

classes from the socio-ethical angle, it can be said that progressive trends of social development are embodied in that class, in whose activity historical necessity and the demands of evolving social reality find their expression. Regressive trends are embodied in that class, whose action reflects a conservative attitude to historical necessity and the demands of evolving social reality. Society, in which there exists, on the one hand, a class reflecting the essential forces of human growth and advance, and, on the other, a class which obstructs the actualization of those forces, testifies to the existence of the aforesaid contradiction and a gulf between man's essential nature and his existence. This contradiction between the individual's changing social needs and the social structure can be removed or sublated in a society which is totally committed to the realization of all its progressive potential, and it is resolved in classless society under communism, which represents, according to Marx, the principle of constant, truly humane development, the constant realization of those opportunities which emerge in the process of historical development.*

* See: Karl Marx. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, p. 114.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF CONCRETE HISTORICAL INTERACTION BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

1. The Neo-Freudian Conception of Social Character

The view that in the modern age, characterized by social dynamics which touch upon the destiny of every individual, psychological problems become political problems and "private disorder reflects more directly than before the disorder of the whole, and the cure of personal disorder depends more directly than before on the cure of the general disorder"* is widely subscribed to in the West nowadays by sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists and historians.

The tendency to interpret and present the overall crisis of the capitalist social system first and foremost as a psychological crisis of the individual, referred to as "dehumanization", "depersonalization", "total alienation and self-alienation", the "collapse of the individual's autonomy", etc., can be explained by the fact that socio-economic contradictions in modern highly industrialized capitalist society find their most striking expression in the psychological crisis of the individual. Typically enough these trends in bourgeois social philosophy and the endeavour on the part of academics to provide a psychological interpretation of social reality are not confined to analyses of the present situation. A number of social scientists call for

* Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization. A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, New York, 1956, p. XI.

wider application of this approach to the study of social phenomena. The American psychologist Arthur Brodbeck for example notes with regret that "we are accustomed to explaining history in terms of crises of a physical nature, as well as in terms of waves of economic problems and physical disease, but we have not yet learned to interpret history in terms of psychological maladies that rise and fall over the course of time".* Fromm's theory which represents an attempt to apply a purely psychological approach to the interpretation of the essence of historical development served to reflect the need for an interpretation of those social processes at work within society.

In many of his writings Fromm, who attributes tremendous importance to the subjective factor in history, turns directly to analysis of various socio-psychological phenomena as a means of explaining the historical process. Against an overall background of subjective idealist and metaphysical conceptions of historical development Fromm's conception stands out by virtue of its inclusion of certain elements of scientific analysis. One of these is his concern with a whole number of important socio-psychological problems—study of basic principles for the socio-psychological definition of the individual (his social character), the role and significance of unconscious factors in men's historical activity (the "social unconscious"), the analysis of the mechanism for the formation of the "unconscious" ("repression")—the correct resolution of which could make a definite contribution to our understanding of the socio-psychological conditions pertaining to the functioning and development of society.

Marxists have never denied the role of socio-psychological factors in history, but at the same time they have remained extremely critical of all conceptions which either attached too much importance to these factors or implied

* *Culture and Social Character*. Ed. by Seymour Martin Lipset and Leo Lowenthal, Glencoe, 1961, p. 44.

an incorrect—from the Marxist viewpoint—interpretation of the latter. While raising no objection to Fromm's formulation of socio-psychological problems relating to the patterns underlying the psychological interaction of man and society, Marxists find themselves unable to accept the solutions to these problems which Fromm puts forward, his abstract psychological interpretations.

The groundlessness of the basic Freudian subjective idealist methodology which Fromm uses in his theoretical searchings comes particularly clearly to the fore in his absorbing interpretation of the concept "social character". In his analysis of the psychological aspect of various concrete historical societies Fromm draws the conclusion that there is a constant feature in each of them. Individuals in any society, despite certain individual psychological differences, always, in his opinion, have something in common when it comes to their psychological properties, and thus constitute typical representatives of the given society. This common element is what Fromm refers to as "social character",* by which he understands "the nucleus of the character structure which is shared by most members of the same culture in contradistinction to the individual character in which people belonging to the same culture differ from each other".**

In Fromm's view there exists a common character structure in each society which is intrinsic to it regardless of its social nature, a structure that is common to the majority of groups and classes in that society. This character Fromm sees as the psychological core of the individual which shapes not only his behaviour, but also his thought patterns, emotions, indeed his whole perception of the external world and relationship to that world. Fromm maintains that the character system can be considered "the human substitute for the instinctive apparatus of the ani-

* See: Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 83.

** Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, p. 78.

mal"³ the adaptative role of which possesses major significance for the individual.

In so far as the individual's behaviour, as Fromm sees it, has to correspond to the demands of society, the main function of social character is "to shape the energies of the members of society in such a way that their behaviour is not a matter of conscious decision as to whether or not to follow the social pattern, but one of *wanting to act as they have to act* and at the same time finding gratification in acting according to the requirements of the culture".⁴ In other words, the function of social character is to "mould and channel human energy within a given society for the purpose of the continued functioning of this society".⁵

It is precisely because of this that Fromm believes social character as a psychological factor capable of enhancing the stabilization of society's functioning. For the individual as such, the significance of social character consists, according to Fromm, in the fact that it allows him to adapt to the requirements of society as effectively as possible involving the least psychological disruption.

Social character takes shape on the one hand under the influence of such social factors as the education system, religion, literature and art and on the other in the process of upbringing children within the family. The latter fact is particularly important because the family is seen by Fromm as the "*psychic agency of society*, the institution which has the function of transmitting the requirements of society to the growing child".⁶ The direct influence of the social character of the parents themselves, which has already taken shape, and methods of upbringing sanctioned by the given culture are those factors which, according to Fromm, enable the family with

* Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself*, p. 59.

** Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 79.

*** Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, p. 79.

**** Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 83.

a fair measure of success to accomplish the task of moulding children's characters in such a way that they are acceptable to the society in which they live.

It should be pointed out here that Fromm's ideas on the role of childhood in relation to individual character formation have undergone certain changes in recent years, as is borne out by his latest book written in conjunction with his pupil and fellow psychologist Michael Maccoby, namely *Social Character in a Mexican Village. A Socio-psychoanalytic Study*. In it are analyzed the results of many years' sociological research into the types of social character in a Mexican village. Fromm rejects Freud's over-categorical assertion to the effect that man's character is shaped fully and once and for all during his early period of development—by five or six years of age—and does not undergo any changes afterwards. Without denying out of hand the important role of that period for character formation, Fromm, however, at the same time admits the possibility of later changes in character after childhood, which he links with the influence exerted on character by constantly changing external conditions.

Fromm on frequent occasions repeats the idea that man is above all a social being and that "the structure of society and the function of the individual in the social structure may be considered to determine the content of social character".⁷ At first glance statements of this kind appear to reflect Fromm's materialist standpoint with regard to the question of the relationship between the individual and society. However, if what actually lies behind these assertions is perused in more detail it soon becomes clear that Fromm's arguments are contradictory and inconsistent. When it comes to the psychological implications of the concept of social character, as reflected in the concrete historical individual, Fromm qualifies character as "the specific form in which human energy is shaped by

* Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, pp. 82-83.

the dynamic adaptation of human needs to the particular mode of existence of a given society".* Consequently social character emerges as little other than the result of the dynamic adaptation of human nature to the structure of a specific society.

The form of this adaptation and therefore social character are variable and are determined by the type of social structure. When analyzing the history of human society, Fromm postulates the existence of the following types of social character: receptive, exploitative, hoarding and marketing types. Specific psychological mechanisms and methods by means of which individuals resolve for themselves the problem of human existence—masochistic, sadistic, destructivist and conformist—underlie each of these different types of character. Fromm refers to these mechanisms as defence mechanisms—compulsive reactions on the part of the individual to a frustrating situation, the essential feature of which is that it does not allow the individual to realize his natural potential within the given social structure.

By means of psychological mechanisms such as masochism and sadism man attains illusions of independence and power, while either voluntarily submitting to or on the contrary dominating something or someone. Feelings of powerlessness, helplessness or a lack of confidence in the face of the existential problem can be compensated for by destructivism, the individual's urge to destroy or annihilate all which exists outside himself as the outside cause of his inner anxiety. The individual himself can in the final analysis be the apogee of destructivist mechanisms. Conformism is man's rejection of his own ego through which he lets himself be absorbed into the mass, into the crowd. These methods for resolving the existential problem are seen by Fromm as universal. However, the individual's option for one or another method is utter-

* Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, p. 305.

ly predetermined by society. Fromm concludes that social conditions always lead to the predominance of one or another type of character. The receptive orientation is, for example, typical of feudal society, the exploitative and hoarding orientation became widespread under the capitalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and finally the marketing orientation is the most typical of modern capitalist society.

Insofar as each of these character orientations is merely a special apparatus for the individual's adaptation to society, his specific reaction to those social conditions in which it is impossible for human nature to come into its own, so each one of them proves, in Fromm's opinion, unproductive, since it fails effectively to solve the problem of human existence.

The only reliable and reasonable means of resolving the problem of human existence is, according to Fromm, through love and the productive character orientation rooted in it. Fromm sees mature love as the union between the individual and the world, the individual and another of his kind, in which his integrity and individuality are preserved. The main elements of love for Fromm are "care, responsibility, respect and knowledge".* It represents a method for resolving the problem of human existence which does not prevent the individual from finding his true inner self and coming into his own. Fromm would have us believe that in the history of mankind there has not existed a type of social organization in which social character of the productive orientation has been predominant.

As he sees it all non-productive historical types of social character which have existed to date embody the conservative psychological force in history, which works to consolidate the functioning of specific social structures.

* Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, New York, 1962, p. 26.

They are all authoritarian in structure since the inner, subconscious regulator of their behaviour is the "authoritarian conscience" which constitutes the internalization of all kinds of "external authority", sets of social norms, or the demands made by a specific society.

On the other hand the creative psychological principle, which changes and transforms social conditions, overthrows all external authorities and incorporates, in Fromm's opinion, the productive character with its "humanist conscience", the "inner voice" of human nature.

Both the unproductive character and the productive, as viewed by Fromm, play the part of active psychological forces influencing the historical process. They differ only insofar as the activity of the first trend is in the direction of stabilization and consolidation of the existing social structure and the second leads to change and negation of that structure.

This extra-historical, non-class approach to the problem of man's essence explains the one-sided and excessively psychological slant of Fromm's socio-historical system for the typology of personalities.

In his study of the relationship between social character and the society which engenders it Fromm concludes that in constant social conditions social character always performs a stabilizing function. While ascribing to social character a mainly stabilizing role in the historical process, Fromm at the same time acknowledges that in specific conditions it can play a negative, destructive role. This occurs when social conditions undergo substantial change and a situation arises, in which the former social character ceases to correspond to the society, in which the changes have taken place, and to the new requirements that have taken shape in the wake of those changes. The traditional character continues to exist and function, although completely new socio-economic conditions have arisen with which it can no longer keep pace. This contradiction between social character and changed social conditions transforms the

former's stabilizing function into a disintegrating one and results in a certain degree of disorganization in society.

Yet in this connection the question naturally arises as to what force changes or is capable of changing these social conditions, if social character is intrinsic to the majority of the members of society, as Fromm himself maintains, and its function consists in consolidating the given society.

Fromm appreciates that the role of the psychological factor in history cannot be reduced to no more than the conservative function of social character. In order to explain the action of the psychological factor in a positive direction, which is capable of fundamentally transforming, of changing the social conditions of man's existence, Fromm refers to the needs inherent in his abstract presentation of man's psychological nature. In his opinion the creative or positive direction in which the psychological factor operates is determined by "human nature" and manifests itself only in the activity of individuals, who have succeeded in raising themselves above the wretchedness of their social mode of existence and appreciating the needs and goals of human nature. The inner regulator of their behaviour is their "humanist conscience" which constitutes the extra-historical demands of human nature.

Thus in Fromm's view of things social character and human nature figure as active psychological factors that shape the historical process. The difference between them consists merely in the fact that the impact of the former is directed towards stabilizing and consolidating the existing society, while that of the latter towards changing that society. With reference to his conception of human nature Fromm explains the uninterrupted progressive changes in human history. With reference to the concept of social character he tries to demonstrate the way in which one or another concrete historical society functions. When considering the process of historical development Fromm suggests that at one pole of history there operates "social

character" which "is shaped by the mode of existence of a given society",* while at the other there is "man's nature, moulding in turn the social conditions in which he lives".**

Fromm's conception of social character represents the culmination of his neo-Freudian theory of historical development. On the basis of this conception Fromm attempts not only to single out the psychological conditions behind the functioning of this or that society, but also to explain why in the given society specific ideas and ideals take root. He holds that social character can explain the link which exists between the economic basis of society and its ideological superstructure. Assuming that every concept and thought has a specific psychological basis that is rooted in the make-up of the individual's character, Fromm voices a basically sound opinion to the effect that only those ideas which correspond to that psychological basis can become convictions for the individual and shape his actions: "Different societies or classes within a society have a specific character, and on its basis different ideas develop and become powerful."*** In other words, from his point of view social character plays a specific selective role in the choice of ideas and ideals from the large numbers current within society, such as correspond to its psychological basis. Those ideas and ideals which do not correspond to that basis are not only unacceptable to the individual, but will not be understood by him. Ideas and ideals, which are rooted in the specific social character, in their turn intensify and consolidate that character.

Fromm argues that "in Marx's theory the nature of the relation between basis and superstructure was not sufficiently explained"**** and attempts to "develop" or "sup-

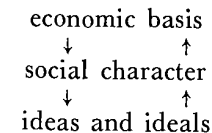
* Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, p. 313.

** Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 81.

*** Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, p. 307.

**** Erich Fromm, "The Application...", op. cit., p. 233.

plement" Marxism. On the one hand he shares Marx's point of view according to which the basis shapes ideas and ideals and on the other he declares that some ideals are independent and do not stem from society at all. For instance he sees the ideals of freedom, justice and love as rooted in human nature. The relationship between basis and superstructure, according to Fromm, consists of more than the link through which the basis determines social character, and the latter in its turn shapes ideas and ideals. Between the two there exists a reverse link, for ideas and ideals can through the medium of social character influence the basis. Moreover, the nature of this reverse influence of ideas and ideals on the economic basis depends entirely on the nature of the former. Those ideas and ideals which are social in origin consolidate the economic basis through social character. Only those ideas and ideals that are rooted in human nature can produce abrupt changes in the economic basis. Thus, according to Fromm, social character "is the intermediary between the socio-economic structure and the ideas and ideals prevalent in a society".* It is the intermediary in both directions, from the economic basis to the ideas and from the ideas to the economic basis. This Fromm illustrates in the following scheme:



This scheme reflecting the interaction of the three factors in relation to a stably functioning society becomes artificial and invalid as soon as Fromm attempts to use it to explain social change and social development.

Marx established that the decisive role in social development is played by the mode of production of material

* Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 87.

because the hearts of men were not ready to assimilate the ideals of human nature, that all revolutions to date have proved failures, for the power of one set of authorities has been replaced by another.

Fromm would have us believe that the age of freedom will dawn, when man looks inward to his own nature, when his actions will only be steered by the "humanist conscience". Insofar as every individual is a representative of the human race and at the same time a member of a specific society, there are always present within him two consciences, the authoritarian and the humanist, although the balance between the two may vary. Throughout history all efforts of prophets have been directed towards stirring to life the humanist conscience dormant in man and compelling him to look to himself and realize that he himself represents a real criterion of all matters and should seek standards and objectives for his actions within himself and not from outside. Men's moral enlightenment in Fromm's view is the most important condition for "true revolution" which will admit man to the realm of "true freedom". It is essential to reshape man's inner world in order that he might apprehend the merits and values inherent in his own nature, in order that man might be able to turn his back on any external demands that society might make on him.

Fromm does not explain and indeed would be unable to explain the appearance of prophets in society, that is men with "productive character orientation", who stand, as it were, outside society. However, he represents all movement and advance in history as dependent on the existence of such individuals. Only thanks to these prophets, who through intuition and mystical apprehension of their human essence raise themselves above the wretched state of social life as we know it and, addressing themselves to men's hearts and minds, call upon them to follow the ideals rooted in human nature, is progress in history possible. Fromm is actually doing little more than

resurrecting the inconsistent ideas found in the subjectivist sociological theory of the Russian Narodniks on the role of outstanding personalities in history, ideas that were sharply and thoroughly criticized by Lenin in his day and which have long been shelved.*

After correctly remarking the fact that the activity of the psychological factor can be directed towards not only the consolidation of society but also used to undermine and change it, Fromm draws a misguided conclusion, when he attempts to explain such change with reference to human nature. He thus overlooks the true source of man's activity directed towards the transformation of social reality.

At the present time numerous attempts have been made by bourgeois anthropologists, social psychologists and sociologists to single out socio-psychological personality types in their correlative relationship with the social institutions of that society in which they live (viz., Abram Kardiner's "basic personality", Margaret Mead's "national character" and David Riesman and Theodor Adorno's "social character"). These bourgeois authors have been fairly successful in describing various types of adaptation mechanisms, which help the individual fit in with society, yet the question of the individual's active role in the social process, the question of social change proves a stumbling block for them. It is not made clear in any of their findings how and in what circumstances man's creative transforming function manifests itself. The essential features in the positive action of the psychological factor in the historical process remain a mystery for them.

Fromm's presentation of social character as a specific functional and psychological structure in the individual, and his attempt to use this structure to explain the role of various types of social character in the context of socio-historical development are of undoubted interest and de-

* See: V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 129-332.

serve attention. Yet we cannot accept his point of view, according to which society only moulds that type of social character, whose function is to promote the consolidation and stability of the existing social system. His other point of departure, namely the idea that the positive and creative function of change in the social system is completely bound up with extra-historical human nature, is equally unacceptable.

Analysis of the content and function of social character reveals Fromm's inability correctly to evaluate society's creative role in the formation and development of the human personality. Although he formally acknowledges it and makes frequent reference to it, in his efforts thus to stress the differences between his views and those of Freud, in actual fact he remains true to tradition and the basic tenets of classical psychoanalysis, delegating to society a basically negative and repressive role.

Fromm's error it would seem lies in the fact that he oversimplifies the process of the formation and development of personality in capitalist society, reducing it to no more than a problem of the uniformization and standardization of types of human behaviour and seeing it as a one-sided process which results only in a conformist type of social character. Fromm was unable to appreciate the dialectical process of socialization of the individual in capitalist society, which consists in a contradictory unity of two sides—the internalization of social norms and demands in each given society, side by side with the internalization of the demands and potential stemming from evolving social reality, which to a certain extent contradict the former and dialectically negate them.

This process is an objective one and expresses the essence of the dialectical unity and interaction of the individual and society. Man, living as he does in society, on the one hand is unable not to uphold the norms and demands society lays before him, while on the other he cannot fail to reflect the trends of his own inner change and develop-

ment. The most satisfactory outcome of this process is the condition for normal authentic development of the human personality. If the process of socialization, as a result of the objective conditions in which it took place within the given society, is confined only to the first side of the dialectical contradiction, and goes no further than the individual's assimilation of the norms and demands dictated to him by society, then that process will inevitably lead to the shaping of a conformist type of personality—here Fromm's line of argument leaves no room for criticism. Yet by neglecting the second side of the process Fromm made it impossible for himself to explain the actual conditions necessary for the normal development of personality. He started to search for these outside social existence. After labelling as conservative any psychological process for the formation of personality types by means of social norms and rules dictated to the individual from outside, Fromm asserts that the only process which can be positive is that which is determined by the inner values and norms rooted in human nature itself. It is worth pointing out that, when not talking directly of this subject, Fromm virtually suggests that the conservative nature of the first process stems from the contradiction between the norms foisted upon the individual and his own essential needs, while the positive nature of the second stems from the extent to which the norms and demands are compatible with man's essential nature. Taken in general this proposition corresponds to the truth, if we refrain from interpreting the substance of the same.

However, Fromm strays a long way from the truth when he links man's full development and formation with the elimination of all social norms and demands whatever that regulate and mould man's behaviour. He is not even prepared to admit that certain social norms and demands can be compatible with human nature, but maintains that only "man's nature" proffers that system of true values, which man must take for his guide in order to become a

free and active personality. In other words Fromm contrasts "social" factors with all that is "essential" to man; in his view the "social" factors are always something alien, something outside man which serve to standardize him and render him faceless. Hence Fromm's negative attitude to all kinds of social norms and demands, which are historical and relative in character, and his search for extra-temporal, absolute norms and demands.

Fromm does not accept that any system of norms and values is the product of a concrete historical society's vital activity, and is therefore always of a transient character, and that as man's activity develops and evolves it cannot help but change. All that is constant is the principle of normative regulation of man's behaviour, and indeed of all human activity. The question as to which social norms and values do or do not further man's advance should be resolved by means of analysis of the links and compatibility between the norms and values extant in the given society and the real concrete and historical demands of individuals. The system of norms and values, on which the regulation of human relations is based, starts to figure as an external, alien system foisted on the individual from without, only when it ceases to satisfy the objective needs of individuals, and, conversely, if it reflects these needs and is compatible with them, then it furthers the advancement of the individual and his formation as an active, creative personality.

Fromm did not entirely come to grips with the essence of the process of personality formation in capitalist society, which reveals mutually assumptive opposite trends, the material foundation of which is the mode of production. Man, being a member of society, finds himself within a system of social relations, which he himself helps to create, and it is precisely in his activity that the character of the social relations is expressed and concretized. In order to decide which social types of personality are moulded by capitalist society, it is essential to start out

from an analysis of the distinctive features of those social relations. An understanding of the real mechanism behind personality formation under capitalism is achieved only after analysis of the real relations between individuals and between classes.

In their analyses of the social relations taking shape within society, Marxists turn their attention first and foremost to the fact that the inclusion of an individual in a society takes place as a result of his being involved in the historical activity of specific social groups and classes, which constitutes the preconditions for the formation of his personality.

It is precisely because Fromm overlooks these preconditions that he fails to light upon the dialectics of social development from the psychological angle.

It is only possible to demonstrate the real place and role of the psychological factor in history on the basis of the Marxist, dialectical materialist interpretation of history, socio-economic formations, the theory of class and class struggle.

Fromm maintains that any society at some historical stage or other exists as a specific qualitative entity, but he fails to analyze the nature of that entity. Socio-economic formations as such do not exist for Fromm. This explains why he oversimplifies the question as to the socio-psychological typology of personality, without taking into account the qualitative characteristics of society's social structure.

Society constitutes a highly complex formation. In order to grasp the infinite variety in trends of social action in which individuals engage, it is vital first of all to define the nature of production relations and analyze the class structure of society which they determine. Marxists hold that when discussing the social structure of an antagonistic society it is only possible to "raise sociology to the level of a science",* if the problem of class struggle

* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 410.

is conceded prime importance. It was precisely the class theory formulated by Marx which for the first time in the history of social sciences established with conclusive precision effective methods for the socio-psychological typology of personalities. The significance of this theory lay in the fact that in the first place it "worked out the concept of the *social-economic formation*. . . . The subjectivists' arguments about 'society' in general, meaningless arguments that did not go beyond petty-bourgeois utopias . . . were replaced by an *investigation* of definite forms of the structure of society. Secondly, the actions of 'living individuals' within the bounds of each such social-economic formation . . . were generalized and reduced to the actions of groups of individuals . . . to the actions of *classes*, the struggle between which determined the development of society."^{*}

According to Marxist theory the division of society into classes provides the objective foundation, on which there grow up various social types of personality which serve to epitomize patterns of social development.

Each individual born into the world encounters ready-made the conditions of his future life. The class to which he belongs serves to shape his specific world outlook which accordingly reflects the objective position and role of that class in the system of social production pertaining to the society in question. The degree to which the individual is aware of his class background, and his attitude to that class and to himself are determined by his degree of participation in the socio-historical activity of the class in question. The behaviour of the specific individual is always objectively shaped by the interests of the class to which he belongs.

If instead of an abstract and speculative approach to analysis of personality a concrete historical approach is adopted, we cannot fail to observe how in social forma-

* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 410-411.

tions characterized by class antagonism two clearly defined types of social personality are to be found which belong to opposite classes: the slave and the slave-owner, the peasant and the feudal landowner, the worker and the capitalist. This does not in any way imply that Marxists do not accept any variations of these types resulting from influence of the two basic social classes on each other. Lenin was to write in that connection: "Of course, there are and always will be individual exceptions from group and class types. But social types remain."^{*}

This means that in society characterized by antagonistic class relations there cannot be a single socio-psychological type of personality independent of class, as Fromm would have us believe. When studying social typology of personality Marxists regard it as essential to examine first and foremost the individual's class essence. Marx and Engels wrote on that subject: "This subsuming of individuals under definite classes cannot be abolished until a class has taken shape, which has no longer any particular class interest to assert against the ruling class."^{**} Only after the division of society into antagonistic classes has been done away with, can the formation of a common social type of personality begin, a process which will enable the individual eventually to feel himself the truly free creator of social relations.

The Marxist, concrete historical approach to the study of the individual makes it possible not only to single out the basic criteria for social typology of personality within antagonistic social formations and to classify the types, but also to define the reasons for profound qualitative differences in the content and trend of their socio-historical activity.

For as long as a socio-economic formation constituting an antagonistic society is on the ascendant and the con-

* Ibid., Vol. 27, p. 276.

** Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 94.

traditions within the sphere of economic relations have not reached a critical point, the incompatibility of opposed classes remains relatively inconspicuous. However, as soon as a socio-economic formation reaches its maturity, an unmistakable polarization of social and class forces takes place, all contradictions in the economic sphere are laid bare and by then there is no avoiding open conflict between the interests of the ruling class and the needs of the oppressed class which reflects the progressive trends in historical development. This conflict plays a decisive part in the replacement of the obsolete mode of production and in the emergence of a new social system. Thus the structure of the particular society does not change in keeping with the dictates of human nature in general, but in answer to the objective socio-economic demands which arise in the course of that structure's development. The impossibility of satisfying those demands within the framework of the old social structure makes its replacement inevitable.

Fromm is misguided to reduce the whole development of history to actions of select individuals, prophets who came to earth in order to impart to the world and mankind the ultimate truth—the goal of man's actions and the paths by which he can reach it. If we embark on attempts to pinpoint the motive forces of history, "it is not a question so much of the motives of single individuals, however eminent, as of those motives which set in motion great masses, whole peoples, and again whole classes of the people in each people".*

Engels wrote that all revolutions that have been accomplished are none other than the irrepressible expression of peoples' needs and requirements.

It would be wrong to accept that capitalist society shapes only that type of social personality which acts as a conservative psychological factor in historical develop-

* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 367.

ment, or that within capitalist society there is supposedly no chance of any other qualitatively different type of personality, opposite to the first, ever emerging. Finally it is also difficult to take seriously Fromm's assertion to the effect that human nature, in essence extra-historical, constitutes the one positive psychological factor.

From the Marxist point of view the real picture presented by human history shows that both the "conservative" and "positive" psychological factors take shape within constantly evolving and changing bourgeois society. One of them cements and stabilizes the functioning of that society, the other revolutionizes its development. Behind each of these factors stands a specific class, namely the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, both of which are agents of historical action.

