relatedness. As Goethe put it: "Man knows himself only inasmuch as he knows the world. He knows the world only within himself, and he is aware of himself only within the world. Each object, truly recognized, opens up a new organ within ourselves."⁴¹

This epistemological insight Fromm later found more fully developed in Marx's theory of the interrelated wholeness of reality.

Fromm shares with Goethe the universalism and internationalism of human brotherhood, a corollary of a dynamic humanism:

The most complete and profound expression of this humanism appears in the thought of Goethe Goethe wrote (in 1790): "At a time when everybody is busy erecting new fatherlands, the fatherland of man who thinks without prejudice and can rise above his time is nowhere and everywhere."⁴²

Just as there were similarities of note in comparison of Spinoza's life with that of Fromm, so have there been similarities between Goethe and Fromm. They both had found the expression of their need for religion without dogma and morality without legalism satisfied in the theories of Spinoza. A relentless curiosity drew both men to



a wide spectrum of social and political causes. Both men had felt the need for a retreat. This for Goethe was accomplished during a critical two-year period in Italy when he perceived a new vision of his mission as a writer. Fromm's winter residence in Mexico has allowed him this same sense of self-realization as a social critic. One interviewer comments:

. . . I believe that one striking feature of his personality is a high degree of dedication to work and an existence allowing time for creative contemplation. Our interviews were conducted in the office of his lovely home in Cuernavaca, and as I observed him there I was left with the impression that he had found in Cuernavaca a place where he can seek the kind of self-fulfillment which he feels is important.⁴³

Another parallel between the two men is the aspiring to dynamic leadership. Goethe's success in bringing a renaissance to German intellectual and political life created an excellent model for Fromm in his quest for influence in the United States and throughout the world. Finally, the practical wisdom and epigrammatic style of Goethe are also found in Fromm's writing style.

In summary, Fromm learned from Goethe that man's purpose is an "eternal search for the meaning of life."⁴⁴ According to Goethe the meaning of life must be built upon the awareness of four things: (1) the universal brotherhood of man, (2) the need for productive human existence, (3) the dynamic structure of reality, (4) the expression of spontaneity as the means to freedom.



Footnotes

Chapter II

- ¹ Kenneth Burke, Attitudes toward History (Boston, 1959), p. 210.
- ² Amos, 1:3 - 2:16.
- ³ Jer., 20:7-10.
- ⁴ Isa., 6:7.
- ⁵ Amos, 3:8.
- ⁶ Erich Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion (New York, 1962), p. 5.
- ⁷ Ibid., p. 3.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 4.
- ⁹ Erich Fromm, "The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory," Socialist Humanism, ed. Erich Fromm (New York, 1965), p. 244.
- ¹⁰ Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, pp. 4ff.
- ¹¹ Ibid., pp. 5-6.
- ¹² Micah, 4:3.
- ¹³ Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, pp. 6-7.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 8.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 9.
- ¹⁶ Personal letter from Fromm to the author, October 14, 1972. See appendix.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ In the Name of Life: Essays in Honor of Erich Fromm, ed. Bernard Landis and Edward S. Tauber (New York, 1971), p. x. This comment concerning the religious atmosphere of Fromm's home indicates a dialectical quality which may well have contributed to the dialectical idiom of Fromm's literary work.



19 Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 5.

20 Ibid.

21 Erich Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods* (New York, 1966), p. 12.

22 Personal letter from Fromm to the author, September 1, 1969.

23 Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods*, p. 13.

24 Johannes Eckhart (1260?-1327), known as Meister Eckhart, German Dominican theologian, has been called the first of the great speculative mystics. As a superior in the Dominican Order, he won recognition for his practical reforms and for his effective preaching. His mystical theology, which blended the Aristotelian thought of Thomas Aquinas with the mysticism of the pseudo-Dionysius, brought a new dimension to scholastic theology of the thirteenth century. For Meister Eckhart, the esse of God is so pervasive that nothing can be said to exist outside God's existence. This pantheistic flavor in his writings brought him under suspicion of heresy by Rome. Eckhart placed special emphasis on the divine existence permeating the human soul, whose ultimate goal is union with God through knowledge. Such divine continuity between God and creatures, especially man, had a special appeal for Fromm.

25 Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods*, p. 13.

26 Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 109.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., p. 101.

30 Ibid., p. 158.

31 Ibid., p. 101.

32 Ibid., p. 68.

33 Ibid., p. 93.

34 Ibid., p. 109.

35 Erich Fromm, *The Heart of Man* (New York, 1964), p. 145.

36 Erich Fromm, "Sex and Character: The Kinsey Report Viewed from the Standpoint of Psychoanalysis," *Sexual Behavior in American Society*, ed. Jerome Himmelfoch and Sylvia Fleis Fava (New York, 1955), p. 308.



³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom (New York, 1941), p. 15.

³⁹Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, pp. 29-29.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 68.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., p. 170.

⁴³Richard I. Evans, Dialogue with Erich Fromm (New York, 1966), p. xviii.

⁴⁴Erich Fromm, Man for Himself (New York, 1947), p. 92.



CHAPTER III

FROMM'S VISION OF FREUD

Although the influence on Fromm of Spinoza and Goethe should not be minimized, it was far outstripped by that of Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx. Freud's influence will be discussed in the present chapter, and Marx's in the following chapter.

Fromm's academic exposure to both Freud and Marx began during his university years at Heidelberg. There he studied with Alfred Weber and Karl Mannheim, working conjunctively in psychology and sociology. This training equipped him with the insights of both disciplines enabling him to come to a broad understanding of the social processes, and thereby qualifying him for his life's work as social critic.

Having finished his doctorate at the age of twenty-two, he began work in psychiatry and psychology at the University of Munich in 1923. The following year he started psychoanalytic training with Drs. Landauner and Wittenberg, two analysts who were to become dominant figures in the American psychoanalytic movement in later years. In 1928 he took up residence at the world famous Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute, where he trained under Theodor Reik. Reik, like Fromm, was a lay analyst, that is, he obtained his certification as a psychoanalyst without prior medical training.¹

The practice of allowing lay analysts, while exceptional, was not uncommon, and a great deal of controversy raged over their



acceptability.² Freud himself never objected to lay analysts. Jones suggests that the reason for this was the harsh treatment Freud received from the medical profession in Vienna and that he conceived of psychoanalysis as a unique profession and not the "mere handmaid of psychiatry."³

As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, Fromm recognized his own psychological needs, and one may assume that Fromm's interest in Freudian theory was as much motivated by personal questions as by social questions. Be that as it may, Fromm did find in Freud an enlightening vision of what he himself could become, what goals he might seek, and some of the means of achieving those goals.

This chapter is arranged according to two categories of influence: first, the effect of Freud, the man and his ethos, upon Fromm, and second, the effect of Freud's ideas. In each instance, the purpose is to demonstrate how such knowledge contributed to Fromm's growth as a prophet.

Freud: The Man and His Ethos

The impact of Freud's ethos came upon Fromm in two ways: first, the personality characteristics of the man, and second, similar experiences in the two men's lives.

One cannot read Fromm's writings without sensing the strong sense of indebtedness to Freud, as well as the deep respect for the man whom he has called one of the architects of the modern world.⁴ Beyond superficial similarities of personality, perhaps the basis for this identification arises from the mutual ambitions shared by the two men. According to David Bakan's controversial interpretation,⁵ Freud



conceived of himself as a Messiah with a strong identification with the military achievements of Moses. Bakan would also link Freud with Jewish mysticism. If one accepts Bakan's thesis, an important parallel can be drawn between Freud and Fromm.

Fromm too has written a biographical work on Freud with a title strongly suggestive of the prophetic role, Sigmund Freud's Mission (1959). While Fromm's secondary purpose may have been to de-mythologize Freud by revealing his vanity, harshness, vindictiveness, authoritarianism, and hypersensitivity to criticism, it may also be said that Fromm's purpose is to present a backdrop before which to portray many of his own messianic visions. Fromm is aware that he has distilled the essence from Freud's message, and as his disciple and spokesman, he is in a position to carry on where Freud was forced to stop. Fromm likens him to the Moses whom he so aspired to imitate:

. . . he wants to show man a promised land of reason and harmony, and yet he can only visualize it from afar; he knows he will never get there, and he probably senses, after the defection of Joshua-Jung, that those who stay with him will not get to the promised land either. One of the great men and pathfinders of the human race, he has to die with a deep sense of disappointment⁶

After ten years practice as an "orthodox" Freudian, Fromm broke with the hierarchy of the movement over matters of essential theory such as the libido, as well as such rubrical matters as the use of the couch for therapy sessions. Within the rigidity and authoritarianism of the movement Fromm found that "dogma, ritual, and idolization of the leader [had] replaced creativity and spontaneity."⁷ In such a movement he knew he could find no meaning or purpose for his work, and thus he withdrew.



In his apostasy he was joined by Karen Horney and Harry Stack Sullivan, soon after his coming to America in 1934. The three worked together formulating an integration of psychoanalysis, anthropology, and sociology, during the 1930's and 1940's until differences in their theoretical emphasis made a separation necessary. In comparing himself with Horney and Sullivan, Fromm has remarked that he felt "much closer to Freud than Horney or Sullivan felt"⁸ The pride engendered by his closeness to Freud is accentuated by a further description of his perceived relationship with Freud: "I feel somewhat like a pupil and translator of Freud who is attempting to bring out his important discoveries in order to enrich and deepen them by liberating them from the somewhat narrow libido theory."⁹ This perhaps is the clearest statement of his role as Freud's prophet, his spokesman. Freud's discoveries are so important that Fromm must remain the pupil, yet they are not so complete that they might not need amplification, further insight, and broader perspective.

Fromm shares with Freud the expanded vision of prophetic reformer, while differing with him on the means necessary to carry out that reform. Helen Walker Pomer takes note of this vision: "One has to understand his [Freud's] striving to be a world reformer to see that he wanted to conquer the world with an ideal—of the control of passion by reason—and to understand why Freud built a psychoanalytic movement which was internationally and hierarchically organized."¹⁰

Fromm describes Freud's goal as the founding of "a movement for ethical liberation of man, a new secular and scientific religion for an elite which was to guide mankind."¹¹ Fromm takes exception to several



features of Freud's method of liberating mankind. He feels that the religiosity of the movement has led to the rigidity of dogmatism and bureaucracy working toward the inevitable defeat of the very goal of liberation which Fromm himself totally embraces. A second point of disagreement is the elitist character of the movement, for leadership emanating from a closed circle of the "initiated" does violence to Fromm's essential democratic trust in the ability of the people to choose wisely, and can spawn only a sterile and inbred sense of direction which he has witnessed among the tradition-bound, orthodox Freudians.