Fromm ignores the fact that in view of objective laws of social development within capitalist society there exists a class with new, progressive socio-historical needs and interests, which it lays before that society as its demands. In other words, within the fabric of capitalist society material, social, political and intellectual preconditions for the emergence of a new type of personality are taking shape, a personality whose psychological features and inner make-up are radically different from those of the conformist type of personality which is being moulded on a mass scale within bourgeois society.

The idealist metaphysical contrasting of human nature with society, and one-sided presentation of the function of social character in the historical process, deliberate neglect of the role of socio-economic formations in socio-psychological typology of concrete historical personalities did not permit Fromm after all to disclose the real dialectics of the universal historical or concrete historical factors pertaining to the formation of the human personality, or to arrive at a correct appraisal of the role of the psychological factor in social development.

2. The Nature of the "Unconscious" and Its Role in the Socio-Historical Process

It would be difficult to give a correct evaluation of the neo-Freudian conception of the essence of man and the psychological dynamics of the historical process without defining Fromm's view of the nature of the "unconscious", of its role and significance in men's socio-historical activity.

Fromm is firmly convinced that the mechanism of the functioning and change of social systems is impossible to understand not only without analyzing the content and functions of social character, but also without pinpointing the so-called negative function of society, which consists essentially in the fact that any society is capable, by means of specific methods, of regulating and determining the degree of man's awareness of the social reality in which he finds himself. It is for this reason that Fromm devotes so much attention to the role of the "unconscious" in the historical process.

Fromm attempts to strip away the veil of mystery surrounding the "unconscious", a subject which for many decades has been a constant preoccupation of authors contributing to scientific journals on psychology and psychoanalysis. He criticizes unmercilessly those psychoanalysts and psychologists who see the "unconscious" as something with which the individual is biologically or substantially equipped. According to Fromm, Freud's approach to personality as the receptacle for "unconscious" biological and instinctive desires at odds with society that prohibits their emergence into a conscious plane, played an enormous part in the spread and acceptance of this idea.

Fromm considers that the very "term the 'unconscious' is actually a mystification. . . . There is no such thing as *the* unconscious; there are only experiences of which we are

aware, and others of which we are not aware, that is, of *which we are unconscious*."^{*}

In psychoanalysis as a specific system of ideas it is possible to single out certain fundamental premises: first, the idea that man, whether he likes it or not, is obliged in his everyday life to suppress his awareness of many feelings and emotions; second, the idea that a conflict arises between the implications of the "unconscious" and consciousness, a conflict which nearly always results in neurosis; and third, the certainty that this conflict will disappear as soon as the "unconscious" is brought to the threshold of man's consciousness.

While leaving untouched the basic assumptions of classical psychoanalysis concerning the "unconscious" and the mechanism of repression, Fromm sets out to reinterpret and analyze both these in a neo-Freudian light.

First of all, in contrast to Freud who regarded the "unconscious" as an extra-historical, anti-social phenomenon biological by nature, Fromm maintains that "the unconscious, like consciousness, is also a social phenomenon, determined by the 'social filter' . . ."^{**}

In his theory he centres his attention on the "social unconscious", namely those "areas of repression" which are not individual but "common to most members of a society".^{***} Only by going out of its way to prevent its members from apprehending the "social unconscious" with the help of a "socially conditioned filter" can society ensure its stable functioning, given that society has to grapple with specific inner contradictions. He maintains that "experience cannot enter awareness unless it can penetrate this filter".^{****} Only that which penetrates the filter can enter the sphere of consciousness. Fromm admits ruefully that the greater part of man's life experience remains out-

* Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 98.

** Erich Fromm, "The Application. . .", *op. cit.*, p. 240.

*** Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 88.

**** *Ibid.*, p. 115.

side the limits of consciousness, that is remains unconscious.

The essential ingredients of that "socially conditioned filter" are: (a) language, (b) logic, (c) social taboos. The most important of these is the third which "does not *permit* certain feelings to reach consciousness and tends to expel them from this realm if they have reached it. It is made up by the social taboos which declare certain ideas and feelings to be improper, forbidden, dangerous, and which prevent them from ever reaching the level of consciousness."^{*}

It should be noted that in his assessment of the origins and essential nature of the "unconscious" Fromm completely ignores the principle of a class approach in his analysis of the role of society in the evolution of the "unconscious"; he talks of society in general, thus blurring the qualitative characteristics of various types of concrete historical societies and preventing himself from understanding the true reasons behind the appearance of "unconscious" phenomena in the history of men's activity.

From the neo-Freudian point of view society endeavours to suppress and impede man's apprehension of those sensual experiences, the implications of which are incompatible with the demands of the given society and which constitute a threat to its smooth functioning. The existence of taboos—specific systems of social bans—makes it easier for society to mould a social character such as will consolidate it and through its influence constantly reproduce the main features of that society. Society cannot wipe out the workings of hidden human experiences and feelings, anti-social in their implications, but it can push them out of its consciousness, repress them, which it indeed does do with the help of the "social filter" which carries out the role of a special sort of censor in social consciousness.

* Ibid., p. 121.

This process that is constantly being carried out by capitalist society, this driving out of undesirable experience from man's consciousness, according to Fromm, goes hand in hand with efforts to fill man's consciousness with various sorts of ideological fictions.

The main factor which comes between man and his awareness of real sensual experience, which is to a certain degree incompatible with the demands of society, is, in Fromm's view, fear of isolation and ostracism. Man is afraid of finding himself in a position that sets him apart from others and for this reason the opinion of the crowd acquires for him at times more importance than his own ideas. Fromm is sure that the content and direction of man's social activity is determined by the norms and rules sanctioned by society and subscribed to by the overwhelming majority of its members. He holds that "what man considers true, real, sane, are the clichés accepted by his society, and much that does not fit in with these clichés is excluded from awareness, is unconscious".^{*} However, society cannot dehumanize and repress man ad infinitum for "man is not only a member of society, but he is also a member of the human race".^{**} Man is not only afraid of isolation from his social group, his own society, but he is also afraid of being cut off from mankind, from the generic principle which he bears within him and which constitutes human nature. This is what leads Fromm to conclude that society cannot subjugate man to itself completely.

The logical consequence of this basic methodological principle adhered to by the neo-Freudians in efforts to resolve the problem of man and society is a false contrasting of concrete historical society with mankind in general. Fromm writes: "In its historical development each society becomes caught in its own need to survive in

* Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 127.

** Ibid., p. 127.

the particular form in which it has developed, and it usually accomplishes this survival by ignoring the wider human aims which are common to all men."^{*} The existing real contradiction between the aims of a given society and the universal aims of mankind as a whole is, according to Fromm, one of the main reasons behind society's fabrication of various fallacies and illusions aimed at concealing that contradiction. "The ability to act according to one's conscience," Fromm suggests, "depends on the degree to which one has transcended the limits of one's society and has become a citizen of the world,"^{**} in other words on the degree to which man has apprehended the limitations of society's social aims and is taking universal human goals as his guide to action, goals in which the essence of human nature finds expression. Insofar as man's appreciation of his truly human goals threatens not merely to disrupt the functioning of the existing social system, but also inevitably leads to social actions directed towards changing that system, society is striving at any cost to obstruct man's perception of his natural essence.

In effect Fromm divides the "unconscious" into two types. First comes man's real sensual experience, awareness of which is capable of introducing elements of disorganisation into the functioning of society in question. By this type of "unconscious" Fromm has in mind socio-psychological behaviour mechanisms underlying social character. In his view if man in capitalist society were aware that his life was meaningless, that everything he does is uninteresting and tedious, that he has no real freedom, cannot behave and think in the way he would wish, then it would be difficult for him to function correctly in the society under consideration. This explains why man's apprehension of such feelings is made as difficult as possible by society.

* Erich Fromm, D. T. Suzuki and Richard de Martino, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, p. 98.

** Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 128.

The second type of "unconscious", known by Fromm as the "universal unconscious", is seen to embrace everything which constitutes human nature. Awareness of this type of "unconscious" gives rise to that type of activity on the part of the individual, which leads to change in existing reality and the creation of a society more compatible with human nature.

Both types of "unconscious", according to Fromm, are social by nature since they are always the result of society's negative function, the consequence of repression by society of feelings and thoughts actually experienced by individuals, which are undesirable for that society, and which always find themselves at cross purposes with society.

From neo-Freudian analysis of the problem of the "unconscious" it emerges quite clearly that the potential needs of human nature steering the social behaviour of the individual in a positive direction and determining in general the forward-moving course of history are ranked by him as "unconscious". Fromm attributes to consciousness a subordinate role in men's historical activity holding that since "consciousness represents social man"^{**} it is false through and through, a mere illusion, which does not contain anything true or positive, or correspond to the real nature of man. According to Fromm, the man's social inclinations are a curse for man himself. All that is truly human is centred in his natural essence. Everything which goes beyond the framework of the practical needs of existing society is seen by Fromm as something extra-historical in origin, and as something "unconscious" in character.

While remaining true to the essential principles of Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, Fromm exaggerates the role of "unconscious" factors in man's behaviour, presents them as absolute and lends them decisive significance in the definition of man's mental activity. The di-

* Ibid.

versity of forms and complexity of human activity are summarized and explained by Fromm as the "universal unconscious", in which existential needs of human nature find expression as opposed to the biological instincts beloved of Freud, or with reference to unconscious psychological defence mechanisms which constitute the motivational basis of social character. Although Freud and Fromm interpret the "unconscious" differently, they both present the essential forces of the human ego as "unconscious", extra-historical needs that find fulfilment in the process of human evolution. History as they see it is entirely the product of the fulfilment of the "unconscious".

When analyzing the "unconscious" and its role in the historical process Fromm devotes a good deal of attention to the problem of de-repression, that is the elaboration of methods of social therapy, which in his opinion should free man of the heavy burden of the "unconscious". Fromm writes that "making the unconscious conscious transforms the mere idea of the universality of man into the living experience of his universality, it is the experiential realization of humanism".* The solution to the problem of de-repressing the "unconscious" lies, in Fromm's view, firstly in removing and neutralizing fear which impedes man in his feeling and thinking and freely expressing that which he really experiences; secondly in the development of man's faculty for critical thought, doubt, independent formulation and resolution of vital questions, and finally in the dissemination of humanist ideas that further the intellectual development of each individual.

The first condition for the successful implementation of the process of de-repressing the "unconscious" is the elimination of those psychological barriers (clichés and fic-

* Erich Fromm, D. T. Suzuki and Richard de Martino, *Zen Buddhism...*, p. 107.

tions) which society has "erected" in the consciousness of each individual. This will enable man to apprehend social reality as it really is. Fulfilment of the second condition will make it possible for the individual to understand social dynamics and achieve a "critical appraisal of one's own society from the standpoint of universal human values".* Finally compliance with the third condition will facilitate the individual's appreciation of the needs inherent in his nature that can be satisfied by him through activity directed towards the creation of a truly humanist society.

Precisely this neo-Freudian psychoanalytic programme for de-repressing the "unconscious", which vividly reflects the views of Fromm the bourgeois enlightener, constitutes, as we shall see later, the theoretical foundation for his socio-political platform.

It should be remembered that Fromm is one of the few modern bourgeois philosophers, who amidst a general mood of disillusionment and despair permeating literally all spheres of intellectual life in bourgeois society, express hope in the creation of a so-called non-repressed society, in which the "social unconscious" will have been eliminated once and for all and opportunity provided for the unimpeded actualization of the needs inherent in human nature. While Freud was a pessimist who held that as civilization grew so "repression" would grow, and that history would not only fail to eliminate "repression", but on the contrary reinforce it, Fromm, on the other hand, maintains the opposite, believing that "in the fully humanized society there would be no need for repression, hence there would be no social unconscious".**

Thus Fromm both poses and resolves the question of the "unconscious" differently from Freud. He draws attention to the social nature of the factors calling forth

* Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 132.

** Ibid., p. 133.

the "unconscious", and regards it as something essentially functional. Unlike Freud for whom the "unconscious" epitomizes all that is evil and corrupt, Fromm, when defining the qualitative implications of the "unconscious", stresses the individual's "creative, productive potentialities". It is worth noting incidentally that the interpretation of the "unconscious" as a "good" principle is characteristic of many neo-Freudians and psychoanalysts in sympathy with them.* In his analysis of the repression mechanism, by means of which society directs man's sensual experience along conscious and unconscious channels, Fromm explores a number of points important for the study of socio-psychological phenomena; however, in his interesting interpretation of the "unconscious" he nevertheless remains under the influence of abstract anthropological psychologism. When writing on the subject of the first type of "unconscious", Fromm gives voice to what at first might seem a materialist point of view, declaring that those elements of sensual experience, which are eliminated from man's consciousness in view of their disruptive influence on the society in question, possess a real historical character. In an attempt to elucidate the reasons for this elimination he makes frequent reference to history. He states that "most of human history (with the exception of some primitive societies) is characterized by the fact that a small minority has ruled over and exploited the majority of its fellows. In order to do so, the minority has usually used force; but force is not enough. In the long run, the majority has had to accept its own exploitation voluntarily—and this is only possible if its mind has been filled with all sorts of lies and fictions, justifying and explaining its acceptance of the minority's rule."** Stressing how the individual loses his capacity for

* See works by Horney, Sullivan and Erickson.

** Erich Fromm, D. T. Suzuki and Richard de Martino, *Zen Buddhism* . . . , p. 98.

actually apprehending reality as it actually is, and consequently of arriving at a correct appraisal of that reality, Fromm maintains that such irrationalities of society "result in the necessity for its members to repress the awareness of many of their own feelings and observations. This necessity is the greater in proportion to the extent to which a society is not representative of all its members."** By thus confining the content of the socially determined "unconscious" to no more than those elements of sensual experience, awareness of which could only lead man to an appreciation of the absurdity of the social reality in which he finds himself, but would not channel his activity towards the creative transformation of that social reality, Fromm robs himself of the chance to really elucidate the social nature of the "unconscious".