Beyond their differences over the means appropriate to achieving the liberation of man, Fromm does find that his ambitions to bring psychoanalytic healing to the broad spectrum of social illness have been envisioned by Freud, albeit with a note of caution:

I would not say that such an attempt to apply psychoanalysis to civilized society would be fanciful or doomed to fruitlessness. But it behooves us to be very careful, not to forget that after all we are dealing only with analogies, and that it is dangerous, not only with men but also with concepts, to drag them out of the region where they originated and have matured. The diagnosis of collective neurosis, moreover, will be confronted by a special difficulty. In the neurosis of an individual we can use as a starting point the contrast presented to us between the patient and his environment which we assume to be "normal." No such background as this would be available for any society similarly affected; it would have to be supplied in some other way. And with regard to any therapeutic application of our knowledge, what would be the use of the most acute analysis of social neuroses, since no one possesses the power to compel the community to adopt the therapy. In spite of all the difficulties, we may expect that one day someone will venture upon this research into the pathology of civilized communities.¹²

A second line of influence which Freud had on Fromm's prophetic



vocation can be traced to a pattern of similar personal experience which contributed to the transformation of each man into his prophetic role. Both men were influenced by their cultural Jewish backgrounds and affirmed it.¹³ Fromm carried his interest in Jewish tradition with him through his days of university training, to the extent of choosing as his topic for his doctoral dissertation the socio-psychological structure of three Jewish sects: the Karaim, the Chassidim, and Reformed Judaism. Regarding Freud's commitment to Jewry, Bakan makes the point that "Freud's repeated affirmation of his Jewish identity had greater significance for the development of psychoanalysis than is usually recognized."¹⁴ He goes on to note that Freud's strong Jewish identification brought him into the midst of the struggles and issues of Jewish mysticism. Parallel to this, is Fromm's study of the Jewish Mystics, especially Moses Maimonides. Fromm's interest in mysticism reached beyond the Jewish tradition to the writings of Meister Eckhart and of Zen Buddhism.

Another common experience was the influence both men felt from Goethe. The German poet's impact on Fromm has been recounted earlier; for Freud he was the stimulus which led him to his life's career. As a boy in his teens, Freud had secretly looked to Goethe's great literary genius for his life's model, and this literary sensitivity remained throughout his entire life. Upon graduation summa cum laude from the gymnasium Freud abandoned his literary ambition to follow a professional career in medicine. The practice of medicine itself was not, however, the principal attraction for Freud. His horizons were broader. In 1873, the year of his graduation, natural science was



beginning to burgeon with the hope of supplying questions and answers about life more complete and more valuable than those which philosophy offered. Goethe, as artist, philosopher, and scientist, showed young Freud the way. Puner describes the crucial scene.

. . . the event that clinched his [Freud's] decision to enter medical school was his hearing, shortly before his graduation in the summer of 1873, Goethe's essay on Nature read aloud at a popular lecture by Professor Carl Bruhl. Professor Bruhl was a man with a thrilling voice and the power to communicate his literary excitement. As he read, passages from the Essay began to engrave themselves on the boy's mind

So a pantheistic paean to the glories of nature, a poem not a treatise, confirmed this child of his century in his choice of a career. Since Goethe could be enlisted on the side of scientific inquiry, since he could inspire the boy with echoes of sentiments he recognized as his own, the path was clear. For in Goethe, who synthesized the spirit of German nineteenth-century culture, Freud recognized a kindred spirit. This kinship was based in the boy's mind not only on Goethe's feeling for nature, but on certain similarities between his life and personality and Goethe's.¹⁵

The emotional impact of World War One was shared by Fromm and Freud in much the same way. Puner recounts Freud's dismay over the challenge to his life's work by the irrational forces of war.

He was confronted not with the triumph or potential triumph of reason, but with its opposite: all those primitive, destructive, hostile drives he had spent his personal and professional life in combating and subjugating. What was the use of reason and his own lifelong dedication to its service if in the end man was still intent on murdering his brother? Must he resign himself to the recognition of a truth he had been fighting all his life--that man, despite the intelligence which differentiates him from the ape, is still a hopeless victim of his animal instinct.¹⁶

Fromm maintains that the incidents of destruction and fratricide so numerous during the World War forced Freud to conclude



that man bears within himself a death instinct. The significance of the death instinct and its influence on Fromm's thinking will be discussed in a later section of this chapter, but suffice it to say here that World War One offered a new direction in each man's thinking.

The Great War was to be but the first step in an ever-growing triumph of insanity which Fromm and Freud witnessed and reacted to.

As Fromm describes it:

The First World War, the victory of Nazism and Stalinism and the beginning of the Second World War are so many stations of the defeat of reason and sanity. Freud, the proud leader of the movement which aimed at the establishment of a world of reason, had to witness an era of ever-increasing social insanity.¹⁷

Fromm here speaks for himself as well as for Freud, but the difference lies in the fact that Freud was forced to witness this series of triumphs of irrationalism during the last years of his life, when his productive years were behind him, while the same circumstances, as horrible as they were, were to furnish Fromm who was still a young man, with the impetus to seek explanations for the causes of such human debacles.

In their attitude toward organized religion Freud and Fromm share similar perspectives. Both rejected the personal practice of religion. For Freud this rejection meant that he and his children would entertain no observance of ritual or attendance at synagogues, but within the family they would preserve the cultural heritage of their co-religionists.¹⁸

In an interview given in 1962 Fromm acknowledged that with the beginning of his psychoanalytic practice in 1926 he had rejected formal



religious adherence: "I gave up my religious convictions and practices because I just didn't want to participate in any division of the human race whether religious or political."¹⁹

If one grants an innate need in man for religion, such a need was fulfilled in both men by the religious quality of dedication each found in his life's work. Freud based his objection to organized religion on the fact that it violated the values of his personal religion. At best it could foster only illusion; at worst it could be the manifestation of neurosis. Fromm, agreeing in substance with Freud, outlines the dimensions of what he understands as man's religious needs:

The conclusion to which we are led with regard to the general problem of human (religious) motivation is that while the need for a system or orientation and devotion is common to all men, the particular contents of the systems which satisfy this need differ. These differences are differences in value; the mature, productive, rational person will choose a system which permits him to be mature, productive and rational. The person who has been blocked in his development must revert to primitive and irrational systems which in turn prolong and increase his dependence and irrationality. He will remain on the level which mankind in its best representatives has already overcome thousands of years ago.²⁰

Thus far, the comparison of Freud and Fromm has focused on the particular effects which Freud's ethos had upon Fromm's development as a social prophet. Fromm's ambitions have coincided with Freud's messianic vision of world reform. Further, episodes during Freud's life sharpened Fromm's sense of identification with this man whom he deeply admired and wished to emulate, viz., their common Jewish background, the influence of the First World War, their attraction to Goethe and to



mysticism, and their rejection of formal religion and the creation of a new religious idiom. The discussion now moves to the effects of Freud's ideas upon Fromm as prophet.

Freud: The Man and His Ideas

This second main section of the chapter will examine the part which Freud's intellectual heritage played in shaping Fromm's prophetic role. The discussion will center around three topics: (1) Freud's intellectual orientation; (2) the analytic concepts he developed for the description and diagnosis of mental illness; (3) his therapeutic techniques. In order to maintain a relevant perspective for this study, only those dimensions of each topic pertinent to Fromm's rhetorical function will be considered. As much as possible, the description of Freudian material has been taken from Fromm's own work. This has been done deliberately in order to develop a clearer picture of the particular subjective usage employed by Fromm.

By way of preface it would be helpful to realize how important Fromm judges Freud's work to have been not just in his own life, but in the Western world as a whole. In the concluding remarks to his biography of Freud, Fromm points out this relevance:

. . . Western thought is impregnated with Freud's discoveries, and its future is unthinkable without the fruits of this impregnation. I am speaking not only about the obvious fact that he has given a new basis for psychological theory in his discovery of the unconscious, and its mode of operation in dreams, symptoms, character traits, myths and religion, the significance of early childhood experiences for the development of character, and many other, perhaps less fundamental discoveries, but about his influence on Western thought in general.²¹

Notwithstanding this generous appraisal of Freud, Fromm in



comparing Freud to Marx has acknowledged Freud's lack of depth and scope of thought.²² Marx's influence on Fromm will be discussed in the following chapter.

Freud's intellectual orientation

Before considering Freud's thought in detail, it may be necessary to define the term "orientation" as understood here. The term may be used in two interrelated senses. First, it may be understood as the "fundamental rationale by which one deals with his world." In this sense, orientation is the rational power directing every element of personal behavior. A second meaning is the "sense of relationships developed as one experiences the changing world about him." This second meaning likewise sees orientation as directing personal behavior, but from the viewpoint of relationships and the determination of those relationships afforded by prior experience.

Even to suggest the notion of orientation bespeaks the assumption that man lives in a constantly changing environment of time, space objects, and persons, and that man himself is by his own nature a part of this constant flux. To adjust to the process nature of human existence, man must formulate for himself a process which will organize, stabilize, and create meaning and predictability in this world of personal experience.

The two meanings of orientation, as the fundamental rationale of behavior and as the sense of relationships, interact in such a way that it would be impossible to establish one as the cause of the other. From the perspective of the "existential-now" one may say that orientation is the fundamental rationale directing behavior. However, were



one to ask how this rationale was developed, the answer would have to be that it is the product of that sense of relationships established by prior experience. But this would not fully answer the question, for the sense of relationships is the product of a rationale which has interpreted the interacting of time, place object, and persons.

What has been said underlines the circularity of the concept and stresses the fact that orientation is both process and product. It interprets what is and what is not, selects values, chooses goals and the means of achieving them, and determines expectancies upon which to base predictability. Essentially, orientation directs behavior, and notion introduces the concept of motives, why people do what they do.²³

For the rhetorical critic the notion of orientation affords an excellent perspective from which to view behavior and to assign motives. To understand the orientation underlying a rhetorical act allows the critic an added insight into the nature of the act and permits him a fuller appreciation of his material. The question now arises as to how much of Freud's orientation has Fromm made his own.

The one characteristic of Freud's orientation which has had the deepest influence on Fromm's thinking was Freud's understanding of reality as a dynamic process. The synergistic psychic model of the ego, superego and id operating through the stress system of the libido theory laid the foundations for a dynamic psychology which Fromm regards as capable of reaching the essentially human factor of human existence.²⁴

When one recognizes the dynamic nature of reality, further



implications of Freud's orientation follow as a logical complement. Freud's fundamentally critical mood so characteristic of modern science and summed up in the Latin phrase, "De omnibus est dubitandum," ("One must doubt concerning everything,") becomes a logical necessity. Granting the constant flux in nature, prudence dictates that one pay special attention to the patterns of change and their causes and consequences. As a result, one must withhold any final judgment, recognizing that a dynamic reality can never be perfectly described and any judgment which is made must be considered suspect and subject to further revision.

Fromm's work gives ample evidence that the spirit of criticism has been a guiding principle in the evolution of his theory. His rejection of Freud's libido theory, his shift of emphasis to the cultural, economic, and political dimensions of the psychic process, his freedom in choosing eclectically from various academic disciplines to amalgamate his own system of analysis are but a few instances indicating how thoroughly he internalized this critical perspective. Fromm has stated the principle that one must accept as a way of life the "implacable distrust of the clichés, ideas, rationalizations, and ideologies which fill people's minds and which form the basis of what they mistake for reality."²⁵

A second corollary of a dynamic orientation is epitomized in the New Testament phrase, "The truth will make you free." To penetrate to the true elements of the reality process means to free man from the unreality of illusions which he conjures up to make the misery of life more bearable. Illusions, like a numbing drug taken to sedate man in



his pain, can only rob him of his freedom and his self-actualization which are the keys to his individuality--to his humanity. As Fromm declares, ". . . If [man] can wake up from the half-dream state, then he can come to his senses, become aware of his proper forces and powers, and change reality in such a way that illusions are no longer necessary."²⁶

Fromm finds another aspect of Freud's dynamic orientation epitomized in the epigram of the Roman poet, Terence, "Nihil humanum a mihi alienum puto," ("I judge nothing human to be alien to me.") Freud's humanism, according to Fromm,²⁷ rests on the premise that each man represents all of humanity. In his concept of the unconscious Freud posited the source of human strivings, common to all men. Men will be able to understand each other if they can penetrate the world of the unconscious.