Since Fromm understands by the "universal unconscious" human nature and regards it as social in origin, for all intents and purposes he does not go beyond the subjective idealist stance. For he regards the "universal unconscious" as social only insofar as society is able to obstruct or further the manifestation of the essentially asocial features of that type of "unconscious". The latter is not, according to Fromm, created by society, but, existing as it does outside society, at the same time shapes society's development.

Failing to come to grips with the heart of Marx's dialectical materialist method, Fromm was not able to explain the essence of the historical forces unperceived by men, which are at work in society. From the Marxist point of view fundamental analysis of the whole complex of political, economic and psychological relations between the ruling minority and the oppressed majority is essential in order to solve the mystery of the "social unconscious". To this end it is essential to drop the abstract approach to the problem and move on to concrete analysis of the relations

* Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 123.

between men in society, pinpoint the agents of historical action, and also establish which class stands to gain from suppression of an awareness of social reality and which class could benefit from and bring about change in the existing social order.

Marx regarded irreconcilable opposition of the interests of two classes as the indispensable background of socio-historical development. Antagonistic socio-economic formations are in his view dominated by that class which always endeavours to present its own interests as the interests of the whole of society and to speak in the latter's name. Marx and Engels wrote: "The ideas of this ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. . . . The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance."^{*} Only at the initial stage of the emergence of a socio-economic formation distinguished by class antagonism, when the progressive class assumes power, do its interests, as those of the ruling class, for an extremely short period truly correspond to the interests of other classes, "under the pressure of hitherto existing conditions its interest has not yet been able to develop as the particular interest of a particular class".^{**} At that initial stage of the formation's development a certain shared interest can manifest itself, an interest in the elimination of the old society, that has outlived its potential, which is subscribed to by the majority of classes.

Marxist analysis of the class structure in antagonistic society, of the place and role of classes in the system of social production makes it possible to explain which class

* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 61.

** Ibid., p. 63.

has need of a "socially conditioned filter" and which class stands to gain from the dissemination of irrationalism through society. According to Marxist theory it is the ruling exploiter class which, in order to preserve and consolidate its power and satisfy its interests, is compelled to resort not only to open force, but also to various more subtle methods to achieve the political and psychological disorientation of the classes and social groupings opposed to it. "The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. . . . The individuals composing the ruling class . . . regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age. . . ."^{*}

The task before the dominant ideology in class society, namely the ideology of the ruling class, is to reconcile the oppressed classes with the existing social order. Possessed of economic and political power, having at its disposal all cultural media and a system of social taboos, the ruling class strives to mould a social type of personality such as would unconditionally comply with its demands and without any resistance accept the existing social order.

The ruling class endeavours with the help of certain negative sanctions to suppress the opposite class' awareness of the real situation and its historical needs and interests, that reflect the objective demands of evolving society. It is these concrete historical needs of the oppressed class, needs stifled by the ruling class, which constitute the "unconscious" in class society. Yet eventually as the oppressed class is drawn into a real struggle against social practices that prove unsatisfactory for it, its self-awareness grows and the fulfilment of its needs comes to coincide with the fundamental revolutionary transformation of the old society. This means that clues to the nature of the

* Ibid., p. 61.

"unconscious" and its role in the historical process should be sought not in the depths of the individual's mind, not in an abstract existential contradiction, but in the objective laws of development pertaining to men's social life. Spontaneous revolt by the oppressed class against the interests of the privileged minority of exploiters at a certain stage in the development of social relations provides the most vivid manifestation of the "unconscious" at work in history. Spontaneous rebelliousness is a manifestation of the need to express their objective social and class essence of which the representatives of the oppressed class are not yet aware. This particular manifestation of the "unconscious" aimed at self-assertion was often referred to by the founders of Marxism-Leninism as class instinct or class awareness.

Marxist theory demonstrated that in social formations characterized by class antagonism the advance of social production gradually brings the oppressed class to an awareness of its significance and role in the historical process, however much the ruling class might strive to prevent this happening, resorting to the "socially conditioned filter" and other methods. Marxists always started out, and indeed still do, from recognition of the fact that the laws of social development find expression in the acts and deeds of men possessed of consciousness, who in their historical activity set themselves specific aims and then strive to attain these. Engels wrote in this connection that "in the history of society . . . the actors are all endowed with consciousness, are men acting with deliberation or passion, working towards definite goals; nothing happens without a conscious purpose, without an intended aim".*

Although men's historical activity incorporates as an essential component "unconscious" factors, nevertheless a decisive role must be accorded consciousness. According

* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 366.

to Marxist theory the dialectic of the correlation between the "unconscious" and the conscious in men's socio-historical activity is such that the first always gives way to the second and in the final analysis the latter determines men's social and transforming activity. While giving all due credit to the spontaneous movement, in which there was still a semi-instinctive reflection of the masses' social existence, Lenin pointed out the need for imparting political awareness to that movement. Very characteristic in this respect was his statement in connection with fraternization during the First World War: "Fraternization, so far, is instinctive, and we must not deceive ourselves on this score. We must admit this in order not to delude the people. The fraternizing soldiers are actuated not by a clear-cut political idea but by the instinct of oppressed people, who are tired, exhausted and begin to lose confidence in capitalist promises. . . . This is a true class instinct. Without this instinct the cause of the revolution would be hopeless. . . . But is instinct alone sufficient? You would not get far if you rely on instinct alone. This instinct must be transformed into political awareness."*

Lenin's works demonstrate with exhaustive detail how the awareness of the oppressed proletariat, which is not only a suffering class but also a militant one, is moulded under capitalism. The subconscious anti-capitalist direction of the oppressed class' action in itself does not yet make a revolution. A workers' movement of single-minded, truly revolutionary character can only be achieved when the proletariat apprehends its class interests. "One must be able to point out the dangers and defects of spontaneity and to *elevate* it to the level of consciousness,"** Lenin wrote, adding that it was vital to impart socialist consciousness to the proletariat's spontaneous movement.

Lenin attributed tremendous importance to the system-

* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 268.

** Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 316.

atic influence of Marxist ideology on the minds of the proletariat, influence which serves to accelerate the development of that whole class' political consciousness. He stressed how the political enlightenment of the masses was a task inseparably linked with that of welding together and organizing the working people, drawing them into the class struggle since only that struggle could really educate the exploited class. "Only struggle discloses to it the magnitude of its own power, widens its horizon, enhances its abilities, clarifies its mind, forges its will."^{*} In the process of his concrete historical activity the proletarian is transformed into a revolutionary as he attains an ever clearer awareness of the interests of his class. This means that the individual is not an abstraction but always the representative of one or another class, an objective vehicle of its development. According to Marxist theory each individual personality determines the degree of comprehensive assimilation by the given human being of his social and class essence. Man's ability to act in keeping with the demands stemming from his essence does not depend on the degree to which he has raised himself above the limitations of his society and succeeded in becoming a citizen of the world, as Fromm would have us believe, but on the extent to which the individual has succeeded in disregarding the demands of the ruling class, in shaking himself free from illusions, and in assimilating his socio-historical essence and becoming a genuine representative and vehicle of the progressive demands and interests of the oppressed class, which epitomizes the true universal human principle. Marxists hold that class struggle is a decisive factor in the formation and development of the proletariat's personality and in the advancement of his self-awareness. This is why the Communist Party has always striven to involve the masses in revolutionary struggle against the obsolete principles and practices of

* V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 241.

capitalist society. The proletariat's perception and awareness of its class essence and historical interests cannot be the result of mere introspection and cannot be brought to fruition merely through enlightenment. It takes place in the course of the proletariat's energetic socio-historical activity.

According to Marxist theory it is the working class which constitutes the real historical force capable of changing capitalist society. In order for that objective to be achieved it must strive to appreciate not the abstract potential opportunities for mankind in general, that represent, according to Fromm, the "universal unconscious" or the core of human nature, but its own concrete historical needs, reflecting the logical patterns of social development.

When analyzing the implications of the "universal unconscious" and its relation to the structure of society, Fromm states that on this point he shares the view of Marx who supposedly held that the "repression" at work in capitalist society was essentially "the result of contradictions between the need for the full development of man and the given social structure".^{*} Fromm overlooks the fact that Marx in his study of the concrete reality presented by the capitalist socio-economic formation demonstrated that this formation created both real preconditions for man's comprehensive development and objective obstacles which made the fulfilment of those opportunities impossible within the framework of the given mode of production. Marx never asserted that the objective opportunities for man's development that take shape within capitalist society are opportunities of a universal nature that had supposedly existed as some sort of potential reality both in slave-owning and feudal social formations.

With reference to Marx's genuinely materialist and

* Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 133.

class-orientated approach to the nature of society. Fromm's definition of the process of repression could be amended in the following way: *repression*, namely the stifling by society of its own opportunities for growth and development, is the result of the contradiction between the need for the actualization of these opportunities and the given mode of production. The need for repression and the irrationality of the given society—if viewed from the standpoint of truly Marxist principles—occur because there exist ruling and oppressed classes, and the more opportunities and needs for progressive social development have taken shape, the more energetic becomes the resistance to this on the part of the ruling class which obstructs the opposite class in every way possible from apprehending and actualizing these opportunities and needs.

The need for repression will only disappear when classes disappear, when the interests and needs of society will correspond completely with the interests and needs of all its members, "as soon as class rule in general ceases to be the form in which society is organized, that is to say, as soon as it is no longer necessary to represent a particular interest as general or the 'general interest' as ruling".* A classless society will not need to preserve its existence by encouraging irrationality and driving out of men's minds a large part of their sensual experience.

In Fromm's view man's opportunities and potentialities are always one and the same regardless of the historical period, while for Marx these opportunities are the concrete historical result of social development. Marx's analysis of the contradictions in capitalist society and in particular the contradiction between the structure of society and the real possibilities inherent in it Fromm interprets from an anthropological angle.

Fromm's error in his approach to the problem of the "unconscious" lies in his universalization of the ideas yet

* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 62.

to be apprehended and appreciated by the individual. For him the "social unconscious" in the broad sense is a matter of potential opportunities for human nature. Since these opportunities are not realized at, for example, the transition from slave-owning society to feudal society or from feudalism to capitalism, the nature of the "social unconscious", according to Fromm, always remains the same despite the transition from one type of society to another. Fromm's view that in class-dominated socio-economic formations at specific stages of their development the "unconscious" finds expression in men's historical activity is perfectly acceptable, but his assertion that the "unconscious" is always constant will not stand up to critical investigation. If Fromm's argument is followed through it would appear that in the course of history a tangle of "unconscious" potentialities that have existed as a fixed entity since its very beginnings simply sorts itself out.

In any socio-economic formation opportunities emerge peculiar to it alone as the formation takes shape, opportunities which reflect trends of development in social production. The latter, when they outgrow the formation's framework, demand scope for their realization, just as a class grows up that expresses those trends and which is capable of incorporating them into its activity and is indeed destined to do so. From this point of view the nature of part of the historical material not yet apprehended by certain classes varies in different formations. Unlike Fromm who holds that at the transition from one historical type of society to another there always remains some proportion of unconscious, not yet actualized potentialities, Marxists maintain that the progressive class which is aware of its needs and opportunities in a specific socio-economic formation and actualizes these in its historical activity thereby wipes out that which constitutes the "unconscious" in the given formation.

At the transition from one antagonistic class-dominated formation to another, when the interests of the class assuming power at a certain stage coincide with the interests of the whole of society, the concrete historical core of the "unconscious" typical of the old formation is eliminated before a new one takes its place. The "unconscious" element in men's historical activity always comes to the fore at that stage of social development when the contradiction between the productive forces and production relations is brought into sharp relief, when new opportunities and needs take shape within an already established socio-economic formation, and the awareness of these opportunities and needs on the part of the progressive class is stifled by the ruling class.

It is precisely the ruling class which endeavours artificially to hold back by various means the oppressed class' apprehension of its historical interests which reflect the progressive trends of development in social reality. In the early stages of the historical activity of the oppressed class, its struggle to assert itself is to a large extent of the spontaneous variety, since the said class is motivated by objective interests, the implications of which it has not yet fully apprehended. Until the appearance of socialist society history advanced within the context of the struggle between antagonistic classes of diametrically opposed interests. As it proceeded towards full awareness of historical necessity and its social needs, the progressive class would move forward along a complex and difficult path of spontaneous rebellion and struggle before embarking on conscious purposeful historical activity aimed at transforming social reality in accordance with the laws of social development. Only when antagonistic classes disappear from the historical arena, when there no longer exists in society a social force intent on holding back the working masses from appreciation of the objective demands of social development, will men's historical activity be entirely shaped by deliberately envisaged aims based on

scientific cognition, forecasting and direction of social processes. Time has shown that in conditions of socialism in practice the social process takes the form not of a series of social conflicts but a systematic, forward-moving progression in step with men's analysis of the objective patterns of social development.

The nature of social development is determined not by the conflicts between society and man's innate potentialities on an unconscious level, but by men's concrete historical activity. Man's activity as regards both its structure and function combines two interpenetrating elements—consciousness and the "unconscious"—and it is consciousness which plays the more important, leading role, although in certain cases activity can take place that does not involve consciousness. Stress of the decisive role of consciousness in human activity is a major feature of Marxist theory and one that is diametrically opposed to the Freudian cult of the "unconscious".

If man's vital activity proceeds without any obstruction whatever, then it is quite natural that needs and potentialities will emerge in that process of which the individual at certain times remains unaware. Yet this lack of awareness is not the essential aspect of the process in which man's essential forces take shape, since the dialectics of the development of man's activity inevitably leads up to a situation in which these needs will eventually be apprehended and find fulfilment as a result of single-minded, conscious activity. However, the whole question becomes infinitely more complex when man's social and practical activity fails to find adequate expression and certain frictions arise between the process of man's activity and the form of the latter's organization. Insofar as man's activity has always been bounded by some sort of structure and possessed a concrete historical character, there is reason to assert that the form of organization of this activity is also of a concrete historical character. If the form of organization for man's activity obstructs the

actualization of his needs, there arises a certain contradiction between man's needs and the opportunities available for bringing these to fulfilment. This contradiction reflects the essence and character of those social relations, in the context of which the activity is taking place. In sociological terms this constitutes none other than a contradiction between productive forces and production relations, between the demands of progressive development in the given society and that society's social structure. This contradiction leaves a profound imprint both on the psychological make-up of the individual and also on the character of his activity.

On the one hand man bears within himself the demands of the actual process of activity, and on the other, in the process of his socialization within the given society, he internalizes such demands of the social structure as contradict the former set. That which originally constituted a purely external contradiction between the demands of evolving reality and the framework of the social structure is in its entirety transposed to the mind of the individual as this internalization takes place. The above contradiction characteristic of antagonistic class-dominated socio-economic formations in particular the capitalist one, emerges as an internalized psychological conflict situation.

The individual whose inner life is shaped by a conflict situation of this type is subjected to colossal psychological tension, from which he seeks to free himself. This endeavour serves to express the essential nature of the alienated individual in modern capitalist society. The stability of capitalist society depends to an enormous extent on the success with which it helps the individual to resolve this psychological conflict which is the reflection of real social contradictions. This society stands to gain if the social functioning of the individual proceeds without any friction and strictly in accordance with the demands of the given society. This goal is achieved through the process of "repression" and the moulding of socially adap-

tive types of behaviour. The process of repression and the social mechanism through which it is perpetrated, that Fromm refers to, do indeed take place, but its true implications can only be singled out if the potentialities of man's essential nature are lent concrete historical content and a social practical orientation. From the Marxist viewpoint the "unconscious" in the historical activity of classes is social both in content and origin.

The existence of the unconscious element does not coincide with the natural phenomenon of unawareness in conditions of the adequate development of man's activity referred to earlier, but intersecting with the latter it serves to express the artificial extension and prolongation of this unawareness resulting from social factors. The individual's concrete historical needs that constitute this unconscious cannot be apprehended by him when the process of repression is proceeding at its most comprehensive and successful, when internalized norms and demands of the social structure occupy a central position in the individual's social orientation. Sometimes the individual vaguely aware of his true needs is unwilling to recognize them, and hence to act in accordance with their demands; while building up a specific resistance to such recognition; sometimes he attains an awareness of the impossibility of the actualization of his true needs within the framework of the existing social structure and of the futility of struggle against the latter, or else sometimes this awareness simply makes him feel his peaceful existence in the given conditions is threatened. Often these factors overlap and operate side by side.

Marxists hold that the only reliable way to remove this psychological tension and resolve the fundamental contradiction in human activity is to break through the narrow horizons of the existing social structure. The process of man's apprehension and attainment of his concrete historical needs coincides with the revolutionary change of the social structure. In this act of practical revolution is

expressed the principle of the dialectic of human activity, that is the essence of man's social existence, man's active essence. The social structure as a specific form of organization for human activity always of necessity changes with the course of time in response to those needs which are caused by the changing and evolving conditions of that activity.

It was pointed out earlier that the character of human activity reflects the specific character of social relations, in the context of which that activity proceeds; this means that such abstract concepts as "man's essential needs" and "the social structure with its demands" are the projection of real social forces—specific social groups or classes. Only a concrete historical approach enables us to explain scientifically how to cope with those socio-psychological problems which Fromm formulated but proved unable to resolve. The Marxist interpretation of the essence of man and history is the one true basis on which it is possible to analyze social systems and their emergence and development, and then present a truly scientific picture of the socio-psychological processes at work in society.

SOCIO-HISTORICAL ILLUSIONS OF THE NEO-FREUDIANS

1. Essential Features of Neo-Freudian Social Criticism of Capitalist Society

Erich Fromm's social philosophy is representative of the critical trend in modern bourgeois social thought. In his writings he criticizes modern capitalist society from the standpoint of abstract naturalistic humanism.

Approaching as he does the process of historical development through the prism of the contradiction between the needs of human nature and the possibility of their actualization in specific social conditions, the contradiction between the need to actualize the essence of human nature and the external social factors that block that actualization, Fromm attempts to demonstrate the nature of that contradiction with reference to concrete historical material.

In his analysis of modern capitalist society Fromm points to its incompatibility with the demands of human nature, and sees the values intrinsic to the latter as the absolute in humanism. Fromm uses his conception of human nature as a specific device for criticism of that society.

He holds that his theory of "humanist psychoanalysis", central to which is his concept of human nature, is the theory of "normative humanism" and enables us to appraise man and the social conditions, in which he finds himself, with criteria based on a "norm" and deviations from that norm. He is firmly convinced that societies obstructing the actualization of the needs inherent in human

nature are diseased and inevitably engender "neurotic", alienated individuals.

In his studies of modern America and his definition of the conflict between the needs inherent in human nature and capitalist society, when noting the total alienation which "pervades the relationship of man to his work, to the things he consumes, to the state, to his fellow man, and to himself".* Fromm proffers his diagnosis for man's conditions—"social pathology", "schizoid self-alienation".

Alienation, according to Fromm, is the main distinctive characteristic of bourgeois society. It is worth noting that Fromm's reference to this concept and the very fact that he uses it when analyzing various psychological phenomena are without doubt the result of Marxism's influence. The foundation for an understanding of the problem of alienation was laid by Hegel and Marx—this Fromm himself admits—and in particular by the Marxist concepts "the fetishism of commodities" and the "alienated labour".** Assuming that the category "alienation" was the most exact for characterization of the inner essence of personality, Fromm proceeds to choose it as a theoretical instrument in his socio-psychological research. However, Fromm did not come completely to grips with the essence of the Marxist interpretation of alienation; he apprehended and interpreted this concept through the prism of his anthropological psychologism as well.

By presenting alienation first and foremost as a psychological phenomenon and turning it into some kind of existential characteristic of man's awareness of the world in general, Fromm repudiates out of hand the real socio-historical significance of this category. Fromm subscribes to the idea shared by bourgeois philosophers and sociologists to the effect that alienation is independent of the socio-economic conditions of man's activity. From the psy-

* Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, p. 124.

** Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, pp. 43-58.

chological angle Fromm understands by alienation "a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself. He does not experience himself as the centre of his world, as the creator of his own acts—but his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys, or whom he may even worship. The alienated person is out of touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person."**

The very fact that alienation is perceived by Fromm as first and foremost a characteristic of the individual's psychological state accounts for the vague amorphousness of his social critique of capitalist society, rendering it so much less effective. In a whole number of works and numerous articles Fromm gives a fairly vivid description of various manifestations of alienation in modern bourgeois society, the aim and purpose of which is the mass production of "things". He notes that in capitalist society man bows down before material things created by him, as if they were something higher than himself. In the course of this universal worship of things man too cannot help but gradually turn into a thing: "Things have no self and men who have become things can have no self."**

The whole economic system of capitalism hinges on the market which provides the main regulator and coordinator of life in that society. Everything is bought and sold and this even applies to human relationships which, according to Fromm, are impregnated with buying and selling interests. Man, whose whole life is centred round the production, sale and consumption of commodities, himself turns into one. On the market the individual represents a combination of characteristics peculiar to things, and endeavours to sell these as advantageously as possible. The rules of the "fair deal" taken for granted in the

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

** Ibid., p. 143.

capitalist market start to be applied to him as well. These rules come to constitute the all-important ethical principles in his life. Man's attitude to life becomes indifferent, superficial, purely mechanical, and his attitude to his fellow men one of cold calculation. He ceases to experience any love for his fellow men or to trust them and he can no longer see any meaning in life.

As capital becomes centralized and concentrated, as the number of large enterprises grows and small ones go bankrupt (when the private ownership of capital invested in them ceases to have any direct bearing on the function of their administration), the importance of bureaucratic methods of administration grows more and more in all sections of the bourgeois social system. Enormous capitalist industrial centres are administered by professional bureaucrats interested above all in ensuring that everything runs smoothly on well-oiled wheels. Mass production and consumption of commodities engulf the individual, foisting upon him artificial predilections and desires. Man's character and mind become standardized. Men are manipulated in the enormous cities like just so many things. Those who administer and those who are administered are turned into mere things and become subject to the laws of commodity circulation. In that society man "does not experience himself as the active bearer of his own powers and richness, but as an impoverished 'thing', dependent on powers outside of himself, unto whom he has projected his living substance".* He becomes the prisoner of those very economic and political conditions which he created. The life of the individual under capitalism is filled with feelings of fear, powerlessness, anxiety, uncertainty and guilt. Fromm considers that "in the nineteenth century the problem was that God is dead; in the twentieth century the problem is that man is dead".**

* Erich Fromm. *The Sane Society*, p. 124.

** Erich Fromm, *The Dogma of Christ*, New York, 1963, p. 101.

That in broad outline is the cheerless picture Fromm paints and the conclusion he draws after analyzing modern capitalist society.

Being convinced that society moulds the type of social character it requires, Fromm feels moved to ask what type of men does modern bureaucratized capitalist society require? The answer he lights upon is men "who cooperate smoothly in large groups, who want to consume more and more, and whose tastes are standardized and can be easily influenced and anticipated. It needs men who feel free and independent, yet who are willing to be commanded, to do what is expected, to fit into the social machine without friction; men who can be guided without force, led without leaders, prompted without an aim except the aim to be on the move, to function, to go ahead."**

Fromm finds himself obliged to observe with bitter regret that modern capitalist society has succeeded in creating just such a man, known as "organization man", "automation man" or "homo consumens", but who for all intents and purposes is none other than "alienated man".

The ubiquitous alienation that permeates the inner life of modern capitalist society testifies, in Fromm's opinion, to its anti-human essence and the diseased conditions prevailing in it. Since Fromm links alienation with the negation of man's "productiveness" and the "wealth of his own potentialities"*** with the negation of the essence of human nature, logically enough, after singling out the irreconcilability of the principles underlying capitalist society and human nature, he draws the conclusion that from the humanist viewpoint capitalist society is losing the last semblance of a rational foundation for its existence.

The aim and meaning of life and its supreme justification should, according to Fromm, be sought beyond actual reality, that is in human nature. A society cannot be nor-

* Erich Fromm in *The Saturday Evening Post*, July 25-August 1, 1964, p. 8.

** Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, pp. 43-44.

mal or sane if it impedes the actualization of the truly human potentialities inherent in man and engenders in him—to use Fromm's own words—"fear of freedom", freedom to be a man in the true sense of that word, in harmony with his own nature. He argues that "from this critical view our rates of alcoholism, suicide and divorce, as well as juvenile delinquency, gang rule, acts of violence and indifference to life, are characteristic symptoms of our 'pathology of normalcy'".* Modern bourgeois society as a whole is condemned as sick.

In the light of this assessment of modern American society Fromm asks: if neurosis is the result of the conflict between man's inner potentialities and those external social forces which obstruct their development and actualization, why, however, do its members, alienated, disturbed creatures as they are, at the same time not regard themselves as such, and why are they not classified by society as neurotics. In his view the answer is to be found in the presence within that society of "socially sanctioned disease". Each individual, powerless in these conditions to bring his essential nature to expression or to unfold his natural potentialities, shares the tragic fate of the overwhelming majority of the members of the society in question. The individual's lack of opportunities to take delight in his own uniqueness and the real joy of being himself is compensated for by a sense of confidence and calmness in the knowledge that he is like others around him, no better no worse.

Capitalist society, in Fromm's eyes, dictates to individuals standards of behaviour, adherence to which will enable them "to live with a defect without becoming ill".** Moreover, as a rule this defect (the individual's incapacity to unfold the wealth of his inner potentialities) is elevated by modern capitalist society to the status of a virtue, a

* Erich Fromm in *The Saturday Evening Post*, July 25-August 1, 1964, p. 8.

** Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, p. 16.

moral example to be emulated, which naturally cannot help but give the individual the illusion of inner development, of progress. There is nothing surprising in the fact that in that society, it is precisely those individuals who were able to preserve their identity and strove in their lives to be "productive", who are looked down on by such a society as diseased or abnormal, or even as harmful, dangerous elements. According to Fromm, precisely this elevation of the individual's sickness to the rank of a social model serves to mitigate the intolerable awareness of isolation, loneliness, inferiority and nonentity experienced by the individual in modern bourgeois society.

Fromm is firmly convinced that the whole tragedy of man's position in modern capitalist society hinges on the fact that he is incapable of approaching himself critically and correctly appraising his behaviour, that he is unable to apprehend the real, though latent, needs inherent in his nature as a result of the fact that he is a neurotic.

Fromm's critical approach to analysis of modern bourgeois society enabled him to demonstrate how that society is dominated by an illogicality, or to be more precise by "a logic that is inside out", according to which the all-pervading self-deception is made to appear like all-pervading truth, abnormality to appear as the norm and sickness as health. Fromm, of course, fails by a wide margin to reveal the social factors accounting for this domination and the constant reproduction of this false consciousness in bourgeois society, but his singling out of its existence as an indispensable feature of bourgeois reality accurately draws attention to one of the essential vices of that society.

While Fromm uses the category "alienation" in order to describe the subjective psychological aspect of man's awareness of the world in the capitalist West of today, he turns to analysis of those "unconscious" compulsive psychological mechanisms that constitute the motivational foundation of social authoritarianism or conformism,

when investigating the nature of man's behaviour and activity in that society. The "unconscious", irrational nature of alienated man's behaviour is, according to Fromm, the result of so-called negative freedom which constitutes the end-product of capitalist development.