A fourth aspect of Freud's dynamic orientation, according to Fromm is pointed up by his preference for psychological models based on the dialectical principle of contrariety. This description of psychological phenomena as the product of opposing forces bases itself on a dialectical model in which conflict and struggle are essential ingredients. Freud's dialectical method is indicated also in the struggle he postulates between the id and the superego, between man striving for sexual pleasure and for survival and mastery over his environment, between the life and death instincts. Fromm's own dialectical method, which is the principal focus of this study, will be treated in a later chapter.

The fifth and final aspect of Freud's orientation which deeply



influenced Fromm is the high priority he places on the power of reason, both as a means and as an end. Fromm writes: "The most striking and probably the strongest emotional force in Freud was his passion for truth and his uncompromising faith in reason; for his reason was the only human capacity which could help solve the problem of existence or, at least, ameliorate the suffering which is inherent in human life."²⁸ Freud felt that reason was the only instrument proper to man which could break through man's illusions and give valid meaning to the complexity of reality. In enthroning reason, Freud exemplifies his share in the heritage of the Enlightenment. Fromm notes:

Freud's Jewish background, if anything, added to his embrace of the Enlightenment spirit. The Jewish tradition itself was one of reason and of intellectual discipline, and, besides that, a somewhat despised minority had a strong emotional interest to defeat the powers of darkness, of irrationality, and of superstition, which blocked the road to its own emancipation and progress.²⁹

Fromm's description of Freud here runs as a commentary upon his own orientation and style dedicated to the service of reason, and founded on a heritage of Jewish culture.

Freud's basic orientation can be summarized under the one guiding principle of the recognition of reality as a dynamic process. The application of this principle led Freud to critically weigh the validity of his sense perception. In such a mood of criticism, truth is best defined as the realism obtained by unmasking illusions. Amid the flow of dynamic reality Freud perceived a universal humanism which betrayed "certain inherent mechanisms and laws, to discover which is the task of psychology."³⁰ Freud chose to view the dynamics of human



motivation through the analytic perspective of the dialectic pattern of conflict and struggle between opposing forces. And finally, a constant faith in the power of reason served to guide his critical mood, to verify truth, to prove the existence of universal humanism, and to establish poles of dialectical opposition.

Freud's analytic categories

Whatever his field of inquiry, the analyst is determined by the categories under which he chooses to examine his subject matter. Each category acts as a lens to place certain elements into focus and to filter out other elements. Thus the selection of analytic categories is extremely important, for it determines the quantity and quality of information available to the analyst.

For this reason the question of which Freudian concepts Fromm selects for his social criticism and how he uses them is of primary significance. A judgment of the rhetorical value of any category or system of categories may be measured by the following criteria:

1. The depth of insight allowed by the categories,
2. The breadth of their relational significance, both within the system itself and in relation to other systems,
3. The applicability of the system to develop further implications.

Obviously, the categories which Freud chose to describe mental illness reflect the direct influence of his orientation. As analyst and diagnostician, he sought the most appropriate means for examining psychological phenomena. Because Freud practiced the art of psychological



healing which depends for its success upon effective communication, it was important that his analytic categories possess two rhetorical qualities: first, they had to be believable to the patient, and second, in order to be believable they had to be consonant with the patient's values and experiences.

Fromm, as prophet, has adapted Freudian analytic categories which over the years have become surrounded with an aura of mystification and employed them to study societal ills.

Fromm has called attention to three contributions which he considers uniquely Freud's and which are, in this author's opinion, pivotal concepts in the evolution of Fromm's rhetorical perspective. These are: (1) a dynamic character orientation, (2) the discovery of the unconscious, and (3) transference.

In Fromm's view, Freud's first and foremost contribution has been the theoretical foundation he laid for a dynamic³¹ and a scientific³² psychology. This observation re-emphasizes an earlier reference to Freud's evolutionary-process orientation to reality. The principal purpose of Freud's work was the understanding of motivation in an effort to modify and re-channel behavior along more productive and healthier lines. Fromm accepted many of Freud's concepts and broadened them to focus not only on individual behavior but also on the behavior of society as such.

Freud's theory of character, as judged by Fromm, has been of "immeasurable value"³³ in creating a useful model to describe motivation. "Freud developed not only the first but also a most consistent and penetrating theory of character as a system of strivings



which underlie, but are not identical with behavior."³⁴ The precisely dynamic quality of Freud's character theory becomes clear when one notes the comparison between behavior traits and character traits as they have been developed by Fromm. The two categories represent qualities of personality which interact in the unfolding of the entire scene of personal motivation. Fromm describes behavior traits as actions which are observable by a third person and which are judged by him according to cultural value patterns. Fromm gives an example of the behavior trait, "being courageous," which he defines as "behavior which is directed toward reaching a certain goal without being deterred by risks to one's comfort, freedom or life."³⁵ Thus the war hero who falls on a live grenade ostensibly is judged to be courageous.

This trait is the designation given the soldier's action by third party observers who have employed values reflecting expectancies learned from their cultural patterns. Thus, the culture teaches the individual by the rewards of positive behavior traits and by punishment of negative traits what is expected of him. Behavior traits operate as motivating elements for group conformity. Behavior traits may employ the myths and illusions which cultures nourish in order to perpetuate the constellations of myths upon which their value systems rest. For the rhetorician, the concept of behavior trait offers a very suitable vehicle for strategies such as debunking, demythologizing, and "you're one too."

On the other hand, one may assume another perspective from which to assign the motivation for a given act. By assuming the existence of an inner motivation, one discovers that level of motivation



called by Freud the character trait. In contrast to the behavior trait, which is based on external and societal evaluation, the character trait assumes a source of inner-direction for behavior, which can be known to the trained observer through analytic techniques.

Fromm reminds his reader that the behavior trait covers numerous and frequently entirely different character traits. In the example of the "courageous" soldier, a variety of conscious and unconscious motives may actually have prompted his action. To cite just a few, one could suggest that the motive may have been self-destruction or a desire for admiration, or ignorance of the consequences, or a deep concern and honest daring to save one's friends even at the cost of one's own life. Character traits often function with a mixture of motives, and the assignment of behavior traits will depend upon which character trait is dominant.

Fromm further comments:

. . . the study of character deals with the forces by which man is motivated, that the way a person acts, feels and thinks is to a large extent determined by the specificity of his character and is not merely the result of rational responses to realistic situations. Freud recognized the dynamic quality of character traits, and that the character structure of a person represents a particular form in which energy is canalized in the process of living.³⁶

Freud's realization that character exists in many cases as a greater determinant of behavior than reason explains why he labored so to bring his patients to an awareness of their character traits and to refocus the motivational patterns in order to correct neurotic behavior.

Freud explained the derivation of particular character orientations in terms of a fixation of the individual at one of the develop-



mental levels in the maturing process with the result that a motivational pattern proper to an infant or child was retained in the adult. Freud's libido theory speaks of the maturation process as the gradual progression of emphasis of psychic-sexual energy in three stages according to the erogenous zone proper to the age level of the individual. For the infant the primary erogenous zone is the mouth, thus the oral stage. In the older child, the primary zone becomes the anus, thus the anal stage. And finally in the mature individual the primary erogenous zone becomes the penis or clitoris, thus the genital stage. Freud, in developing the libido theory in terms of body zones, attributed neurosis to biological causes, which he linked to personality development. Fromm has accepted Freud's concept of character orientation, but rejects its essentially biological emphasis.

I believe that it is not a fixation on some primary erogenous zone [which determines character]; . . . I think it depends primarily upon the nature of the society, of the culture, and secondarily upon the character of the parents, as to which of these modes of assimilation will be primary in a person. Then, and only secondarily, whatever is true of the erogenous zones might appear as a consequence rather than as a cause.³⁷

Fromm proposes his own variation of Freud's theory of character by emphasizing the specific type of relatedness which an individual has to his world, rather than Freud's biologically fixed libido theory.

In the process of living, a man relates himself to the world (1) by acquiring and assimilating things, and (2) by relating himself to people (and himself). The former I shall call the process of assimilation; the latter, that of socialization. Both forms of relatedness are "open" and not, as with the animal, instinctively determined.³⁸

Fromm explains character trait as a "syndrome which results from a



particular organization or, as I shall call it, orientation of character."³⁹ These orientations form the core of the individual's character, which Fromm defines as "the (relatively permanent) form in which human energy is canalized in the process of assimilation and socialization."⁴⁰ Character orientation, as understood by Fromm, does not neglect the conditioned reflex theory of the behaviorists, but rather proceeds a step further to explain how conditioned reflexes are developed.⁴¹ He suggests that "the character system can be considered the human substitute for the instinctive apparatus of the animal."⁴² Character thus functions to allow "the individual to act consistently and 'reasonably'; it is also the basis for his adjustment to society."⁴³

Fromm has expanded his concept of character by developing a catalogue of character types. These types are arranged under two principal headings, one based on nonproductive orientation, the other based on productive orientation. Under the heading of nonproductivity he lists (1) the receptive orientation, closely paralleling Freud's oral stage; (2) the exploitative orientation; (3) the hoarding orientation; and (4) the marketing orientation, peculiar to modern man who perceives himself as an object of barter which must be properly packaged in a personality which will "sell," rather than as a person of intrinsic worth. Characteristic of each nonproductive orientation is de-personalization, emptiness, meaninglessness of life, the automatization of the individual--all resulting in a "growing dissatisfaction and in a need to search for a more adequate way of living and for norms which could guide man to this end."⁴⁴

In opposition to the nonproductive orientation Fromm posits the



productive orientation which leads him "beyond critical analysis and inquiry into the nature of the fully developed character that is the aim of human development and simultaneously the ideal of humanistic ethics."⁴⁵ Fromm notes the similarity of the productive orientation with Freud's genital character, however, with the one difference, the exclusion of the libido theory.⁴⁶

As this point the reader should take note of the rhetorical dimensions available in Fromm's description of character traits. First, the dichotomous development of character types allows a very simple and direct attributing of praise or blame. Secondly, the categories of nonproductiveness create a rich sense of the obviousness of their undesirability. And finally, character trait analysis by its definition as the search for inner and perhaps hidden motivation carries with it the mystique which surrounds the role of the psychoanalyst, and thus lends a strong basis for mystification.

Borrowing from Freud the notion of behavior and character traits, Fromm has generated a third concept, the social character which imputes an individual character to the whole of a society. As Fromm explains social character, it "makes people act and think as they have to act and think from the standpoint of the proper function of their society."⁴⁷ Social character thus represents one link between the social structure and the character traits of the individual. For the society it assures cohesion and unity, and for the individual in the society the feeling of security, propriety, and predictability.