When analyzing the emergence of capitalism and the disintegration of feudal society, Fromm turns his attention to the fact that when it comes to the socio-psychological consequences this process led on the one hand to the individual's new sense of freedom and independence, and on the other to a new sense of loneliness, helplessness and anxiety. This, according to Fromm, was the result of the fact that capitalism had freed man from various types of restrictions experienced in feudal society, by destroying its class hierarchy and undermining the influence of the Church, while at the same time destroying the orientational framework and patterns of subordination traditional in feudal society, which had enabled man to find his place in that society and apprehend the world around him as an integral whole. Liberation from this orientational framework provided in feudal society involved the loss of former social relationships and the sense of solidarity these engendered. Fromm would persuade us that the monopolistic phase of capitalist development that granted man "negative freedom", did not at the same time provide him in exchange with any other universal orientational framework and patterns of subordination or give him the chance to realize his "positive freedom," that is freedom to actualize the potentialities inherent in his nature.

The lack of an orientational framework which would enable man to establish rational relationships with himself, with other people and the whole of Nature, and the vague uncertainty born of the "negative freedom" granted man and all the feelings that accompany this condition—powerlessness, loneliness, anxiety—weigh heavy upon the individual and, according to Fromm, oblige him to seek a

means of escape. Negative freedom is a crushingly heavy and excruciating burden for him and he is afraid of it. Since man in actual fact has no positive freedom to actualize his natural essence, his awareness of his guilt in face of that impossibility and his fear of "negative freedom" make him run away from himself, endeavour as quickly as possible to bury himself in oblivion and suppress within him intolerable feelings of anxiety and loneliness. This is how, according to Fromm, those distinctive psychological mechanisms of escape from freedom come into being. They are of a compulsive, "unconscious" character and are common to all men living in capitalist society. He singles out four mechanisms—masochism, sadism, destructivism and mechanical conformism—that underlie various types of character and determine man's social behaviour. The conditions pertaining in capitalist society in the present period favour in particular the last of these four mechanisms, although the other three are also encountered.

Fromm assures us that an unconscious, compulsive-psychological reaction to the sick social conditions which impede the realization of positive freedom underlies men's feelings, thoughts and actions in capitalist society. Fromm, like Freud before him, dismisses the qualitative difference between psychological normality and disease, thereby demonstrating that in his theoretical research he remains true to the traditions of classical psychoanalysis: "The phenomena which we observe in the neurotic person are in principle not different from those we find in the normal."* Neurotic activity Fromm presents as tantamount to the norm in view of its proliferation within capitalist society.

Anthropological psychologism in his approach to the problem of personality leads Fromm to virtually overlook the differences in the psychology and behaviour of the

* Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, p. 159.

various classes in capitalist society. Capitalists and workers in his opinion are sick to an equal degree. Fromm is unwilling to note the difference in the social position of these classes and their consciousness, and this oversight reflects the inconsistency inherent in his criticism of bourgeois practices. In this question, as indeed in many others, the position he adopts differs fundamentally from that of Marx. Marx and Engels, while indicating that the propertied class and the proletariat suffered from one and the same human self-alienation, at the same time underlined the different ways in which these classes reacted to their position. The former, to use Marx and Engels' words, "finds in this self-alienation its confirmation and its good, *its own power*: it has in it a *semblance* of human existence".* The latter meanwhile "feels annihilated in its self-alienation; it sees in it its own powerlessness and the reality of an inhuman existence. . . . The class of the proletariat is in abasement *indignation* at that abasement, an indignation to which it is necessarily driven by the contradiction between its human *nature* and its condition of life, which is the outright, decisive and comprehensive negation of that nature."^{**}

The fact that Fromm presents these pathological phenomena of modern capitalist society as absolute and universal naturally prevents him from appreciating the dialectics of the situation in which the proletariat finds itself, since this particular class is at one and the same time the most alienated class in society and potentially the most revolutionary force within that society.

Behind the overall picture of the degradation of personality in the modern capitalist world Fromm is unwilling to note the unmistakable struggle of the proletariat against existing social practices. He does not notice how in the course of that struggle workers are becoming increasingly aware of their concrete historical needs and striving

* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Holy Family*, p. 51.

** Ibid.

to change the existing state of affairs in accordance with the objective demands of evolving reality. Nor does Fromm observe that in the course of the actual struggle against capitalist society which enslaves and renders faceless all individuals the working class is acquiring features of a new social character—solidarity, comradeship, loyalty to the common cause. Fromm is unwilling to admit that it is this class which expresses the truly human principle.

Fromm's fundamental mistake was his interpretation of the all-pervading character of alienation in capitalist society as justification for declaring it a supra-historical feature of human existence. Marx saw the causes of alienation to lie in the concrete socio-economic conditions in which man acted. By alienation he understood an objective process of the transformation of man's activity and its results into a force that would be outside man's power and would dominate him, a process shaped by the predominance of private property and the division of labour. Fromm reduced the causes of alienation to the anthropological contradiction between man and Nature, while linking the forms of its manifestation with the social trauma inflicted on man's nature.

While providing an adequate description of the psychological aspect of alienation of the individual under capitalism, Fromm fails nevertheless to pick out the link between alienation and the socio-economic foundation of society. Alienation for him is some kind of "natural" characteristic of human existence as such. In Fromm's opinion alienation does not appear at a specific stage in the development of human society but has existed since the very beginnings of that society. According to Fromm, at precisely the moment when man severs his natural links with Nature, "he and Nature become enemies, not to be reconciled until man has become fully human. With this first step of severing the ties between man and Nature, history—and alienation—begins."^{**} As history advances so alienation becomes

* Erich Fromm, *You Shall Be As Gods*, p. 70.

increasingly widespread and profound. Fromm sees society's role to lie in the fact that it lends a distinctive form to the original, natural alienation and then renders that alienation more profound. H. K. Wells has every reason to assert that Fromm views human separation "as a kind of unconscious original sin penetrating the conscious awareness of man in all epochs as feelings of aloneness, helplessness, hopelessness, anxiety, guilt and shame".* Fromm is really doing little more than presenting us with a psychoanalytical reinterpretation all his own of the biblical concept of "original sin". Alienation is to him the heavy cross which each man has to bear as a result of his being born to this life.

In his attempt to present the tragedy of man's situation in modern capitalist society as some sort of metaphysical tragedy of the human condition as such, and the essence of alienation as a "natural" phenomenon, as a universal feature of man's existence, Fromm comes very near to existentialism. Central to both neo-Freudianism and existentialism is "the complex of feelings expressed as loneliness, frustration, guilt, anxiety and despair...".** Hence it is not surprising that "many existentialists are busy adapting the psychoanalytic method to their own needs. At the same time, many psychoanalysts are turning to existentialism in their attempts to give their discipline a broader base than that offered by Freud."*** Both neo-Freudianism and existentialism are the product and reflection of the shattering of hopes and ideals peculiar to traditional bourgeois individualism found among certain strata of the Western intelligentsia and the lesser and middle members of the propertied class. Typical of both existentialism and neo-Freudianism is an extreme mystification of the actual processes of alienation at work within modern capitalist society. Both theories fail to do more than recognize

* Harry K. Wells, *The Failure of Psychoanalysis*, p. 176.

** Ibid., p. 191.

*** Ibid., p. 192.

and superficially describe various forms of alienation without pinpointing its true social causes.

Neo-Freudian criticism of capitalist society from the standpoint of abstract naturalistic humanism ranks with that type of bourgeois social criticism which, to use Marx's words, "knows how to judge and condemn the present, but not how to comprehend it".* This explains why neo-Freudian criticism is directed more at exposing and the said society from a moral standpoint, than at the elaboration of practical methods for changing it.

Fromm's criticism of existing capitalist society is not merely abstract but of a purely external variety. It does not touch upon the essential features and in its negation of the society makes no reference to the real social forces that are capable of actually changing that society. Fromm's social criticism is an individual philosophical expression of a yearning for social conditions worthy of man, a form of moral protest against existing capitalist reality. While outwardly critical of capitalism, a social critique of this sort lacks any revolutionary-critical spirit and is therefore easily tolerated by capitalist society. The bourgeoisie is well aware that criticism of this type represents no danger for it; therefore not only does it permit it to be voiced, but furthermore goes out of its way to encourage it and thus cultivate "romantic" rebellion in certain circles of the intelligentsia, preferring that to any sort of organized revolutionary action on the part of the masses.

At the present time abstract criticism of capitalist society on the part of the liberal bourgeois intelligentsia constitutes a form of "sublimation" acceptable for this very society, a re-directed variety of social protest. The purely external radicalism of the liberal bourgeois intelligentsia reflects not so much its strength as a manifestation of its bewildered and undeniable powerlessness to change anything in the existing state of affairs.

* Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1974, p. 474.

Fromm's social criticism which is rooted in his abstract humanist philosophy provides a vivid illustration of the illusions and misconceptions of petty bourgeoisie, of liberal intelligentsia with regard to the sources of social evil, and at the same time of their helpless search for correct and effective methods with which to eliminate that evil.

2. A Social Programme for the Restructuring of Capitalist Society (The Ideal of "Humanist Communitarian" Socialism)

In addition to declaring capitalist society of today sick, diseased and neurotic Fromm asserts that it should be replaced by a sane society which "conforms to the needs of man, needs which are rooted in the very conditions of his existence".*

He assumes that his conception of human nature enables us not merely to assess the extent of social disease, but also to forecast what the sane society should be like. In his opinion knowledge of the needs intrinsic to human nature makes possible precise determination of the actual social conditions necessary for their actualization, and of the nature of society that would further the unfolding of man's natural essence. Unlike Freud who considered that the question of human progress was a tragic one in view of the irreconcilable conflict between man's pansexual instincts and society's moral demands, Fromm suggests that a society could be created on this planet in which the social conditions would enable man to realize his inner potentialities. While Freud's views of the prospects for civilization's development and future were undeniably sceptical and pessimistic, Fromm is optimistic about what the future holds.

The only constructive way to resolve the problem of total alienation under capitalism, according to Fromm, is

* Erich Fromm, *The Dogma of Christ*, p. 103.

provided by socialism as construed by him which constitutes the ideal of the sane society. Precisely this conclusion confronts Fromm with a certain logical problem, the resolution of which lays bare the misguided ideological and methodological stand he adopts in his interpretation of the "man-versus-society" dilemma, and the illusory nature of the practical, tangible methods he proposes for the attainment of that ideal.

As pointed out earlier, Fromm holds that alienation engenders in the members of capitalist society a sense of isolation, loneliness, helplessness and the futility of life. How then can man free himself from those decadent, panic-stricken emotions if, as Fromm himself states, man's behaviour stems from "unconscious", compulsive-psychological mechanisms which do not in any way differ from neuroses?

Indeed, how can the sick, "alienated" individual in diseased capitalist society arrive at the idea of a sane society, let alone find ways and means of realizing that idea?

According to Fromm, capitalism, as a sick society, produces and moulds on a mass scale neurotic and alienated people, who in their turn consolidate and stabilize the functioning of that society and are constantly reproducing its typical features. It is obvious, that for as long as capitalism exists, the behaviour of the individual cannot be other than irrational and compulsive, but in that case there are no grounds for hoping that a new society with a different social structure can emerge.

Yet how should we break our way out of this vicious circle?

Fromm suggests that we should resort to "humanist psychoanalysis". Since capitalist society as a whole is sick and constitutes a universal disease, we should be able to apply to it those "therapeutic methods" which are used for the treatment of individual cases. Fromm is convinced that capitalist society can be changed and turned into a sane

society by means of so-called social therapy, i.e., by changing the psychological make-up of each of the individuals who constitute that society. To this end it is essential without encroaching upon the core of capitalism—private ownership of the means of production—to embark within the framework of capitalism on man's moral re-education, so as gradually to replace his "marketing orientation" with "productive" behaviour. The cure would involve firstly helping the psychologically disturbed individuals to an awareness of their "unconscious", compulsive-psychological mechanisms for an escape from negative freedom, and secondly helping them to an awareness of their true strivings towards positive freedom repressed in the "unconscious". Alienation will disappear as soon as man attains awareness of the inner needs rooted in his nature. The purpose of social therapy, according to Fromm lies in the moral enlightenment of man, in the arousing of his dormant "humanist conscience". The sane society cannot, he feels, be built until a preliminary moral rebirth of men has taken effect.

Fromm refers to the theoretical position he adopts when assessing the opportunities open to modern man in capitalist society as one of "nontheistic mysticism".* In his view it will only be possible to overcome all forms of alienation and implement humanist ideals, if every individual strives to extend the range of his consciousness by probing the depths of his "ego". Insofar as "unconsciousness represents universal man, the whole man",** man must and can come to appreciate the natural, generic essence latent within him. The elimination of alienation involves, according to Fromm, a process of inner renewal for the individual, a transformation of man's individual world, which in his view will do away with the split typical of capitalist society, namely that between man's essence and his existence, and as it were restore man to his true nature.

* Erich Fromm, *You Shall Be As Gods*, p. 19.

** Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 128.

Adopting the stance of the bourgeois enlightener, Fromm assumes that in order to heal capitalist society, it is essential to propagate more widely the ideas of "humanist psychoanalysis", the ideas peculiar to the neo-Freudian philosophy of "normative humanism". As men under the influence of this propaganda start to be aware of the needs inherent in their nature, as they begin striving to actualize their inner potentialities, he expects that capitalist society will gradually turn into socialist society as the result of the simple introduction of humanist values to the consciousness of each individual.

Thus, after singling out the real vices of capitalist society—universal alienation, disintegration of the personality, etc.—and failing to find real, effective methods of changing them, Fromm turns his attention to the sphere of man's inner, spiritual world, to the sphere of his consciousness.

Following on from this Fromm assures us that the only possible "historical" force capable of transforming "sick capitalist society" is that constituted by the psychoanalysts with their therapeutic techniques of enlightenment for the moral re-education of the alienated personality. It is precisely to the psychoanalysts, representatives of the "humanist psychoanalysis" school, to whom Fromm delegates the decisive role in the transition from capitalism to socialism. According to H. K. Wells, "Fromm reforms the utopian theory into a utopian therapy".*

Fromm's illusions and errors in relation to the question of the transformation of capitalist society come still more clearly to the fore in his analysis of the social prerequisites for this transformation.

The neo-Freudian social programme includes not merely a demand for moral re-education and treatment for the mentally sick, but also a demand for indispensable change of the capitalist system as a whole as the vital

* Harry K. Wells, *The Failure of Psychoanalysis*, p. 134.

condition for changing capitalist society into a socialist one. If the purpose of the first demand is sufficiently clear there arises the question as to what the true essence of the latter demand might be beneath its relatively revolutionary exterior.

In his depressing picture of the degradation and depersonalization of the individual in capitalist society Fromm does not confine himself to demanding criticism of the social conditions which engender the forms of alienation peculiar to that society, but he goes on to say that "important and radical changes in our social structure are necessary".* In many of his works he stresses how men "must think of the economic and political changes necessary in order to overcome the psychological fact of alienation".** The creation of a sane society demands, in Fromm's view, "a fundamental reorganization of our economic and social system in the direction of freeing man from being used as a means for purposes outside of himself, of creating a social order in which human solidarity, reason and productiveness are furthered rather than hobbled".*** Yet what at first appears a radical idea of Fromm's later proves in practice to be nothing but an empty phrase, smacking of no more than liberal bourgeois radicalism.

Fromm holds the capitalist structure of society to be responsible for alienation and calls for its change, yet he has in mind not the mode of production but the form of industrial organization. In the language of neo-Freudian philosophers the "structure of society" and the "social factor" are none other than the "form of industrial organization" for production shaped in its development by technical discoveries and achievements, something external in relation to man and his natural potentialities.

Insofar as alienation represents for Fromm first and

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

** Erich Fromm, *The Dogma of Christ*, p. 102.

*** Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, p. 277.

foremost a consequence of the negative influence of the form of organization of production, of modern productive forces and technology on the needs intrinsic to human nature, his demand for change in the social structure does not even touch on capitalist production relations, but applies merely to forms of organization of production. Ignoring the class principle in his approach to investigation of such a complex social problem as alienation, Fromm assumes that it is possible to eliminate it while preserving the cornerstone of capitalism—namely private property. Fromm comes out categorically against "socialization of the means of production" and puts forward a scheme for "humanizing" modern capitalist society. He suggests transforming the "bureaucratically managed industrialism in which maximal production and consumption are ends in themselves . . . into a humanist industrialism in which man and the full development of his potentialities—those of love and of reason—are the aims of all social arrangements".*

The view of alienation as a phenomenon above class, supposedly stemming from the industrial character of modern society and independent of its socio-economic order, is highly popular among bourgeois philosophers and sociologists. They regard alienation not as the result of contradictions within class society but as something eternal, which is intrinsic even to socialist society.

The social purpose and motive of such ideas reflecting an extended and abstract interpretation of the essence of alienation is to eradicate the qualitative difference between capitalism and socialism and to attribute to socialism the weaknesses peculiar to bourgeois society. In defiance of the real facts Fromm asserts that alienation "exists in the European-American industrialized countries, regardless of their political structure",** thus equating capitalism and socialism.

* Erich Fromm in *The Saturday Evening Post*, July 25-August 1, 1964, p. 10.

** Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 59.



When comparing industrial organization in the capitalist countries and the USSR and calling attention to certain similar features and trends in their economic development (growth in the size of both enterprises and branches of industry, their centralization, etc.), Fromm concludes that "the Soviet Union may be called state capitalism, or . . . managerial, bureaucratic system. . .".* In Fromm's opinion, both in capitalist and the socialist countries industrial production based on the existence of large centralized enterprises is controlled by the so-called managerial, bureaucratic elite, that is by executives and engineers.

Being acquainted with the Soviet Union only by hearsay and gleaning his picture of the country from the writings of bourgeois ideologists who attempt to provide deliberately distorted information about the first socialist country, Fromm identifies the social systems of capitalism and socialism, on the sole basis that a supposedly similar "industrial method of production" is found in both, a method which promotes the development of large-scale industrial units. His assertion that "the Soviet system and the Western system are both confronted with the same problems of industrialization and economic growth in highly developed, centralized managerial society"*** merely reveals his failure to understand the socio-economic essence of the two different social systems.

Theoretical conclusions of this sort play into the hands of the anti-communists, the unabashed champions of capitalism, since they, while propagating the theory of a "single industrial society", are really aiming at discrediting socialist ideas. On essential principles Fromm shares the views of Rostow and Aron, who founded and popularized the theory of a modern industrially developed society, in which ownership of the means of production would be immaterial, while all that really counts would be how

* Erich Fromm, *May Man Prevail?*, p. 76.

** Ibid., p. 81.

production is managed. Fromm chooses to ignore one of the main tenets in Marx's theory that has been borne out in practice since it was expounded, the idea that the nature of the social system is determined by the form of ownership of the means of production. In two qualitatively different social systems, such as capitalism and socialism, production goals are diametrically opposite. While in the socialist countries production is directed towards a single goal—to make man's life happy—in capitalist countries even the finest of men's achievements and efforts are, in the final analysis, used against man's interests, and their fruits are reaped by those who own the means of production.

His failure to understand the essence of those social processes at work in the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries leads Fromm to contrast what he terms "communitarian" or "democratic" socialism with actual socialism. Indeed he holds that "man today is confronted with the most fundamental choice, not that between Capitalism or Communism, but that between robotism (of both the capitalist and the communist variety), or Humanistic Communitarian Socialism".* Fromm holds that modern industrial organization of society is faulty in both its capitalist and communist forms and proposes that it should be countered with "Humanistic Communitarian Socialism"—a society organized on the basis of small decentralized social units in which all members would be involved in administrative functions. This type of organization he sums up as "an industrial organization in which every working person would be an active and responsible participant, where work would be attractive and meaningful, where capital would not employ labour, but labour would employ capital".** Fromm went on to indicate that for the transition to such a variety of socialism the principal point

* Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, p. 363.

** Ibid., pp. 283-84.

would not be "ownership of the means of production, but participation in management and decision-making".*

Concentrating on analysis of the "concrete function of man in the labour process" and dismissing property as an abstraction Fromm suggests that since strivings, urges and needs intrinsic to man's nature which bear no relation to forms of ownership underlie man's historical activity, it makes supposedly no difference to the worker, who owns an enterprise—the people or a capitalist. In his opinion "the transfer of property rights from the private capitalist to society or the state has, in itself, only a negligible effect on the situation of the worker"*** Fromm holds that the overall organization of production and labour conditions are of far greater significance for the worker: he writes that "nationalization (the abolition of private property in the means of production) is not an essential distinction between 'socialism' and 'capitalism'".*** It therefore comes hardly as a surprise when Fromm maintains that the central problem in the transition from capitalism to humanistic socialism "lies in the change of the work situation",**** in the "transformation of work", and is not change in the character of production relations. He puts forward as an alternative to the Marxist programme of socialist revolution a programme for the "humane" organization of economic life that is petty-bourgeois in character, a programme of "managerial revolution" that must "decentralize work and the state so as to give them human proportions, and must permit centralization only to the point necessary for the requirements of industry".***** According to Fromm managerial revolution must of necessity transform the character of work, change labour conditions for the worker and introduce universal co-management of

* Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, p. 323.

** Ibid., p. 331.

*** Erich Fromm, *May Man Prevail?*, p. 81.

**** Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, p. 331.

***** Erich Fromm, *The Dogma of Christ*, p. 102.

production. Yet Fromm does not see how the capitalist shall permit the worker to participate in management and decision-making connected with the activity of the enterprise that does not belong to the worker. All that is left open to him is to console himself and others with the hope that "new forms for such participation can be found".* When presenting his programme for the transformation of capitalism Fromm comes out in favour of peaceful reform and on more than one occasion warns against radical upheaval in social relations: "A law introducing co-management would be a restriction of property rights, but by no means any revolutionary change in such rights."**

Essential for the construction of "communitarian socialism", according to Fromm, is not only change in the economic sphere of man's life referred to earlier, but also in the political and cultural spheres. In his view "any progress restricted to one sphere is destructive to progress in all spheres".*** The stand adopted by Fromm in relation to the principles and character of social change in capitalist society described in outline in this chapter is fundamental to his social philosophy and in a number of his writings he makes a point of underlining where his own stand differs from that of Marx. Fromm's categorical imperative incorporating the demand for simultaneous change in all spheres of social life, in practice, despite its apparent radicalism, amounts to little more than an appeal for reconciliation with capitalist reality.

Indeed recognition of the significance and interdependence of economic, political and cultural factors is a negligible contribution to the definition of the role which each of them plays in the process of historical development. A theory that goes no further than a general verification of the link between these three factors and fails to

* Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, p. 361.

** Ibid., p. 324.

*** Ibid., pp. VIII-IX.

single out the most important, decisive factor in the functioning and development of the given social system proves sterile as theory and ineffective in practice.

Fromm proffers the view that Marx was mistaken when he wrote that the "socialization of the means of production was not only the necessary, but also the sufficient condition for the transformation of the capitalist into a socialist co-operative society".* A statement like this made by Fromm lays bare not only his failure to understand Marx's position, but also his vulgarization and distortion of that position. Although Marx viewed the socialization of the means of production as the essential condition for the transition to socialism, at the same time he never held that that particular condition in itself was sufficient. According to the Marxist conception of historical development, the mode of production plays an all-important role in the formation of all aspects of social activity, and precisely for this reason transformation in the economic sphere is the essential, decisive condition for the creation of a new, socialist society. However, this in no way implies that Marxist theory belittles the significance of other spheres of social life. On the contrary it approaches the socio-historical process as an organic whole, as a complex pattern of interrelated economic, political and cultural aspects, and takes into account the specific nature of each factor and the way in which the three influence each other.

In his assumption that socialist revolution in Russia after socialization of the means of production set up a form of industrial organization similar to the capitalist form without implementing socialist ideals, Fromm reveals his complete misconception of the character and essence of the Great October Socialist Revolution. The far-reaching political change implemented by the popular masses, led by the Communist Party (Bolsheviks), resulted

* Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, p. 265.

in the establishment of a truly democratic, infinitely humane socialist society. The socialization of the means of production was never seen by Marxists as an end in itself. The elimination of alienation in the process of the social and revolutionary transformation of society is not completed at the stage when capitalist social relations are being negated and abolished; it requires the creation of qualitatively new material and cultural conditions for the comprehensive development of each individual. The October Revolution marked the beginning of the most enormous social transformation the world has seen in all spheres of man's life. Through its fundamental transformation of economic relations it in practice realized mankind's humanist ideals. At the present time the Soviet people, led by the Communist Party and inspired by Marxist-Leninist principles, is successfully building communist society in which social differences will disappear and for the first time on earth the most noble and lofty dreams of the whole human race will come true.

When he criticizes modern capitalist society, exposes the humiliating conditions in which man lives within the framework of that society, and proceeds from there to stress the need for social change, Fromm repeats on several occasions the reservation that none of the changes he envisages must be "brought about by force".* He does not oppose revolution as such, he claims, but rather the kind of revolution called for by Marxists. To use his own phrase, Fromm supports revolution of a more profound and all-embracing variety than that defined in Marxist theory. In his rejection of revolutionary change of capitalist society, of the elimination of private property and the socialization of the means of production, Fromm can be seen to adhere to Proudhon's concept of the "integral revolution in the ideas and in the hearts"**. He writes that "the revolution

* Ibid., p. 361.

** Ibid., p. 252.

of our hearts does not require new wisdom—but new seriousness and dedication”.*

Thus the programme for social revolution put forward by Fromm is confined to the substantiation and proclamation of the purely ethical demand for moral rearmament, cultural renewal, and change in man's inner world. This programme is based on Fromm's belief that appreciation of the humane, kind, just potentialities inherent in human nature is in itself sufficient to bring about man's rebirth and compel all men—exploiters and exploited—to forget mutual insults and erstwhile conflict, and to come together in an upsurge of sentiment and emotion so as to transform society on socialist lines in accordance with the principles intrinsic to human nature.

After thus reducing the question of restructuring capitalist society to a revolution in the spiritual sphere, which supposedly automatically paves the way for changes in the whole social system, Fromm for all intents and purposes starts justifying the contradictions inherent in modern capitalism and condemning any real efforts and concrete struggle undertaken by the masses in order to resolve those contradictions. Abstract slogans and rallying calls for this type of revolution can bring nothing but harm to the revolutionary movement for they divert the working masses away from active political and economic struggle against the exploiting class, and against all forms of social and national enslavement.

The reverse of this “humane” revolution, as presented by the neo-Freudians, of the revolution that does not involve class struggle or the surmounting of resistance from all reactionary forces interested in preserving capitalist society, is the approval, vindication, and defence of that society, and the call for slavish acceptance of existing reality.

Fromm's naïve faith in the peaceful transformation of capitalism and his active propaganda of the scheme for

* Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, p. 344.

“humanizing” capitalism without any radical revolutionary break with the old production relations makes him, whether he wants it or not, an apologist for the very society he is criticizing.

While making due mention of Fromm's critical attitude to modern capitalist society, at the same time it would be wrong to lose sight of the Utopian nature of the ideas he expresses in connection with the socialist ideal, and the ways and means of achieving that ideal. The methods put forward by Fromm for resolving the social contradictions of capitalism are too vague, abstract and far removed from providing an answer to the all too tangible and burning problems of the modern age. When all is said and done, the picture of the transition to socialism which he paints is fantastic and quite unreal. Lacking any clear idea of the real motive forces and laws behind the replacement of capitalism by socialism Fromm evolves a programme of social change for capitalist society which is not only inconsistent from the theoretical angle, but profoundly harmful with regard to social practice.