From Freud's concept of the unconscious Fromm has derived a second link describing the influence of society's ideology upon the



the thought patterns of the individuals in society Fromm observes that "each society determines which thoughts and feelings shall be permitted to arrive at the level of awareness and which have to remain unconscious."⁴⁸ This censorship by implicit social norm he terms the "social unconscious." It functions to repress ideas which represent contradictions within the value system held by most members of the society. Such group norms force this repression, for if the individuals were to become aware of the contradictions, certain values inherent in the maintenance of the system as such would be subject to rejection, and thus, the whole stability of the social system would be threatened. This concept of the social unconscious resembles certain postulates of Festinger's dissonance theory and similar theories of cognitive balance.

The rhetorical function of the social character and the social unconscious will be developed in the later analysis of alienation. However, here it need be said only that Fromm's rhetoric, utilizing the theories of love, human nature, freedom, personality, and authority, explains these theories using the concepts of both social character and the social unconscious. He ascribes to Freud the recognition that "most of what is real within ourselves is not conscious, and most of what is conscious is not real."⁴⁹ This unveiling of the unconscious creates new dimensions to the conventional notions of truth and reality, and thus affords Fromm new perspectives in assigning motives within the social process. These new perspectives he employed in his analysis of the Nazi psychology and of the Cold War political scene, to cite only two examples.

Earlier in this chapter the dynamic quality in Freudian psychology



was pointed out. This dynamic quality allowed Freud to evolve three behavioral patterns, which Fromm calls character orientations, namely, the Oedipus complex, the death instinct, and narcissism. These three orientations assume a crucial role for assigning blame in Fromm's dialectic.

The first of these character orientations, the Oedipus complex, is, according to Fromm,⁵⁰ a central concept in Freud's theory. "Freud believed this concept to be one of the cornerstones of his scientific edifice, and I believe that his discovery of the fixation to mother is, indeed, one of the most far-reaching discoveries in the science of man."⁵¹ Fromm does, however, take exception to Freud's description of the Oedipus complex in what he considers the constricting view of the libido theory. Fromm uses the notion as a dialectical term in a broader context of social behavior.

The incestuous striving, which is the primary motive for the Oedipus complex in its pre-genital stage, is, Fromm writes:

. . . one of the most fundamental passions in men and women, comprising the human being's desire for protection, the satisfaction of his narcissism; his craving to be freed from the risks of responsibility, of freedom, of awareness; his longing for unconditional love, which is offered without any expectation of his loving response.⁵²

Although this need for loving closeness and unconditional acceptance is undoubtedly present in the Oedipal feelings, the individual may also experience a fear of his mother or mothering person. At times he may perceive her as a dangerous cannibal or an all-destroying monster, since the regression to the sucking state or to the protective womb admits a dependency which lessens self-reliance and freedom.



The ambivalence of approach-avoidance feelings exists, according to Fromm, in varying degrees between "very benign forms of 'mother fixation,' forms which in fact are so benign that they can hardly be called pathological, and malignant forms of incestuous fixation which [he] calls 'incestuous symbiosis.'"⁵³

The dialectical tensions demonstrable in the Oedipal syndrome offer Fromm a useful matrix by which to delineate man's alienation in a sick society. He remarks:

. . . if man fails to solve his Oedipus complex, or to put it differently, if man does not overcome his infantile strivings and develop a mature genital orientation, he is torn between the desires of the child within himself and the claims which he makes as a grown-up person. The neurotic symptom represents a compromise between infantile and grown-up needs, while the psychosis is that form of pathology in which the infantile desires and phantasies have flooded the grown-up ego, and thus there is no more compromise between the two worlds.⁵⁴

Here again, one sees Fromm extending the boundaries of ideas borrowed from Freud and accommodating them to his own social-analytic purposes.

Freud's second character orientation, the death instinct, amplifies the idea of the anal instinct in order to explain the self-destructive tendencies often found in human behavior. For Freud, this death instinct was a "part of normal biology."⁵⁵ Fromm views it rather as pathological. Examples, such as the nuclear arms race and the success of such authoritarian regimes as those of Hitler and Stalin, raise the question of how one must interpret man's seeming indifference toward what has traditionally been explained as the basic human motive--the will to live. For Fromm the answer lies in the view of man as drawn between two antithetical poles--the affinity for life and the affinity for death. Such a



dialectical tension posits the "most fundamental contradiction which exists in man."⁵⁶

Faced with this dilemma, Fromm chooses to accept man as primarily oriented to the love of life, as an expression of eros which binds, integrates, and unifies the individual, and only secondarily, or accidentally, oriented to the love of death as an expression of thanatos which separates and disintegrates the individual. To explain man's penchant for self-destruction, Fromm distinguishes between primary and secondary potentialities.

The primary potentiality develops if the appropriate conditions for life are present, just as a seed grows if the proper conditions of moisture, temperature, etc., are given. If the proper conditions are not present, the necrophilous tendencies will emerge and dominate the person.⁵⁷

It should be noted that Fromm attributes the dominance of secondary potentialities, not to man's nature, but to environment. This position, in opposition to Freud, allows Fromm to be consistent in affirming the goodness of human nature.

Having postulated primary (positive) potentialities and secondary (negative) potentialities for life, Fromm lists the conditions appropriate for the development of each. Those conditions necessary for biophilia are as follows: (1) warm affectionate contact with others during infancy; (2) freedom, and absence of threats; (3) teaching--by example rather than by preaching--of the principles conducive to inner harmony and strength; (4) guidance in the "art of living"; (5) stimulating influence of and response to others; (6) a way of life that is genuinely interesting.



Fromm adds another dimension to the biophilous orientation by likening it to the productive orientation which he describes as the product of the mature genital stage in which the individual manifests a preference for constructive behavior rather than the passive hoarding characteristic of the anal fixation. Fromm develops his argument in dialectical progression.⁵⁸

1. Constructive behavior demands that the individual develop an open capacity for wonder and curiosity rather than a close-minded acceptance of things as they are.
2. This curiosity in its turn assumes the process character of reality leading the individual to prefer discovery of the new rather than the security of validating the old.
3. Such a spirit of discovery engenders a sense of adventure in living rather than a smug security based on certainty.
4. This vital orientation with its quest for the new requires an adaptive and creative approach to living rather than a pre-established, mechanical execution of patterns.
5. In his perspective the biophilous individual tends to see the whole rather than the parts, organic structures rather than static summation.
6. The biophilous individual seeks to influence the world about him by love, reason, and personal



example rather than by forcefully dissecting things and bureaucratically manipulating people as if they were things.

7. Finally, joy comes by learning to appreciate life for life's sake rather than the extrinsic titillation of seeking mere thrills and excitement which are actually diversionary from the essence of life. Continuing his dialectical contrast, Fromm underlines the

negative qualities of necrophilia:

1. Basically necrophilia represents the "nucleus of a severe mental sickness, and . . . the essence of true evil."⁵⁹
2. In its time orientation, necrophilia focuses on the past, never the future, clinging to sentimental recollections, in an effort to avoid change and the inevitable adaptation demanded by change.
3. In the matter of personal relationships, necrophilia prompts coldness and distance since by its nature necrophilia reduces persons to things, thus, making warm, close human relationships impossible.
4. In a search for security the necrophile becomes a devotee of "law and order," with a way of life characterized by a love of force and destruction.
5. So intense is the love of death that it replaces the normal sexual drive toward the opposite sex.
6. For the necrophile personal attraction is based



on a positive polarity toward those possessing the power to kill and a negative polarity toward those lacking this power. Such historical figures as Hitler and Stalin derived their political power from their "unlimited capacity and willingness to kill."⁶⁰

7. Such necrophilous leaders command love and following from other necrophiles, because they offer a basis for identification with the death instinct of their followers and the expression of anal-sadistic behavior perpetrated by the political party.

A summary of the theory of biophilous vs. necrophilous orientation can now be made. Biophilia, as a life orientation, operates from an intrinsic value system which establishes norms in directing behavior. Biophilia is also the product of a more basic value system. This point is made simply to acknowledge the fact that values prescribe behavioral patterns, as well as establish perceptual sets by which to interpret the behavioral implications of those patterns. Fromm has been able to employ the biophilous-necrophilous dialectic in two ways: first, as an evaluative measure in adjudicating the insanity of modern capitalistic society, and second, as a strategy to urge the adoption of his proposals for the sane society.

The third and final type of character orientation is narcissism, which is, in Fromm's judgment, "one of the most fruitful and far-reaching of Freud's discoveries."⁶¹ Although narcissism frequently carries the



connotation of neurotic egocentrism, it may also be understood as a normal and necessary element of psychological dynamics. Fromm adopts a positive view of narcissism as a primary biological function directed toward man's self-preservation needs. Since man lacks the instinctual powers for self-maintenance of the brute animal, he must compensate for this lack by his rational concern and love of himself and what is his own.

While describing narcissism as a natural and necessary part of human existence, Fromm employs a dialectical extension of this term, so that narcissism may be understood as existing in a pathological state as well. Narcissism becomes pathological when the love of self distorts one's evaluation of himself and others in relation to himself to the extent that the individual loses contact with his environment.

The polarity of the term narcissism extends from the positive side where the self-love is "real" and productive to the negative side where the perceptual field of the individual attaches value to persons and things, not because of a perceived goodness, beauty, wisdom, etc., but solely because of the one factor, identification. If the individual identifies with persons, places, things as "his," they are loved; however, if they are perceived as foreign or "different," they are rejected. In its negative function narcissism fosters either an unhealthy hoarding attachment to familiar objects or an equally unhealthy rejection of the unfamiliar. But in either case, narcissism, as a survival mechanism, enables the individual to defend himself and seek security when he perceives himself threatened or endangered.

The social import of narcissism is reflected in its influence



on styles of national leadership, and as an example, Fromm cites the megalomaniac leader. History records a seemingly endless list of Caligulas and Neros, Stalins and Hitlers, men whose egomania drove them to power, seeking out true believers who could share their illusions and support their craving for power. This type of leader has tried characteristically to transform reality to accommodate his narcissism. While gathering around him all those who would share his distorted picture of reality, the megalomaniac leader reaches out to destroy all who would challenge the reality of his illusions. This need to maintain their illusions explains the paranoid character of such leaders. Their colossal ambitions to change the world, according to Fromm, is their attempt to "cure" their narcissism, to remake the world to fit their insane urges.⁶²

As he does with so many other Freudian concepts, Fromm has translated the concept of individual narcissism to that of group narcissism. Fromm draws his examples from history, as he has done so frequently elsewhere. One instance of group narcissism is the Roman Catholic Church of the fifteenth century. The church represents itself as the "one true church," possessing Papal infallibility and "Triumphalism," with the exclusion of non-Catholics as heretics. All this reflects clearly the dialectic thinking which creates the illusion of self-worth at the expense of the denigration of "outsiders." Fromm has chosen the fifteenth century because during that period strong elements of humanism were likewise at work in the Catholic Church in the persons of such men as Thomas More, Erasmus and Nicholas of Cusa. In this historical example Fromm underlines the dialectical character of the struggle between narcissism and humanism.