While various versions of Utopian socialism possessed certain progressive implications in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, at the present time in a context of fierce class struggle when the Marxist theory of scientific socialism has long since stood the test of time, ideas of this type appear not only unscientific but to a certain extent reactionary.

The social harm stemming from the neo-Freudian theory of “humanist democratic socialism” consists not only in the fact that it distorts the paths to the reconstruction of capitalist society and paints a Utopian picture of the gradual development of capitalism into socialism, but, most important of all, in its claim to be the only true theory of socialism and in its open and unequivocal negation of the veracity of Marxist-Leninist theory, which has been borne out in the practice of socialist construction. Fromm attempts to set up his own abstract “model for socialism”

over against the real socialist order which actually exists and is successfully developing in a number of countries.

A typical feature of Fromm's work, and indeed of the liberal-bourgeois propagators of abstract humanism in general, is his endeavour to formulate a different "interpretation" all of his own and a "critical reassessment" of Marx's historical materialism, presenting the results of such reworking to his readers as the only true Marxist philosophy.

The theory of scientific socialism represents for Fromm "existential humanism". He writes that "Marx's concept of socialism is a protest, as is all existentialist philosophy, against the alienation of man..."* From this angle he approaches Marx, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche as existential humanists of one and the same mould. Suggesting that "Marx's thought is Messianic-religious, in secular language"*** and ascribing to Marx an interpretation of man as a generic, extra-temporal essence, he goes on to claim that "Marx's aim, socialism ... is essentially prophetic Messianism in the language of the nineteenth century"****. In Fromm's opinion only an existentialist approach in the assessment of Marx's philosophy is bound to lead to a correct "re-interpretation of Marx, based on the whole Marx and his humanist philosophy"****.

Taking upon himself the mission of interpreter and expounder of Marx's writings, speaking as if in Marx's name and referring to himself as a "Marxist", Fromm in practice distorts Marx's actual ideas, his whole world outlook.

Fromm bases his existentialist-anthropological interpretation of Marx on his early economic and philosophic manuscripts and attempts to draw a dividing line between the early philosophical tenets contained in these and the

* Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, p. 63.

** Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, p. 236.

*** Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, p. 5.

**** Ibid., p. 72.

conclusions elaborated in Marx's later economic and political theory, regarding the latter as altogether erroneous. In Fromm's view true Marxism is Marxism in its anthropological naturalist-humanist form. He regards Marx's interpretation of history as an "anthropological interpretation",* assuming that such concepts as "labour" and "capital" are not primarily economic categories but anthropological ones** and presenting socialism as a society, in which "man realizes his own essence" and "returns to his own essence, which in theological language is nothing other than his return to God".*** Fromm is for all intents and purposes attempting to present the Marxist conception of history as an anthropological secularized eschatology. The misguided inconsistency of Fromm's assessment of Marx's philosophical heritage speaks for itself.

Fromm attempts to convince the Western reader with little knowledge of Marxism that the neo-Freudian abstract humanist version of Marxism expounded by him in numerous works is the genuine article. Neo-Freudian social philosophy is part of a now relatively fashionable trend in modern bourgeois philosophy to refute Marxism in the name of Marx. Setting out to "protect" Marx's "humanism" against "Soviet revisionists", who supposedly distort the essence of Marxism, Fromm goes out of his way to rob Marx's socio-philosophical conclusions of their revolutionary content. What is more he sets up Marx's socio-political programme over against Marx's humanism: "the idea of political revolution is not a specifically Marxist, or socialist idea, but it is the traditional idea of the middle class, bourgeois society in the last three hundred years."**** Fromm tries to demonstrate that the idea of political revolution as such is alien to the spirit of Marx's humanist

* Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, p. 13.

** Ibid., p. 40.

*** Ibid., p. 30.

**** Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, p. 260.

philosophy and has been grafted on to Marxism from outside. In a whole number of works—*The Sane Society*, *Marx's Concept of Man* and others—he reproaches Marx on a number of occasions for overestimating the role of political power and violence in connection with the transition to socialism.

Fromm sees his task to lie not only in "correctly" interpreting Marx but also in "freeing" Marxism of all he sees as "wrong", "unnecessary" or "superfluous", which prevents it from being "true" Marxism. In this way what essentially amounts to all the fundamental ideas and principles of Marxism is excluded from it: the explanation of the character and motive forces of revolution, the concepts of the role of the working class, and its strategy and tactics in the fight for socialism, of the need to do away with private ownership of the means of production, and the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In a pretentious attempt to "protect" Marxism from the Marxists Fromm tries to point out a supposedly extant contradiction between Marx's theory of socialism on the one hand and Lenin's subsequent elaboration of that theory and the practical implementation of the tenets of that theory in Soviet Russia on the other: "the Leninist development of Socialism represents a regression to the bourgeois concepts of the state and of political power, rather than the new socialist concept."* He rejects the patterns of the formation and development of socialist society singled out in Marxist-Leninist theory and subsequently borne out by the practice of socialist construction in the socialist countries. He regards the social and political system existing in the socialist countries as a system which contravenes "Marx's humanism". Assertions of this type make strange reading in the writings of a theoretician anxious to assume the role of a champion and defender of Marx's humanist philosophy.

* Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, p. 259.

While supposedly engaged in the "humanization" and "cleansing" of Marxism, Fromm is attempting to eradicate Marxism's political content, to rob it of its vital force and thus reduce it to no more than abstract phrases rendering it harmless for the bourgeoisie. In the context of today's fierce ideological struggle, liberal-bourgeois readings and interpretations of Marxism such as this one, masked by abstract humanist slogans such as the fight for "humanist democratic socialism" "but at the same time openly opposing existing socialism, represent a subtle falsification of Marxism, an extremely dangerous variety of ultra-modern anti-Marxism.

A distinctive characteristic of modern anti-Marxism as practised by liberal-bourgeois theoreticians, and Fromm in particular, consists in the fact that they do not make an outright, blanket rejection of Marxism, as do ideologists who openly express the interests of the powerful bourgeoisie and make no effort to conceal their hostile attitude to Marxism, but reject it in the name of struggle to vindicate "true" Marxism and "develop", "improve" and "renew" the latter. This type of anti-Marxism has recently become more and more widespread among bourgeois ideologists, who are starting to realize that to ignore or openly reject Marxism would be none too popular among the people of the capitalist countries. This is why they make active use of all opportunities to direct distorted versions of Marx's own ideas against Marxism. This is how bourgeois ideologists are attempting to confuse the masses and mislead them.

Yet, after distorting the essence of Marx's dialectical materialist philosophy and selecting as a methodological foundation for his theory subjective idealist principles of anthropological psychologism and metaphysical materialism, Fromm was still unable to either resolve or even formulate correctly the subject of social change and transformation in capitalist society. His idea of socialist construction is a conglomeration of abstract moral sentiments

and precepts bearing little relation to the real world. Fromm's exposure of the vices of capitalism is harsh and he is aware of the need to transform all spheres of life in that society. Yet his endeavour to pin our hopes on humanist enlightenment effected by the psychoanalysts, to whom he entrusts the role of moral mentor, and his naïve belief that both capitalists and workers after re-education in a humanist spirit will join forces in a common effort to build a new society, reveal Fromm's complete failure to understand the essence of the actual socio-historical process.

The theoretical tenets of Fromm's neo-Freudian social philosophy and the socio-political conclusions rooted in it which he attempts to present as Marxist, in actual fact have nothing in common with Marx's ideas. Fromm's anthropological psychologism and his abstract humanism avoiding class issues prevent him from apprehending the essence of socio-historical development. In his description of man's tragic fate in modern capitalist society he fails to indicate the social force and social means essential for the transformation of capitalist society.

Marxist theory which reveals the actual causes of the social vices of modern capitalism also pinpoints the forces capable of implementing social revolution, and indicates the ways and means for putting into practice the true ideals of humanism. The real historical force capable of effecting the revolutionary transformation of capitalist society is the working class armed with Marxist-Leninist theory.

In Marxist theory such concepts as "man" and "humanism" are not abstract, extra-historical concepts. They express real social relations. Marxist-Leninist theory lends these concepts concrete historical content. Marxist humanism is based on a profound understanding of the correlation of class forces in society and is closely linked with the revolutionary activity of the working masses and with recognition of the leading role played by the working class and its Marxist-Leninist party. Precisely these fea-

tures make it militant, revolutionary and creative. Marxist humanism is the highest form of humanism.

The abstract humanism propagated by Fromm represents a kind of rebirth of classical bourgeois humanism, of enlightenment and romanticism, that is a return to a bygone stage in the development of humanism whose limitations have long been outstripped by Marxism. Fromm's work illustrates what abstract humanist philosophy can lead to when it turns its back upon concrete historical social definitions and attempts to replace these with vague liberal-bourgeois phrases. Neo-Freudian social philosophy with its search for the "golden mean" and a "third path" and its rejection of truly revolutionary, socialist ideas, which have taken shape in the course of long and determined class struggle and in the course of attempts to interpret the historical experience of social development, with its endeavour to set itself over against the humanism inherent in Marxist-Leninist theory veers on the one hand towards anti-communism and on the other towards various types of revisionism.

Real humanism does not consist of vague amorphous phrases concerning the welfare and happiness of mankind but investigates actual means of transforming society which could free man from all the injustices of antagonistic class society. It was Marxism which for the first time in history linked the idea of humanism with the class struggle of the proletariat, with socialist revolution and the construction of communist society, thereby providing a practical basis for both the understanding of complex social phenomena and for guiding man's historical activity aimed at transforming social reality in accordance with his concrete historical ideals.

At the present time no one can be a true humanist without adopting a dialectical materialist world outlook, without linking his life with the cause of socialist revolution, which is an affirmation of realistic, active, and practical revolutionary humanism.

An appraisal of Fromm's social philosophy could be just as applicable to all abstract humanist conceptions. It provides a relatively apt illustration of the liberal-bourgeois outlook which, as noted earlier, is at present fairly widespread in the West. Inherent in Fromm's petty-bourgeois world outlook are profound and irreconcilable contradictions. On the one hand there is criticism of modern capitalist society, the desire to root out and destroy the evil born of that society, and on the other fruitless moralizing and Utopianism in forecasts of ways and means for the eradication of that evil, an effort to belittle the revolutionary practical experience of social development summarized and substantiated in Marxist-Leninist theory, and finally a direct attempt with reference to abstract humanist, liberal-bourgeois amorphous arguments to emasculate the revolutionary essence of Marxism. As a result of this complex combination of widely varying elements, which together make up Erich Fromm's social philosophy, evaluation of that philosophy cannot be uniform for it is essential to take into account the dialectics of its evolution and development and its relationship to Marxism and to various socio-political movements of the modern age.

The positive significance of Erich Fromm's social philosophy lies in the fact that it represents the critical trend in modern bourgeois social philosophy and exposes

the social vices and evils in the capitalist order. Being part of the general democratic movement, its universally attractive ideas of freedom, dignity and happiness help in some degree to further class consciousness and its abstract humanism wins a large number of representatives from a variety of social groupings.

Yet the ineffective Utopianism of this social philosophy is revealed as soon as it comes up against the practical tasks involved in the concrete political struggle against capitalism. The limitations of Fromm's abstract humanist social theory are reflected in the futility of its socio-theoretical conclusions and historical predictions. The petty-bourgeois ideal of "communitarian" or "democratic" socialism, just as the appeals for moral improvement and for the individual's rebirth by means of social therapy, and propagation of "humanist psychoanalysis" are speculative, abstract schemes, since they do not reflect the forward movement and actual dialectics of the social process and are not rooted in knowledge of the real laws of social development.

In comparison with the genuinely scientific theory of Marxism-Leninism which went beyond the abstract approach to the resolution of social problems and opened up to man real prospects for the creation of truly human social relations, Fromm's social philosophy constitutes a Utopian, unscientific system for analyzing and changing capitalist society. Fromm's conclusions in the field of theoretical philosophy and politics which disregard tenets of Marxist-Leninist theory that have been theoretically substantiated and proven in practice serve to disorientate wide masses of the people.

The limitations of Fromm's abstract humanist theory reflected first and foremost in his inability to single out and predict realistic ways and means for eradicating the causes of the social evils found under capitalism lead him to draw blatantly reactionary socio-political conclusions. These make themselves felt in his contempt for the practi-

cal experience of revolutionary social development formulated in Marxist-Leninist theory and in his direct attempt, with the help of abstract arguments on the subject of man and humanism in general, to detract from the revolutionary content of Marxism. Fromm's endeavour to water down Marxist, concrete historical definitions and concepts in vague liberal-bourgeois phrases and his deliberate effort to contrast Marxism and Leninism represent an attempt to distort the revolutionary essence of Marxist-Leninist theory.

The revolutionary character of the transformation of society cannot be objectively depicted in abstract humanist theory, and the true paths of revolutionary development cannot be charted with the help of a theory that is fundamentally unscientific. Any kind of attempt to "liberalize" or "democratize" Marxism will in the final analysis play into the hands of those anti-communists who are openly endeavouring by any means available to discredit Marxism and undermine its influence on the masses. Lenin wrote in his day that "the Marxist doctrine is omnipotent because it is true. It is comprehensive and harmonious, and provides men with an integral world outlook irreconcilable with any form of superstition, reaction, or defence of bourgeois oppression."* Nothing can weaken the attraction of Marxist-Leninist ideas, for they reflect the truth of life itself and truth is invincible.

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* V. I. Lenin. *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, p. 23.