He describes narcissism in diametrical opposition to humanism, allowing an ideal negative mirroring of his goal for society. To crown his dialectical argument, Fromm posits as the essential goal of humanism, the overcoming of man's narcissism.⁶³

The group narcissism of modern times which began with religion, Fromm claims, spread to the narcissism of nations, races, and parties. Each such group blinded by narcissism became robbed of objectivity and rational judgment. Ideas which poor whites have about Blacks, Frenchmen about Germans, Nazis about Jews, demonstrate how group narcissism can assemble falsehoods and fabrications to enhance the group's self-glorification. Fromm also attributes the rise of ideology to narcissism, inasmuch as ideology dogmatizes group superiority in the mind of each member creating for him an intellectualized security with communal reinforcement. The final reward for the group member comes with the symbiotic identification with the person of the leader-- "the greater the leader, the greater the follower."⁶⁴

If the narcissism of the group is wounded, a reaction of rage verging on insanity will follow. Examples of such collective rage have been seen in recent riots of construction workers against student war protesters, crowd reactions to violation of the flag, and the frequent spectator violence after the loss of an athletic contest. Hitler made masterful use of wounded group narcissism, as he planned his strategies to gain power and unite the people of Germany around the national need for revenge against the Versailles Treaty.

Fromm has fitted the basic polarity of narcissism versus humanism to cover such issues as the arms race, nationalism, bureaucratic indus-



trialism, centralization of economic, political, and social power, the alliances of the power blocs of nations with their efforts of colonial exploitation, genocide, racial supremacy, and the alienation of the individual.

Reinforcing the validity of the perspective of this study, Fromm compares his own efforts to combat narcissism with that of the prophets.

The fight against idolatry, which is the central issue of prophetic teaching, is at the same time a fight against narcissism. In idolatry one partial faculty of man is absolutized and made into an idol. Man then worships himself in an alienated form. The idol in which he submerges becomes the object of his narcissistic passion. The ideal of God, on the contrary, is the negation of narcissism because only God—not man—is omniscient and omnipotent.⁶⁵

The third analytic category which Fromm borrows from Freud to develop his rhetoric of alienation is the concept of transference. The word has a number of meanings as it is used in both psychoanalysis and general psychology. The strict Freudian usage of the term refers to a phenomenon influencing the patient's attitude and behavior toward his analyst. Freud first mentioned the concept of transference in connection with his analysis of a patient, Dora.⁶⁶ He observed that the patient related to the analyst not as he exists in himself, but as he symbolically represents for the patient persons who have played an influential part in the patient's past, and especially during childhood. In the therapeutic effort to recognize and free feelings repressed in the unconscious, the patient transfers to the analyst his feelings of fear, love, hate, which as a child he felt especially toward his father and mother.



Fromm grants that there is substance to Freud's interpretation of the transference phenomenon, and that a good deal of evidence supports it; yet Fromm also finds the interpretation incomplete. "The grown-up patient is not a child, and to talk about the child in him, or 'his' unconscious, is using a topological language which does not do justice to the complexity of the facts."⁶⁷

Fromm's differences with Freud on this point are based on his rejection of Freud's libido theory.⁶⁸ While Freud assumed neurosis to be the manifestation of repressed libido, Fromm asserts that neurosis is rather the manifestation of alienation, and that the need to escape alienation is the primary motive for transference. Fromm observes that the phenomenon of transference need not be limited to the patient-analyst relation, but that it is an occurrence in the life of every individual who has experienced alienation.

Fromm describes the alienated individual as feeling weak, empty, frightened, inhibited, with no sense of control over his life. In order to overcome these feelings, the alienated individual chooses a person or object on which to project all the human qualities which he finds lacking in himself. This object of projection takes on an idolistic state for the alienated individual who submits to the idol and in doing so feels that he may be in touch with those qualities which he finds lacking in himself. This idolatrous attachment allows the individual to feel strong, wise, secure, and brave. The identification becomes so intense at times that "to lose the object means danger of losing himself."⁶⁹ The energies at work within the individual attempting to escape from alienation, Fromm contends, are the central dynamism of transference.



The precise feelings which are transferred follow infantile patterns, while the intensity of these feelings are measured by the degree of alienation which the individual is undergoing. Fromm concludes by describing the extent of the transference phenomenon: "It is to be found in all forms of idolization of authority figures, in political, religious, and social life."⁷⁰

The Influence of Freudian Therapeutic Techniques

Thus far the discussion of Freud as a part of Fromm's prophetic vision has considered Freud's ethos, his orientation, and his analytic and diagnostic categories. A final area of influence lies in the therapeutic insights developed by Freud for the purpose of individual treatment of mental disorders and which Fromm has translated into an idiom applicable for the treatment of mental illness of society as a whole. The following discussion describes the particular psychotherapeutic techniques and indicates their rhetorical significance. Fromm's concept of mental health, as well as the cultural implication of the therapy itself, will be covered.

Classic psychoanalytic therapy begins with the patient being encouraged to make free association of ideas. He is told to express every random thought or feeling which comes to mind, regardless of its seeming significance or connection. Based on the assumption that ideas and feelings are repressed by the ego and superego, this technique assumes also that the free flow of ideas will gradually reveal certain associations which will be the key by which the analyst discovers the underlying conflicts responsible for the particular illness. Free



association ideally opens up to the patient an awareness of himself and his motives, which, in Fromm's opinion, lies at the heart of Freud's therapy.⁷¹

Fromm amplifies what was basic to Freud's understanding of the notion of "awareness."

Discovering one's unconscious, is, precisely, not only an intellectual act, but also an affective experience, which can hardly be put into words, if at all. This does not mean that thinking and speculation may not precede the act of discovery; but the act of discovery is not an act of thinking but of being aware and, still better perhaps, simply of seeing. To be aware of experience, thoughts or feelings which are unconscious, does not mean thinking about them, but seeing them, just as being aware of one's breathing does not mean to think about it. Awareness of the unconscious is an experience which is characterized by its spontaneity and suddenness. One's eyes are suddenly opened; oneself and the world appear in a different light, are seen from a different viewpoint. There is usually a good deal of anxiety aroused while the experience takes place, while afterward a new feeling of strength is present. The process of discovering the unconscious can be described as a series of ever-widening experiences, which are felt deeply and which transcend theoretical, intellectual knowledge.⁷²

Freud discovered that the process of free association was difficult for the patient, for the patient usually continued to repress certain feelings which he found too threatening to talk about. This blockage of communication between patient and therapist Freud termed resistances. To overcome resistances Freud suggested that the therapist analyze what the patient has said and suggest what it might mean in relation to other statements and actions of the patient. This attempt at aiding the patient to understand his repressed self Freud called



interpretation.

Freud also found that dreams were so important in understanding the psychic processes that he devoted one complete book to this topic, The Interpretation of Dreams. Dreams, evolving as they do during the unfettered moments of sleep, can reveal inner conflicts, repressed desires, and fears; thus the therapist must learn to read from the manifest content of the patient's dreams their latent meanings. Fromm too has chosen the subject of dream analysis for a book, The Forgotten Language, in which he explores the nature of symbolic language, dreams, myths, ritual, fairy tales, and literary fiction.

In his introduction to The Forgotten Language, Fromm sets forth the principal thesis of the book:

. . . all myths and all dreams have one thing in common, they are all "written" in the same language, symbolic language Symbolic language is a language in which inner experiences, feelings, and thoughts are expressed as if they were sensory experiences, events in the outer world. It is a language which has a different logic from the conventional one we speak in the daytime, a logic in which not time and space are the ruling categories but intensity and association. It is the one universal language the human race has ever developed, the same for all cultures and throughout history. It is a language with its own grammar and syntax, as it were, a language one must understand if one is to understand the meaning of myths, fairy tales and dreams. ⁷³

Fromm also notes:

Indeed, both dreams and myths are important communications from ourselves to ourselves. If we do not understand the language in which they were written, we miss a great deal of what we know and tell ourselves in those hours when we are not busy manipulating the outside world. ⁷⁴

The final step in psychotherapy is emotional re-education.



After the patient has successfully reached that degree of awareness in which the unconscious is brought to the conscious level, he may find his original neurotic behavior still unchanged. Thus it becomes necessary for him to work out the "reconstruction of his conscious ego," as Joseph Nuttin terms the process.⁷⁵

This process will develop chiefly as a result of new and favourable emotional experiences which the patient goes through in the course of treatment and in the ordinary situations of his life. In concrete circumstances the patient discovers other attitudes to adopt towards certain people and certain situations, and thanks to this he also acquires a new experience of himself.⁷⁶

To set in perspective the foregoing description of psychotherapy in terms of its rhetorical implications, note should be taken of Fromm's assumption of the parallel between personal psychology and social psychology. The assumption that what is true of the individual is analogously true of society supports the rationale for the whole present discussion. Fromm states his fundamental premise as follows:

. . . to understand the dynamics of the social process we must understand the dynamics of the psychological processes operating within the individual, just as to understand the individual we must see him in the context of the culture which molds him.⁷⁷

Thus as social prophet, Fromm adapts certain Freudian therapeutic techniques in order to analyze social ills.

Fromm has been frequently criticized negatively for venturing into academic fields for which he has no professional credentials. This apparent lack of "professionalism" may however be interpreted as an implementation of free association within his own psyche. Fromm often verbalizes in a free flowing manner in the areas of history, philosophy,



economics, religion, technology, and others. His inquiry into these subjects may reflect an effort at achieving an awareness of the social order, past and present, in order to discover lines of social energy and to assign motives to them. In the synthesis that he achieves through such free associations, Fromm, the prophet, has been able to unmask the symbolic structures which society uses as forms of social resistances to mask its own motives.⁷⁸

Considering another facet of unmasking, it should be pointed out that Fromm's dialectic which pits reason against unreason and reality against illusion, establishes the groundwork for the validity of his "interpretations," which he claims, create awareness. Thus he develops his theory of character orientation to unmask narcissism, the death instinct, and the Oedipus complex—all as parts of the social unconscious. The analogy may also be applied to his consideration of dream analysis whereby he is able to analyze the social "dreams," viz., goals, myths, social ambitions, in order to expose their illusory quality.

The final stage of psychotherapy, emotional re-education, illustrates Fromm's prescriptive role of re-orienting social thinking along the lines of his socialist humanism. He proposes a productive orientation based on love, rationality, justice, the brotherhood of man, and the love of life—all leading to the realization of individuality and freedom for each member of society.

In terms of therapy, Fromm has also been Freud's heir in a cultural orientation. As Thompson, in her history of psychoanalysis, reminds her readers: "Since Freud himself stressed so much the impor-



tance of the innate instinctual life in neurotic problems, the fact that he also considered cultural pressure significant may easily be overlooked."⁷⁹ Fromm shares the same view: "Even though I have been said to emphasize cultural factors, I feel that people forget that Freud, also, was concerned with cultural determinants."⁸⁰ Fromm points out the difference between himself and Freud:

. . . for Freud, culture was a quantitative entity in which civilization was more or less the determinant of the degree or intensity of repression of instincts. I look at culture not in a quantitative sense which determines the amount of repression, but as something qualitative which structures man to conform to the social mold. In other words, I assume we are what we have to be, in accordance with the necessities of the society in which we live; therefore for me it is terribly important to analyze the particular structure of any given society, whether feudalism or nineteenth century capitalism or Greek slave society.⁸¹

Fromm along with Harry Stack Sullivan, Karen Horney, and Abram Kardiner has been classified in the "cultural school of psychoanalysis," a term which Fromm takes exception to. He differs with Sullivan and Kardiner in that they showed primary interest in cultural influences whereas he and Horney, to a limited extent, have sought to analyze the functioning of society: "What is necessary is to combine psychoanalysis with a strict and scientific analysis of social structure."⁸²

Clara Thompson gives some historical perspective to this integration of anthropology, sociology, and psychoanalysis, noting that about 1930 the pioneering advocacy of anthropologist, Edward Sapir, spurred analysts to begin to show an interest in anthropological studies



of culture:

. . . a few analysts were beginning to think of learning more about the relation of man to his society by a collaboration with anthropologists and sociologists in the study of comparative cultures. In the last project one analyst, Erich Fromm, as I have shown, had much to contribute. However, even today it is a relatively small group of analysts who are interested in developing a science of human relations based on a study of culture. Four names should be mentioned as definitely contributing to this field: Fromm, Horney, Kardiner, and Sullivan. Of these Fromm was one of the earliest and most significant contributors. Horney, greatly influenced by him, made further practical applications of his thinking. Sullivan, who for some years had been seeking a means of rapprochement between psychiatry and the social sciences, joined forces with Horney and Fromm soon after their arrival in America, and at last put into concrete form his dream of creating a school where the distinctive contributions of the related disciplines could be combined. Edward Sapir and Ruth Benedict were among the anthropologists interested. By 1936 this small group was collaborating in studying the interaction of man and his culture.⁸³

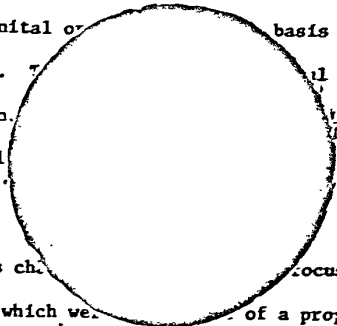
There is one final element of therapeutic technique where Freud's influence was felt by Fromm, namely, the goal of psychotherapy, mental health. For Freud the healthy individual was one who had achieved the genital level of libidinal development. Here was a person who could live his life at an adult level of work and sexual satisfaction, or in Fromm's words, who could "produce things and reproduce the race."⁸⁴ Fromm points out another essential aspect of Freud's concept of mental health, which involved the individual's sphere of relationships.

For the newborn child the only realities which exist are his own bodily and mental experiences. The world outside does not yet exist for him either conceptually or emotionally. As the child grows, his



first relationship is with his mother, and this is a strong and binding attachment, for she represents food, warmth, healing, security, and love. Later, what began as a fixation to his mother shifts to an allegiance to his father. The father's commands and prohibitions are translated and internalized as part of the child's superego. By his process of self-determination the child grows in his independence from both father and mother. Fromm summarizes his position: "The healthy person, for Freud, then is the one who has reached the genital level, and who has become his own master, independent of father and mother, relying on his own reason and on his own strength."⁸⁵

Freud's idea of the healthy individual who has developed to the level of genital or genitality is the basis for Fromm's idea of productive orientation. The genitality ties allows the individual to seek freedom. Genital self-direction, which are the goal.



This character of a prophetic cast and which, it is here hypothesized, Fromm identified with as he evolved his own self-image. Beyond his ethos value as a man, Freud was for Fromm his intellectual mentor, furnishing him with an orientation, as well as with a scientific, analytic, and therapeutic methodology which he could adapt to his own prophetic purposes in his role as social critic.



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Freud's idea of the healthy individual who has developed to the level of genital orientation is the basis for Fromm's idea of productive orientation. The severing of the Oedipal ties allows the individual to seek freedom, self-actualization, and rational self-direction, which are the goals of Fromm's social reform.

Summary

This chapter has attempted to focus on those elements in Freud's personality which were themselves of a prophetic cast and which, it is here hypothesized, Fromm identified with as he evolved his own self-image. Beyond his ethos value as a man, Freud was for Fromm his intellectual mentor, furnishing him with an orientation, as well as with a scientific, analytic, and therapeutic methodology which he could adapt to his own prophetic purposes in his role as social critic.



Footnotes

Chapter III

- ¹Saturday Review of Literature, XLII (April 11, 1959), 40.
- ²Ernest Jones, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, III (New York, 1957), p. 291.
- ³Ibid., p. 301.
- ⁴Erich Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion (New York, 1962), p. 11.
- ⁵David Bakan, Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition (New York, 1958), p. 172.
- ⁶Erich Fromm, Sigmund Freud's Mission (New York, 1959), p. 119.
- ⁷Ibid., p. 106.
- ⁸Richard I. Evans, Dialogue with Erich Fromm (New York, 1966), p. 58.
- ⁹Ibid., p. 59.
- ¹⁰Helen Walker Puner, Freud: His Life and His Mind (Dell ed., New York, 1959), p. 10.
- ¹¹Fromm, Sigmund Freud's Mission, p. 105.
- ¹²Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 60.
- ¹³Puner, op. cit. (above, note 10), pp. 156ff. Here the author recounts Freud's emphasis on Jewish tradition in rearing his children.
- ¹⁴Bakan, op. cit. (above, note 5), p. ix.
- ¹⁵Puner, op. cit. (above, note 10), pp. 48-49.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 173.
- ¹⁷Fromm, Sigmund Freud's Mission, p. 114.
- ¹⁸See Puner, op. cit. (above, note 10), p. 156.
- ¹⁹Joseph Wershba, "An Interview with Erich Fromm," New York Post Magazine, April 22, 1962, p. 12.



- 20 Erich Fromm, Man for Himself (New York, 1947), p. 49.
- 21 Fromm, Sigmund Freud's Mission, p. 115.
- 22 Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 12.
- 23 Kenneth Burke, Permanence and Change (Los Altos, Cal., 1954), p. 18.
- 24 Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom (New York, 1941), p. 14.
- 25 Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 14.
- 26 Ibid., p. 15.
- 27 Ibid., p. 17.
- 28 Fromm, Sigmund Freud's Mission, p. 2.
- 29 Ibid., p. 3.
- 30 Fromm, Escape from Freedom, p. 15.
- 31 Ibid., p. 14.
- 32 Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 12.
- 33 Evans, op. cit. (above, note 8), p. 2.
- 34 Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 72.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid., p. 73.
- 37 Evans, op. cit. (above, note 8), pp. 3-4.
- 38 Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 58.
- 39 Ibid., p. 57.
- 40 Ibid., p. 59.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid., p. 60.
- 44 Ibid., p. 82.



⁴⁵Ibid., p. 83.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 84.

⁴⁷Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 88.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 89.

⁵⁰Erich Fromm, The Heart of Man (New York, 1968), p. 95.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid., p. 97.

⁵³Ibid., p. 101.

⁵⁴Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 43.

⁵⁵Fromm, The Heart of Man, p. 50.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 50-51.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 46-47.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 37.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 40.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 62.

⁶²Ibid., p. 76.

⁶³Ibid., p. 88.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 85.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 89.

⁶⁶Joseph Nuttin, Psychoanalysis and Personality: A Dynamic Theory of Normal Personality, trans. George Lamb, (Mentor-Omega ed., New York, 1953), p. 49.

⁶⁷Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 52.

⁶⁸See Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving (New York, 1956), p. 37 and Evans, *op. cit.* (above, note 8), p. 2.



- 69 Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 52.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Ibid., p. 16.
- 72 Ibid., pp. 93-94.
- 73 Erich Fromm, The Forgotten Language (New York, 1951), p. 7.
- 74 Ibid., p. 10.
- 75 Nuttin, op. cit. (above, note 66), p. 51.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 Fromm, Escape from Freedom, p. viii.
- 78 Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 113.
- 79 Clara Thompson, Psychoanalysis: Evolution and Development. A Review of Theory and Therapy (New York, 1950), p. 131.
- 80 Evans, op. cit. (above, note 8), p. 9.
- 81 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
- 82 Ibid., p. 10.
- 83 Thompson, op. cit. (above, note 79), pp. 195-196.
- 84 Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 64.
- 85 Ibid., p. 65.



CHAPTER IV

FROMM'S VISION OF MARX

Fromm has discovered in Karl Marx's writings the most intense and pervasive vision of his life. This vision is impregnated "by a passionate, moral conviction and by the uncompromising search for the truth and courage to express it."¹ Fromm finds in Marx "the rare blending of the greatest penetrating reason and of the highest quality of affect."² While Freud gave Fromm a critical methodology, Marx, as a thinker "of much greater depth and scope than Freud,"³ could offer Fromm a much more complete prophetic vision.⁴ Marx penetrates to the heart of Fromm's need to know. "Freud was a liberal reformer; Marx, a radical revolutionary."⁵ Marx shares with Freud the same critical mood,⁶ love of truth,⁷ and humanism,⁸ but Marx goes further in fulfilling Fromm's prophetic ideal. Marx's philosophy of protest is "imbued with faith in man, in his capacity to liberate himself and to realize his potentialities."⁹ This positive protest strikes out "against man's alienation, his loss of himself and his transformation into a thing; it is a movement against the dehumanization and automatization of man inherent in the development of Western industrialism."¹⁰

Fromm sees Marx as a humanist-moralist for whom there is the fundamental idea "that State (society) and spiritual values cannot be divorced from each other; that politics and moral values are indivis-



ible."¹¹ This moral protest Fromm traces to the influence on Marx of the messianism of the Old Testament prophets, the Greco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian traditions, the Renaissance humanism, the eighteenth century Enlightenment, and nineteenth century socialism.¹²

Fromm considers himself not only as Marx's prophet (spokesman) but also as Marx's re-interpreter. "The misunderstanding and the misinterpretation of Marx's writings are paralleled only by the misinterpretation of his personality."¹³ Sidney Hook points out the secular religiosity of Marxism: "Marxism like Christianity has its Bible, its councils, its schisms; its orthodoxies and its heresies; its exegeses, profane and sacred."¹⁴ Fromm's prophetic duty is to condemn the narrowing heresy of positivistic-mechanistic thinking and to present a transcendent exegesis of Marx which "will be a source of new insight and hope."¹⁵

The revisionist "re-discovery" of Marx, according to Fromm, points to the beginning of a renaissance of Marxist thought.

The effects of this renaissance is, first of all, to cease making a dead saint of Marx and to restore him to the position of a living thinker. Secondly, it tends to cease cutting Marx into two parts: the "young Marx," still an idealist and the "mature Marx," mainly or exclusively interested in economics.¹⁶

Fromm explains the popular misunderstanding and distortion of Marx as the result of ignorance due to a failure to read him or at least to read him thoroughly enough and also due to the complexity of Marx's thought and the extensiveness of his writings. A second reason for the distortion of Marx's theories arises from his identification with Russian communism and the devil image it conjures up.



In reviewing the specific influence Marx had upon Fromm, this chapter will discuss (1) Marx the man, (2) his method of dialectical materialism, (3) the problems of consciousness and the social structure and the use of force, (4) his concept of man, (5) his concept of alienation, (6) his concept of socialism, and (7) the continuity of the young and old Marx.

Marx The Man

Fromm concedes that the commonly held picture of Marx is that of a lonely man, isolated from his fellows, aggressive, arrogant, and authoritarian.¹⁷ Such an image Fromm rejects as a distortion and cites the following evidence to prove that Marx was actually just the opposite. Marx's marriage to Jenny von Westphalen, the daughter of a feudal Prussian family and a descendant of one of the oldest Scottish families, was filled with unwavering love and mutual happiness. Despite their differences in family background, their life of continuing material poverty and sickness, there was between them such a devotion, possible only to two people with an extraordinary capacity for love.¹⁸

Marx as a father was free of domination over his children. His productive love was reflected in their long walks together, in his story telling, and the family reading ritual where annually all of Shakespeare, Homer, the Nibelungenlied, Don Quixote, and the Arabian Nights, were read in their original language.¹⁹

Fromm describes Marx's friendship with Frederick Engels as "perhaps even more unique than his marriage and his relationship to his children."²⁰ Again Fromm emphasizes Marx's great capacity for love. During Marx's thirty-nine year friendship with Engels, Fromm points out:



There was hardly ever any friction in the relationship between these two men, no competitiveness, but a sense of comradeship rooted in as deep a love for each other as one ever might find between two men.²¹

Marx is for Fromm the ideal man--productive, nonalienated, independent, a "humanist through and through."²² Marx becomes the epitome of the prophet--"he was what he thought."²³ He could not tolerate sham or deception, totally rejecting dishonest rationalization or any kind of insincerity.

Fromm's admiration for Marx springs as much from Marx's critical turn of mind as from his humanism. Fromm quotes Marx's favorite maxims: "'Nothing human is alien to me' and 'one must doubt of everything.'"²⁴ In a letter to his friend, Arnold Ruge, Marx wrote that what was needed was "merciless criticism of everything existing, merciless in two senses: this criticism must not take fright at its own conclusions and must not shrink from a collision with the powers that be."²⁵

Marx's humanism gave him a breadth of vision which made him a "true internationalist who had no preference for any nation, and who was critical of all, never respecting the taboos of national feeling."²⁶ This same internationalism has guided Fromm's thinking in rejecting the incestuous ties of blood and soil to embrace a universal brotherhood of man.

The ultimate prophetic characteristic of Marx is his radical vision, which has so attracted Fromm. Robert C. Tucker describes Marx's radicalism:

The radical is not simply a rebel but a visionary. What inspires his rebellion against the world as it stands is his vision of an alternative universe, a



right social order. His negation of what exists proceeds from an underlying affirmation, an idealized image of the world as it ought to be. Indeed, it is the very perfection of his alternative universe that explains the depth and totality, i.e., the radicalness, of his act of world-repudiation.²⁷

Whenever Fromm mentions Marx's name, one senses a glow of admiration that bespeaks the awe Marx generates in Fromm. Fromm's praise is lavish:

He [Marx] represented the flowering of Western humanity, . . . a man with an uncompromising sense of truth, penetrating to the very essence of reality, . . . He represented the Western tradition in its best features: its faith in reason and in the progress of man. . . . the very concept of man which was at the center of his thinking. The man who is much and has little; the man who is rich because he has need of his fellow man.²⁸

Marx's Method: Dialectical Historicism

From Freud Fromm learned a psychological methodology, from Marx he learned a method of historical and social criticism which was to give him the primary rhetorical devices he needed for his prophetic role. Much negative criticism has been leveled at Marx for his "materialism." This criticism Fromm answers by countering that the "materialism" of Marx is in reality "spiritual existentialism in secular language."²⁹ When Marx calls for a "materialistic approach, what he is actually saying is that social protest must be concrete rather than abstract, in order to achieve the "spiritual emancipation of man"³⁰ caught in the web of economic determinism. Marx's goal was "restituting him [man] in his human wholeness, of enabling him to find unity and harmony with his fellow man and nature."³¹ Marx's ultimate concern is



"essentially prophetic Messianism in the language of the nineteenth century."³²

Although Marx's concern was spiritual, his method was distinctly concrete. This was in rejection of Hegel's idealism. He wrote:

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men imagine, conceive, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men and on the basis of their real life process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process.³³

Marx's method is frequently referred to as "historical materialism" or "dialectical materialism"; however, according to Fromm,³⁴ neither term was ever used by Marx. His method does rely on a theory of history, does reject abstract postulates of philosophy in favor of exposing existing social conditions,³⁵ and does employ the Hegelian principle of dialectic.

Marx's methodology appears all the more humanistic when one realizes that he believed that there must be an "understanding of history based on the fact that men are 'the authors and actors of their history.'"³⁶ Marxist history thus can be seen as strongly anthropocentric: "Marx's fundamental idea: man makes his own history; he is his own creator."³⁷ This divinization of man, the self-creating being, lays the groundwork for Marx's faith in human progress and establishes a logical principle upon which the prophet can proceed to instruct men how best to create themselves.

Marx's existential concentration on the "now" prompted his concern for the immediate causes of the present human condition. He



discovered that the mode of production is the causal factor: "The way man produces determines his thinking and desires."³⁸ Marx, unlike other eighteenth and nineteenth century writers "does not consider capitalism to be the outcome of human nature and capitalistic motivation the universal motive of man."³⁹ For both Marx and Fromm, man must seek alternative ways of realizing himself and reject the dehumanizing of capitalism.

Because the mode of production is fundamental in determining man's condition, Marx's theory of labor holds a central position in his scheme of social criticism. Fromm summarizes Marx's theory on labor:

Labor is the factor which mediates between man and nature: labor is man's effort to regulate his metabolism with nature. Labor is the expression of human life and through labor man's relationship to nature is changed, hence through labor man changes himself.⁴⁰

The third element in Marx's method, dialectic, has given to Fromm's own method its essential form and style. Fromm describes Marx's Hegelian based dialectic of history: "The evolution of man, in all history, is characterized by man's struggle with nature."⁴¹ Thus, "history, according to Marx, is determined in its course by continuous contradiction."⁴² Marx's own statement of the dialectical principle of social organization repeats the idea of struggle: "In all political economy we find that the hostile opposition of interests, struggle, and warfare, are recognized as the basis of social organization."⁴³

Bertell Ollman points out the universality of Marx's dialectic, as well as its application to specific historical periods:

. . . for Marx any factor is a product of historical



development. The dialectic tie which finds value, labor, capital and interest in Capital only holds good for a single period in world history, Thus, by uncovering the connection between these and other social factors Marx is also displaying their real historical relations. And, conversely, in writing history all developments are conceived of as the temporal relations of the factors concerned.⁴⁴

In addition to the principles of struggle and contradiction in Marx's dialectic, Fromm suggests the principle of alternatives:

It can be shown that Marx—like Spinoza and Freud—was neither a determinist nor a nondeterminist. He was an alternativeist. Man at every step of his individual and historical life is confronted with a number of "real possibilities." These possibilities, as such, are determined, being the result of the totality of the circumstances under which he lives, but man has a choice between alternatives as long as he is aware of them and of the consequences of his decision early enough so that his personality is not yet completely inclined toward what is against his human interest; once this has happened, the time for choice has irrevocably passed. Freedom, in this sense, is not "acting in the awareness of necessity," but is based on awareness of real possibilities and their consequences, in contrast to belief in fictitious and unreal possibilities which are an opiate, and destroy the possibility of freedom.⁴⁵

Sidney Hook comments on Marx's revision of Hegel and his dependence on Aristotle:

In turning Hegel, to use Marx's own words, "right side up again," Marx was definitely returning to the position of one whom Hegel had turned "wrong side down"—Aristotle. If Marx's philosophical method was Hegelian, his fundamental metaphysical starting point, as Engels admits, was Aristotelian—an Aristotelianism saturated with temporalism, freed from the dogma of fixed substantial forms and the poetry of the Prime Mover. Dialectical materialism has its basis, but not its fulfillment in Aristotle's naturalism.⁴⁶



The Problem of Consciousness and Social Structure

Although Freud's name is most commonly associated with the idea of the unconscious, Marx too was acutely aware of the importance of unconscious motivation. Fromm attributes this awareness to Marx's reading of Spinoza. Marx's interest in the unconscious focuses on the function of the unconscious in determining the social structure and vice versa. As Fromm states:

While Freud was mainly concerned with individual repression, the student of Marxist social psychology will be most concerned with the "social unconscious." The concept refers to that repression of inner reality which is common to large groups The unconscious, like the consciousness, is also a social phenomenon, determined by the "social filter" which does not permit most real human experiences to ascend from unconsciousness to consciousness. This social filter consists mainly of (a) language, (b) logic, and (c) social taboos: it is covered up by ideologies (rationalizations) which are subjectively nothing but socially produced and shared fictions. This approach to consciousness and the repression can demonstrate empirically the validity of Marx's statement that "social existence determines consciousness."⁴⁷

Marx's full statement is: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines his [sic] existence, but on the contrary, it is their social existence that determines consciousness."⁴⁸ Society, for Marx, is the purveyor of ideology and its distortion of reality. Fromm explains: "Marx believed that most of what men consciously think is 'false' consciousness, is ideology and rationalization; that the true mainspring of man's actions are unconscious to him."⁴⁹

Marx's principle of the unconscious as a control factor in the structuring of society contributed to Fromm's theory of "social character." This analytic concept will be discussed in a later chapter as



part of Fromm's strategy of unmasking.

The exposure of the unconscious serves as the primary objective also for Marx: "For Marx the aim of life is liberation from bondage, and the way to this aim is the overcoming of illusion and the full use of our active powers."⁵⁰ Fromm continues, "For Marx, awareness of illusions is the condition for freedom and human action."⁵¹

Marx's often quoted description of religion as the "opiate of the people" has alienated him from the general religious community. But, as Fromm notes, Marx's attack on religion comes not so much from an anti-God motive as from an attempt to protect man from his illusions. As Marx himself states:

The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of men, is a demand for their real happiness. The call to abandon their illusions about their condition is a call to abandon a condition which requires illusions. The criticism of religion is, therefore, the embryonic criticism of this vale of tears of which religion is the halo.⁵²

Fromm continues his defense of Marx:

. . . Marx, like Hegel and like many others, expresses his concern for man's soul, not in theistic, but in philosophical language.

Marx fought against religion exactly because it is alienated, and does not satisfy the true needs of man. Marx's fight against God is, in reality, a fight against the idol that is called God. Already as a young man he wrote as the motto for his dissertation "Not those are godless who have contempt for the gods of the masses but those who attribute the opinions of the masses to the gods." Marx's atheism is the most advanced form of rational mysticism, closer to Meister Eckhart or to Zen Buddhism than are most of those fighters for God and religion who accuse him of "godlessness."⁵³

Marx is also concerned with the relationship of consciousness to language, as it creates selective perception and thus influences



behavior.

Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness, as it exists for other men, and for that reason is really beginning to exist for me personally as well; for language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men. Where there exists a relationship, it exists for me Consciousness is therefore from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all.⁵⁴

Marx describes the incipient growth of consciousness as the individual's immediate perception of his environment as a "completely alien, all-powerful and unassailable force."⁵⁵ This initial stage of consciousness Marx terms "a purely animal consciousness of nature,"⁵⁶ which is "determined by the form of society and vice versa."⁵⁷

The Use of Force

Marx's advocacy of force to overthrow existing governments has made Marxism a devil term among Western democracies. Fromm defends Marx's right to this position while rejecting the notion himself. Since Marxism and world revolution are so closely identified, Fromm seems to feel that Marx must be defended in this matter of forceful revolution lest the entire body of Marxist doctrine be refused a hearing because of this one principle.

Admitting that Marx does advocate the use of force, Fromm legitimizes the idea by association with pious linkages. Rather than a Marxist idea, revolution by force "has been the idea of bourgeois society during the last three hundred years." As a matter of historical record, "Western democracy is the daughter of the great English, French, and American Revolutions."⁵⁸ History also bears witness that the West has



been very selective in condemning forceful revolution. The question has not been resolved on moral principle but rather as a matter of political advantage. Condemnation or praise over the use of force has been determined by who uses force against whom.⁵⁹

In trying to redeem Marx, Fromm is quick to point out that Marx explicitly excluded England and the United States as targets for forceful revolution. He continues his argument by emphasizing that Marx improved the middle-class view of revolution by basing his theory on historical evolution.

Marx saw that political force cannot produce anything for which there has been no preparation in the social and political process. Hence that force, if at all necessary, can give, so to speak, only the last push to a development which has virtually already taken place, but it can never produce anything truly new. "Force," he said, "is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one."⁶⁰

Thus Marx is transformed from an advocate of violence to a chronicler of an inevitable historical evolution.

Marx's Concept of Man

Like so many other facets of Marx's philosophy, his concept of man has strong Hegelian roots. Acknowledging that man's nature is a "recognizable and ascertainable entity,"⁶¹ Marx denies that it is an "abstraction inherent in each separate individual."⁶² Man possesses certain constant (fixed) drives, i.e., sex, hunger, etc., and certain relative appetites which "are not an integral part of human nature, but which 'owe their origin to certain social structures and certain conditions of production and communication.'"⁶³

Marx distinguishes between "human nature in general" and "human



nature as modified in each historical period."⁶⁴ Human nature, for Marx, is potentiality, but a specified potentiality. This conception of potentiality arises from Marx's dialectical analysis which perceives the problem of human nature as the relationship between essence and existence. "In the process of existence," says Fromm, "the essence is realized, and at the same time, existing means a return to the essence."⁶⁵ This dialectical orientation pictures man's growth in a circular pattern spiraling upward. The principle of unity and self-identity within the process of change is, according to Hegel, a process in which "everything copes with its inherent contradiction and unfolds itself as a result."⁶⁶

Fromm describes Marx's historical perspective on human nature:

Man's potential, for Marx, is a given potential; man is, as it were, the human raw material which, as such, cannot be changed, just as the brain structure has remained the same since the dawn of history. Yet, man does change in the course of history; he develops himself; he transforms himself, he is the product of history; since he makes his history, he is his own product. History is the history of man's self-realization; it is nothing but the self-creation of man through the process of his work and his production: "the whole of what is called world history is nothing but the creation of man by human labor, and the emergence of nature for man; he therefore has the evident and irrefutable proof of his self-creation, of his own origins."⁶⁷

Man defined as a self-realizing entity is alive, according to Marx, "only inasmuch as he is productive, inasmuch as he grasps the world outside of himself in the act of expressing his own specific human powers, and of grasping the world with these powers."⁶⁸ Marx's concept of productivity Fromm links with Spinoza and his divinization of man. And as a logical conclusion Fromm says: "In this productive process,



man realizes his own essence, he returns to his own essence, which in theological language is nothing other than his return to God."⁶⁹ Again Fromm tries to legitimize Marx by a pious linkage with traditional Judaeo-Christian theology.

To understand Marx's concept of activity, it is critical to understand the relationship between subject and object. In this regard, Marx speaks of " . . . spiritual senses, the practical senses (desiring, loving, etc.), in brief, human sensibility and the human characteristic of the senses which can only come into being through the existence of its object, through humanized nature."⁷⁰ In essence, Marx calls for a humanizing relationship between the "self" and the "other" (which embraces the total, personal, and material environment of the self) based on knowing and loving. "In effect, I can only relate myself in a human way to a thing when the thing is related in a human way to man."⁷¹ Such a relation represents the antithesis of human self-alienation and the assumption of true human nature, man's return to himself.

Fromm explains this dialectical development of man as a continuation of Zen Buddhist, Goetheian, and Hegelian thought:

What is common to them is the idea that man overcomes the subject-object split; the object is an object, yet it ceases to be an object, and in this new approach man becomes one with the object, although he and it remain two. Man, in relating himself to the objective world humanly, overcomes self-alienation.⁷²

Relating oneself productively to the world becomes an act of self-creation which in turn makes man free and independent.⁷³ This explanation of the subject-object relation forms the basis for Fromm's



theory of the art of loving.

The interrelated complexity of Marx's thought becomes more evident when one observes how Marx links the concept of work to self-realization: "Labor is, in the first place, a process in which both man and nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material reactions between himself and nature."⁷⁴

Fromm summarizes Marx's notion of labor in the following two passages:

Labor is the self-expression of man, an expression of his individual physical and mental powers. In this process of genuine activity man develops himself, becomes himself; work is not only a means to an end--the product--but an end in itself, the meaningful expression of human energy; hence work is enjoyable.⁷⁵

and:

The central theme of Marx is the transformation of alienated meaningless labor into productive, free labor, not the better payment of alienated labor by a private or "abstract" state capitalism.⁷⁶

In the latter quotation Fromm absolves Marx of his economic fixation and humanizes his socialist goals. It also reiterates Marx's belief that the means of production determines man's desires and thinking and thus determines what man is and what he will become.

Marx's Concept of Alienation

Lewis Coser and Irving Howe, discussing the rhetorical images of socialism, claim that "no Marxist concept has been more fruitful (as a polemic) than that of 'alienation.'"⁷⁷ This term whose history



extends back to Medieval ecclesiastical jurisprudence, offers the polemicist a wide range of attack. As a dialectical concept, alienation fits well into the Marxist system of alternativism:

For Marx, as for Hegel, the concept of alienation is based on the distinction between existence and essence, on the fact that man's existence is alienated from his essence, that in reality he is not what he potentially is, or, to put it differently, that he is not what he ought to be, and that he ought to be that which he could be.⁷⁸

Fromm describes Marx's understanding of the term:

Alienation (or "estrangement") means, for Marx, that man does not experience himself as the acting agent in his grasp of the world, but that the world (nature, others, and he himself) remain alien to him. They stand above and against him as objects, even though they may be objects of his own creation. Alienation is essentially experiencing the world and oneself passively, receptively, as the subject separated from the object.⁷⁹

Marx assigns the cause of alienation to the social and political circumstances of the capitalistic division of labor:

Alienation then, is, for Marx, the sickness of man. It is not a new sickness, since it starts necessarily with the beginning of division of labor, that is, of civilization transcending primitive society; it is most strongly developed in the working class, yet it is a sickness which everybody suffers.⁸⁰

Fromm wishes to correct the popular notion that Marx directed his criticism of society at the mal-distribution of wealth. According to Fromm's reading of Marx, his purpose is to end alienation and its dehumanizing effects on man.⁸¹ The capitalistic mode of production reduces human labor to an abstract thing. "Labor is a commodity If the life of man is to be a commodity, then slavery must be acknow-



ledged."⁸² In such slavery man becomes a machine,⁸³ alienated from his "species-being," from himself and his fellow man.⁸⁴ Alienation perverts human values and creates imaginary appetites which feed the "commodity fetish."⁸⁵ In the end the rich but alienated society can accomplish only the destruction of the worker.⁸⁶ Marx writes:

The most opulent state of society, which is an ideal, yet one which is gradually approached and which is at least the aim of political economy and of civil society, is a state of stationary misery for the workers.⁸⁶

Since a later chapter will analyze in detail Fromm's concept of alienation as derived from Marx, this cursory description of alienation must stand for now.

Marx's Ideal of Socialism

Fromm summarizes Marx's socialist program as a "protest against the alienation of man."⁸⁷ His was not to be a "welfare state,"⁸⁸ but a "society which serves the needs of man"⁸⁹--real and not illusory needs. "Socialism (in its Marxist and other forms) returned to the idea of the 'good society' as the condition for the realization of man's spiritual needs."⁹⁰

Socialism's aim, Fromm says, "is a reconstruction of society in such a way as to make it the basis for man's true return to himself, without the presence of those authoritarian forces which restrict and impoverish man's mind."⁹¹

Marx's new society seeks to improve simultaneously the economic, political, and intellectual activities of man.⁹² Fromm develops the idea of Marx's existentialism:



. . . Marx, while sharing the aims of Spinoza and Goethe, added a new dimension to humanism. He recognized that education alone will not transform man. He saw that man is to a large extent determined by his practice of life, and that if man wants to change he has to change the very circumstances which imprison him. In Capitalism, so Marx thought, man is made to be a person who has much, who uses much, but who is little.⁹³

The "good society" proposed by Marx's humanism works for man's freedom, dignity, and activity, in the belief that all men are one and that man can find a new harmony with man and nature.⁹⁴

Fromm shares with Marx the assumption that society can be built according to certain social "laws." Egbert and Persons describe this "scientific" socialism:

To this philosophy Marx and his followers have given the name of "scientific" socialism because they believe that Marx discovered laws of economic and social change of such validity that general predictions as to the forthcoming development of the fundamental economic conditions of society can be made on the basis of them, and made with the precision of natural science. Because Marxians believe that man is free to act only within the framework of these laws, freedom consists in understanding how the Marxian laws of history and the laws of nature operate, and in acting accordingly. However, since Marx's own time there have been disagreements as to his views concerning the exact degree to which man is determined by the laws of history, for Marx expressed himself differently under different circumstances.⁹⁵

With regard to the differences of opinion concerning historical determinism, Fromm voices a strong opposition to the positivist position of strict determinism. He chooses to interpret Marxian "laws" in terms of alternatives which plot a dichotomous course for mankind.

Fromm states a summary of Marx's ideal of socialism:

For Marx, socialism meant the social order which



permits the return of man to himself, the identity between existence and essence, the overcoming of the separateness and antagonism between subject and object, the humanization of nature; it meant a world in which man is no longer a stranger among strangers, but is in his world, where he is at home.⁹⁶

Continuity in Marx's Thought

To make Marx's early writings acceptable to an audience which knows only what Fromm describes as the "distortions of the older Marx," Fromm must link the young and old Marx as one. His arguments follow two basic lines. First, admitting the classic interpretation of Marx simply as an economic revolutionary, Fromm blames the positivist-mechanist influence especially of Lenin and Bucharin on the rejection of Marx's idealism and religious humanism. Secondly, Fromm appeals to the resurrection of the humanistic Marx created by the contemporary revisionist theory. This humanistic interpretation of Marx, according to Fromm, is closely allied with the strong anti-Soviet position taken by many scholars in Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and East Germany. Fromm mentions as some of the most promising humanist work done in the United States, Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution (1941) and Raya Dunayevskaya, Marxism and Freedom (1958).

While postulating a continuity in Marx's writings, Fromm does not reject the idea of change within his work.⁹⁷ Marx's later rejection of Hegelian idealism resulted in the change of some concepts. Granting that the older Marx became more discouraged, Fromm recognizes that his language grew less enthusiastic and eschatological. But Fromm holds fast to the notion that the core of the philosophy developed by the



young Marx remained unchanged in the older Marx. Fromm's ultimate premise is: To understand any of Marx, one must understand the young Marx.

Conclusion

This then is the vision Fromm beheld in Marx. It came with the same intensity that Moses experienced before the burning bush. As a consequence of his encounter with Marx, Fromm's entire life has been altered. His mission has been to translate Marx's ideas and ideals to the world. In the fullest sense of the term, Fromm has become Marx's nehbi, his prophet.